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‘Shakespeare’s Women and the Fin de Siècle.’

Thesis: D.Phil in English

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Thesis Abstract

Scholarship on Victorian productions of Shakespeare typically isolates Shakespeare from the rest of the repertory. My thesis illuminates how late-Victorian performances of Shakespeare and contemporary Victorian drama conditioned each other. I re-interrogate iconoclastic performances of Shakespeare’s heroines to reveal actresses’ performance networks, showing how actresses’ movements between *fin-de-siècle* roles created consonances between ostensibly antithetical areas of the repertoire. The performances and receptions of British actresses with high cultural capital reveal Shakespeare’s interventions into *fin-de-siècle* debates on gender and sexuality. Highlighting female performance genealogies, I offer the first narrative of women’s acting traditions in Shakespeare. I explore actresses’ commercial strategising, celebrity personae, theatrical innovations and contributions to Shakespearean hermeneutics. The thesis draws on significant unpublished archival material, including from private collections.

Chapter One examines how the ostensibly puritanical Madge Kendal and Royal mistress Lillie Langtry used the role of Rosalind (*As You Like It*) within a portfolio of self-promotional strategies, inscribing their professional legitimacy and dramatising different sexual identities. Chapter Two explores how Terry’s Lady Macbeth (1888–9), interpreted as a loving wife, challenged theatrical semiotics, contemporary ideals of marriage, and perceptions of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ women. Chapter Three, on Mrs Patrick Campbell, demonstrates the success of her movements between the ‘sex-problem play’ and Shakespeare, revealing how her Shakespeare reception reflected *fin-de-siècle* concerns as the unwell body and mind, the figure of Salome, and the child – as both a sexual object and potentially suicidal. Chapter Four, on Terry’s Imogen (*Cymbeline*) discusses Shakespearean actresses’ contribution to ideas of national character and queenship, as Queen Victoria’s reign neared its end, including specific milestones such as the 1897 Diamond Jubilee. Chapter Five examines Shakespeare’s intersections with the ‘New Woman’, commodity culture and politics, as suffragists co-opted Shakespeare as a ‘suffrage’ playwright, with *The Winter’s Tale*’s Paulina as their icon.

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List of Abbreviations

<i>DMK</i>	Madge Kendal, <i>Dame Madge Kendal By Herself</i> (London: John Murray, 1933).
<i>EIC</i>	<i>Essays in Criticism</i> (OUP journal).
<i>MP</i>	<i>Morning Post</i> (newspaper).
<i>NCTF</i>	<i>Nineteenth Century Theatre and Film</i> (Manchester UP journal).
OED	Oxford English Dictionary online (2008 edition).
<i>PMG</i>	<i>Pall Mall Gazette</i> .
<i>PMLA</i>	<i>Publications of the Modern Language Association</i> (PMLA journal).
SCLA	Shakespeare Centre Library and Archive, Stratford-upon-Avon.
<i>SQ</i>	<i>Shakespeare Quarterly</i> (John Hopkins UP journal).
<i>SRI</i>	<i>Sheffield and Rotherham Independent</i> (newspaper).
<i>TRI</i>	<i>Theatre Research International</i> (CUP journal).

Introduction

Scholars of Victorian theatre rightly agree on the theatre's cultural primacy: as art form, as a mediator of ideas, and as central to 'the entertainment industry of an urban industrial society'.¹ This society was rapidly expanding, thanks to migration from the countryside to towns, a rising birthrate and (for some) improved nutrition and medical care.² By the *fin de siècle*, London's population had reached 5,650,000.³ Consequently, thousands of Victorian Londoners went 'every night of the week, to the spanking new West End entertainments'.⁴ Between 1870 and 1893, nineteen new theatres were built.⁵ As well as the proliferation of pantomimes and music hall, the Victorian era saw the 'legitimate' theatre negotiate for social respectability.

Shakespeare was a central, determinative presence in artistic, civic, social and political Victorian life. The Victorians published his plays at an unprecedented rate: while 65 editions of Shakespeare's Complete Works were published between 1709 and 1810, a full 160 new editions appeared in only nine years between 1851 and 1860.⁶ In education, Shakespeare became 'the dominant component of the new subject of English Literature': a subject important both as an imperial export, and as a tool for teaching Englishness at home.⁷ Scholars have identified Shakespearean influence in the works of myriad Victorian novelists and poets: hence Valerie L. Gager's catalogue of Dickens's one thousand Shakespearean allusions, and Robert Sawyer's whistle-stop tour of Shakespearean 'appropriations' in the writings of Eliot, Swinburne,

¹ Russell Jackson, *Victorian Theatre: The Theatre in Its Time* (New York: New Amsterdam, 1989), 1.

² Michael R. Booth, *Theatre in the Victorian Age* (Cambridge: 1991), 3.

³ Joseph Donohue, 'Introduction', *Cambridge History of British Theatre* (Cambridge: 2004), II.217–221, 254.

⁴ Jacky Bratton, *The Making of the West End Stage* (Cambridge: 2011), 4; Booth, *Theatre in the Victorian Age*, 13.

⁵ Donohue, 'Introduction', 254.

⁶ Gary Taylor, *Reinventing Shakespeare* (London: Vintage, 1991), 184.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 194.

Browning and (again) Dickens.⁸ Shakespeare became increasingly central to Victorian tourism, as the purchase of his birthplace for the nation (1847), and creation of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust (1866) established Stratford-upon-Avon as a curated site of literary pilgrimage.⁹ The century, and especially its tourism, are associated with ‘Bardolatry’, the popular veneration of Shakespeare that offered both the ‘assurance and consolation of a vanished golden age’ and the ‘transcendent illumination of transhistorical genius’.¹⁰ Above all, Shakespeare remained the cultural constant of the theatrical repertory. Janice Norwood’s catalogue of performances of Shakespeare in nineteenth-century London records 866 productions across just ten major theatres between 1837 and 1900.¹¹ The first actor knighted for services to drama was the Lyceum’s actor-manager Henry Irving, who starred in twenty-six Shakespeare productions there between 1874 and 1900, as well as touring repeatedly to America.¹²

Canonical scholarship on Victorian stagings of Shakespeare typically isolates performances of his plays from the wider Victorian repertory. Adrian Poole and Gail Marshall’s *Victorian Shakespeare* (2003) typifies this; most recently, Marshall’s *Shakespeare in the Nineteenth Century* (2012) explores Shakespeare’s contributions to the visual arts, literature and political discourse, but does not consider how nineteenth-century intellectual, social and theatrical culture influenced Shakespeare’s performance and reception. David Francis’s article in the latter

⁸ Valerie L. Gager, *Shakespeare and Dickens* (Cambridge: 1996); Robert Sawyer, *Victorian Appropriations of Shakespeare* (London: AUP, 2003). See also Gail Marshall, ‘Shakespeare and fiction’, *Shakespeare in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: 2012), 96–112. Marshall also discusses, with Philip Shaw, Shakespeare’s influence on Tennyson, and Barrett Browning. Gail Marshall and Philip Shaw, ‘Shakespeare and poetry’, Marshall (ed.) *Shakespeare in the Nineteenth Century*, 113–128.

⁹ Julia Thomas, *Shakespeare’s Shrine* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012).

¹⁰ Graham Holderness, ‘Bardolatry’, *Cultural Shakespeare* (Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2001), 125–140.

¹¹ Janice Norwood, ‘A reference guide to performances of Shakespeare’s plays in nineteenth-century London’, Gail Marshall (ed.), *Shakespeare and the nineteenth century* (Cambridge: 2012), 348–416. Norwood includes Covent Garden, Drury Lane, the Haymarket, Sadler’s Wells, the Olympic, Princess’s, Lyceum, Her Majesty’s Theatre, Surrey, Pavillion and Whitechapel theatres. Significant omissions include the St. James’s Theatre, and Poel’s work.

¹² *Ibid.*, 386–388.

collection comes the closest to doing this, but focuses instead on how Shakespeare's biography and the plots and language of his plays directly inspired Victorian new writing for the theatre, rather than how acting, managerial and design choices in Shakespeare performance affected new writing in performance, and vice versa.¹³ Shakespeare performance history is still largely studied in isolation, emphasising patterns and evolutions between successive periods of performance, with less synchronic consideration of Shakespearean productions' links to other forms of contemporary performance.

There are several possible reasons for this. Firstly, the Victorian productions selected for inclusion in single-volume transhistorical studies of individual Shakespeare plays are frequently atypical of popular theatre, such as William Poel's attempts to reconstruct Elizabethan performance. Critics including Auerbach and Bratton note how earlier criticism has frequently and wrongly dismissed early and mid-Victorian plays as 'sub-canonical', and 'in deep darkness, waiting for a new dawn that did not appear until Ibsen'.¹⁴ These plays attract less critical attention, and fewer reprints, than their *fin-de-siècle* successors. It has thus been difficult to place Shakespeare in conversation with plays which are themselves rarely critically discussed, despite significant scholarship on performers including the Kembles, Edmund and Charles Kean, Ellen Tree, and William Macready. Conversely, the particular richness of *fin-de-siècle* dramatic writing has generated considerable scholarly attention, particularly in the society problem play's exploration of gender debates. In comparison, *fin-de-siècle* Shakespeare has been under-studied.

¹³ David Francis Taylor, 'Shakespeare and drama', Gail Marshall (ed.), *Shakespeare and the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: 2012), 129–147.

¹⁴ Nina Auerbach, 'Before the curtain', *Cambridge Companion to Victorian and Edwardian Theatre* (Cambridge: 2004), 3–14, 3; Bratton, *Making of the West End Stage*, 170.

Meanwhile, the Shakespearean scholars writing performance histories of individual plays have rarely themselves been Victorian specialists. Cambridge University Press's *Shakespeare in Production*, the best such series, has twelve contributing authors, of whom only Julie Hankey and Richard Madelaine have published directly on Victorian Shakespeare.¹⁵ Of the remaining ten, James N. Loehlin is a Chekhov specialist, and Christine Dymkowski has published extensively on Edwardian drama.¹⁶ While all consider the nineteenth century, their analytical emphases lie elsewhere.

Victorian theatre historiography typically identifies New Woman, 'problem play' and Ibsen roles as the *fin de siècle*'s definitive crucibles for challenging established gender roles. However, examining the Shakespearean performances and receptions of British actresses with the greatest cultural capital – including Ellen Terry, Madge Kendal, Mrs Patrick Campbell and Constance Benson – dismantles critical assumptions regarding Shakespeare's position in the Victorian repertoire. Re-interrogating these performances establishes Shakespeare's role as catalyst in contemporary debates on gender and female sexuality. Simultaneously, while feminist Shakespeare criticism has illuminated much about the representation of female characters, and the experiences of female performers, existing historiographies still emphasise male genealogies of performance over female: Derek Jacobi calls Hamlet 'the greatest of all acting traditions'; books such as Clement Scott's *Some Notable Hamlets* (1900), Gielgud's 'The Hamlet Tradition'

¹⁵ CUP. 'Shakespeare in Production', (2013)

[http://www.cambridge.org/gb/knowledge/series/series_display/item3937889/?site_locale=en_GB, accessed 14 June 2013]. Hankey wrote an article on Victorian Portias, while Madelaine has worked on nineteenth- and twentieth-century Australian productions of Shakespeare. Julie Hankey, 'Victorian Portias: Shakespeare's borderline heroine', *SQ* (1994), 426–448. John Golder and Richard Madelaine (eds), *O brave new world: two centuries of Shakespeare on the Australian stage* (Sydney: Currency Press, 2001).

¹⁶ James N. Loehlin, *Cambridge Introduction to Chekhov* (Cambridge: 2010). Royal Holloway. 'Christine Dymkowski – Publications', *Royal Holloway* [<http://pure.rhul.ac.uk/portal/en/persons/christine-dymkowski/%28f8b9e72c-d954-4d5d-91f4-e9a3e516e97f%29/publications.html>, accessed 14 June 2013].

(1937), Austin Brereton's *Some Famous Hamlets* (1972) and John A. Mills's *Hamlet On Stage: The Great Tradition* (1985) illustrate Patrick Stewart's conception of the role as 'an unbroken tradition handed down from one age to the next'.¹⁷ Jonathan Holmes's *Merely Players? Actors' Accounts of Playing Shakespeare* (2004) gives 'Noble memories: playing Hamlet' an entire chapter, the only one in the book to focus on a single role. Other studies focus extensively if not exclusively on male characters' stage histories, such as Alden T. Vaughan and Virginia Mason Vaughan's *Shakespeare's Caliban* (1991) and John Gross's *Shylock* (2001).¹⁸ Although Lois Potter's *Othello* (2002) also discusses Desdemona, her account gives little sense of continuity or canonicity between interpretations.¹⁹ *The Afterlife of Ophelia* (2012), edited by Kaara L. Peterson and Deanne Williams is a rare exception, but much of the material is necessarily post-textual, discussing Ophelia's appropriations in photography, painting, film and social media; Neil Taylor's chapter discusses eight performers – apart from one quotation from Ellen Terry, all are living actresses, and they are never asked, or speak about, being influenced by each other.²⁰ Carol Rutter's *Clamorous Voices* (1988) best illuminates patterns of influence between late-twentieth-century actresses, probably because the book consists of first-person testimonies by the actresses themselves.²¹ However, since the actresses are discussing performances given for a single theatre company, the Royal Shakespeare Company, over less than a decade (1978–1987), there is little sense of sustained, intergenerational tradition.

¹⁷ Quoted Jonathan Holmes, *Merely Players? Actors' Accounts of Playing Shakespeare* (London: Routledge, 2004), 95. Clement Scott, *Some Notable Hamlets* (London: Charing Cross & Co., 1900).

¹⁸ Alden T. Vaughan and Virginia Mason Vaughan, *Shakespeare's Caliban: A Cultural History* (Cambridge: 1991); John Gross, *Shylock* (New York: Touchstone, 2001).

¹⁹ Lois Potter, *Othello (Shakespeare in Performance)* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2002).

²⁰ Neil Taylor, 'An Actress Prepares: Seven Ophelias', Kaara L. Peterson and Deanne Williams (eds), *The Afterlife of Ophelia* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 43–58.

²¹ Carol Rutter, *Clamorous Voices: Shakespeare's Women Today* (London: Women's Press, 1988).

Players of Shakespeare (six volumes, 1985–2004) also focuses on the RSC, and, surprisingly, doesn't emphasise *Hamlet*, with contributions from only three Hamlets out of eighty-eight roles discussed.²² No particular male role dominates (Gloucester/Richard III appears four times; Hamlet three) but, notably, only twenty-nine out of eighty-eight roles considered are female. Significantly, Janet Suzman's recent book on women in theatre is entitled *Not Hamlet* (2012), reflecting the sense in which female performers still need to differentiate themselves from male performance traditions, rather than existing in a tradition of their own.²³

This thesis is the first study to illuminate the vital ways in which late-Victorian performances of Shakespeare and contemporary Victorian theatre culture conditioned each other. In putting these elements in conversation, I have been influenced by Jacky Bratton's constructive readings in 'intertheatricality' and notions of 'repertory', which illuminate not merely the logic of considering contemporary performances alongside each other, on the basis that 'all entertainments, including the dramas, that are performed within a single theatre tradition are more or less interdependent', but how productive such readings can be.²⁴ Re-interrogating selected, iconoclastic performances of Shakespeare's heroines, I examine how actresses' movements between Shakespearean and *fin-de-siècle* roles created collisions and unexpected consonances between apparently aesthetically disconnected and discrete areas of the repertory.

The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries constitute a particularly rich epoch in Shakespeare performance. It was the era of the most influential Shakespearean actor-managers, three of whom I consider in detail in this study: Henry Irving, F.R. Benson and Harley Granville-

²² Michael Pennington (vol 1); Philip Franks (vol 3); and Simon Russell Beale (vol 5). Philip Brockbank (ed., vol. 1); Robert Smallwood (ed., vols 2–6), Russell Jackson (ed., vols 2–3), *Players of Shakespeare* (6 vols, Cambridge: 1988–2007).

²³ Janet Suzman, *Not Hamlet* (London: Oberon, 2012).

²⁴ Jacky Bratton, *New Readings in Theatre History* (Cambridge: 2003), 37–38.

Barker.²⁵ Of these, Irving was the most responsible for a surge in Shakespeare's commercial success, from 'box office poison' to an important source of revenue.²⁶ This was also the period in which more of Shakespeare was actually staged: Tate, Cibber and Garrick's adaptations were finally abandoned, and novelties included Poel's Q1 *Hamlet* (St. George's Hall, 1881), rarely-performed *Cymbeline* (Lyceum, 1896), Benson's uncut, six-hour First Folio *Hamlet* (Stratford, 1899) and two productions of *All's Well That Ends Well* (see Chapter Five).²⁷ Apart from the Kendals' *As You Like It* (1869–1885, see Chapter One), all the case studies in this thesis occur after 1880. Davis and Emeljanow's *Reflecting The Audience* (2005) offers a crucial narrative of how the West End emerged through the period 1840–1880. Benefitting from their research, this study, although not primarily concerned with audience demographics, looks at Shakespeare reception within an established, rather than an evolving West End marketplace.²⁸ Although I focus primarily on theatrical activity in London, I also consider the Bensons' work at the *fin-de-siècle* Stratford Memorial Theatre (opened in 1879). The *fin de siècle* also catalysed modern open-air Shakespeare performance, to which actresses were essential (see Chapters One and Three).

The *fin de siècle* is also a rich period for explorations of Shakespeare's intersections with contemporary drama. Julie Holledge's work on the performance history of Ibsen's Nora (*A Doll's House*) has been a vital influence on this thesis's methodology. Holledge's work on how the character of Nora acquired meaning through successive theatrical incarnations helped inspire my

²⁵ The other, Herbert Beerbohm Tree, only established his management in 1897, producing four Shakespearean productions from 1897–1899. Maud Tree's Ophelia is discussed briefly in Chapter Three.

²⁶ Nina Auerbach, *Ellen Terry: player in her time* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1987), 208.

²⁷ Cibber's *Richard III* was revived once in April 1892, at the Olympic. Norwood, *A reference guide*, 349. Paul Werstine, 'Touring and the Construction of Shakespeare Textual Criticism', Laurie E. Maguire and Thomas L. Berger (eds), *Textual Formations and Reformations* (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 1998), 45–66; 59–60. See Chapter Four for discussion of *Cymbeline*. David Bevington, *Murder Most Foul* (Oxford: 2011), 142.

²⁸ Jim Davis and Victor Emeljanow, *Reflecting the Audience* (Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2001), 167.

focus on accreted stage business and cultural significance within performances of Shakespeare's heroines.²⁹ However, this thesis is primarily concerned with popular performance in the period, meaning that Henrik Ibsen's plays are not a major focus. Ibsen's importance to gender debates, to European drama, and to the move towards Modernism has been well-attested by scholarship, and he is undoubtedly central to the period's conceptual, intellectual and avant-garde histories. Elizabeth Robins's first production of *Hedda Gabler* (1891) has received much critical attention, but the 'few' who attended the initial production belonged to the *avant-garde* rather than the mainstream. Even the sympathetic *Pall Mall Gazette* acknowledged the production was only 'almost' popular.³⁰ Researching the reception of individual Shakespeare performances showed that they were generally not put in conversation with Ibsen, as opposed to Arthur Wing Pinero or Henry Arthur Jones. Notably, while Mrs Patrick Campbell's return to Shakespeare after appearing in problem plays caused critical unrest, her 1896 performances in *Little Eyolf* was not an element of this unease. Her roles as Paula Tanqueray and Agnes Ebbsmith were far more determinative: *Judy* called her 'Paula Juliet Ebbsmith Lady Hamilton' without mention of her Ibsen performances.³¹ Moreover, Campbell's autobiography presents Maeterlinck, not Ibsen, as an alternative to Shakespeare (see Chapter Three). While Robins found Ibsen empowering, Kerry Powell notes that *Hedda Gabler* gave her only 'personal and transitory' success.³² For Langtry, Shakespeare's Rosalind proved most liberating; similarly, Terry felt that Shakespeare offered actresses better opportunities than Ibsen's 'silly ladies' and said she would 'prefer not to act' in Ibsen's plays.³³

²⁹ Julie Holledge, 'Addressing the Global Phenomenon of *A Doll's House*', *Ibsen Studies* 8.1 (2008), 13–28.

³⁰ 'The Theatres', *PMG* (21 April 1891), 2.

³¹ 'The Stage Coach', *Judy* (25 August 1897), 400.

³² Kerry Powell, *Women and Victorian Theatre* (Cambridge: 2007), 163.

³³ Ellen Terry, 'Stray Memories', *New Review* (June 1891), 499–507, 503.

This thesis also provides the first narrative of women's acting traditions in Shakespeare, taking the *fin de siècle* as its focus. A methodological focus on actresses' performances illuminates networks of co-operation, mentoring and training between *fin-de-siècle* female performers. My thesis reveals how Shakespearean performance traditions moved between actresses via imitation of, and mentoring by, an older generation, alongside converse processes of innovation and adaptation. Simultaneously, actresses' performances of Shakespeare's heroines were inspirational for other public women including writers and activists, catalysing vital creative networks.

The acting profession exploded in the nineteenth century. In 1841, 1,463 men and women identified themselves as actors on the census for England and Wales.³⁴ By 1901, the number was 12,487.³⁵ Other professions showed greater influxes of women – particularly literary work and the civil service – but numbers of self-identified, census-registered actresses grew from 310 in 1841 to 6,443 in 1901, and from a female:male ratio of 26.89:100 to 106.6:100.³⁶ The specificities of data are problematic. Performers' self-identifications were 'extraordinarily erratic' and census-taking on a Sunday may have omitted many performers travelling between weekly engagements.³⁷ Nevertheless, the trend amongst those registered is consistent. Davis sees a profession which women 'entered in great numbers [...] equalling and then eclipsing their male colleagues, despite a concurrent influx of men'.³⁸

³⁴ Tracy C Davis, *Actresses As Working Women* (London: Routledge, 1991), 10.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 9–10.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 10.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 9.

Critics such as Kerry Powell, Katherine Newey, Tracy C. Davis and Ellen Donkin have all illuminated Victorian women's achievements as playwrights and theatre managers, while Jane Moody considered the actress-manager's achievements as an author collaborating with the named playwright.³⁹ Against these insights into women's managerial and authorial activities, prevailing historicist narratives of the actress in nineteenth-century theatre too readily characterise her primarily as either an oppressed subordinate in partnership with leading men, or a radical but marginal pioneer. As Nancy Henry identified in 2002, the 'new canon' of Victorian women theatre-makers tends to emphasise theatre-makers writing and working outside Shakespeare, relatively early in the nineteenth century, such as Joanna Baillie (1762–1851), Elizabeth Inchbald (1753–1821) and Jane Scott (1779–1839).⁴⁰ Accordingly, theatre historiography has failed to recognise the active contributions of women in the Shakespearean mainstream. As Cary M. Mazer notes, the work of theatre historians including Michael Booth, David Mayer and George Rowell all tends to demonstrate that 'theatre activity is most culturally and socially meaningful at its most popular'.⁴¹ Overlooking the active contributions of the most popular Shakespearean actresses distorts Shakespeare's cultural impact.

The key performers in this study are (by age) the British actresses Ellen Terry (1847–1928), Madge Kendal (1848–1935), Lillie Langtry (1853–1929), Janet Achurch (1884–1916), Constance Benson (1864–1946), Mrs. [Stella] Patrick Campbell (1865–1940), Violet Vanbrugh (1867–1942), Lillah McCarthy (1864–1946) and Esmé Beringer (1875–1972). These are the performers

³⁹ Kerry Powell, *Women and Victorian Theatre* (Cambridge: 1997); Katherine Newey, *Women's theatre writing in Victorian Britain* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005). Tracy C. Davis and Ellen Donkin (eds). *Women and Playwriting in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: 1999). Jane Moody. 'Illusions of authorship', *Women and Playwriting*, 99–124.

⁴⁰ Nancy Henry, 'Lifting the Curtain', *History Workshop Journal* 53 (Spring 2002), 264–268, 267.

⁴¹ Cary M. Mazer, 'New theatres for a new drama', *Cambridge Companion to Victorian and Edwardian Theatre* (Cambridge: 2004), 207–221, 210.

with the greatest cultural capital who played Shakespeare's heroines through the *fin de siècle* (used here to include the pre-war period) and across a variety of genres and sites of performance. They have been chosen to exemplify the connections and diversities between Shakespearean actresses in the period, and illuminate changing models of actress training. While Terry, Kendal and Beringer enjoyed what Davis calls 'physical and financial security within the family compact' as daughters of theatrical families, others including Campbell and Langtry entered the profession out of financial necessity, while Vanbrugh studied in Sarah Thorne's acting school.⁴² The actresses reveal the importance of mentors: Terry was trained by Ellen Kean, while Campbell's autobiography indicates her emotional identification with the French actress Sarah Bernhardt.⁴³ Kendal was Vanbrugh's greatest influence.⁴⁴ The actresses also formed a range of partnerships with leading men, highlighting the activities of different companies producing Shakespeare. Some remained in partnership for most of their professional lives, some only briefly; others achieved professional independence. Terry was Henry Irving's leading lady for over twenty years at the Lyceum theatre, in a partnership that included international tours. Shaw dubbed Johnston Forbes-Robertson and Stella Campbell their 'heir and heiress apparent'.⁴⁵ Several actresses were in partnership with their husbands. After Madge Robertson married W.H. Kendal in 1869, the two acted exclusively together in a variety of managements; similarly, Constance Benson acted opposite her husband F.R. Benson (1858–1939) in different incarnations of the Benson Company. Later, Lillah McCarthy was directed by her husband, Harley Granville-Barker, in his Savoy Shakespeares. Lillie Langtry, meanwhile, used her celebrity capital as Royal mistress and beauty icon to establish her own, independent management. These actresses'

⁴² Tracy C. Davis, *Actresses as working women* (London: Routledge, 2002), 7.

⁴³ Mrs Patrick Campbell, *My Life and Some Letters* (London: Hutchinson, 1922).

⁴⁴ Violet Vanbrugh, *Dare to be Wise* (London: Hodder & Staughton, 1925), 54.

⁴⁵ Quoted Margot Peters, *Mrs. Pat: the life of Mrs. Patrick Campbell* (London: Bodley Head, 1984).

relations to their leading men challenges narratives of female suppression. The only direct evidence of a Shakespearean actress's victimisation by her leading man – John Gielgud's (1904–2000) claim that his great uncle Fred Terry (1863–1933) 'made his wife's life hell at rehearsals' – is highly unusual.⁴⁶ As Chapter One discusses, Madge Kendal (acclaimed for both Shakespearean and modern roles) created and collaborated in the illusion that she was an obedient, subordinate wife, deferring to her husband as leading man and manager. In fact, she was the partnership's personal and creative driving force. Biographical narratives from George Bernard Shaw (1856–1950) to Nina Auerbach present Terry as Irving's subjugated and creatively oppressed subordinate. Chapters Two (on *Lady Macbeth*) and Four (on *Cymbeline*'s Imogen) reveal the extent to which the Irving-Terry relationship was symbiotic and collaborative, as the *Cymbeline* promptbooks make especially clear.

The actresses also received varying critical attention during their lifetimes and since. Madge Kendal, deemed Britain's best actress by commentators including Shaw, is the outstanding example of a star actress neglected by scholarship, and deserves to be listed alongside Ellen Kean, Céline Céleste and Priscilla Horton (Mrs German Reed) in Bratton's account of 'important women who [...] worked with their partners or husbands, and who were widely acknowledged to be the actual moving force of the concern [...] not only as star performers but also in the role we would call director or artistic director'.⁴⁷ Ellen Terry, Victorian Britain's best-loved actress, has generated sustained biographical interest, mostly notably in Auerbach's landmark feminist study (1987) and an edited collection by Katharine Cockin (2011). Terry is the only late-Victorian actress included in either the *Great Shakespeareans* (Continuum) series or *Lives of*

⁴⁶ John Gielgud, *An Actor and His Time* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1979), 18.

⁴⁷ Jacky Bratton, *The Making of the West End Stage*, 9.

Shakespearian Actors (Pickering & Chatto). If late-Victorian Shakespeareans receive less attention than the Kembles, Keans and Macready, the late-Victorian Shakespearean actress is even further from creative canonicity. Two other actresses in the group have been the subjects of full-length studies. Campbell is usually discussed in relation to *fin-de-siècle* society dramas, chiefly *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* (1893).⁴⁸ Her last biographer was Margot Peters in 1984.⁴⁹ Lillie Langtry, as mistress of both the future Edward VII and Prince Louis of Battenberg, remains the subject of popular, and some academic interest. Laura Beatty's *Lillie Langtry: Manners, Masks and Morals* (1999) is the major critical source for her life and work.⁵⁰

Beyond the actresses listed above, the French actress Sarah Bernhardt (1844–1923), American actresses Ada Rehan (1859–1916), Elizabeth Robins (1862–1952) and Eleanor Calhoun (1864–1957), and the Italian Eleonora Duse (1858–1924) are all significant, as are the earlier British actresses Sarah Siddons (1775–1831) and Helena Faucit (1817–1898). However, to focus on these actresses in equal detail would exceed the scope of this thesis.

The following chapters examine British actresses' performances across tragic, comic and romantic roles, exploring the reception of Shakespeare's heroines across a range of genres. The performances received very disparate receptions, from Langtry's widely-derided 1882 Rosalind to Terry's universally popular Imogen (1896). I also chart the changing reception of an actress's performances in a single role. The evolution of Madge Kendal's Rosalind (1869–1885) in the public consciousness demonstrates the problems of a woman's age and sexual 'knowingness' in performance. Many of the other performances divided critical opinion – above all Terry's 1888–9

⁴⁸ Bridget Elliott, 'New and Not So "New Women"' *Victorian Studies* 31.1 (Autumn 1987), 33–57; Joel H. Kaplan and Sheila Stowell, *Theatre and fashion* (Cambridge: 1994), 45–81.

⁴⁹ Margot Peters, *Mrs. Pat* (London: Bodley Head, 1984).

⁵⁰ Laura Beatty, *Lillie Langtry: Manners, Masks and Morals* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1999).

Lady Macbeth – in ways which reveal changing and conflicting cultural priorities. A key issue is theatrical modernity, with the tension between antecedent ideals of performance and a burgeoning desire for innovation that ran throughout the *fin de siècle*.

The actresses' performances arose within different companies – such as Irving's Lyceum and the Bensonians – and different forms of performance, notably open-air theatre, a form with which women were associated from the outset. Their performances were also associated with different movements: in Chapter Three, I show how Campbell's association with Pinero and Jones's society dramas, and (from 1896) with Ibsen, inflected the 1895–8 reception of her triumvirate of Lyceum Shakespearean heroines: Juliet, Ophelia and Lady Macbeth. In Chapter Five, I look at performances of Ophelia, Katherine (*The Taming of the Shrew*), Hermione and Paulina (*The Winter's Tale*) associated with the suffrage movement, another example of women's networks. Typically, criticism limits 'suffrage drama' to *fin-de-siècle* and Edwardian playwrights such as Cicely Hamilton and Elizabeth Robins. However, in addition to Shakespearean performers' prominence in the Actresses' Franchise League, Shakespeare's co-option as a 'suffrage' playwright is evident from Harley Granville-Barker's Savoy Theatre productions, starring Lillah McCarthy (1875–1960) and Esmé Beringer (1875–1972), and theatrical criticism by newspapers such as *The Vote*. Christina Walshe lauded *The Winter's Tale* as an 'exposition of the humiliation of women's position', while *Suffragette* newspaper described Beringer's Paulina as 'the eternal suffragette', and an ideal model of solidarity and support for abused women.⁵¹ Pro-suffragist

⁵¹Christina Walsh, *Daily Herald* review (5 October 1912), quoted John Stokes, "'A woman of genius': Rebecca West at the theatre.' Michael R. Booth and Joel H. Kaplan (eds), *The Edwardian Theatre* (Cambridge: 2008) 185–200, 191; untitled review in the *Suffragette* (18 October 1912), 5.

Shakespearean commentaries and imaginative works also focused on Ophelia, citing her as a woman whom suffrage would have helped.⁵²

The roles and productions analysed in this thesis have been chosen to illuminate the plays' particular performance histories, and their impact. In particular, Chapter Four on Irving's 1896 *Cymbeline* examines the production's role in the genesis of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) to offer new comparative readings of both texts. The thesis also explores actresses' negotiations of marriage, on and offstage, placing their lives, cultural profile, and roles in conversation. Notably, Chapter One's examinations of Madge Kendal's wedding-day performance as Rosalind, and wider fin-de-siècle trends in performing the Victorians' favourite heroine, Imogen, reveal the young bride as a particularly sexualised and under-considered figure within Victorian performance. My analysis of British actresses' performances as Imogen and Cleopatra also reveals their contribution to ideas of national character, queenship and empire as Queen Victoria's reign neared its end, including specific milestones such as the 1897 Diamond Jubilee.

These iconoclastic performances illuminate a range of intersections between *fin-de-siècle* Shakespeare and diverse movements and events in and beyond the theatre, including the Jack the Ripper killings, Aestheticism, Decadence and metropolitan shopping culture. If, as previous studies have shown, Shakespeare was everywhere in Victorian culture, my study explores the surprising ways in which Victorian culture (from *Dracula* to pornography, and from Ruskin to the suffragettes) inflected Shakespeare.

Source material

⁵² See 'Prologue', *Vote* (4 Nov 1911), 19.

The thesis draws on substantial unpublished archival material. Chapter One includes significant archival and manuscript information on Madge Kendal, including previously unseen letters. Kendal's granddaughter and great-granddaughter, now in Canada, whom I traced through genealogical research, made these available to me. I also quote from Kendal's papers and scrapbook in the North East Lincolnshire Archives. Chapters Two and Four draw heavily on Ellen Terry's promptbooks for *Macbeth* (1888–9) and *Cymbeline* (1896), both now at the Ellen Terry Museum in Smallhythe Place, Kent. Other unpublished material relating to Terry (used throughout the thesis) includes transcripts of two letters from Irving to Terry, recently given to the V&A by an anonymous descendant, archival material relating to the Lyceum theatre in the Garrick Club Library (especially the *Percy Fitzgerald* scrapbooks), and the British Library's manuscript and typescript drafts of her lectures and correspondence. Chapter Five draws heavily on resources from the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust library, including their compilations of reviews, the *Shakespeare Centre Theatre Record*. The SBT's Bram Stoker Collection and the Bodleian's John Johnson Collection have been valuable throughout this project.

Benson, Campbell, Kendal, Langtry and Terry all published memoirs. These are valuable sources not only for illuminating their attitudes to their careers, but as evidence of how the women continued to manipulate their public personae, often long after retirement. All were writing after the *fin de siècle*: Terry in the 1900s; Langtry, Campbell and Benson in the 1920s; Kendal in the 1930s. However, their writing is saturated with the lexis, morality and ideas of the period in which they were most active.

Additionally, I have made extensive use of the many new databases of periodicals, especially *19th Century British Library Newspapers*, *19th Century UK Periodicals*, *British Periodicals 1681–*

1939 and *The Times Digital Archive (1785–2006)*, retrieving reviews from the widest possible range of publications. Whereas pre-digital scholarship typically relied on a few metropolitan accounts of performance or reviews by anthologised critics, reintroducing provincial and special-interest coverage of productions reveals a more detailed and diverse range of responses to a performance. This sometimes radically reorients our impression of that production's reception. This is particularly true of the case studies of Langtry's 1882 *Rosalind* (Chapter One), Terry's 1888–9 *Lady Macbeth* (Chapter Two) and Olive Kennett's 1895 *Helena* in *All's Well That Ends Well* (Chapter Five). As Emma Smith notes, reviews reveal 'less what a production was actually *like* and more what meanings were available to a particular professional audience member [...] writing for a particular context'.⁵³

With this in mind, the emphasis in using reviews is on reconstructing reception (including the politics of reception) rather than performance. Drawing on the widest possible range of reviews and archival material, as well as other aspects of performance, this thesis presents the infinite variety of Shakespeare's women in the *fin de siècle*.

⁵³ Emma Smith, "'Freezing the Snowman': (How) Can We Do Performance Criticism?" Laurie Maguire (ed.). *How to Do Things with Shakespeare* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 285.

Chapter One:

The Lily, the Matron, and Rosalind

A notorious and beautiful woman made her way to the table. With an insolent look, she said: ‘I understand that Mrs Kendal is selling herself to-day.’

Quick as a flash Mrs Kendal replied that that was not her profession.

– Hubert Swears, *When All’s Said And Done* (1937).

Victorian Rosalinds

Amongst Shakespeare’s comedies, *As You Like It*’s performance history is uniquely matrilineal, ‘saved to the stage’ by a succession of great actresses who established the play’s performance traditions.¹ In the nineteenth century, although William Macready, Samuel Phelps (1847), Charles Kean (1851) and Hermann Vezin (1875) achieved varying degrees of success as Jacques, only one writer, H.N. Hudson, was uncertain ‘whether Jaques or Rosalind be the greater attraction’.² Others agreed that Rosalind both exemplified Shakespeare’s notions of ‘womenkind’s innate purity and devotion’, and offered unique professional attractions to the actress.³ In 1875, *PMG* identified Rosalind as generically ‘neutral ground, independent of professional classification, and open only to the most able and accomplished’ performers: a role without the traditional generic parameters for casting, but which identified the performer as a member of a professional elite.⁴ Successful Rosalinds had to be equally able to convey ‘the romance, the sentiment, the tenderness’ of Rosalind, and her ‘wit’ and ‘archness’: ideal for

¹ George C.D. Odell, *Shakespeare – from Betterton to Irving*, (London: Constable, 1921), 339.

² H.N. Hudson, *Shakespeare* (London: Ginn & Company, 1872), 240.

³ Mary Cowden Clarke, ‘Shakespeare as the Girl’s Friend’, *Shakespeariana* (Philadelphia: Scott, August 1887), 355–69, 357.

⁴ Anon., ‘As You Like It’, *PMG* (5 February 1875), 11–12, 12. All subsequent newspaper articles are unsigned, unless otherwise stated.

‘comedy actresses who are not content merely to provoke laughter’.⁵ More pragmatically, Rosalind’s stage history combined successful antecedents with a contemporary vacancy in canonical performances: Rosalind had yet to be idealised by Ellen Terry. As *Musical World* argued in 1890, Langtry had the opportunity to become her generation’s best Rosalind because ‘there sits Lady Macbeth at the Lyceum and will not play it’.⁶

By 1875, being ‘content merely to provoke laughter’ as Rosalind, was – as *PMG*’s ‘merely’ suggests – a devalued theatrical strategy. This was due to Rosalind’s specific didacticism as a Shakespearean model of ‘artlessness, guilelessness, modesty’ for Victorian girls, and to cultural anxieties regarding the relationship between femininity, comedy and class. Rosalind’s comedy, argued Helen Faucit, was inaccessible to ‘mere comedian[s]’, requiring an ‘intellect disciplined by fine culture [...] and a certain native distinction.’⁷ Faucit’s ‘gentlewomanly’ 1840s Rosalind ‘vanquished the coquettish Rosalinds of Louisa Nisbett and her ilk’: this move away from hectoring, satirical heroines inherited from eighteenth-century actresses (whose badinage had popularised the role), exemplifies Victorian treatment of Shakespeare’s independent or ‘unruly’ comic women.⁸ Heroines performed as ‘no-holds-barred shrews’ in the eighteenth century, notably Katherine and Beatrice, were increasingly softened and feminised through emerging Victorian psychological notions of ‘latency’.⁹ These theorised Katherine and Beatrice’s innate, unconscious attraction to Petruchio and Benedick; Faucit wrote that before *Much Ado* begins,

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ ‘As You Like It,’ *Musical World* (8 March 1890), 190. Terry opened as Lady Macbeth on 29 December 1888.

⁷ Richard Foulkes, ‘Touchstone for the Time’, Marshall and Poole (eds), *Victorian Shakespeare* (London: Palgrave, 2004). 140–160, 155; Helen Faucit, *On Some of Shakespeare’s Female Characters* (London: Blackwood, 1885), 239.

⁸ Juliet Dusinberre (ed.), *As You Like It* (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2004), 13.

⁹ Claire McEachern, (ed.), *Much Ado About Nothing* (London: Methuen, 2006), 36.

Beatrice's attraction to Benedict requires 'only a spark to kindle it into flame'.¹⁰ As late as 1898, William Winter wrote that the ideal stage Katherine always revealed 'the loving and lovable woman, latent beneath the shrew'.¹¹ The nineteenth-century emphasis on latency was accompanied by the marginalisation of comedy, in favour of the characters' love-relationship, especially in *Much Ado About Nothing*: hence the 1840 assertion that Beatrice and Benedick were 'created for better things than jests'.¹²

Excluding Faucit, criticism has focussed most heavily on a Victorian actress who, ironically, never played Rosalind: Terry herself.¹³ While Terry regretted the omission, noting in her copy of Hiatt's biography that Rosalind was 'the part I shall never have the happiness of acting', critical fascination with this unacted Rosalind rather reflects the drive to situate Terry in a narrative of oppression and deprivation: emphasising actresses' apparent limitations over their active contributions.¹⁴ Conversely, this chapter considers two actresses all but omitted from Marshall's 2004 *Shakespeare In Production* volume: Madge Kendal (1848–1935) and Lillie Langtry (1853–1929).

The twenty-second child of the famous Robertson acting family, Kendal first played Rosalind on 7 August 1869, at an evening performance at Manchester's Theatre Royal. A few hours earlier, she had begun her other enduring role, as wife to her Orlando, William Grimston (better-known as W.H. Kendal).¹⁵ The Kendals' *As You Like It* toured for a year, culminating in Madge

¹⁰ Faucit, 293.

¹¹ William Winter, *Shakespeare's England* (London: Macmillan, 1898), 54.

¹² Untitled article, *John Bull* (12 April 1840), 26.

¹³ See Auerbach, *Ellen Terry*.

¹⁴ MS. annotation to Terry's copy of Charles Hiatt, *Ellen Terry* (London: George Bell & Sons, 1898), 261.

¹⁵ 'Marriage of Orlando and Rosalind', *Morning Post* [hereafter *MP*] (9 August 1869), 5.

Kendal's London debut as Rosalind, on 3rd September 1870, at the Haymarket. Their *As You Like It* remained immensely successful throughout the 1870s, opening the Haymarket's 1871 season, and subsequent revivals included Gaiety Matinees (January – March 1875), appearances at the Imperial, and a series of readings as Rosalind for charitable benefits (1878–9). A final major British production opened at the St. James's Theatre on 24 January 1885. Subsequently, their production was primarily seen in the provinces, as solo recitals for Madge, and (from 1889) on the Kendals' phenomenally successful American tours. Even out of repertory, Madge Kendal's association with Rosalind persisted: George Moore's 1887 *Confessions of a Young Man*, depicts her 'nurs[ing] children all day and striv[ing] to play Rosalind at night'.¹⁶ Rosalind became Kendal's legacy: when in 1933, the BBC commissioned a series of theatrical recordings, *The Stars in their Courses*, Kendal reprised her Rosalind, aged eighty-five.¹⁷

Theatre scholarship takes relatively little interest in Lillie Langtry, the royal mistress, beauty icon, actress and actress-manager. Her last biography, Beatty's *Lillie Langtry: Manners, Masks and Morals* (1999), skims over most of her theatre career. The last entry for Langtry in the MLA database was in 2007. Born Emilie le Breton, Langtry arrived in London with her husband in the mid-1870s and immediately became a beauty icon. By 1877, she was the Prince of Wales's mistress, and subsequently that of his cousin, Prince Louis of Battenberg. Crowds and near-hysteria greeted her early public appearances. In an 1891 interview and in her 1925 autobiography, Langtry described Rosalind as her 'favourite role', and 'delicious'.¹⁸ Having become an actress out of financial necessity, Langtry made her London debut as Rosalind at the

¹⁶ George Moore, 'Confessions of a Young Man', *Time* (November 1887), 545.

¹⁷ *Times* (16 March 1933), 16.

¹⁸ 'Mrs. Langtry Up North', *Era* (31 October 1891), 12; Lillie Langtry, *The Days I Knew* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1925), 181.

Imperial on 23 September 1882, after a provincial tour. Her New York debut followed in November 1882, followed by tours throughout the 1880s. Langtry's last American tour finished in February 1889, and by September 1889, she was once again playing Rosalind in Brighton. From frequently eviscerating reviews in 1882, Langtry reached her zenith as Rosalind in a production that opened at the St. James's, London on 24 February 1890. This was the same theatre, with the same designer (Lewis Wingfield) as Kendal's last major British run in the part, five years before. Coincidentally, both Kendal and Langtry performed Rosalind in America during the other's St James's run.

Personalities and possibilities

Writing on theatrical performance around 1900, John Stokes offers criteria for definition of the emerging female theatrical 'star'. The star, in addition to being 'protean, multiple, yet [...] unmistakably themselves and no one else' achieved a 'celebrity' based not only on being 'famous, charismatic, mythic' but on bringing 'distinct personal possibilities' to their theatrical practice, and 'embodying their own complex times'.¹⁹ Stokes identifies a 'select number': Sarah Bernhardt (1844–1923), Eleonora Duse (1858–1924), and Rachel Félix (1821–1858), overlooking the contributions and celebrity of English actresses who also fulfilled his criteria for stardom: including Terry, Kendal and Langtry.²⁰ To see the star as innately 'foreign' reinforces the most problematic myth of late-Victorian female performance: that success and agency were exceptional and occasional. Stokes's examples, Bernhardt, Duse and Félix, were all primarily

¹⁹ John Stokes, 'Varieties of Performance at the Fin de Siecle,' in Gail Marshall (ed.), *Cambridge Companion to the Fin de Siècle* (Cambridge: 1997), 207–222, 210.

²⁰ Ibid.

tragediennes, especially within their Shakespearean repertoires, further sidelining actresses' achievements in comedy.

The importance of repertory has changed according to traditions of actor preparation. Twentieth- and twenty-first century understanding of actor preparation emphasises creating a single role as a process of 'discovery' shared between actor and director. In sharp contrast, Tiffany Stern has demonstrated how seventeenth- and eighteenth-century conjunctions between performer popularity and rapidly-changing repertoires saw performers develop 'across-play acting personalities' through roles and productions that 'held hands with one another'.²¹ Audiences perennially seek or perceive continuities between actors' roles: in 1986, Antony Sher's disparate roles of Richard III, the artist Stanley Spencer, and a drag queen in *Torch Song Trilogy* were yoked together as joint reasons for his Laurence Olivier Award, rewarded as if the three were a single role.²² In the 1700s, the short-run system would have reinforced audiences' impressions of 'across-play' similarities, by placing actors' roles so closely in conversation. In the nineteenth century, a broadening theatrical repertoire, proliferating theatre companies, and the development of more complex make-up and costuming effects might have been expected to slow this process. The reverse was true, especially for leading actresses who, as Kendal observed, were discouraged from 'changing their appearances', instead appearing in their 'own persons' while male actors had recourse to effects.²³ Simultaneously, a proliferating popular press offered more extensive and intimate coverage of actresses' home lives, forcibly locating the actress in her 'own complex

²¹ Tiffany Stern, *Rehearsal from Shakespeare to Sheridan* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2000), 15.

²² Carole Zucker, *In the Company of Actors* (London: Routledge, 1999), 169.

²³ Madge Kendal, *Dame Madge Kendal by Herself* [hereafter *DMK*], (London: John Murray, 1933), 94.

times' and demanding she be 'famous, charismatic, mythic' in both her profession and offstage persona, to succeed in the theatrical marketplace.²⁴

Kendal's achievement

Kendal is the outstanding example of a star Victorian actress neglected by scholarship. Ellen Terry was Henry Irving's leading lady for over two decades, but Madge Kendal was unique in being equated with him in terms of technical ability. In 1900, Frederick Wedmore wrote of the 'searching investigation' and 'close' critical analysis, which 'any performance of Mr Irving or Mrs Kendal' deserved.²⁵ From the 1870s, she was ranked 'easily the first of the English-speaking actresses', pre-eminent in 'genius and accomplishment', and 'without her superior, even if she has her equal'.²⁶ Shaw called her 'incomparably the cleverest, most highly skilled, most thoroughly trained, and most successful actress' of her generation.²⁷ As an author, her publications exceeded straightforward autobiography: recognised as a 'litterateur', in 1884 Kendal took the unparalleled step of reading a paper before the 1884 Congress of Social Science, and in 1890 published her *Dramatic Opinions*. The 1903 *Women's Library* volume on *Education and Professions* includes a chapter by Kendal on 'Theatrical Life' and her memoir, *Dame Madge Kendal By Herself* appeared in 1933.²⁸ She was regularly interviewed, and her unpublished speeches, including those for the 1899 International Women's Congress, were widely reported and transcribed by the press. One adoring critic claimed of the Kendals that 'By their personal

²⁴ 'Varieties of Performance', 210.

²⁵ Frederick Wedmore, 'Notes on Players and Old Plays', *Nineteenth Century* (August 1900), 249.

²⁶ William Archer, 'A Well-Graced Actress,' *National Review* (August 1886), 770; unattributed cutting entitled 'Dramatic Criticism', (14 June 1902), Madge Kendal Scrapbook, North East Lincolnshire Archives no. 1256 / Kendal Papers / 1 (hereafter *Scrapbook*), 218.

²⁷ Quoted A.M. Gibbs, *A Bernard Shaw Chronology* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), 364.

²⁸ Madge Kendal, 'Some Pros and Cons of Theatrical Life', in Ethel M.M. McKenna (ed.) *Education and Professions* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1903), 223–59.

example, as by their perfect acting, they have done more to elevate the stage and the profession than any other two': their social elevation saw them become the first actors to perform before the widowed Queen Victoria, by Royal invitation to Osborne.²⁹ They also had numerous aristocratic friends. In 1926, the widowed Madge Kendal was named DBE, and in 1927, GBE.³⁰ To date, she and Ellen Terry are the only two actresses thus honoured.

Kendal's dual repertory, in modern comedy and Shakespeare, also typifies influential artists neglected by scholarship. Although intersection between modern comedy and Shakespeare created Victorian unease – with the 'sneer of "modern comedy" thrown at any attempt to be natural' – the overlap remains under-studied.³¹ As a biographer remarked of Fanny Stirling, as whose 'successor' Kendal was recognised, her 'singular versatility' greatly complicated 'writing her theatrical biography'.³² The less classifiable actress is less likely to be memorialised. Unlike her better-remembered colleagues, such as Ellen Terry, Constance Benson or Julia Neilson, Kendal was *not* the consistently subordinate partner of a more famous actor-manager, despite having played opposite both Samuel Phelps and Ira Aldridge, early in her career.³³ Thus, unlike Terry or Benson, she is omitted from the traditional genealogies of male classical performance: W.H. Kendal was primarily 'the heavy swell' and 'darling of English comedy', rather than a Shakespearean hero.³⁴ In fact, Madge Kendal was the dominant creative partner: the 'inspiration' behind productions, and, for Violet Vanbrugh, both a 'fine producer' and 'absolutely the finest

²⁹ 'Her Majesty's Opera House. Mr. and Mrs. Kendal', (Undated cutting), *Scrapbook*, 180; 'A Stage Play at Osborne', (Undated cutting), *Scrapbook*, 181.

³⁰ Richard Foulkes, 'Kendal, Dame Madge (1848–1935)', *DNB* [<http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/34274>, accessed 19 Nov 2012].

³¹ 'Nestor', 'Slashes and Puffs', *Fun* (18 February 1885), 66.

³² Percy Allen, *Mrs Stirling* (London: Unwin, 1922), 226; 65.

³³ T. Edgar Pemberton, *The Kendals* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1900), 44; 42.

³⁴ Unattributed, undated cutting, *Scrapbook*, 222.

stage manager that I have ever known'.³⁵ As a successful creative professional, writer, chair of the International Women's Congress, and a founder member of the Actresses' Franchise League, Kendal appears a logical candidate for feminist attention: to date, she has not been so. Voluble but respectable, successful, and unconnected to Ibsen or the New Woman, Kendal eludes the larger historicist narratives of Victorian performance, and thus performance scholarship's typical accommodations for women as either transgressive pioneers, or oppressed candidates for feminist rehabilitation.

'Freed from accustomed control'

Both 'famous, charismatic, mythic', Kendal and Langtry fulfil Stokes's criteria for 'star' status, 'embodying their own complex times', and distinctively inflecting Rosalind with their mutable 'personal possibilities'.³⁶ Langtry's autobiography rejoices in the extensive 'private rehearsal' or 'study' Shakespeare required, moving from the dutiful acknowledgment that her 'father's example' had made her 'a serious student of the great poet' to the revelation that 'Besides, to be my own manager, my own mistress, and freed from accustomed control, changed my point of view entirely'.³⁷ The syntactical dislocation of 'Besides', and the inference that Langtry's 'point of view' regarding Shakespeare needed to be 'changed [...] entirely' indicates the potential for hermeneutic freedom and discovery afforded to the actress, disrupting the received narratives of patriarchal education.³⁸ While critics have studied Langtry's personal life, her Shakespearean stage practice has received far less attention. In fact, Langtry's practice in the 1880s speaks to emerging ideas in Shakespeare studies. Holbrook argues that A.C. Bradley in his *Shakespearean*

³⁵ Violet Vanbrugh, *Dare To Be Wise* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1925), 42.

³⁶ 'Varieties of Performance', 210.

³⁷ *Days*, 181.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

Tragedy (1904) finds ‘in Shakespeare’s tragedies a way of thinking and feeling that helps him escape the constricting morality of his day [...] Shakespeare himself, or the plays and poems [...] are used in a self-liberating project.’³⁹ Achieving success as Rosalind was also a financially ‘self-liberating project’ for Langtry, since acting brought her out of bankruptcy.

By the *fin de siècle*, the ‘self-liberating’ experience of the Shakespearean ‘leading lady’ was a recognised, disruptive phenomenon. The *Era* condemned the ‘leading lady’ for ‘curtain lecturing’, a practice by which performers capitalised on the theatrical moment to deliver onstage, post-show polemics.⁴⁰ ‘Ladies’, the *Era* laments, were ‘the greatest offenders’: Kendal, having ‘lent the weight of her example’ to colleagues, was blamed for Helena Modjeska’s Polish nationalist speech in Dublin (June 1887).⁴¹ The article’s conclusion emphasises its Shakespearean context: an actress should only appear ‘upon a balcony’ when her address was ‘to Romeo, and let its words be those of Shakespeare’s Juliet’.⁴² More galling than actresses’ ‘inflammatory remarks’ was that ‘the position and salary of the ‘leading lady’ generally placed her beyond ‘any real influence of [...] punishment’: a freedom which clearly caused great social unease when it allowed actresses to comment on political issues.⁴³ Moreover, the *Era*’s acknowledgment of the existence of a ‘leading lady’ whose ‘position and salary’ gave her autonomy belies the historical narrative of the Victorian actress’s oppression.⁴⁴ That Kendal is listed alongside Helena Modjeska (1840–1909), who (although married) acted without her husband, offers a paradox: Kendal was beyond control of a dominant leading man, but from 1878 (when only thirty)

³⁹ Peter Holbrook, *Shakespeare’s Individualism* (Cambridge: 2010), 131.

⁴⁰ ‘Patriotism, Politics, and the Profession’, *Era* (6 June 1885), 13.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

assiduously cultivated a public profile as an exemplary, submissive Victorian wife to her leading man – a wife also ‘very, very proud’ to be called ‘Matron of the Drama’.⁴⁵ This self-construction as perfect Victorian wife, and later, the ‘Mater Afflicta’ devoted to ungrateful children, was key to Kendal’s ‘creation of a saleable self’ in three areas.⁴⁶ Firstly, she demarcated and defended her professional space and ‘brand’ by promoting and policing different performer identities. Kendal constantly criticised ‘immoral’ performers and promoted actors within theatrical families as artistically and morally superior – which was, of course, exactly the type of theatre she and her husband offered. Secondly, using the persona of deferential Victorian wife let Kendal mask her less conventionally ‘ladylike’ activities as fierce theatrical producer, by attributing managerial decisions and artistic pre-eminence to her husband. Finally, constructing her wifely and ‘Matronly’ identity in the 1870s let Kendal adopt a more lucrative and sustainable professional identity, when her previous (youthful and more sensual) stage persona was no longer sustainable. This rebranding created different kinds of opportunities, including the 1887 visit to Osborne.

‘I was always his leading lady’

Kendal’s 1933 autobiography, like Langtry’s, retrospectively manipulates her professional and personal image for posterity. Kendal reprints in full Shaw’s letter of condolence (received after her widowhood in 1917), until Shaw’s reference to W.H. Kendal as Madge’s ‘leading man’. Here, Madge interrupts Shaw’s text with her own, interpolating the dubious correction that William ‘was never my leading man [...] I was always his leading lady’.⁴⁷ On the page, the formal qualities of Shaw’s letter (justified, indented, and in smaller type than the body text)

⁴⁵ *Dramatic Opinions*, 17.

⁴⁶ *Manners*, 148.

⁴⁷ *DMK*, 70.

evoke the other letters with which Kendal structures her text. The last before Shaw's is from Boucicault to W.H. Kendal, praising Madge Kendal's Galatea: 'Mary Anderson [and] Mrs. Langtry have gone through it, but I have seen Madge [...] her performance is a revelation.'⁴⁸ In publishing a letter addressed to her husband, and not to her, Kendal ostensibly modestly distances herself from the compliment paid her and – by reprinting the salutation to W.H. Kendal – places herself outside the act of correspondence and apparently magnifies her husband's importance: Boucicault is writing to him, and commenting on her performance as if it were (tacitly) to her husband's credit. However, the two letters – one to her husband and one about him, function primarily as paeans to herself.

Kendal evinced the same obtrusive, near-farcical foregrounding of her husband far earlier in her career. The Kendals' authorised biographer, Pemberton, records in the introduction to his 1900 joint biography that Madge bade him 'write my husband's life if you like [...] *His* career should be written [...] only ignore *me* as much you possibly can! *I prefer it*'.⁴⁹ While William would claim in interviews that neither spouse enjoyed 'the limelight' (performing a respectable horror of publicity), his speech-giving, book-publishing, interview-giving wife must have known that no adequate biographer could ever have 'ignored' her.⁵⁰ Her deeply unconvincing protest, ascribed by Pemberton to 'pure diffidence', in fact constitutes a sustained, effective framing of a conservative Victorian marriage.⁵¹ Discussing her working relationship with her husband, Kendal depicts the 'good-bye' she 'always used to say' when entering the theatre for rehearsals: 'Good-bye, Willie, I'm going to my work. I have a horrid manager, but a darling husband whom I shall

⁴⁸ DMK, 69.

⁴⁹ *The Kendals*, vi.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

meet when my work is over'.⁵² Kendal's highly feminised, uxorial lexis casts William as the 'horrid manager' and herself, implicitly as victim, simultaneously reinscribing herself as the affectionate, accepting wife with allegiance to both the 'horrid' and 'darling' aspects of her husband's behaviour. The vignette, with its artificial and unnecessary reiteration of names and circumstance (William would, of course, have known his wife was 'going to [her] work'), emerges as Kendal's affidavit to her husband's dominance and her devotion, on the page and in real life.

In fact, the only suggestion that William ever exercised control over his wife came from Madge herself. Playwright Herbert Swears's 1937 memoir, the first after the Kendals' deaths, firmly establishes Madge as the 'inspiration' for 'practically all' the Kendals' productions, who was 'always deferred to' regardless of whose 'name would appear on the bill as producer'.⁵³ Typically 'as severe with Kendal' as with the 'most insignificant actor', Swears describes Madge as demanding William abandon some business because 'it drops the scene'.⁵⁴ Hints of the actual power balance came with the 1888 cessation of the Hare-Kendal managerial partnership. William's last-night speech stated that 'for our success we are principally indebted to Mrs. Kendal [...] without her, we could, indeed, have done but little'.⁵⁵ It is notable that in the only anecdote of rehearsal-room rebellion published during Kendal's lifetime, William is emphatically *not* the object of her rage (and, indeed, the anecdote was published after his death). Instead, the object is W.S. Gilbert. In a letter, Madge describes how, while rehearsing *The Wicked World*

⁵² *DMK*, 69.

⁵³ Herbert Swears, *When All's Said and Done* (London: G. Bles, 1937), 143–4.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 149.

⁵⁵ 'Messrs. Kendal and Hare' (1 September 1888) *Scrapbook*, 182.

(1873), she ‘threw down [her] part’ because Gilbert tried to ‘force’ her to alter her performance. Subsequently, Gilbert ‘had to give way’.⁵⁶ The anecdote is anomalous but revealing.

Violet Vanbrugh’s detailed account of Madge Kendal’s professional practice describes watching her ‘taking a rehearsal’, i.e. actually directing preparation for a play; she also describes Kendal as ‘producing’ the Kendals’ successes.⁵⁷ Vanbrugh recalls Kendal rehearsing a range of performers in roles from ‘farm-labourer[s]’ to elderly French aristocrats, determining performance across a range of theatrical genres.⁵⁸ Ultimately, Vanbrugh stresses Kendal’s theatrical influence, admitting ‘I constantly find myself testing a method [...] or an involved bit of characterisation by trying to imagine how Mrs. Kendal would have tackled it’.⁵⁹ Explicitly, Kendal is ‘quite the finest stage manager of them all’, excelling named rivals including ‘Sir John Hare, Sir Squire Bancroft [...] Sir Henry Irving, Sir George Alexander, Sir Herbert Tree, Arthur Bouchier, Dion Boucicault, Augustin Daly, Sir Arthur Pinero, Sir Charles Wyndham, Sir Charles Hawtrey, H.V. Esmond’ and Vanbrugh’s own husband, Seymour Hicks.⁶⁰ Crucially, Vanbrugh never describes W.H. Kendal as stage-managing or producing.

Memory and curation

Vanbrugh’s Kendal is nurturing and maternal, offering her ‘kindest and practical help’ after her mother’s death, and providing ‘constant encouragement and constructive building-up of one’s self-confidence’ when developing the younger actress’s technique.⁶¹ This corresponds with

⁵⁶ Sidney Dark and Rowland Grey, *W.S. Gilbert* (London: Ayers, 1923), 156.

⁵⁷ Vanbrugh, *Dare To Be Wise*, 50–51.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 54.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 42; 51.

Kendal's public projection of maternal devotion to her biological children. Kendal idealised pregnancy, claiming to a journalist that she saw 'the most beautiful expression the human eye ever knows in those of expectant mothers', allowed her children to appear in her 'at-home' interviews, and permitted the press to document their visits to their children's expensive boarding schools (Kendal retained one such article for her personal scrapbook).⁶² Satirists highlighted this aspect of Kendal's persona, producing cartoons in which she and her husband 'frolic[ked] with the children', and Kendal herself noted that she was sometimes criticised as an actress who could 'do nothing without a baby'.⁶³ In her autobiography, Kendal presents her maternal experience as one of rejection, with her selfish children ignoring their 'Mater Afflicta', a term she pre-planned as her epitaph.⁶⁴ Her personal scrapbook stresses self-pity, with an image of herself and her second daughter captioned 'Ethel and her poor mother' in Kendal's hand; the title of her autobiography reflects her sense of rejection.⁶⁵

However, what makes Vanbrugh's affirmation of this nurturing, maternal persona so fascinating is that it inverts how Kendal's family and other colleagues perceived her. The Kendals became estranged from all their surviving children, notably their son Hugh Dorrington on grounds of his poor 'economy', and youngest child Dorothy for marrying Jewish theatre manager Bertie Meyer in 1903.⁶⁶ Kendal's inexplicable rant in *DMK*, describing the children of 'mixed marriages' as 'very mean [...] changing their minds; often clever and often unscrupulous' is illuminated by the knowledge that she rejected all her grandchildren, cutting one granddaughter dead when she

⁶² 'Mrs. Kendal', (undated cutting), *Scrapbook*, 343; Harry How, 'Illustrated Interviews,' *Strand Magazine* (January 1893), 226–242; untitled cutting from the *Era* (27 September 1890), *Scrapbook*, 213.

⁶³ Undated cartoon, *Scrapbook*, 220; *Dramatic Opinions*, 178.

⁶⁴ *DMK*, 83.

⁶⁵ *Scrapbook*, 359.

⁶⁶ MS annotation to *Scrapbook*, 220; private correspondence with Ethel Robinson and Elizabeth Nimmo (25 March 2011).

introduced herself at a school prizegiving.⁶⁷ Similarly, despite exploiting her filial and marital identities within the Robertson/Kendal ‘brand’, Madge refused to let any of her children capitalise on the Kendal fame by performing under that surname, rather than Grimston (particularly ironic given that Madge had benefitted hugely from the Robertson surname, and that William Grimston had chosen the name Kendal in imitation of the Kembles).⁶⁸ Moreover, despite William’s whole-hearted collaboration in Dorothy’s rejection – as she reminded him in 1913, he had predicted ‘that being your daughter – I should rue the day I married a Jew’, and that ‘You and Mother have always regarded all of us children as ungrateful and doubtless unloving’ – Dorothy retained happy memories of her father.⁶⁹ In contrast, she only expressed warmth towards Madge when desperate for money, after deafness ended her career.⁷⁰ The Kendals’ marriage was perhaps more strained than their public personae suggested. Although Dorothy wrote in 1913 that her father was ‘one of the fortunate ones to marry where you really loved and were loved’, she told her children that their grandmother had bullied William, Dorothy and her siblings.⁷¹ Swears reports an anecdote in which the young Madge insisted she wanted a divorce after William came to bed drunk, and Lord Carrington recalled how, at Marlborough House, the presumably intoxicated Kendal, ‘a good-looking bounder’ sang ‘a very vulgar song which was not favourably received in high quarters’.⁷²

I have already discussed how Madge Kendal’s complex, and apparently contradictory,

⁶⁷ *DMK*, 25; conversation with Ethel Robinson and Elizabeth Nimmo (6 October 2011).

⁶⁸ Conversation with Ethel Robinson and Elizabeth Nimmo (6 October 2011); Pemberton, *The Kendals*, 3.

⁶⁹ Letter from Dorothy Grimston to W.H. Kendal, (7 April 1913), privately held; conversation Robinson and Nimmo (6 October 2011).

⁷⁰ Letters from Dorothy Grimston to Madge Kendal, (15 February and 17 November, year unknown), privately held. Similarly the only surviving warm letter from Ethel to Madge concerns money (1 August, year unknown), privately held.

⁷¹ Dorothy Grimston to W.H. Kendal, (7 April 1913); conversation with Robinson and Nimmo, 6 October 2011.

⁷² Swears, 45; Philip Magnus, *King Edward the Seventh* (London: John Murray, 1964), 173.

allegiances (to professional advance, and to her persona as submissive wife; to the AFL, and to the Society for Dramatic Reform), disrupted scholarly paradigms for the female performer, and thus facilitated her exclusion from theatre historiography. Arguably, these faultlines between the Kendals' public and private personae may also have contributed to Madge's absence from scholarship. Gary Taylor notes that 'a crucial determinant of artistic reputation is the availability of *someone* who, after the artist's death, has a stake in preserving his or her memory'.⁷³ Notably, the Victorian actors most visible in contemporary scholarship typically had a child, grandchild or protégé who memorialised them, either through (personal or professional) likeness or biographical curation. In Irving's case (with whom Kendal was equated technically), his godson Edward Gordon Craig wrote a hagiographic 1930 biography, while his grandson Laurence Irving produced *Henry Irving, the Actor and his World* (1988). Irving's sons, Laurence and Henry B. Irving, when reviewed as performers and dramatists were also discussed in relation to their father (H.B. Irving was caricatured as his father's miniature double), even when not deliberately acting as stakeholders.⁷⁴ Gordon Craig also wrote about his mother. Edith Craig began curating Terry's memory the morning after her death, photographing her bedroom, and subsequently ensuring that another relative, Olive Terry, become custodian of her house and – in her resemblance to Ellen – a living memorial. Edith Craig and her partner Christopher St John had also helped with Terry's memoir during her lifetime.⁷⁵ Through personal and professional estrangement from her children, Kendal destroyed the possibility of such curation. Paradoxically, while the prominence of Kendal's uxorial and maternal persona contributed to her lifetime fame, that very persona's artificiality meant the absence of a willing '*someone*' (in Taylor's lexis) to ensure Kendal's

⁷³ Gary Taylor, *Cultural Selection* (New York: BasicBooks, 1999), 5.

⁷⁴ 'The Old Obadiah and the Young Obadiah', *Entr'acte* (9 March 1889), Bram Stoker Collection (RL57/26), SCLA.

⁷⁵ See Michael Holroyd, *A Strange Eventful History* (London: Picador, 2010).

posthumous prestige.

‘A most unexpected and bewildering experience’

While Kendal could manipulate her reputation, however, she did so very successfully. Both Kendal and her critics used the relationship between her onstage marriage as Rosalind, and her offstage marriage as Margaret Grimston, to market her performances as uniquely authentic. Kendal’s account of her wedding day juxtaposes preparations for the offstage wedding with a description of its onstage equivalent. Unforeseen circumstances having necessitated a last-minute staging of *As You Like It*, Kendal comments: ‘I shall never forget my mother’s despair when [...] told I should have to act on my wedding-day [...] I did not understand at all why she should make so much fuss about it’.⁷⁶ Kendal’s juxtaposition of maternal despair and filial incomprehension stresses both Mrs Robertson’s respectability and Kendal’s innocence, commendable to their respective life stage, with Kendal’s immediate addendum, ‘but of course I do now’, indicating her own subsequent trajectory from innocent incomprehension to respectable matronly awareness.⁷⁷

Omitting the real-life wedding, Kendal’s narrative jumps to the couple’s evening return to the Theatre Royal, believing their wedding has remained ‘secret’. However, at the moment when Orlando ‘vows’ to marry Rosalind-Ganymede in the mock marriage, answering Celia’s ‘Will you, Orlando, have to wife this Rosalind?’ with ‘I will’, the audience ‘broke out into applause’, evincing, for Kendal, the ‘interest the Manchester public took in us’ and ‘their appreciation of the

⁷⁶ *DMK*, 66.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

romantic sentiment' surrounding the wedding.⁷⁸ The account documents two aspects of the onstage wedding: the audience's enthusiasm for the scene as authentic romance, and Kendal's supposed diffidence during a 'most unexpected and bewildering experience'.⁷⁹ Performing Orlando and Rosalind's mock-marriage on their actual wedding day, the Kendals effectively reinscribed their own marriage (a process Kendal reinforces in *By Herself* by omitting the Grimstons' ceremony from her narrative), allowing the audience – aware of the offstage circumstances – to witness a 'real' wedding. In her writings, Kendal affirmed that audiences wanted to believe that 'when the curtain has fallen', the performer 'at home [...] leads [...] the same kind of life the representation of which has moved an audience'.⁸⁰ If allowing the audience to perceive continuities between onstage emotion and offstage circumstance intensified spectator enjoyment by reinforcing what George Taylor calls the 'semiological clarity' of performance, the Kendals' onstage marriage allowed appreciative audiences the chance to participate in the marriage of 'two young people who had won their favour'.⁸¹

Kendal's reception as the bride-Rosalind shows how astute her theory was. In the week following the wedding, regional, national, serious and satirical publications carried the story, often syndicating the detailed *Morning Post* article, whose headline, 'Marriage of Orlando and Rosalind' epitomises popular elision of the Kendals with their roles.⁸² Both *Orchestra* and *Sphinx* praised the bride's acting as uniquely excellent; *Orchestra* had 'never [seen] Miss Robertston to such perfection', while *Sphinx* explicitly assumed her 'extraordinary vivacity' derived from the

⁷⁸ Ibid., 67. Kendal's emphasis on the audience as 'the Manchester public' reflects Manchester's status as a vital training-ground for actors: a good reception supposedly guaranteed London success. The Theatre Royal was in 1869 the city's leading theatre, after the Queen's Theatre closed.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Kendal, *The Drama*, 23.

⁸¹ George Taylor, *Players and Performances* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1989), 122; *DMK*, 67.

⁸² 'Marriage of Orlando and Rosalind', *MP*, 5.

wedding.⁸³ Unsurprisingly, however, Kendal's account of the coverage in *By Herself* ignores its erotic context. The *Morning Post* (and its syndicates) clearly demonstrated the particular fascination of observing 'the young bride' in performance, foregrounding Madge's (paradoxically) 'real and natural' acting in the 'love-making scene', which 'brought down the house'.⁸⁴ Awareness that the Shakespearean text was vocalising authentic marital desire added to the audience's inclusion in a celebrity match the semi-illicit thrill of glimpsing a usually private moment in performance. As well as increasing the value of the Kendal 'brand' of acting, staging 'real' emotion helped overturn the lingering anti-theatrical distrust of mimetic emotion (convincing in appearance but unfelt by performers), the debate over which became intraprofessional with the translation of Diderot's *Paradoxe sur le comédien*.⁸⁵ Marshall notes rightly that the translation constituted a 'travesty' of Diderot's arguments: British actors believed Diderot's theory discarded emotional identification in favour of 'magnificent aping' which taxed only 'bodily strength' [emphasis mine].⁸⁶ Kendal's response, in (what might charitably be called) verse, opined that 'In spite of criticising elves/Those who make others feel/Must feel themselves'.⁸⁷

Within the specific instance of the Robertson-Kendal performance, the young bride herself emerges as a particularly eroticised object, observed in the sexually-charged interim between ceremony and consummation. To see Rosalind's lovemaking when she and Orlando were 'really' lovers legitimised audience enjoyment of female love and desire. Marriage and theatre

⁸³ 'Provincial', *Orchestra* (13 August 1869), 323; 'The Haymarket Company', *Sphinx* (14 August 1869), 165–166, 166.

⁸⁴ 'Marriage of Orlando and Rosalind', 5.

⁸⁵ Denis Diderot, *Paradoxe sur le comédien* (Paris: Editions de Seuil, 1994).

⁸⁶ Gail Marshall, *Actresses on the Victorian Stage* (Cambridge: 1998), 123; *Players and Performances*, 144.

⁸⁷ *DMK*, 222.

legitimised Madge-Rosalind's 'bantering' with W.H. Kendal as Orlando, so that the latter appeared 'quite confused'.⁸⁸ Audience response to Robertson's bridal exuberance counters Marshall's claim that no critic 'until Shaw' condoned 'Rosalind's forwardness in wooing Orlando'.⁸⁹ Furthermore, the audience had the added frisson of knowing that verbalised desire was the only form of sexual expression Madge-Rosalind could currently enjoy, and that – as the play's end approached – the imminent wedding-night would shortly change that. Potentially, the audience's foreknowledge of the particular circumstances of this *As You Like It* was appropriate to the play's generic function as comedy, which guarantees a happy outcome for its characters; the actors and the text's known ending would have offered the audience the same kind of ritualistic pleasure.

The Kendal wedding, its onstage (re)performance and coverage offer us a surprising alternative narrative on the Victorian bride. Understudied in performance criticism, when the bride emerges in other subfields of Victorian scholarship, critical literature usually emphasises female terror, sexual dissatisfaction, and possible rape. The title of Peter Cryle's 2009 article, 'A Terrible Ordeal From Every Point of View' sets the tone for his exploration of French literary and medical accounts of 'amorous initiation'.⁹⁰ As late as 1909, one doctor claimed 'the husband is almost always quite unable to play his dangerous and delicate role' because he is 'maladroit, crude and ineffective, driven by repugnant desire'. Cryle notes that the diseases popularly attributed to 'wedding nights gone wrong' included vaginismus, sterility and nymphomania.⁹¹ Cryle's

⁸⁸ 'Provincial', *Orchestra*, 323.

⁸⁹ Marshall (ed.), *As You Like It*, 41.

⁹⁰ Peter Cryle, 'A Terrible Ordeal from Every Point of View' *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 18.1 (January 2009), 44–64, 47.

⁹¹ Cryle, 46; 61–63.

argument that the Victorian husband's task was 'to bring about his bride's transformation from girlhood to womanhood' contrasts sharply with Madge-Rosalind's agency in the wedding-day performance, where Rosalind is the architect of her own desires.⁹² The performance's timing blurs the two states Cryle identifies in the bride's wedding-night trajectory 'from a presexual to a properly sexual condition'.⁹³

Subsequently, publicly enacting the wife, society's most privileged female identity, would help Kendal negotiate the theatrical marketplace once her seductive, unmarried persona of 'Miss Madge Robertson' (a stage-title she retained for years after marriage) was no longer commercially viable. By encouraging the contemporary appetite for 'real and natural' theatrical emotion, Kendal increased the value of the theatrical event she and her husband were uniquely placed to offer. The Bancrofts were the Kendals' competitors in modern comedy, but not in Shakespeare: a mid-1890s cartoon depicting the Bancrofts as the Macbeths is captioned 'A Theatrical Nightmare'.⁹⁴ This offered the Kendals creative space: particularly, in 1869, Mrs Kendal, who despite some dispersal of attention onto her husband and company, was undoubtedly the major focus of criticism. No longer was 'Miss Robertson' solely 'that rising young actress', but *Orchestra*'s coverage indicates an additional, solemn significance of her evolving identity as bride, resonant beyond the moment of wedding-day performance, and which, given the ludic, performative nature of the couple's encounter as Rosalind and Orlando, co-existed alongside the 'played' marriage.⁹⁵ The multiplicity of the theatrical moment allowed Kendal to embody different kinds of bridal identity for different audiences. Preceding

⁹² Ibid., 46.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Unattributed cartoon entitled 'A Theatrical Nightmare', *Percy Fitzgerald Scrapbooks*, IX.182.

⁹⁵ *Orchestra* (13 August 1869), 323.

Orchestra's praise for Madge's 'bantering manner' appears Nannie Lambert's poem, 'Remembrances'.

I saw her when a careless child
She sported on her way,
Her ringing laughter, clear and wild,
Sound in my ear to day.
The light which sparkled in her eye
Was like the evening star
Which glimmers in the azure sky,
And sheds its beam afar.

I saw her in her girlish days,
A being, fair and young,
A bright and lovely thing, whose praise
A poet might have sung;
And for her happy bridal decked,
With flowers upon her brow,
And sunny hair which flowed unchecked
Upon her neck of snow.

Fair bride, the ills which all must share
May make thine eye less bright,
May cause the tear to tremble there,
And dim its joyous light;
Yet, in this glowing heart of mine,
I ever fondly pray
That less of joy may ne'er be thine,
Than on thy bridal day.⁹⁶

The poem's opening depicts the active Romantic child closely associated with nature: its description of the (potential) child-Kendal's 'ringing laughter, clear and wild', and eye which 'sparkled' while its owner 'sporting' evokes the Keatsian 'faery's child' with 'wild' eye, long hair and 'light' foot.⁹⁷ However, the motion of Lambert's poem contradicts Keats's trajectory, moving from a depiction of the Romantic star-child not towards the untrappable 'lady in the meads' of

⁹⁶ Nannie Lambert. 'Remembrances'. *Orchestra* (13 August 1869), 323.

⁹⁷ Keats, 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci' (1819), *The Poems of John Keats* (London: Longman, 1970), 500–506, ll. 14–6.

‘La Belle Dame Sans Merci’ (l. 13), but her Victorian corrective: the ideal bride. The poem’s narrative framing reiterates the subject/object, audience/actor relationship, in the repetitive ‘I saw’ and objectification of the bride as a ‘bright and lovely thing’, with ‘sunny hair which flows unchecked/Upon her neck of snow’, an image reinforcing the text’s structuring concerns. The bride’s ritual transition from uncontrolled and controlled states of childhood and marriage resonates in the lexical choice of ‘unchecked’: while ‘carelessness’ (her childhood state) is a condition *per se*, the adjectival value of ‘unchecked’ immediately connotes its opposite: the imminent, ‘checked’, halted alternative. Arguably, this does not overstate the ‘familiar, even conventional’ contemporary link between hair description and the female subject’s mental state, nor hair description’s value as hermeneutical tool. As Elisabeth Gitter argues ‘women’s hair is the text which reads her’ in Victorian poetics. Accordingly, the bride’s ‘sunny hair’, reduces the ‘golden hair’ that is the ‘crowning glory of the mythologised Victorian grand woman’ such as Lilith or Portia, to an aesthetically and emotionally unchallenging form.⁹⁸ The bride’s ‘neck of snow’ is an index to virginity in its unspotted whiteness. However, in juxtaposing ‘sunny’ hair and emotion with white skin, Lambert might recall Browning’s ‘Porphyria’s Lover’. Considering his mistress’s ‘smooth white shoulder [...] spread’ with ‘yellow hair’, Browning’s narrator uses that hair as a ‘string’ for strangulation, leaving a corpse which (supposedly) retains its ‘smiling rosy little head’ and ‘blue eyes [...] without a stain’.⁹⁹ Recasting the bride’s body as the site for violence places an even darker complexion on Lambert’s tear-inducing ‘ills’ that may ‘dim’ the bride’s formerly sparkling eyes.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Elisabeth G. Gitter, ‘The Power of Women’s Hair’ *PMLA* (1984), 936–954.

⁹⁹ Browning, ‘Porphyria’s Lover’ (1833), *Robert Browning: Selected Poems* (London: Penguin, 2004), 17–18, ll.17–18; 39; 52; 44.

¹⁰⁰ *Orchestra* (13 August 1869), 323.

Lambert places the reader in a position of knowledge and affectionate emotional investment in Kendal, prepared to ‘fondly pray’ for her with ‘glowing heart’, through lifelong emotional (and perhaps physical) proximity.¹⁰¹ This positioning is more plausible given the younger Robertson’s career as a child performer who had grown up in proximity and on view to audiences across the country. The physical proximity Lambert implies would of course continue: there was never any suggestion (in 1869 or retrospectively) that Mrs Kendal would retire (unlike Faucit). This professional context intensifies the specific identification of Lambert’s bride with Madge Robertson for audiences who had indeed ‘seen’ her as a child. The poem’s major implication, however, is of inevitable marital suffering: the logical referent of Lambert’s ‘all’ in ‘Fair bride, the ills which all must share’ is *brides*.¹⁰² The rhyme between bright/light and mine/thine reimposes this expectation of pain, subverting the poem’s supposedly optative context. The poem, immediately preceding *Orchestra*’s review of Kendal, functions as proem, structuring reader reception of the review. The latter’s opening, ‘We announce this week the marriage of [...]’ provides a further generic link between different types of wedding literature: epithalamium, and newspaper announcement. Temporally, the performance itself becomes *another* kind of marriage song: the epithalamium between marriage ceremony and wedding-night.

Kendal’s embarrassment in the ‘unexpected and bewildering circumstances’ of her wedding-day is debatable, given the exuberance critics described.¹⁰³ Her discomfiture at such ‘bewildering’ circumstances as spontaneous applause is unlikely: she had already endured playing Phelps’s

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ *DMK*, 67.

pubescent Lady Macbeth, and being dragged by the hair as Aldridge's Desdemona.¹⁰⁴ However, the modesty topos retrospectively aligned Kendal with the kind of conservative bridal identity she was trying to impose. Faucit, the ideal conservative Victorian actress, had a holy horror of confronting an audience as herself, and thus found direct contact with them – as Kendal experienced on her wedding-day, and when speaking Rosalind's epilogue – 'repugnant', and thus 'never addressed an audience, having neither the wish nor the courage to do so'.¹⁰⁵ As we have seen, Kendal's actual behaviour as voluble, exuberant 'leading lady' disrupted Faucit's paradigm, despite the Kendals' professed hatred of the limelight. Langtry was to move even further away from Faucit, praising the 'much-liked' epilogue for 'whip[ping] up' the end of *As You Like It*. Faucit acted only intermittently between her 1851 marriage and 1879 final benefit (also as Rosalind), and her attitudes were firmly mid-Victorian. The *fin-de-siècle* Rosalind, whatever her retrospective protestations, had to exploit her audience interactions. As performer identities became increasingly 'protean, multiple' – Kendal the speechmaker, Langtry the fashion icon – the 'personal' style of theatrical journalism proliferated, and the relationship between actors and Society deepened, the theatre became only one site for contact between actors and audience.¹⁰⁶ For Langtry, onstage display offered 'nothing strange [...] from the publicity point of view' and 'no novelty in facing the crowded audience, in which I knew most of the occupants of the stalls and boxes, and all in the cheaper parts knew me'.¹⁰⁷ Langtry thus had no need to negotiate the difficult transition from 'private life', or to decry the exposure involved in 'address[ing] an audience'.¹⁰⁸ Kendal, emphasising her affinity with the ideologue Faucit, here chose to do so.

¹⁰⁴ *The Kendals*, 44; 42.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ 'Varieties of Performance', 210.

¹⁰⁷ *Days I Knew*, 173.

¹⁰⁸ *Days I Knew*, 175.

‘Husband and wife met on stage in the forest of Arden’

For several reasons, ‘The marriage of Orlando and Rosalind’ remained essential to the Kendal brand. In 1893, nearly a quarter-century after her marriage, Kendal retold the story for a *Strand Magazine* ‘At Home’ interview, framed by the editorial comment that it was ‘the true story of the wedding of Mr. and Mrs. Kendal [...] husband and wife met on the stage in the forest of Arden’.¹⁰⁹ Literally true in its reference to the newlyweds’ shared stage space, the statement also elides the Kendals’ earlier lives and pre-marital association into a single moment of marital meeting, further identifying them with the characters who came together in the forest, and thus ideally qualifying them to embody Orlando and Rosalind. The story also has reconfigures ideas of space in coverage of the Kendals: stage and forest become as permeable as the actors’ identities: the ‘husband and wife’ are both the Kendals and Shakespeare’s lovers, when ‘meeting’ in the theatrical space that made their wedding-day flirtation public. The permeability of space and identity also has implications for the interview’s location. Moving around the Kendals’ family home, the 1893 article anticipates the twentieth-century ‘lifestyle’ features, designed both to display a celebrity’s taste, and provide gentle insight into their psychogeography. Kendal tells her ‘true story’, itself a problematic phrase juxtaposing asserted authenticity with the fictive, in the ‘harmonious’, painting-filled drawing room.¹¹⁰ Room, stage and Shakespearean forest become interchangeable as spaces for aspirational display: of affluence, marital harmony, and intimacy with Shakespeare. These ‘At Home’ articles reveal Kendal manipulating her public image across a new medium. Kendal asserted that human interest journalism, with ‘all the petty, trivial detail about actresses’ clothes and appearances’ was ‘an injury to our profession’ and

¹⁰⁹ Harry How, ‘Illustrated Interviews,’ *Strand Magazine* (January 1893), 226–242, 236.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 230.

‘responsible for the ignorance and half the evils of the world’; nevertheless, a classic article sees Kendal object that the journalist will ‘probably [...] begin by describing me dressed in blue, with white embroidery’, then mentions the dress in her next sentence.¹¹¹ Kendal relentlessly exploited public appetite for domestic detail. Her privileged domestic status was essential to this: before 1903 (when Dorothy married Meyer and was disowned) Kendal could feed the press details that would have been problematic for Ellen Terry, whose children’s ages and parentage were generally elided by the press, or Mrs Bancroft, whose illegitimate son, Charles, was never mentioned in print. The Kendal children (who would never ‘go on the stage’, their parents mistakenly predicted), like their parents’ paintings, ‘bronzes and Venetian ware’, function in print as signifiers of their parents’ affluence and respectability.¹¹² The *Strand* article emphasises that the Kendals’ sons are a Cambridge student and ‘a Marlborough boy’, while Madge’s first interview following an American tour immediately mentions that their ‘three girls’ are being educated in Boulogne.¹¹³ Kendal’s international coverage also worked to emphasise her unique morality: an American cutting for a tour describes how she ‘stands alone, a great actress, a woman also against whose reputation not even the dirtiest cad could throw a stone. In these days of smart society that is a fine record’.¹¹⁴ Significantly, Kendal enjoyed this comment enough to paste it into her scrapbook. Just as the ‘At Home’ interviews let Kendal alternate discussion of her wifely role and theatrical repertory, the earlier ‘Mr. and Mrs. Kendal at Home’ (*The World*, 1881) stressed both Mrs Kendal’s ‘brilliant and demanding career’ and her commitment to ‘household affairs’ and ‘playing with her children’.¹¹⁵ Significantly, the narrative of submission

¹¹¹ Untitled cutting, *Westminster Gazette*, (25 October 1909), referring to an article ‘some years ago’. *Scrapbook*, 214.

¹¹² ‘Illustrated Interviews’.

¹¹³ Ibid., ‘Back from the States’, *PMG* (3 June 1890), 1–2.

¹¹⁴ J.H. Wrangham, ‘The Kendals at the Grand’, (Undated cutting), *Scrapbook*, 222.

¹¹⁵ ‘Mr. and Mrs. Kendal At Home’, *North Wales Chronicle* (25 June 1881), 7.

predominates. In the 1881 article, Kendal rehearses ‘not as the wife of a co-lessee of the St. James’s [...] but as any other artist’ (an attitude not shared by Swears or Vanbrugh), then, post-show, dutifully waits up while ‘determined smoker’ William ‘takes his tobacco freely until two o’clock in the morning’.¹¹⁶

Kendal’s self-presentation as ideal Victorian wife was hermeneutically resonant: the reciprocal relationship between Shakespearean exegesis and morality meant that, as Marshall writes, an actress could ‘create herself, and be seen’ simultaneously ‘as a Shakespearean heroine’ and ‘a most exemplary Victorian woman’.¹¹⁷ Matthew Arnold argued that effective Shakespearean exegesis evinced virtue: one could only comprehend ‘Shakespeare aright’ if able to ‘seize’ and enact his morality.¹¹⁸ Actresses are this study’s focus. While the lack of a narrative of female performance genealogies derives partly from women’s omission from the prevailing male narratives of performance history, it would be a complementary and comparable error to exclude actors from the history of actresses. The ideology that demanded actresses be simultaneously convincing artists and ‘exemplary’ Victorians had profound implications for male actors, for whom the ideal public persona was simultaneously artistic, unquestionably masculine, and gentlemanly. The *Strand* magazine felt W.H. Kendal fulfilled the ideal criteria, praising his artwork before describing him as a ‘striking-looking man, the very idea of a picturesque soldier, with a constitution of steel’.¹¹⁹ Actresses’ morality was constantly, visibly interrogated, lamented and defended throughout the Victorian era. Simultaneously, sexual transgressions by performers with cultural capital (across genders) could also be effectively concealed. Thus, the ‘picturesque

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Gail Marshall, *Shakespeare and Victorian Women* (Cambridge: 2009), 90.

¹¹⁸ Matthew Arnold, *Complete Prose Works*, 11 vols (1960–78), X.188.

¹¹⁹ ‘Illustrated Interviews’, 242.

soldier' Kendal may well have fathered Marie Bancroft's eldest illegitimate child (she had two), Charles, in the early 1870s; this is the reason given by Dorothy Grimston's daughter for the speedy annulment of Margaret Grimston's marriage to Charles Bancroft.¹²⁰ Similarly, Henry Irving's sexual relationship with Ellen Terry (popularly queried by biographers, or treated as ambiguous) was only confirmed with the 2012 discovery of two letters from him to Terry, which indicate both their relationship, and Irving's repeated infidelities.¹²¹ The press also elided the illegitimacy of Terry's children.¹²² The early twentieth-century rumour that Australian actress Beatrice Pewtress (1872–1961), who married Irving's Australian business manager Joseph Blascheck, was Irving's illegitimate daughter was only raised (dismissively) by Michael Holroyd in 2008, despite the astonishing physical resemblance between the two, and Beatrice Blascheck's close relationship with Terry.¹²³ Notably, Madge Kendal never hinted at William's pre-marital relationship with Marie Wilton, or his drinking, in print, despite publicly criticising her children and hating Marie Bancroft enough to collect vicious reviews of the Bancrofts' books (and specifying that it was Marie she loathed by emphasising that her 'old regard' for Squire Bancroft persisted).¹²⁴ Terry also emphasised her loyalty to Irving in all (surviving) public and private writing. It is difficult to separate personal and professional commitment when analysing the Terry-Irving and the Kendals' relationship. Both partnerships reveal the complex interrelations between performers' emotional and professional lives, and the actresses' personal and financial

¹²⁰ Margaret Grimston and Charles Bancroft married in September 1895, and cohabited for fifteen weeks between then and their 1897 annulment on the grounds of Charles's impotence. In fact, Charles remarried and fathered at least two children. Neither the Bancrofts nor William Kendal attended the wedding, which may have been hastily arranged: Charles Bancroft had applied for a licence only three weeks previously. Conversation with Elizabeth Nimmo (9 October 2011). Margaret Grimston, *Wife's petition for/of nullity* (1896). *Court for Divorce and Matrimonial Causes* (J/77/589/18015).

¹²¹ Letters from Irving to Terry, (21 and 26 June 1893), transcripts from uncatalogued additions to the V&A collections, provided by Susannah Mayor, Smallhythe Place (26 September 2012).

¹²² See Chapter Four.

¹²³ Unpublished account and images, by Peter Berkeley (grandson of Beatrice and Joseph Blascheck), consulted at Smallhythe Place, September 2012.

¹²⁴ *Scrapbook*, 269–270; *By Herself*, 118.

incentives for discretion. Particularly for Kendal, these incentives transcend a simple case of male exploitation of an economically dependent female partner: Madge's popularity exceeded William's, and Swears claimed she boasted of having ended the Hare-Kendal management by threatening a solo tour.¹²⁵ What emerges clearly is Madge's total commitment to the Kendal 'brand', and the value of *As You Like It*, which affirmed the Kendals' unity, authenticity, and ability to realise Victorian theatre's most privileged type of performance.

Kendal certainly affirmed that privileging of Shakespeare. *Dramatic Opinions* discusses the 'difficulty' of 'realizing to the *majority*' Shakespearean characters 'they have read of', and co-opts Arnold's belief to elevate theatrical interpretation to Biblical exegesis: Kendal asserts that 'realising the ideal we may have formed of the face of our Blessed Lord' is a similar problem.¹²⁶ The Biblical 'Now we see through a glass darkly', Kendal argues, 'might be applied to the reading of Shakespeare's plays'.¹²⁷ This equation reflects (like her devotion to Helen Faucit as 'Our Example') Kendal's commitment to Victorian respectability, while audaciously elevating her professional preparation to a potentially sacred act. Despite Kendal's conservatism, this took her close to the theology of the Fabian priest Stewart Headlam, who conceptualised performance as a potentially sacred vocation.¹²⁸

For patriarchal audiences, Kendal's known marital status offset fears about heroine and actress independence by reiterating Rosalind's ultimate assimilation into the hegemonic institution of

¹²⁵ Swears, *When All's Said and Done*, 144.

¹²⁶ *Dramatic Opinions*, 26.

¹²⁷ *Dramatic Opinions*, 90.

¹²⁸ Peter Yeandle, 'The Bishop, the Ballet Dancer and "The most Bohemian Priest in all of London"', Seminar talk, Brasenose College, Oxford (31 October 2012).

marriage: however, the superimposition of Kendal's marital experience (and attendant sexual knowledge) on Rosalind's volubility presented unique problems. The 1885 revival gave the bawdy 'cuckoo song' from *Love's Labour's Lost* to Rosalind: popular with audiences (Kendal was an accomplished singer) but offensive to critics. More than the disjunction between her puritan status and bawdy lyrics, Kendal's mature ability to 'perfectly well understand' the obscenity offended.¹²⁹ Lynn Voskuil argues persuasively for Victorian theatre's celebration of 'naturalness', 'innocence' and 'artlessness' in Ellen Terry's performance, despite Terry's published insistences that 'effects [which] on the stage may seem [...] spontaneous' were inevitably 'calculate[d] to a nicety'.¹³⁰ Calculation and knowingness were contentious qualities in Victorian actresses and, in Rosalind, even more problematic than 'forwardness'. The 1885 controversy burgeoned. Interestingly, and indicating the increasingly fragmentary press attitudes to performance, the major defences of Kendal's 'understanding' came from wildly disparate publications. The respectable *Graphic* rested its interpretative defence on discrete categories of female identity, describing Rosalind as 'neither an Ariel nor a Miranda', but of a type entitled to 'sportive humours'.¹³¹ The satirical *Fun* went much further, identifying 'two ways of looking at Rosalind'. The first rested both on hermeneutics and an aversion to theatrical tradition, and affirmed Rosalind 'as Mrs. Kendal plays it, and as, I think, Shakespeare meant it – a young lady [...] who does not go through the world with either eyes or ears shut, [...] neither prude nor bread-and-butter miss'.¹³² The alternative was recognisably Faucit's 'ethereal' Rosalind, descried by *Fun* as 'all poetry, and prettiness, and impossibility' in an atmosphere that required

¹²⁹ 'From Our London Correspondent', *Manchester Times* (7 February 1885), 4.

¹³⁰ Lynn Voskuil, *Acting Naturally* (Charlottesville: UVa Press, 2004), 215; J.A. Hammerton, *The Actor's Art* (London: George Hammerton, 1897), 175.

¹³¹ 'Theatres', *Graphic* (31 January 1885), 6.

¹³² 'Slashes and Puffs', *Fun* (18 February 1885), 66.

Shakespeare's women to be plausible, realistic, real-life women.¹³³ *Fun* anticipates the conclusion of Wilde's *Lady Windermere's Fan* by eight years: Wilde's first society heroine would realise that, like Rosalind, she cannot 'shut [her] eyes to half of life', since 'good and evil, sin and innocence' coexist.¹³⁴ Like *Fun*, Margaret Windermere argues against the polarising of 'good' and 'bad' to construct mutually exclusive female identities; Wilde's subsequent young protagonists would all have their eyes opened by events around them, with Gerald Arbuthnot confronting his illegitimacy and Gertrude Chiltern her husband's fallibility. Arguably, this indicates the extent to which 1880s Shakespeare explored issues that mainstream society drama would take almost another decade to cover.

By 1885, there were also objections to Kendal performing the wooing scenes at all. Although some felt Kendal's 'beauties' were 'too matured and too solid' to convince or entice as Ganymede, *Fun* argued that Kendal's age was 'not obtrusive'; she was also the same age as Langtry would be in the 1890 revival, and twelve years younger than Terry's 1896 Imogen.¹³⁵ The underlying problem was the type of knowing sexuality presented. Despite Kendal's 'good qualities' and 'comprehension', the *Saturday Review* felt Kendal now conveyed the 'refined fascination of the mature woman' rather than the 'artless coquetry of the light-hearted damsel'.¹³⁶ Although Kendal had only *ever* played Rosalind while she was a married woman, the first decade of reviews of her Rosalind display journalistic relish for Kendal's powerfully erotic performance (despite her later conservatism). As in her wedding-day debut, this eroticism derived from the

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Oscar Wilde, *Lady Windermere's Fan, The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde* (London: HarperCollins, 2003), 420–465, 463.

¹³⁵ 'The Drama in London', *Freeman's* (15 December 1884), page number illegible; *Fun* (18 February 1885), 66.

¹³⁶ 'As You Like It,' *Saturday Review* (31 January 1885): 143–4, 144.

very tension between Madge Robertson's established professional identity as a single woman, and audience knowledge of her married sexual knowledge. Scholarship has never acknowledged Kendal's eroticism: her title 'Matron of the Drama' became the critical avatar for her career. However, Kendal's 1870s reviews as Rosalind stress neither 'Matron', 'Mrs. Kendal, or Mrs. Margaret Grimston, as it pleases her' but 'Miss Madge Robertson' whose 'most attractive *personnel*' and 'spirit and sparkle' could 'rivet the attention of the spectator and delight' while her 'high mental culture' legitimised audience 'delight' and alleviated 1870s fears regarding the degradation of the stage.¹³⁷

¹³⁷ 'Haymarket Theatre', *Standard* (12 October 1871), 3.

Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4



An 1870 *carte-de-visite* shows Kendal peering across a fan, above full skirts and velvet couch (fig 1). The effect is both enigmatic and seductive: the caption, 'Miss Madge Robertson'. Kendal remained 'Miss Robertson' in *As You Like It* reviews as late as 1874; by 1875, the *Graphic*

referred to ‘Miss Madge Robertson (Mrs. Kendal) in the part of Rosalind’.¹³⁸ After the Gaiety matinees (February 1875), the *Era* clarified the relationship, praising ‘Mrs. Kendal, or, as everybody delights to call her, Miss Madge Robertson’; the *Penny Illustrated* asserted ‘Rosalind I should be fairly in love with, were Miss Madge Robertson not Mrs. Kendal’.¹³⁹ Notably, these reviews simultaneously exploit Kendal’s dichotomous identity, and foreground her sexual attraction. For the *Era*, Kendal’s ‘artistic and bewitching performance’ eroticised the script, as Rosalind’s ‘beautiful sentiments’ found ‘additional beauty on her lips, exercis[ing]’ an ‘irresistible spell’ over the audience; the *Penny Illustrated* also reimagined her as a siren, finding her ‘bewitching’ and ‘indescribably captivating’.¹⁴⁰ Moreover, the *Era*’s account of audience reception is recognisably a narrative of sexual response, from the ‘spontaneous thrill [that] seemed to run through the house’ to a climactic release which ‘found vent in a burst of enthusiastic cheering’.¹⁴¹ Both reviews incorporate a lexical fantasy of contact with the actress, indicated by the *Era*’s juxtaposition of language finding ‘beauty on her lips’ and Kendal herself seeming ‘simply delicious’ to spectators: in the *Penny Illustrated*, Kendal is similarly ‘delightfully piquante’. Both relocate the audience’s ocular and aural responses to the mouth, where Kendal and her performance are simultaneously ‘tasted’.

In ‘delighting to call’ Kendal ‘Miss Robertson’, the *Era* reviewer indulgently fantasised Kendal’s singleness and sexual availability, in which the siren call of ‘bewitching’ performance might legitimately be answered.¹⁴² The *Penny Illustrated* writer’s claim that he would be ‘fairly in love’

¹³⁸ ‘Theatres’, *Graphic* (30 January 1875), 107.

¹³⁹ ‘Town Edition’, *Era* (7 February 1875), 4; ‘The Playgoer’, *Penny Illustrated* (27 February 1875), 130.

¹⁴⁰ ‘Town Edition’, *Era*, 4; ‘The Playgoer’, *Penny Illustrated* (27 February 1875).

¹⁴¹ ‘Town Edition’, *Era*, 4.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

with Rosalind, were ‘Madge Robertson not Mrs. Kendal’ exempted him from charges of desiring a married woman, while legitimising that desire’s obvious display.¹⁴³ Kendal’s dual status as professionally single and famously married exacerbated her eroticism, recasting journalistic attraction as ‘forbidden’ desire, and exploiting the ambiguity of a sexually-knowing, married female identity encountered on the playbill as unmarried, and thus sexually available. Another early 1870s image upholds this duality (*fig 2*). Again, Kendal gazes across her fan: although seated higher, William is visible only in profile, gazing down towards his wife. Madge dominates the picture: staring steadily away from William, her eyes meet those of the photographer, and of any other male viewer, teasingly inviting their gaze. Later 1870s images remain ambiguous: in a mid-decade double portrait beside a sundial (*fig 3*), Madge’s gaze is demurely downcast, but withheld from her husband. Following his sightline, the viewer’s eyes find the line of her tightly-corseted body. A still later shot ostensibly embodies wifely submission, with Madge curled beside William, who gazes loftily outwards (*fig 4*). However, the image centres on their hands: her forefinger traces his palm. Beyond the chiromantic connotations, with Madge divining – perhaps determining – William’s future, her grip bends back William’s index and forefingers, displaying his palm for the camera. The impression is of gypsyish sexuality – Kendal’s lingering caress of her husband’s hand – and of control.

Cross-dressing, modesty and prudishness

Given Madge Kendal’s eroticism as a performer, it is unsurprising that reviewers initially found her ‘perfectly bewitching in male attire’.¹⁴⁴ The eroticism of theatrical cross-dressing has long been recognised: Richards persuasively attributes the Restoration drama proliferation of

¹⁴³ ‘The Playgoer’, *Penny Illustrated* (27 February 1875).

¹⁴⁴ ‘Town Edition’, *Era* (7 February 1875).

‘breeches parts’ to actresses’ and managers’ exploitation of their most lucrative resource: women’s bodies.¹⁴⁵ Even at the time that representation of Shakespeare’s heroines moved from broader comedy to emphasising ‘the heart over the head’ and morality, cross-dressed comic heroines remained intensely popular. Modesty, however, became an increasingly contested issue. Limited evidence for Madge Kendal’s stage business saw her ‘cove[r] her face with her hands’ and ‘half-whisper’ to Celia the question ‘what shall I do with my doublet and hose?’, seemingly supporting Marshall’s editorial assertion that Victorian cross-dressed heroines performed ‘elaborate displays of modesty’.¹⁴⁶ However, Marshall argues that these ‘displays’ were designed to ‘call attention to the actress’s body’. Although striking, Kendal’s gesture does not ‘call attention’ as such. Cross-dressing was well-recognised as offering unparalleled opportunities for physical display: an 1840s illustration of Madame Vestris as Don Giovanni even suggests, through a divided tunic, the outline of her genitals.¹⁴⁷ Additional, overt attention-drawing was unnecessary; in Kendal’s specific case, 1870s references to her ‘attractive *personnel*’ indicate that critics were very well aware of her body, its appearance legitimised by her husband’s presence, and thus presumed consent to her display.¹⁴⁸

Moreover, the relationship between modesty and cross-dressing was not static. In addition to the *fin-de-siècle* work of Stewart Headlam who, via the Fabian Society, argued that the display of female dancers’ legs in tights was not innately immodest or sinful, *Fun*’s 1885 aversion to the Rosalind ‘all poetry and prettiness’ reflected burgeoning cultural weariness with obtrusive stage

¹⁴⁵ Sandra Richards, *The Rise of the English Actress* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1993), 15.

¹⁴⁶ Marshall, ed. *As You Like It*, 41.

¹⁴⁷ ‘Madame Vestris as Don Giovanni’, reprinted Tracy C. Davis and Ellen Donkin, *Women and Playwriting in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: 1999).

¹⁴⁸ ‘Haymarket Theatre’, *Standard* (12 October 1871), 3.

modesty.¹⁴⁹ In 1889, J.M. Barrie condemned the ‘prudish’ or ‘self-conscious’ Rosalind who slowed the Ganymede scenes with the ‘elaborate displays of modesty’ Marshall deemed essential.¹⁵⁰ ‘The self-conscious Rosalind’, wrote Barrie, ‘should play the forest scenes in skirts’.¹⁵¹ In 1890, Langtry’s new business included a gestural gloss on the line ‘on the skirts of the forest, like fringe upon a petticoat’: momentarily reaching for a petticoat, before remembering she no longer wore one (III.2.324). Previously, the line’s charm would have lain in Rosalind’s modest awkwardness. Now, however, the *Daily News* valued the gesture as an innovative theatrical act, ranked equally with the (far *less* ladylike) action of ‘bursting into uncontrollable laughter’ when ‘pointing at’ Orlando’s chin on a reference to his ‘beard neglected’.¹⁵² Similarly, W.G. Robertson remembered the petticoat moment as a ‘perfectly natural [...] bit of original business’, rather than as participation in any structuring representation of shame.¹⁵³ Langtry’s innovation proved influential. Constance Benson, who played Rosalind between 1894 and 1915, transposed the gesture into her own business. The 1904 Benson promptbook glosses the reference to ‘fringe upon a petticoat’ with ‘indicates where petticoats shd be’.¹⁵⁴

This changing attitude to cross-dressing didn’t end the ongoing enjoyment of ‘womanliness’ in cross-dressing; even Kendal’s most critical 1885 reviewers praised her as ‘womanly’ when cross-dressing.¹⁵⁵ Following Jennifer Drouin’s model of the relationship between cross-dressing, drag and passing in Shakespearean comedy, it’s clear that the late-Victorian Rosalind was rarely

¹⁴⁹ ‘Slashes and Puffs’, *Fun* (18 February 1885), 66.

¹⁵⁰ J.M. Barrie, ‘What The Pit Says’, *Time* (December 1889), 589–592, 590.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² ‘The Drama’, *Daily News* (25 February 1890), 12.

¹⁵³ Graham Robertson, *Time Was* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1931), 71.

¹⁵⁴ Quoted Marshall (ed.), *As You Like It*, 41.

¹⁵⁵ ‘St. James’s Theatre’, *Times* (26 January 1885), 8.

meant to pass in the audience's eyes.¹⁵⁶ Nevertheless, the late-Victorian Rosalind's tension between female body and male attire increasingly catalysed queer, transformative works, implicating both Kendal and Langtry. In 1869, Kendal inspired bride-poetry; in 1877, an article on Kendal's repertory (including Rosalind) was immediately followed by the novelist Marie Corelli's (1855–1924) sonnet on 'Rosalind', occupying the rest of the page.¹⁵⁷ Subtitled 'Am I not your Rosalind?', 'Rosalind' disparages the intelligence and heteronormativity of 'Foolish Orlando [...] dull-pated youth and drowsy lover' for failing to discern

beneath the shepherd's vest
The bounteous wave of Rosalind's fair breast?
As boy she kiss'd thee! by that touch divine
Wert still in doubt with *her* sweet lips on thine?

Corelli's creation of an intimate gaze, moving 'beneath the shepherd's vest' to see and identify the female breast, juxtaposed with Corelli's authorship, reinscribes the sonnet as expressing desire between women.¹⁵⁸ This reflects the wider corpus of Corelli's sonnets on the beauty of Shakespeare's cross-dressed heroines: 'Viola', dedicated to Ellen Terry, praises 'those eyes/That flash with love and laughter and desire' in the 'bright boy' who is simultaneously 'Beautiful Viola!' and 'Fair as Apollo'.¹⁵⁹ Corelli's personal conservatism (she was anti-suffrage) disrupts expectations about the origins of such queer texts. Conversely, while Corelli celebrates drag's erotic potential, her fellow conservative Clement Scott *did* require Rosalinds to 'pass' as a masculine Ganymede. In June 1890, Scott felt Mrs. Patrick Campbell's Rosalind 'disappointed'

¹⁵⁶ Jennifer Drouin, 'Cross-Dressing, Drag and Passing', in James C. Bulman (ed.), *Shakespeare Re-Dressed* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson, 2008), 23–56.

¹⁵⁷ Marie Corelli, 'Rosalind', *Theatre* (April 1883), 214.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ Marie Corelli, 'Viola', MS version (5 July 1884), in S.R. Canton's scrapbook *Chronicles of the Lyceum Theatre 1884–1892* (Garrick Club Library), unnumbered pages.

because ‘her reading was too effeminate for the character’.¹⁶⁰ More commonly, though, the press relished Rosalind’s gender-mutability. Barrie, praising Langtry’s 1889 tour, remembered from previous productions ‘Rosalinds who should have been Orlando, and indeed Orlandos who might have changed parts with them,’ referencing without censure some Rosalinds’ resemblance to ‘princes from the pantomime’, who were, of course, played by women.¹⁶¹ Shakespeare’s other cross-dressed heroines (such as Imogen or Julia) never attracted equal attention regarding their cross-dressing; this especial Victorian emphasis on the comic chaos of Rosalind’s gender-switching indicates the Victorian roots of the modern view (articulated by Lindsay Duguid) that ‘the English actress playing Rosalind is a gender all her own’.¹⁶² Barrie’s reference to the ‘princes from the pantomime’, however, ties Langtry’s Rosalind into a contemporary Victorian tradition that also stretched beyond Shakespeare to other comic theatrical forms, placing her in a tradition of cross-gender drag characters in the nineteenth-century imagination.¹⁶³ By the *fin de siècle*, this included the tradition of harlequinade dames in pantomimes, from Grimaldi’s comic dances in *Mother Goose* (1807) and as Queen Ronabellyanna in *Harlequin and the Red Dwarf* (1812), through Vestris’s drag duets with John Liston, to living performers such as Dan Leno and Vesta Tilley.¹⁶⁴ Barrie situates Langtry within a tradition of comic playfulness with gender.

Kendal evidently recognised Rosalind’s gender-changing possibilities, exploiting them when prefacing an 1878 speech on dramatic reform with highly popular readings from Rosalind’s Ganymede sequences. Early in the speech (thus shortly after the Ganymede readings), Kendal

¹⁶⁰ Clement Scott, ‘June’, *Dramatic Notes* (January 1891), 115.

¹⁶¹ J.M. Barrie, ‘What The Pit Says’, *Time* (December 1889), 589–592, 590.

¹⁶² Lindsay Duguid, quoted Robert Smallwood (ed.) *As You Like It* (Cambridge: 2000), 128.

¹⁶³ ‘What The Pit Says’.

¹⁶⁴ Uncatalogued images of Joseph Grimaldi, Madame Vestris and John Liston, Brady Collection, Christ Church.

stated that ‘I am sure there can be no objection to seeing my friend Mrs. Pattinson on stage, and I am sure Mr. Kendal is very nice to look at’.¹⁶⁵ Her performance as the gender-mutable Rosalind legitimised her assumption of the (usually male) prerogative of gaze that Rosalind (as Ganymede, teasing Orlando and criticising Phoebe) enjoys. Kendal’s recasting of her husband as decorative stage object was greeted with ‘loud cheers and laughter’.¹⁶⁶ Kendal’s allusions to Rosalind, who both cross-dresses and interacts directly with the audience in *As You Like It*’s epilogue, might have helped legitimise her volubility when she ‘very bold[ly]’ ‘found fault’ with the audience’s anti-theatrical prejudices: Ganymede, whom she had performed for the audience, is after all a male dramatic persona which gives Rosalind greater freedom of behaviour and speech.¹⁶⁷ W.H. Kendal subsequently ‘endorsed’ his wife’s comments, a gesture that arguably echoes the Orlando-Rosalind dynamic, in which Rosalind is far more voluble, determines the nature and timing of their conversations and activities, and in which Orlando’s attempts at communication (e.g. the ridiculous love poetry) are far less important.¹⁶⁸

‘an emasculated, lackadaisical, posturing aesthete!’

Despite this playfulness, Langtry’s 1882 reception demonstrated how Rosalind could become the locus for contemporary anxieties regarding male sexuality. When journalists widely condemned Langtry’s performance, *Theatre*’s critic complained of her supporters’ retaliatory sexual invective: ‘to disagree with Mrs. Langtry’ was ‘to be ‘an emasculated, lackadaisical, posturing aesthete’!’.¹⁶⁹ Failing to endorse Langtry transgressed normative masculine sexual response,

¹⁶⁵ ‘Mrs. Kendal on the Stage,’ *Manchester Times* (30 November 1878), 7.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ ‘Mrs. Kendal in Defence of the Stage,’ *Era* (1 December 1878), 7.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ ‘Our Omnibus-Box,’ *Theatre* (November 1882), 307.

giving Shakespeare performance (already a crucible for theorising womanhood) determining repercussions for its male audience's sexuality. The irony of positioning gender-mutable Rosalind as a barometer of obligatory heterosexuality is intensified by Rosalind's late-Victorian queer contexts for men (as well as women including Corelli). One 'posturing aesthete' who adored Langtry was Oscar Wilde, whose work multiplied Rosalind's queer significances around the time of Langtry's final provincial tour and March 1890 London revival. In 'The Portrait of Mr W.H.' (1889), the 'effeminate' Cyril Graham, too beautiful for 'mere prettiness', becomes 'the only perfect Rosalind', commended for the 'beauty, the delicacy, the refinement' of his performance, before dying for his theory of the youth who inspired Shakespeare's sonnets and 'passionate adoration'.¹⁷⁰ Meanwhile, Dorian, in 'The Picture of Dorian Gray' (*Lippincott's Magazine*, 20 June 1890), finds actress Sibyl Vane 'never more exquisite' than when in drag 'as a pretty boy, in hose and doublet and dainty cap'.¹⁷¹ Langtry had fascinated Wilde for over a decade; his 'The New Helen' was written for her in 1879. Sibyl Vane's 'dainty cap' may have been inspired by Langtry's 'saucy little cap, made quite killing by two tall feathers', which thrilled audiences in March 1890.¹⁷² Auerbach perhaps overstates the extent to which Rosalind's theatrical and literary contexts in the 1880s and 1890s made her the unique Shakespearean 'symbol of visionary liberties' for 'England's homosexual elite', while Katherine Duncan-Jones argues on more tangible evidence for the sonnets' direct intervention into *fin-de-siècle* gay culture.¹⁷³ Nevertheless, the changing relationship between Langtry's Rosalind (Rosalind remains

¹⁷⁰ Wilde, 'The Portrait of Mr. W.H', *Oscar Wilde: Complete Short Stories* (Oxford: 2010), 111–138, 114, 117.

¹⁷¹ Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (London: Simpkin, Marshall Hamilton, Kent & Co., [n.d.]), 60.

¹⁷² 'Notes from London', *Sheffield & Rotherham Independent*, hereafter *SRI* (1 March 1890), 5.

¹⁷³ Auerbach, *Ellen Terry*, 227; Katherine Duncan-Jones (ed.), *Shakespeare's Sonnets* (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2010).

the most important female figure in *Mr. W.H.*), aestheticism and sexuality reflects the wildly different directions in which *fin-de-siècle* Shakespeare production travelled.

Kendal vs. Langtry

In 1882, reviews of Langtry's debut as Rosalind called her a 'drawing room coquette' and 'complete failure'.¹⁷⁴ She was also subject to a profession-wide revolt against the *fact* of her as an actress, as debate over her 'right' to perform overshadowed assessment of her ability. Condemning the 'professional determination to crush [Langtry] if possible' *Theatre*, although not endorsing her *performance*, argued that Langtry's debut was an issue 'of art and art alone', and that she had 'as much right as anyone' to act, no matter 'from what class they spring'.¹⁷⁵ The professional 'worth his salt will not allow the bread to be taken out of his mouth by Mrs. Langtry'.¹⁷⁶ The reference to 'class' is significant. Kendal constantly reiterated the lessons of her 'daddy', actor J. William Robertson, and brother T. W. Robertson, as well as her intimacy with aristocratic society, self-fashioned as a kind of theatrical aristocrat, justifying her prestige through descent and association as well as technique.¹⁷⁷ Thus, Kendal's controversial acts in 'the character of a speech-maker' framed, reframed and occasionally jeopardised her performances by alienating journalists, but were legitimised by her marital status, antecedents, allies and conservative 'purity of purpose'.¹⁷⁸ As Mrs. Stirling's 'successor', and 'of the old school', she signified the continuation of antecedent tradition.¹⁷⁹ In comparison, Langtry was artistically *nouveau riche*, an interloper and self-made woman.

¹⁷⁴ 'IX. September', *Dramatic Notes* (1882), 41–46, 45.

¹⁷⁵ 'Our Omnibus-Box', *Theatre* (November 1882), 307–314, 314.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁷ *When All's Said & Done*, 167.

¹⁷⁸ J.A. Hammerton, *The Actor's Art* (London: Ayer Company, 1912), 157.

¹⁷⁹ *Stage Life of Mrs Stirling*, 226; 'The Kendals at the Grand', *Scrapbook*, 222.

Langtry lacked theatrical antecedents, nor did her family ‘rank with the old and stable nobility’, and yet ‘by some means’ she achieved what *Town Talk* called a ‘fictive popularity’ and commercial success as an actress.¹⁸⁰ Richard le Gallienne wrote that in an age of ‘great symbolic personalities’, Langtry represented ‘Beauty personified’: Langtry’s acting career made the new, composite ‘symbolic personality’ of professional beauty (and better-known female archetypes of royal mistress and fashion icon) available to audiences.¹⁸¹ It was these ‘means’ and ‘popularity’ that created the ‘famous, charismatic, mythic’ Langtry of the Victorian stage, and the nature of her composite reputation that made her Rosalind ultimately so innovative and influential.¹⁸² Her disastrous 1882 reception forced her to create more innovative business in subsequent tours through a decade in which, quipped Wilde, ‘acting [was] no longer considered absolutely essential for success on the English stage’.¹⁸³ Simultaneously, her polyvalence as actress and fashion icon gave her 1890 Rosalind both political and sartorial significance.

Kendal responded by consistently polarising herself and Langtry. Kendal’s 1884 diatribe *The Drama* condemns three kinds of behaviour by actresses. One criticised practice, that of feeding personal information to the press, and specifically using ‘affliction’ or ‘illness’ as a ‘positive boon’ to ‘advertise’ the performer, was an attack on Ellen Terry.¹⁸⁴ Terry herself recalled in *The Story of My Life* that ‘a member of [her] profession’ made an ‘unkind allusion (in a speech made at the Social Science Congress)’ to ‘actresses who feign illness’ and would ‘neither assert nor

¹⁸⁰ ‘Who is Mrs. Langtry?’ *Town Talk* (30 August 1879), quoted Beatty, *Lillie Langtry*, 156.

¹⁸¹ *Days I Knew*, 9.

¹⁸² ‘Varieties of Performance’, 210.

¹⁸³ Wilde, ‘The American Invasion’, (23 March 1887), *Court and Society Review*, Anya Clayworth (ed.), *Oscar Wilde: Selected Journalism* (Oxford: 2004), 66–69, 66.

¹⁸⁴ Kendal, *The Drama*, 23.

deny that it was Ellen Terry'; in the copy of *The Story of My Life* given to Terry's friend and fan, the actress Evelyn Nesbit (1884–1967), this anecdote bears the manuscript annotation 'Mrs Kendal'.¹⁸⁵ The two other practices Kendal condemned in *The Drama* were performer self-promotion via commercial advertising contracts and the correlation between a scandalous private life and commercial success.

Both constituted attacks on Langtry, whose creation of a 'saleable self' included a long-standing relationship with Pears Soap, who featured her portrait by Millais throughout the 1880s, including in 1884.¹⁸⁶ Even in 1889, when Langtry was endeavouring to reinvent herself as a serious actress, the *PMG* asked her whether her energy and complexion derived from Pear's 'transparent specific'.¹⁸⁷ The *Gazette* dismissed Langtry's response, which cited plentiful sleep, and 'never eating supper [...] neither Marie Bancroft nor Ellen Terry were ever real supper-eaters', thus undermining her attempt to align herself with her fellow-professionals and the respect due to their behaviour.¹⁸⁸ Kendal also condemned careers based on 'wrong-doing which has been made sufficiently public' *before* the wrong-doer 'took to the Stage'.¹⁸⁹ This largely exempted from criticism performers whose misdemeanours ran alongside their careers, and/or those who (like Kendal) had been child performers (this is unsurprising given that hereditary actors were one of the categories of performer Kendal sought to privilege over Langtry). Marie Bancroft and Ellen Terry had both had two illegitimate children *after* becoming actresses, but then married – Kendal had written to Terry that the 'world' was once again 'at her feet' in

¹⁸⁵ MS. annotation to Evelyn Nesbit's copy of Ellen Terry, *The Story of My Life* (1909), Smallhythe Place Library.

¹⁸⁶ *Manners*, 148.

¹⁸⁷ 'The Lily in London', *PMG* (7 September 1889), 66–67, 67.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁹ *The Drama*, 23.

1877.¹⁹⁰ Similarly, before Charles Bancroft and Margaret Grimston's marriage, Kendal and Marie Bancroft were on apparently good terms: she gave Bancroft's niece Mary Collette (1871–1961) her professional debut in a September–November 1888 'farewell' tour (following the end of the Kendal-Hare partnership) and praised Collette's performance in Pinero's *The Squire* to the press.¹⁹¹ At the time of *The Drama*, Bernhardt was undoubtedly the greatest theatrical celebrity active in London, and an early advertiser, but, unlike Langtry, she had been an actress for twenty-two years by 1884, with her illegitimate son born during her career.¹⁹² Bernhardt's British celebrity depended more on 'legendary personal expenditure' and exoticism than 'wrong-doing' itself. Crucially, unlike Langtry, Bernhardt was deemed an electric performer, veering between 'wild delirium' and 'concentrated love and despair' in tragedy.¹⁹³ Langtry, however, had become notorious in 1879 when *Town Talk* magazine claimed in print that Ned Langtry would divorce his wife for adultery, citing the Prince of Wales as co-respondent. As Beatty notes, the scandal branded Langtry before 'the public, as an adventuress, whose notoriety was purchased at the expense of her own morals'.¹⁹⁴ Kendal's lasting antipathy towards Langtry makes it even likelier she was her primary target in 1884. In her autobiography, Kendal stated that in her 'humble opinion', Langtry was 'no artist. The divine spark had been lighted on her face' – a rather nasty image of Langtry-as-celestial-matchbox – 'and there it ended'.¹⁹⁵

Defining Langtry's identity was certainly a moral issue. While Kendal's bridal status inflected her debut as Rosalind, Langtry's reception stressed her sexual availability; unsurprising given her

¹⁹⁰ *DMK*, 27.

¹⁹¹ Bernard Ince, 'The Showman's Daughter', *Theatre Notebook* 66.3 (2012), 126–152, 127.

¹⁹² John Stokes, 'Sarah Bernhardt', *Bernhardt, Terry, Duse* (Cambridge: 1988), 13; John Stokes, 'Bernhardt, Sarah Henriette Rosine (1844–1923)', *DNB* [<http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/57574>, accessed 26 November 2012].

¹⁹³ 'Sarah Bernhardt', 24.

¹⁹⁴ 'Town Talk', quoted Beatty, 148.

¹⁹⁵ *DMK*, 251.

established cultural status. *Town Talk*'s 1879 article had condemned Langtry's modeling career for lacking 'modesty in posing to photographic artists' in 'suggestive attitudes, to leer and wink and simulate smiles [...] one degree below lewdness', claiming Langtry must 'disgust all respectable thinking women'.¹⁹⁶ Kendal's *The Drama* certainly evinces this disgust. However, there is evidence that her fellow-professionals and critics found Kendal's vaunted conservatism, aristocratic friendships and moral policing equally problematic. Weeks after *The Drama*, the Christmas cartoon in *Truth* included spoof advertisements. 'Kendal' offered a 'Testimonial' for a 'Purity Pill', claiming 'both I and my Willie, as well as many members of the Aristocracy whom we know' deemed the product ideal for any 'family on Stage and in Society'.¹⁹⁷ Timing and context link the attack on Kendal with her forays into authorship: the *Drama* had been published only weeks before, containing Kendal's first attacks on self-promotion via advertising, and the 'debasing' practice of excessive socialising. Most damningly, the idea of 'Purity' in 'Pill' form carried obvious implications of artificiality.

Truth highlighted Kendal's increasingly fraught relation to her profession. In 1887, the Kendals' energetic aristocratic networking ensured that they were the 'distinguished members of the theatrical profession' who gave the first 'dramatic representation before her Majesty' since Prince Albert's death, at Osborne: when Cathcart was chosen as co-performer, Madge noted privately that 'From this time Mr. & Mrs. Hare were no longer our friends'.¹⁹⁸ *The Drama* ended friendly relations with Henry Irving for its vicious allusions to Terry. Although Madge and Terry's relationship seems to have oscillated between friendship and cattiness until (at least) old age,

¹⁹⁶ 'Town Talk', quoted *Lillie Langtry*, 156.

¹⁹⁷ *Percy Fitzgerald Scrapbooks*, VII.304 (Garriick Club Library).

¹⁹⁸ 'A Stage Play at Osborne' (undated cutting), with MS. annotations, *Scrapbook*, 118.

when Kendal sent ‘Dear Nellie’ her ‘love To you + also to Edie’, Terry described her in private as ‘the most vulgar lady, I have ever met – or imagined – She is my idea of Hell’.¹⁹⁹

Actress Ina Rozant also attacks Kendal in her novel *Life’s Understudies* (1906). Heroine and young actress Georgie is ‘greatly disappointed’ at ‘the celebrated lady’ Mrs Tyndall, seen ‘off the stage’.²⁰⁰ Tyndall, ‘with plain features, reddish hair, turning grey’, worn under a ‘prim bonnet’, discouragingly ignores the conversation of ‘her husband, a well-preserved man’ in favour of ‘the knitting needles twirling rapidly in her fingers’.²⁰¹ Disparaged as unattractive, ostentatiously domestic and implicitly frigid, Tyndall is subsequently accused of hypocrisy. Georgie’s colleague Lulu ‘can’t bear that woman [...] Don’t she look prim? [...] as if she looked down on the whole profession and was ashamed she belonged to it! She’s made all her money out of it, though, and she’s just as much an actress as you an’ me’.²⁰² Despite Kendal’s claim to ‘love’, ‘honour’ and ‘reverence’ her profession, there were deepening fault lines between her attitude to her profession and fellow professionals. As theatrical and moral interloper, Langtry is the major locus for attack. Kendal’s 1901 attack on ‘the motor car effect that an actress often creates on entering a drawing-room – the tip-toe excitement, unrestrained curiosity’ most clearly recalls Langtry’s early London appearances; Kendal’s sneer that such celebrity actresses attract the ‘almost inevitable’ remark that ‘You can tell she’s an actress’ clearly catalysed the accusations of shame and disdain in

¹⁹⁹ Letter from Kendal to Terry (6 June [c. 1920]), British Library Loan MS 125/29/6, Smallhythe Library Z1,555. Letter from Terry to Shaw (31 October 1896), *ET Letters*, III.202. Terry sent Kendal a friendly letter (23 April 1918) in response to the gift of some flowers. Kendal also preserved the label on her first-night gift from Terry in *Merry Wives*, signed ‘from Meg Page’; *Scrapbook*, 299; 325.

²⁰⁰ Ina Rozant, *Life's Understudies* (London: T Sealey Clark, 1907), 26–7.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*

²⁰² *Ibid.*

Rozant's novel.²⁰³ In *Life's Understudies*, the gulf between Georgie, frenetically guarding her virginity via melodramatic monologues on the sufferings of 'a decent woman in this profession!' and Lulu's cheerful promiscuity complicates the suggestion that Lulu's assessment of Tyndall/Kendal as 'just as much an actress' carries the inherent accusation of immorality. More characteristic of contemporary attacks on Kendal is the reminder she 'made all her money out of acting'²⁰⁴. Lulu Lane's alliterative name recalls Lillie Langtry, and her pet mouse's name is Hayden Coffin, a singer with whom Langtry shared many provincial bills.²⁰⁵ *Life's Understudies* offers Georgie alternative models of 'an actress': of Tyndall and Lane, Lane is by far the most sympathetic. This has to be balanced with Vanbrugh's accounts of Kendal as exacting but nurturing. However, while indicating that Kendal's reputation was not unanimously poor, Vanbrugh's account is anomalous.

Equally intriguing is Swears's undated anecdote of Kendal at a charitable bazaar. Seated at a table of 'photographic tributes', Kendal is approached by a 'notorious and beautiful woman' who 'with insolent look' instigates the dialogue reprinted at the start of the chapter.²⁰⁶

'I understand that Mrs. Kendal is selling herself to-day.'

Quick as a flash Mrs. Kendal replied that that was not her profession. The lady did not turn a hair, but picking up one of her own photographs she drawled: 'What is the price of this one?'

'I understand that it varies,' returned Mrs. Kendal, 'but to-day it is five pounds.'

'How cheap,' murmured the beauty [...]

²⁰³ The Kendals' abhorrence of the stage as a profession for their children – unlike Irving, the Terrys, Campbell and the Bancrofts – might well have contributed to this impression.

²⁰⁴ *Life's Understudies*, 87; 26–7.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 27.

²⁰⁶ *When All's Said*, 153–154.

Whether Langtry was Kendal's 'beauty' is unknowable, but no other contemporary of Kendal's so clearly personified beauty and notoriety for mass culture. The anecdote's lexical slippages around selling, self, profession and price centre on the locus of a charitable bazaar, where the celebrity 'seller' was displayed to attract and facilitate commerce, and around photographs: the promotional product most associated with Langtry, as in *Town Talk*. However, juxtaposing Kendal's claim not to 'sell herself' with the display of her own 'photographic tributes', Swears alludes to the *Era*'s 1884 accusation of hypocrisy. Reviewing *The Drama*, the *Era* had condemned Kendal's combination of 'materialistic views' with 'Pharisaical superiority', pointing out 'one cannot walk along any main thoroughfare without seeing [Kendal's] photographic presentiments in every stationer's window'.²⁰⁷ At the bazaar, Kendal's 'quick as a flash' retort that self-selling is 'not her profession' is both literally untrue in that her 'photographic tributes' are also on the stall: she is selling herself in miniature, and recognises the relation between photograph and photographic subject as applied to the 'beauty', whose own price, Kendal claims, 'varies'.²⁰⁸ Most obviously, the unverifiable anecdote reiterates the age-old anxiety over similarities between female acting and the literal self-selling of prostitution: Kendal's assertion that 'selling herself' is 'not my profession' both defends acting and casts aspersion on the beauty's commercial strategies.²⁰⁹ However, most importantly, the beauty's opening remark recognises that both she and Kendal are participating in parallel strategies of self-selling and self-promotion, or what Beatty calls 'the creation of the saleable self'.²¹⁰ Both women are promoting themselves as photographic subjects, and simultaneously 'selling' themselves as both wealthy consumers and philanthropists. Swears, demonstrating these identities' instability and potential

²⁰⁷ 'Mrs. Kendal's Opinions,' *Era* (27 September 1884), 13.

²⁰⁸ *When's All Said*, 153–4.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

²¹⁰ *Lillie Langtry*, 149.

hypocrisy, evokes literature's most famous church bazaar scene: Becky Sharp's pious presence at a stall for 'the Destitute Orange-girl, the Neglected Washer-woman, the Distressed Muffin-man', and who 'cast down her eyes demurely, and smiled' when William and Amelia Dobbin flee her in horror.²¹¹ By this point in *Vanity Fair*, Becky is an adulteress, fraudster and possible murderess. Swears presents Kendal and Langtry as manipulating their images via a portfolio of legitimate and more questionable 'self-selling' strategies: Kendal's self-promotion was of longer standing, but Langtry's commercial identity was undoubtedly more protean. As Robertson noted, she had already inspired 'the Langtry bonnet, the Langtry shoe, even the Langtry dress-improver'.²¹²

Langtry as Rosalind: 1882

The anxieties around simulation, display and financial gain that had inflected Langtry's pre-theatrical career carried over to performance, where exposure occurred not in 'windows of shops', but onstage. *Town Talk* objected that Langtry's modelling gave "'Arry and Hedward an opportunity of passing indecent remarks about her' in the late 1870s."²¹³ The 1882 satirical press's coverage of her Rosalind functioned likewise:

How Mrs. Langtry, a clever woman and a woman of the world, could have made such a mistake I can't make out. *If they must be shown*, surely some other play might have been selected [...] not quite so long-winded and hard to act; and, besides, *they weren't shown after all* – that is, *there was too little shown, and at the same time, too much*.²¹⁴

Judy's article both dissects and enacts the structuring hypocrisy of Langtry's reception, juxtaposing disapproval at 'their' being 'too much' displayed with frustrated desire when 'they'

²¹¹ William Makepeace Thackeray, *Vanity Fair* (London: Bradbury & Evans, 1848), 624.

²¹² *Time Was*, 70.

²¹³ 'Who Is Mrs. Langtry?', quoted *Manners*, 156.

²¹⁴ 'The Only Jones', *Judy* (4 October 1882), 160.

are ‘too little shown’.²¹⁵ Logically, the correlative of ‘they’ is Langtry’s legs, indicated by subsequent discussion of her ‘short stockings’. The nature of Langtry’s ‘mistake’ is more ambiguous: is it her play choice, displaying her legs, or disappointing expectations of herself as ‘clever’ (and thus attuned to her audience’s wishes) and ‘a woman of the world’ by showing ‘too little’. Simultaneously, far from merely satirising righteous indignation at Langtry’s display of ‘short stockings!! Who *could* have imagined such a thing’, the pseudonymous correspondent actually participates in the disapproval, oscillating from an objection to *As You Like It* as ‘long-winded and hard to act’, to the complaint that Langtry’s ‘silk’ and ‘flimsy strapped shoes’ ‘burlesqued’ Rosalind.²¹⁶ The article’s conclusion admits this is ‘not, strictly speaking, a criticism of Mrs. Langtry’s acting’, but doubts ‘if one of a hundred crowding the theatre [...] cared a brass button for the acting’.²¹⁷ Langtry’s appearance and sexuality were far more important than her ability: *Judy*’s uneasy balance between satire and disapproval reflects contemporary critical ambivalence. Kendal ranked technically with Irving, whereas in 1882, Langtry was considered a sex object rather than an actress. Poetry inspired by the two actresses’ debuts as Rosalind underlines the disparity. Nannie Lambert’s bride-poem idealised Kendal in the 1869 *Orchestra*; *Judy*’s 1882 tribute to Langtry mimicked Orlando’s III.2 verses’ structure, but otherwise undermined Langtry’s performance in couplets satirising her popularity:

Common ‘pro’s’ for years may grind,
 Not so gentle Rosalind.
 Beauty and high birth combin’d
Must produce a Rosalind!
 [...]
 Streets with carriages are lined,

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

Audiences for Rosalind,
Braving chill September's wind
For the sake of Rosalind.
Rank and fashion, lately dined,
Flock to feast on Rosalind.
But I can't make up *my* mind,
To accept this Rosalind!²¹⁸

Sharing the prose article's uneasy inability to 'accept this Rosalind', the poem is considerably more suggestive in its depiction of Langtry's popularity and sexual transgression. The reference to 'Common 'pro's'' is probably solely an allusion to Langtry's lack of professional apprenticeship, the slang abbreviation for 'prostitute' not entering discourse until the twentieth century. However, given the orthographical similarities and the semantic prosody of 'common', there was still the possibility of allusion for the *fin-de-siècle* reader.²¹⁹ *Town Talk* had objected to Langtry's lack of 'high birth'; her family could not 'rank with the old stable nobility'.²²⁰ The 'high birth' of *Judy*'s poem more likely denotes the Prince of Wales or Prince Louis of Battenberg, with the obvious sexual pun on 'combin'd', ratifying the earlier innuendo of 'grind'.²²¹ Subsequent references to 'streets with carriages' offering 'audiences' corroborate this, connoting the movement of wealthy patrons to the theatre and the 'audiences' given by royalty to favourites. The depiction of 'rank and fashion' (the Prince of Wales embodied both) dining and then coming to the theatre to 'feast on Rosalind' elides two different approaches to Langtry. The first is purely visual: the audience 'feast their eyes' on Langtry, the star-in-embryo', who already embodied Stokes's criteria for stardom by being simultaneously, 'famous, charismatic, mythic'

²¹⁸ 'Rosalind ---- Mrs. Langtry', *Judy* (4 October 1882), 166.

²¹⁹ *OED* online, 'pro'.

²²⁰ 'Who Is Mrs. Langtry?', quoted *Lillie Langtry*, 156.

²²¹ 'Rosalind ---- Mrs. Langtry', 166.

and ‘palpably, undeniably, up there on the stage, in the here and now’.²²² But the verb offers alternative narratives of consumption: sexual, as well as ocular excess, as patrons, having already ‘dined’, come to Langtry to satisfy a different kind of appetite.

Langtry’s Rosalind also disrupted hermeneutical tradition. Generically, her strong emphasis on comedy overturned the ‘gentlewomanly’ Rosalind popularised by Faucit and partially upheld by Kendal. Although Kendal compared Shakespearean interpretation to Biblical exegesis, this complied with her overarching elevation of all theatrical processes, augmenting the status of her ‘noble profession’. Primarily, Kendal’s Rosalind was hermeneutically autobiographical, centralising the marriage of Orlando and Rosalind. Conversely, Langtry’s ‘short analysis as [she] interpreted’ Rosalind, which she ‘ventured to give’ in her autobiography, decentralised romance.²²³ Of Rosalind’s ‘first meeting with Orlando’, Langtry felt ‘there is not much to be said’; while Orlando ‘feels the pang of sudden love’, Rosalind does not ‘take the occasion too seriously’: in fact, without Orlando’s ‘curious mania’ for ‘hanging verses on trees’, Rosalind might plausibly have ‘thought no more’ of him.²²⁴ Langtry argues that Rosalind could not have behaved ‘so airily’ in the first wooing scene had she been ‘half as much in love with [Orlando] as she knew him to be with her’. Even when Rosalind subsequently falls for Orlando, Langtry’s account persistently centralises Rosalind’s responses, marginalising Orlando. Rosalind is ‘the coquette, the woman revelling in the whimsical courtship [...] often on the verge of revealing herself and just recovering her self-control in time’.²²⁵ Langtry emphasises Rosalind’s exploration and regulation of her own identities: the sense of the ‘whimsical courtship’ and

²²² ‘Varieties of Performance,’ 210.

²²³ *Days I Knew*, 229.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, 230.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, 231.

mock-marriage as relished emotional experiences, enjoyed for their own sake, is far stronger than Langtry's impression of Rosalind's passion. Langtry's verdict on the latter has an oddly cautionary ring: Rosalind falls 'as deeply in love as it is in Rosalind's nature to be'.²²⁶

Whereas Kendal's 'brand' as Rosalind derived partly from her relationship to Orlando, Langtry's Rosalind was a study in self-realisation for actress and character, each 'freed from unaccustomed control'. This, too, was unconventional. Cowden Clarke, in her 1887 didactic 'Shakespeare as the Girl's Friend' posited Shakespeare as the 'great poet-teacher' who offered girls and women exempla of 'womenkind's innate purity and devotion', the *purpose* of that devotion was its more assiduous application towards fathers and husbands.²²⁷ Despite Faucit's stated enjoyment of using what was 'best in myself' to construct Rosalind, she still argued that the supreme purpose of Shakespeare's women was to 'teach the part women [...] are meant to play' in bringing 'sweetness [...] help and moral strength into men's lives'.²²⁸ Conversely, Langtry's study disparages Orlando, questioning – like Corelli – his failure to recognise Ganymede as Rosalind:

is he really unsuspecting [...]? I have never analysed his character, I thought it better not [...] I must say the alacrity with which he is ready to rush into marriage with a girl he has only spoken five words to filled me with misgivings.²²⁹

The idea that Shakespeare's heroines were superior to his heroes was not new. Ruskin called Orlando 'the despairing toy of chance', who must be 'followed, comforted, saved by

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ 'Shakespeare as the Girl's Friend', 357.

²²⁸ Faucit, *Shakespeare's Female Characters*, 228.

²²⁹ *Days I Knew*, 231.

Rosalind’.²³⁰ However, Ruskin lacked Langtry’s ‘misgivings’: Orlando embodied his theory that Shakespeare’s heroines functioned as ‘infallibly faithful and wise counsellors’, adjuncts and props to male psychological growth, existing primarily in the ‘mode of help’, bound to the duties identified by Faucit.²³¹ For Ruskin, the imbalance between male and female wisdom was the structuring catalyst of the Shakespearean text, with the ‘catastrophe of every play’ created by the man, and ‘the redemption, if there be any’, by ‘the wisdom and virtue of a woman’.²³² For Langtry, however, there are implications both for Orlando’s character, and the whole play’s stability. Either Orlando is chronically unworthy of Rosalind or, more subversively, Langtry sees Orlando as under-developed and the text unsound: ‘better not’ to attempt an analysis the text potentially cannot withstand. Langtry’s criticism of Orlando further distances her from Kendal, whose unique selling point as Rosalind was the presupposition of her genuine love for Orlando – unsustainable in a hermeneutic scheme that devalued him as a character.

Langtry in 1890: Rosalind on ‘Rotten Row’

Even Langtry’s cross-dressing acquired startling new significance in the 1890 revival. Interviewed in the *Era*, Langtry said freely that the ‘charm of such a part’ as Rosalind derived from its ‘emancipation from petticoats’ and ‘sprightly freedom and abandon [...] donned with boy’s dress’.²³³ Even in her earlier productions, this ‘emancipation’ was clear to reviewers. One 1882 critic observed that ‘doublet and hose’ made ‘more free, more natural her speech, as well as her limbs’, enabling Langtry to move ‘with grace and ease; her action was ever free and

²³⁰ Ruskin, ‘Of Queen’s Gardens’, *Sesame and Lilies* (Yale: Yale UP, 2002), 68–94, 70–72.

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² Ibid.

²³³ ‘Mrs. Langtry Up North’, *Era* (31 October 1891), 12.

appropriate'.²³⁴ Abandoning the tradition of shame, Langtry said in her autobiography that man's dress was 'precisely the disguise [Rosalind] would have chosen' in which to face Orlando.²³⁵ While both Kendal and Langtry were deemed 'bewitching' when cross-dressed, only Langtry's cross-dressing transcended theatrical impact.

The relationship between *fin-de-siècle* theatre couture and contemporary journalism is exemplified by coverage of modern, modish dramas at the St. James's and Haymarket Theatres, by magazines such as *Queen* and *Woman's World*. Scholarship has foregrounded the evening gown as stage costume, positing the 'stage traffic' in women's bodies as provoking women's economic aspirations, and the erotic male gaze.²³⁶ Kaplan and Stowell argue in their brilliant *Theatre and Fashion* that male sexual desire for female 'fashion plates' helped create the first catwalk viewings in 1900.²³⁷ Although the *fin-de-siècle* actress in an up-to-the-minute couture gown must remain central to narratives of late-Victorian stage costume, the *fin de siècle* also saw the relationship between the theatrical and sartorial moment become multiple and polyvalent. Earlier costumes including *The Colleen Bawn*'s red cloak had been imitated by audiences, but now actresses themselves carried costumes into social life: Campbell's actress daughter Stella wore her Ellean Tanqueray costume to the wedding of the Prime Minister's son.²³⁸

This was the environment in which Langtry, after affirming her 'emancipation from petticoats' in the 1891 interview, immediately questioned why 'a dress had never been devised on such lines

²³⁴ 'Mrs. Langtry as Rosalind', *Era* (30 September 1882), 5.

²³⁵ *Days I Knew*, 230.

²³⁶ Joel H. Kaplan and Sheila Stowell, *Theatre and Fashion* (Cambridge: 1995), 2.

²³⁷ *Ibid*, 5.

²³⁸ Mrs. Patrick Campbell, *My Life and Some Letters* (London: Hutchinson, 1922), 216.

for country wear'.²³⁹ This was not an idle question: in 1884, American actress Eleanor Calhoun had worn her Ganymede costume, 'high leather boots and all' as a private guest at Coombe House.²⁴⁰ However, a costume for public town wear had been designed, as the *Era* journalist explained. A 'controversy [...] agitated London society about two years ago about ladies riding *a la cavalier*'.²⁴¹ 'Mrs. Langtry's Rosalind dress' had 'suggested the free, graceful and novel costume' adopted by 'advanced women' including 'Lady Florence Dixie'.²⁴² In June 1890, Dixie (suffragist, war correspondent and President of the British Ladies' Football Team) and two or three highly fashionable 'conspirators' had caused chaos by proposing to attend the Hyde Park Coaching Club's first meeting in breeches based on Langtry's costume.²⁴³ The outcome is unclear; the *Dundee Courier* said the 'horrible indelicacy' was avoided; but the *Era*'s discussion of women adopting the 'free, graceful and novel costume' suggests that some did, or, perhaps more importantly, that the link between Rosalind and cross-saddle riding was made in the public imagination, and subsequently people believed it had happened.²⁴⁴ Certainly, the Ipswich journalist interviewed one of the women who had planned to do so, 'young and decidedly good-looking' (not unlike Langtry and Dixie), who vowed to 'persevere'.²⁴⁵ Dixie's commitment to the 'Dress Question' was such that her 1905 obituary in the *Penny Illustrated* consisted entirely of an article she had written, in which the 'intrepid horsewoman' termed conventional fashion 'a

²³⁹ 'Mrs. Langtry Up North', *Era*, 12.

²⁴⁰ Princess Eleanor Lazarovich-Hrebelianovich [Eleanor Calhoun], *Pleasures and Palaces* (New York: The Century Company, 1915), 70.

²⁴¹ 'Mrs. Langtry Up North', 12.

²⁴² *Ibid.*

²⁴³ 'Metropolitan Gossip', *Belfast News-Letter* (26 May 1890), 7; 'Our London Letter', *Ipswich Journal* (7 June 1890), 5.

²⁴⁴ 'Our London Letter', *Dundee Courier* (2 June 1890), 5. 'The Coaching Club in Hyde Park', *Birmingham Post* (2 June 1890), 5.

²⁴⁵ 'Our London Letter', *Ipswich Journal*, 5.

monstrous stack of imbecilities', particularly condemning the riding habit, and continuing to recommend women used the cross saddle.²⁴⁶

The link was made most explicitly in March 1890 (the date of Langtry's London revival), with one female *Graphic* reader asking why 'the side saddle question' automatically saw women riders adopt 'the hideous masculine dress of the present day?' What, she asked, could 'be prettier than the dress worn by Mrs. Langtry as Rosalind?' *Judy*'s satirists, like the majority of male commentators, were wholly unimpressed, arguing that they didn't 'want Rotten Row turned into a Shakespearian Circus'.²⁴⁷ Arguably, however, Hyde Park was ideally placed for theatrical transformation. With its Serpentine, landscaped gardens and Speakers Corner, it was already spectacular. Its denizens included the prostitutes or 'park women' whom *London Labour and the London Poor* described as soliciting in Hyde Park between 'five and ten' (before moving to Green Park), political speakers, tourists, protestors, and celebrity riders.²⁴⁸ By the *fin de siècle*, Hyde Park was a place for performing a range of identities, some respectable and some not. As spaces for discovery, self-discovery, impersonation and desire, the Renaissance Arden and Victorian urban green space were not dissimilar. In taking the signifier of Langtry's performance to Hyde Park, women could simultaneously imitate a fashion icon, and perform their own 'emancipation from petticoats' in an urban Forest of Arden.²⁴⁹ Performing Langtry's act of cross-dressing offered them dual benefits: Langtry's aesthetic appeal, and her enhanced physical freedom. Although a vocal speechmaker outside performance, Kendal was ultimately 'the first of

²⁴⁶ Florence Dixie, 'Comely Dress for Women', *Penny Illustrated* (18 November 1905), 15.

²⁴⁷ 'The Call Boy', *Judy* (12 March 1890), 124.

²⁴⁸ Henry Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor* (London: Charles Griffiths and Co., 1862 ed), 4 vols, IV.242.

²⁴⁹ 'Mrs. Langtry Up North'.

the *home-loving* artists', upholding rather than destroying the domestic hegemony; Langtry's disruptive political and sexual significances were part of her performance.²⁵⁰ As the controversy indicates, Langtry's 'distinct personal possibilities' were both sexual and sartorial: although both actresses would go on to advocate for women's suffrage with the AFL, Langtry's status as catalyst was possible only because she was already an acknowledged fashion and beauty icon, who altered theatre by complicating its priorities. The controversy illustrates not only *fin-de-siècle* Shakespeare representation's increasing inflection by contemporary movements, but also its capacity to galvanise political debate.

Legitimacy at last: the 1890 revival

Langtry's 1890 reception was infinitely more favourable than in 1882. The eight-year interim had given Langtry extensive professional experience in Britain and America. In her autobiography, Langtry acknowledged the difficulties of the transition; learning to act 'was such a constant worry' that she 'wonder[ed] if it could be my native language I was engaged in speaking'.²⁵¹ However, her immediate attitude to the profession was one of entitlement. Writing privately to Earl Wharncliffe, she asked rhetorically,

Why shouldn't I act. I don't mean without previous hard study for I should love it as an art & should wish to excel – Do you think I should succeed. After all look at women like Neilson making 100 a night in America, & you will admit that she is not over-burdened with intellect. I am very persevering really & would work hard.²⁵²

²⁵⁰ 'Mrs. Kendal', *Theatre* (April 1883), 214.

²⁵¹ *Lillie Langtry*, 214.

²⁵² 1880 letter to Edward Montagu-Stuart-Wortley-Mackenzie (1827–1899), quoted *Lillie Langtry*, 51.

Unfortunately for Kendal, Langtry had identified the professional opportunities Kendal articulated in 1884: the ‘competence’ which Langtry turned to riches, and the ‘blessedness of independence’ which gave Langtry the volition to renegotiate her ‘saleable self’ with the world.²⁵³ The result was competition for one of Kendal’s most popular roles. Langtry’s 1890 *As You Like It* opened in a significantly different theatrical marketplace from that of 1882. Categories of theatrical representation were cross-fertilising: Kendal had legitimised Shakespeare’s ‘Piccadillying’ with the 1885 revival, and Terry as Lady Macbeth (1888–9) had defied contemporary expectations regarding actress typology.²⁵⁴ Celebrity culture was also intensifying, in both image and text. From 1870 to 1900, newspaper circulation increased by 400%, while celebrity photographers including Frederick Hollyer were most active between 1880 and 1900.²⁵⁵ In 1882, Langtry’s audacity in attempting Rosalind had shocked; now, the *Morning Post* praised Langtry’s ‘courage and good taste’ in choosing *As You Like It* and her ‘tender and passionate’ acting.²⁵⁶ Reviewers also consistently praised Langtry’s ‘hard work’ and ‘study’, reflecting the beginnings of a cultural shift from the elevation of female artlessness towards appreciating female skill.²⁵⁷ The 1890 reviews demonstrate the success of Langtry’s theatrical apprenticeship through her 1880s tours. This apprenticeship did not derive from the paternalistic model of family companies that had privileged and protected Madge Robertson, but from Langtry’s ability to develop her own artistic legitimacy as a result of her financial viability as a celebrity. This combination of celebrity thrill and artistic maturity ideally placed Langtry to fulfil

²⁵³ *Dramatic Opinions*, 31; *Lillie Langtry*, 149.

²⁵⁴ ‘Slashes and Puffs’, *Fun* (18 February 1885), 66; see Chapter Two.

²⁵⁵ Ernest Cashmore, *Celebrity/Culture* (Oxford: Taylor & Francis, 2006), 57.

²⁵⁶ ‘St. James’s Theatre’, *MP* (25 February 1890), 5.

²⁵⁷ ‘The London Theatres’, *Era* (1 March 1890), 16.

the dual purposes of 1880s theatre, as identified by one American correspondent: to offer ‘endless gossip to the trivial, and intellectual interest to the serious’.²⁵⁸

Apart from the consistent compliments above, Langtry’s 1890 praise was, however, notably disparate. The *Daily News* commended her ‘uncontrollable laughter’; the *Standard* her innovation in a potentially ‘exhausted’ play.²⁵⁹ The *Graphic* celebrated Langtry as ‘beautiful’ and ‘intensely fashionable’; the *Saturday Review* enjoyed her ‘frank attraction’ to Orlando, while the *Era* praised her ‘maidenly modesty’.²⁶⁰ *Reynolds’s* description of Rosalind as ‘the rainbow-tinted child of our fancy’ partly glosses Langtry’s heterogeneous acclaim.²⁶¹ From an early nineteenth-century narrative of the iterations of successive ideals, Rosalind herself had become as ‘protean’ and ‘multiple’ as the actresses who played her, illustrating the diversification of Shakespeare interpretation and performance.²⁶² At their respective heights, Kendal and Langtry signified radically different conceptions of femininity to the public. However, both understood the importance of negotiating ‘saleable selves’ with that public, to negotiate and renegotiate the theatrical marketplace.²⁶³ Accordingly, they achieved ‘stardom’ in their own right, exploiting Rosalind to shape their personae and reiterate their talent and agency. Their portrayals of Rosalind modelled the ‘blessedness of independence’ in diverse areas of impact: political speech, and dress reform. As future AFL members, they provide diverse antecedents of actresses’ roles in the suffrage cause, in which Shakespeare would continue to be heavily implicated.

²⁵⁸ Quoted Amy Henderson, ‘Media and the Rise of Celebrity Culture’, *OAH Magazine of History* (Spring 1992), 49–54, 50.

²⁵⁹ ‘The Drama’, *Daily News* (2 February 1890), 15; ‘St. James’s Theatre’, *Standard* (25 February 1890), 3.

²⁶⁰ ‘Theatres’, *Graphic* (1 March 1890), 259; ‘Mrs. Langtry’s Rosalind’, *Saturday Review* (1 March 1890), 258; ‘The London Theatres’, *Era* (1 March 1890), 16.

²⁶¹ ‘Public Amusements’, *Reynolds’s* (2 March 1890), 8.

²⁶² ‘Varieties of Performance’, 210.

²⁶³ Beatty, 149.

Langtry's account of investigating and constructing Rosalind, in centralising her own performance, evinces a move towards individualism in actor preparation. Rather than a hermeneutical process governed by inherited tradition, Langtry's lack of concern about antecedent interpretations, or the fellow-performers' demands, moves towards the twentieth-century notion of a theatrical role as 'discovered' by the actor for him or herself in some degree of collaboration with the director, rather than an attempt to reproduce or accommodate the aesthetic and interpretative preferences of a stock company or a popular predecessor's style. Langtry's disruptive professional advent ideally suited her to the increasingly ambiguous, fragmentary world of 1880s Shakespeare performance. By 1890, she was remodelling herself as an artist of intelligence and business acumen, her cultural polyvalence accommodating heterogeneous praise. Her modernity and, thus, her modern Rosalind, are visible in Viola Allen's view of Rosalind in a 1916 article on Shakespeare's heroines, 'Seen as Modern Types, People of Today'.²⁶⁴ Allen wrote of 'how contemporary' Rosalind was, not a 'Patient Grizel', but 'that modern type, the woman of direct, brave, and intelligent action'.²⁶⁵

Kendal and Terry both theorised commercial success in terms of effect exerted on audiences: the 'peculiar charm' of 'drawing' audiences.²⁶⁶ Langtry's sexual appeal achieved this, but the variety of acclaim she received in 1890 signals less the possession of a fixed 'power', than her ability to embody, as Rosalind, multiple, mutable identities. Reviewers were now able to project their own desires and theories of Rosalind onto Langtry: she could now be whatever they wanted her to be.

²⁶⁴ Viola Allen, 'The Heroines as Viewed from the Stage – and Seen as Modern Types, People of Today', *NYT* (5 March 1916), ST2–3.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁶ *An Actor's Art*, 161.

Chapter Two

Bad women, good wives: Ellen Terry as Lady Macbeth

“Horrible murder” without. Horrible murder within.’

On 29 December 1888, *Macbeth* opened at London’s Lyceum Theatre. The leads, Henry Irving and Ellen Terry, were at the height of their twenty-year partnership. Whilst Irving had successfully played Macbeth in 1875, Terry, best-loved for roles like Beatrice (*Much Ado About Nothing*) and the innocent Olivia (in W.G. Wills’s adaptation of *The Vicar of Wakefield*) played Lady Macbeth for the first time: an apparently extreme example of casting against type. A month before *Macbeth*’s first night, the magazine *Bow Bells* reported that ‘speculation [...] [grew] daily’ regarding the production; especially over the ‘theory afloat’ about Terry’s ‘rendering’ of Lady Macbeth.¹ Rumour claimed Terry was preparing not ‘the orthodox [...] bold and utterly bad character’, but a Lady Macbeth whose ‘motive’ was not ‘ambition, but love for her husband’. The magazine deemed the gossip ‘ingenious, if not likely’.² Subsequently, publications began offering readers ‘the future in the instant’, eliding Terry’s unseen interpretation with views not entirely her own.³ *Bow Bells*’s ‘theory’ – a ‘leak’, in modern journalism – obviously originated within the Lyceum. The Lyceum business manager, Bram Stoker, was a possible source, supervising with Irving ‘a team of writers who supplied paragraphs to the London papers’.⁴ On 23 November, *Bow Bells* deemed Terry’s hermeneutical departure unlikely; such an interpretation ‘would not be the

¹ ‘Theatrical Notes’, *Bow Bells* (23 November 1888), 334.

² Ibid.

³ *Macbeth*, I.5.58. All Shakespeare line references are to the *Shakespeare Collection* database (Gale Cengage: 2013) [<http://ezproxy.ouls.ox.ac.uk:2262/shax/start.do?prodId=SHAX&userGroupName=oxford&finalAuth=true>, accessed 1 June 2013].

⁴ Lynn Voskuil, *Acting Naturally* (Charlottesville: UVA Press, 2004) 200.

Lady Macbeth of Shakspeare [sic].⁵

In 1888, the ‘Lady Macbeth of Shakspeare’ remained that of Sarah Siddons (1755–1831). Siddons had played Lady Macbeth between 1779 and her 1819 retirement.⁶ The performance Hazlitt deemed ‘tragedy personified’ endured in imagination; like Charles Lamb in 1812, when the Victorians discussed Lady Macbeth, most were ‘in reality [...] thinking of Mrs S’.⁷ Although she wrote of Lady Macbeth as ‘fair, feminine and fragile’, Siddons’s performance inspired the received nineteenth-century image of Lady Macbeth as a physically aggressive virago, or, as Terry’s lectures described the tradition, as ‘abnormally hard, abnormally cruel [...] with the muscles of a prize-fighter’.⁸ Despite Siddons having died in 1831, she is the predecessor most often mentioned in journalistic anticipations and receptions of Terry’s performance; in contrast Helena Faucit, a successful Lady Macbeth between the 1840s and 1870s, is mentioned briefly by three publications.⁹

Shortly before the Lyceum *Macbeth* opened, Joe Comyns-Carr, art critic, gallery director and husband of Alice Comyns-Carr (Terry’s costume designer) published *Macbeth and Lady Macbeth*. This essay turned scarcely-believed gossip about Terry’s revolutionary interpretation into anticipated fact; the *Daily News* typified journalistic response by receiving Comyns-Carr’s

⁵ ‘Theatrical Notes’, 334.

⁶ Robert Shaughnessy, ‘Siddons, Sarah (1755–1831)’, *DNB*, [<http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/25516>, accessed 15 Sept 2012].

⁷ Michael R. Booth, ‘Sarah Siddons’, Booth, John Stokes and Susan Bassnett (eds), *Three Tragic Actresses* (Cambridge: 2006), 10–66, 10; Charles Lamb, ‘On Shakespeare’s Tragedies’, *Works of Charles Lamb* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1838), II.349–364, 350.

⁸ Quoted Penny Farfan, *Women, Modernism and Performance* (Cambridge: 2004) 39; Ellen Terry, *Four Lectures* (London: Martin Hopkinson, 1932), 160.

⁹ ‘The Theatres’, *Daily News* (24 December 1888), 6; “‘Macbeth’ at the Lyceum”, *Glasgow Herald* (31 December 1888), 7; ‘Our London Correspondence’, *Liverpool Mercury* (31 December 1888), 5.

‘quasi-defence’ of the ‘new view’ of Lady Macbeth as a ‘forecast’ of Terry’s performance.¹⁰ The ‘canary-coloured’ pamphlet, evoking Parisian publishing, looked *fin-de-siècle* enough to be ‘new’, and politicised *Macbeth*’s staging of gender. Comyns-Carr positioned the Macbeths as ‘embodiment and expression of the contrasted characteristics of sex’, with the ‘essentially feminine’ Lady Macbeth typifying women’s ‘mental and moral characteristics’.¹¹ The *Era* found Comyns-Carr’s divisive ‘forecast’ ‘apropos’ when ‘so many minds’ were ‘forming anticipations’ of ‘the demolition of the popular idea of Lady Macbeth’ – only one publication also expected ‘novel readings’ from Irving.¹² Some audience members took *Macbeth and Lady Macbeth* with them to the performance; before the house opened on 29 December, one theatregoer was seen ‘groping for truth and information’ in Comyns-Carr’s ‘pamphlet’.¹³

Macbeth’s timing intensified public interest. Scheduling the opening between Christmas and the New Year ensured that editors would focus heavily on the Lyceum, in compensation for the traditionally slow news week. The *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent* felt that even Irving would not have received ‘anything like’ the coverage with Parliament in session.¹⁴ The other major news story, the Ripper killings, intensified interest in *Macbeth*. As far afield as Edinburgh, the *Scots Observer*’s ‘Notes’ section swung from the ‘beautiful’ *Macbeth* to the ‘disgusting’ murders in consecutive paragraphs. The *Glasgow Herald* similarly reported *Macbeth*’s first night alongside speculation on the Ripper’s knowledge of anatomy.¹⁵ Increasingly, Irving’s hotly-

¹⁰ ‘The Theatres’, *Daily News* (24 December 1888), 6; ‘The Week’, *Athenaeum* (5 Jan 1889), 25.

¹¹ Joseph Comyns-Carr, *Macbeth and Lady Macbeth* (London: Bickers, 1889), 12–13.

¹² ‘Harrow Music School’, *Era* (22 December 1888), 7.

¹³ ‘Lyceum Theatre’, *Birmingham Daily Post* (31 December 1888), 5.

¹⁴ ‘Our London Letter,’ *SRI* (1 January 1889), 5.

¹⁵ ‘Notes’, *The Scots Observer* (5 January 1889). 176.

anticipated production shared space with the murders, in both the popular press and the popular imagination. The killings became a context of the production's reception.

Although the five women now accepted as Ripper victims had died by 9 November 1888, public panic persisted through *Macbeth*'s rehearsals and opening.¹⁶ On 21 November, the day of Ripper victim Mary Kelly's funeral, an attack on Spitalfields prostitute Annie Farmer saw an hysterical lynch mob of 'thousands upon thousands' search the East End for the Ripper.¹⁷ On 20 December, Whitechapel resident Rose Mylett's strangulation reignited the terror; by Boxing Day, Mylett was erroneously named as the Ripper's 'latest victim'.¹⁸ Clustered around reportage on the murders were hundreds of letters to newspapers, each supposedly from the killer; a mentally-ill German, Theophil Hanhart, even declared himself the Ripper two days before *Macbeth* opened.¹⁹

As columnist Mary Augusta Ward noted in December 1888, the Ripper killings had created 'a taste just now for the horrible'; this 'taste' intensified interest in *Macbeth*'s subject matter.²⁰ As *PMG* noted, frenetic journalistic emphasis on 'Murder' was 'attun[ing] the minds of those who had seats in the Lyceum' to *Macbeth*'s violence.²¹ On 29 December, the back page of *PMG*'s late edition described the 'fearful murder and mutilation' of Bradford schoolboy John Gill, 'worse' than the 'fiendish East-End crimes'. Meanwhile, the front page saw *PMG* spoof-

¹⁶ Modern scholarship recognizes five victims of the original 'Ripper': Mary Ann Nichols (31 August); Annie Chapman (8 September); Elizabeth Stride and Catherine Eddowes (30 September) and Mary Kelly (9 November).

¹⁷ 'Attempted Murder in Whitechapel', *Freeman's* (22 November 1888), 6; 'Attempted Murder in Whitechapel', *SRI* (22 November 1888), 6.

¹⁸ 'Supposed Murder at Poplar', *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper* [hereafter *Lloyd's*] (30 December 1888), 12.

¹⁹ Lewis Perry Curtis, *Jack the Ripper and the London Press* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2001), 239; 'The Whitechapel Murders', *Sunday Times* (23 December 1888), [http://www.casebook.org/press_reports/sunday_times/881223.html/, accessed 7 December 2010].

²⁰ Mary Augusta Ward, 'Social Echoes', *London Society* (December 1888), 666.

²¹ 'The House', *PMG* (31 December 1888), 6.

interview Shakespeare regarding Irving and Terry's anticipated performances, in an article entitled 'The Macbeth Murder Case'.²² While *PMG* reported Gill's mutilations, salaciously specifying how Gill's 'members' were 'thrust into his stomach', London's most popular actors starred in regicide, infanticide, horror and terror at London's leading theatre, now with the added frisson of a *real* murderer stalking the capital.²³ The result was, as *PMG* noted, "'Horrible murder'" without. Horrible murder within'.²⁴

Reflecting Ward's 'taste for the horrible', *PMG*'s 'Macbeth Murder Case' reframed the play as contemporary crime. However, despite the Ripper's presumed maleness, 'Macbeth Murder Case' emphasised its murderess, Lady Macbeth. The murderess fascinated Victorians in literature – via sensation heroines such as Lucy Audley – and life. Moreover, Lady Macbeth's behaviour appeared to confirm modern criminological theory: Havelock Ellis's *The Criminal* (1890) would argue that a woman wanting to commit a crime 'usually finds a man to do it for her'.²⁵ The 'Macbeth Murder Case' was the inevitable outcome of *Macbeth*'s collision with the Whitechapel murders. The relationship illuminates the general 'taste [...] for the horrible' and the particular anxieties of staging Lady Macbeth at that moment.²⁶ By 29 December, newspaper coverage of the Ripper emphasised potential 'copy-cat' murderers, reinforcing concerns about mimesis and imitation. *PMG* worried that 'the Whitechapel tragedies' had 'inflamed' John Gill's murderer to 'emulation of their worst features'.²⁷ The *Aberdeen Journal* reported that Gill suspect William Barrett had been 'very singularly affected by reading' the Ripper coverage, one column over

²² 'Fearful Murder and Mutilation', and 'The Macbeth Murder Case', *PMG* (29 December 1888), 8; 1.

²³ 'Fearful Murder', 8.

²⁴ 'The House', *PMG* (31 December 1888), 6.

²⁵ Havelock Ellis, *The Criminal* (London: W. Scott, 1890), 216.

²⁶ Ward, 'Social Echoes', 666.

²⁷ 'Fearful Murder', 8.

from extensive discussion of *Macbeth* as a ‘national event’.²⁸ The murder reports’ proximity to the Lady Macbeth-centric theatre journalism allowed mutual disambiguation. Both stories centre on contested, terrifying, fascinating figures: one of whom was explicitly – and one implicitly, given theatre’s mimetic nature – likely to beget imitators.

Murderous bodies: ‘thirteen-stone woman’ vs. ‘seven-stone sylph’

The *PMG* ‘Macbeth Murder Case’ asked ‘Shakespeare’ about Lady Macbeth’s physical appearance. Women’s bodies were an obsession *Macbeth* reviewers increasingly shared with journalists describing the Ripper’s crimes. *PMG*’s spoof ‘Shakespeare’ claimed to think of Lady Macbeth ‘as a handsome woman’ and ‘feminine’, but avowed he would ‘back a thirteen-stone woman against a seven-stone sylph in the part’.²⁹ This dichotomy persisted: *Punch*’s satire on the ‘Lady Macbeth Puzzle’ discussed Lady Macbeth’s weight: ‘Some say she was meant to be thin, /Some say she was meant to be fat’.³⁰ *PMG*’s spoof does not name Terry, but its timing, references to Irving and Joe Comyns-Carr, and emphasis on Lady Macbeth implicitly allude to her imminent performance.

Both the ‘thirteen-stone woman’ and ‘seven-stone sylph’ are necessarily exaggerated bodily categories, and this comment’s implications for Terry remain obscure. Today, when a slender or underweight body is a virtual pre-requisite for successful female celebrity, Terry seems large, not ‘sylph-like’. Gail Marshall, in a book analysing actresses’ corporeality, describes her as ‘of ample

²⁸ ‘Latest London News’, and ‘The Bradford Murder’, *Aberdeen Weekly* (1 January 1889), 5.

²⁹ ‘Macbeth Murder Case’.

³⁰ ‘The Lady Macbeth Puzzle’, *Punch* (5 January 1889), 6.

build'.³¹ Terry certainly diverges from the subsequent *fin-de-siècle* body type, which Sarah Bernhardt and Mrs. Patrick Campbell epitomised. Graham Robertson called Campbell 'painfully thin', and she was caricatured as skeletal during *The Second Mrs Tanqueray*'s run.³²

It is difficult to identify Terry with 'Shakespeare's' 'thirteen-stone woman'. Demonstrably lacking Siddons's 'prize-fighter' physique, or the stolidity of the older Ellen Tree, surviving images of Terry fall between the 'sylph' and 'thirteen-stone' categories. Nevertheless, contemporary descriptions of Terry demonstrate the limitations of static photographs as a guide to her performance, destabilising recent critical descriptions of Terry as 'statuesque'.³³ Marshall argues that 'Terry's charm was inseparable from her statuesque grace', and Terry's excellent aesthetic and pictorial instincts certainly made her essential to Irving's 'living pictures'.³⁴ However, reviewers consistently praised her 'grace' of movement, from Beatrice's 'lapwing run' to Imogen's 'happy haste'. Henry James even condemned Terry's Portia for too much movement; she 'played with her fingers' and was 'too osculatory' with Bassanio.³⁵ Marshall cites the 'classical draperies' in which Godwin costumed Terry for Tennyson's *The Cup* as evidence of how the actress-as-statue motif reduced Terry to the 'signification of robes'.³⁶ Nevertheless, critics actually responded to the robes' movement, rather than their static image. As Scott noted, 'in the midst of [...] scenic allurements glide the classical draperies of Ellen Terry'; Terry contributed animation to the aesthetics.³⁷ Shaw's favourite 'point' in *Olivia* was a 'glimpse' of

³¹ Gail Marshall, *Actresses on the Victorian Stage* (Cambridge: 1998), 159.

³² Graham Robertson, *Time Was* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1931), 248; Edward Reed, 'Played Out; or, The 252nd Mrs. Tanqueray', *Punch* (5 May 1894), 208.

³³ Marshall, *Actresses*, 100.

³⁴ Mrs Ormiston Chant, *Why We Attacked the Empire* (London: Marshall, 1895), 21.

³⁵ Clement Scott, *Ellen Terry* (London: Stokes, 1900), 16; Mrs Patrick Campbell, *My Life and Some Letters*, 130.

³⁶ Marshall, *Actresses on the Victorian Stage*, 102.

³⁷ Clement Scott, *From The Bells to King Arthur* (London: John Macqueen, 1896), 201.

the fleeing Terry ‘as she passes the window in her flight’; Joseph Knight’s favourite ‘point’ when Terry with ‘greatness’ repelled her seducer.³⁸ In portraits, the positions Terry negotiated with artists were designed to look like the pose of a single moment; inhaling a flower’s scent in Watt’s *Choosing* (c. 1864), and the second before Lady Macbeth crowns herself (Sargent, 1889). Marshall calls the latter portrait ‘towering in the stillness [...] almost sculptural’.³⁹ This is debatable: Lady Macbeth is mid-gesture, the crown about to plunge downwards again. The critical paradigm for describing Terry as light, active and mobile persisted even when problematic. In 1903, Terry (aged fifty-six) played an elderly fisherwoman in *The Good Hope*. Although, to convey ‘roughness and stolidity’ Terry ‘stumped about in large sabots’, enraptured reviewers claimed she moved ‘like a fairy’. ‘If so,’ Terry concluded, ‘I am a very bad actress’; the description was ‘Too bad’.⁴⁰

Rather than “statuesque” stillness or heaviness, Terry’s physical shape, dress (in Aesthetic, draped fashions to which Godwin had introduced her) and performances accrued meanings of strength, lightness, flexibility and femininity, connoting another body type: the flexible, agile, curved body, capable of exertion. In contrast to Campbell and Bernhardt’s ‘fin de sickly’ thin bodies, Viv Gardner has demonstrated the theatricality popularity of the healthy female body, notably in musical comedy. This responded to the spread of tennis, cycling and golf as women’s pastimes, and the rise of physical education within women’s schools and colleges.⁴¹

³⁸ Frank Dukore (ed.), *Bernard Shaw: The Drama Observed 1880–1895* (University of Pennsylvania State Press, 1993), 45; Joseph Knight, quoted Charles Hiatt, *Ellen Terry*, 168.

³⁹ Marshall, *Actresses*, 126.

⁴⁰ *The Story of My Life* Terry’s copy (Smallhythe Place Library), 321 and MS. annotations.

⁴¹ Viv Gardner. ‘Gertie Millar and the “Rules for Actresses and Vicars’ Wives”’, Martin Banham and Jane Milling (eds). *Extraordinary Actors* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2004), 97–119.

In ‘The Macbeth Murder Case’, ‘Shakespeare’s’ assertion that ‘genius [...] made Pritchard genteel and Garrick six feet high’ acknowledges exceptional performers’ ability to transcend their corporeality for audiences. Terry, ‘treading on air’ and ‘Peter Pan at eighty’, according to Ellaline Terriss, could accordingly transcend her actual height and weight, to appear a ‘sylph’.⁴² Terry’s active modernity and accrued meanings challenged the traditional iconography of the ‘thirteen-stone woman’ of the ‘Macbeth Murder Case’. *PMG*’s ‘Shakespeare’ also dismissed any notion of Lady Macbeth’s *emotional* ‘fragility’ and repentance; asked whether Lady Macbeth feels ‘remorse’, Shakespeare denies it.⁴³ Although Hazlitt had described *Siddons* as displaying ‘an ever-burning fever of remorse’, cultural memorialisation of Siddons’s performance had travelled so far by 1888 that the remorse journalists anticipated in Terry’s performance was seen as a departure from Siddons’s interpretation.

‘Most women break the law during their lives’

Re-reading the Lyceum *Macbeth* alongside crime reportage reveals diverse attitudes to *Macbeth*’s relation to ‘real life’. While *PMG* headlined its *Macbeth* satire as if it were ‘true crime’, Comyns-Carr’s essay disparaged any ‘advocacy’ of Lady Macbeth that offered the reader a ‘brief in the lady’s favour’ or a ‘forensic’ application of Lady Macbeth to modern life.⁴⁴ His argument reveals a gulf between his intentions, and Terry’s. Her letter to the critic Clement Scott (written two days into *Macbeth*’s run) explicitly justified her interpretation of Lady Macbeth by extrapolating lived experience and ‘womens secrets’:⁴⁵

⁴² Ellaline Terriss, *By Herself and with Other People* (London: Cassell & Company, 1928), 11.

⁴³ ‘The Macbeth Murder Case’.

⁴⁴ *Macbeth and Lady Macbeth*, 8.

⁴⁵ Letter to Clement Scott (31 December 1888), Katharine Cockin (ed.), *Collected Letters of Ellen Terry* (hereafter *ET Letters*) (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2010–12), 1.214–216.

[...] although certainly I know I cannot do what I want to do in this part, I don't even want to be 'a fiend' & won't believe for a moment Cant believe for a moment that she did 'conceive' that murder = that one murder of which she is accused = most women break the law during their lives, ~~but~~ few women realise the consequences of ~~wh~~ that they do to day = In my memory I have facts, & I use them for (not for my 'methods' in my work <that's where I fail, so dismally in this> but for) reading women who have lived, & can't speak & tell me = I am quite top full of – ~~dr~~ (not direst cruelty I hope but) – womens secrets = (& I have my own !!!) & my women – my friends – were not wicked -- & you say *I'm* not = !!⁴⁶

Implicating 'most women' in her experience, Terry universalises rather than pathologises Lady Macbeth.⁴⁷ Contrasting with her despondent dismissal of her abilities – she believes she 'cannot do what I want to do' and has failed 'dismally' – Terry asserts her lived reminiscences of female experience as doubly-underlined 'facts'.⁴⁸ These 'womens secrets', implicitly women's property, constitute a body of knowledge from which Scott is barred by sex.⁴⁹ Audaciously, Terry positions herself both as an hermeneutical authority, refusing to play a 'fiend' or 'believe for a moment' in Lady Macbeth's infanticide, and a moral arbiter: her sources for Lady Macbeth, 'my women – my friends' are 'not wicked'.⁵⁰

Terry's emphasis on 'law' and 'facts' (of which she is 'top full') creates a 'brief' in *all* ladies' 'favour[s]' that defies Comyns-Carr.⁵¹ Terry's emphasis also diverges from that of her biographer, Nina Auerbach, whose account of *Macbeth* emphasises Terry's performance as autobiographical, intended to 'tell audiences about herself'.⁵² Auerbach's idea that Terry wanted to 'speak to and for' wives is based primarily on the debatable argument that Terry's life and

⁴⁶ Ibid, 214.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Letter to William Winter, reprinted Auerbach, *Ellen Terry*, 259–60; Letter to Scott, (31 December 1888), *ET Letters* I.214.

⁵¹ Ibid., *Macbeth and Lady Macbeth*, 8.

⁵² Auerbach, *Ellen Terry*, 252.

‘stage marriage’ to Irving made her ‘the pattern of all wives’, telling ‘her story through and not beyond the character she played’.⁵³ Auerbach’s lens remains resolutely confessional: Lady Macbeth was Ellen Terry ‘trying to confess’ to an ‘unsanctioned, forbidden, powerful self’.⁵⁴ Similarly Booth sees in Sargent’s portrait the revelation of ‘a hidden Ellen Terry’ rather than a depiction of Lady Macbeth.⁵⁵ This emphasis simplifies the comment on female experience that Terry was trying to make.

Like Comyns-Carr’s denial of the ‘forensic approach’ that clearly informed Terry’s methodology, other pre-commentaries misreported Terry’s view of Lady Macbeth’s personal ambition.⁵⁶ Echoing *Bow Bell*’s earlier claims, the *Daily News* asserted Terry’s Lady would be ‘not ambitious on her own account but merely out of love for her husband’.⁵⁷ Comyns-Carr’s pamphlet similarly denies her ‘vaunting ambition’, attributing her readiness to murder Duncan to ‘surrender to [Macbeth’s] will’.⁵⁸ In fact, Terry’s promptbook annotations clearly indicate her belief that ‘Lady M- was ambitious[.] Her husband’s letters aroused intensely the desire to be Queen –’.⁵⁹ Moreover, while the *Daily News* thought that the interpretation of an unambitious Lady Macbeth was necessary to ‘save’ the character’s ‘womanliness’, Terry’s promptbook asserted that it was ‘true [to] woman’s nature, even more than a man’s to crave power – and power’s display’, repeating again that ‘Lady M was ambitious’.⁶⁰

⁵³ Ibid., 254–7. For a fuller discussion of why the concept of the Irving-Terry ‘stage marriage’ is limiting, see Chapter Four.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 257; 263.

⁵⁵ Booth, 108.

⁵⁶ *Macbeth and Lady Macbeth*, 8.

⁵⁷ ‘Theatrical Notes’, *Bow Bells* (23 November 1888), 334; ‘The Theatres,’ *Daily News* (24 December 1888), 6.

⁵⁸ *Macbeth and Lady Macbeth*, 26.

⁵⁹ Smallhythe EV2.18, *Macbeth* promptbook 1 (hereafter *Macbeth I*), MS. annotation, 19v.

⁶⁰ *Daily News* (24 December 1888), 6; *Macbeth I*, MS. annotation 19v.

The proliferation of pre-commentaries on Terry's performance indicates popular anxiety regarding whether Terry could play Lady Macbeth. As well as disrupting the critical paradigm for describing Terry's physicality and movement, the prospect of Terry 'striking into a wholly new path' as Lady Macbeth marked 'an epoch in her stage career'.⁶¹ The choice concerned *Jackson's Oxford Journal*, disturbing Terry's semiological significance as an interpreter of 'only sympathetic and intrinsically attractive parts' including '*Portia, Beatrice, Ophelia, Olivia* and *Marguerite*', which let audiences enjoy her onstage 'graciousness and winsomeness'.⁶²

This discomfiture ran alongside traditionalists' deeper, conservative aversion to radically altering Shakespearean hermeneutics. As Prescott notes in his discussion of *Macbeth's* eighteenth-century stage histories, Terry's casting risked 'alienating an audience devoted to a genealogical tradition of interpretation'.⁶³ In 1888, positive responses to the prospect of a radical Lady Macbeth were muted. The *Bristol Mercury's* correspondent acknowledged a 'quieter, less masculine' and 'more catlike' concept as a pragmatic performance choice that would 'suit Miss Terry's special gifts' better than 'the Bellona-like woman of Siddons'.⁶⁴

Comyns-Carr heightened impressions of the newness of this 'new view' of Lady Macbeth, by failing to mention its theatrical precedent. As the *Daily News* realised, Comyns-Carr (despite citing various printed sources) overlooked Faucit's Lady Macbeth, who displayed 'conjugal affection' and 'effusive affability'.⁶⁵ Similarly, *PMG's* 1884 review of Bernhardt's Lady

⁶¹ Frederick Hawkins, 'Macbeth on the Stage', *Theatre* (December 1888), 281–287, 281.

⁶² 'Art and Artistes', *Jackson's Oxford Journal* (22 December 1888), 6.

⁶³ Paul Prescott. 'Doing All That Becomes a Man', *Shakespeare Survey* 57 (Cambridge: 2004), 81–95, 84.

⁶⁴ 'London Letter', *Bristol Mercury* (29 December 1888), 8.

⁶⁵ *Daily News* (24 December 1888), 6.

Macbeth preferred her ‘Dalilah-like [sic]’ interpretation to what they termed the Lady Macbeth of ‘recent criticism’, satirised as one whose ‘gentler virtues’ were ‘balanced by a little over-anxiety for her husband’s advancement’.⁶⁶

Success or failure?

Terry’s Lady Macbeth survives as a series of texts and images clustered around a series of unrecrutable acts of performance. These include Terry’s annotated promptbooks, diary entries, correspondence, memoirs and lecture notes – the last two mediated by Christopher St John and Edith Craig’s editorial involvement. Cockin’s ongoing synthesis of Terry’s papers at Smallhythe and the British Library gives the physical archives of Terry’s intention and reception geographic and electronic cohesion, enabling reappraisal of the Terry corpus.⁶⁷ Cockin’s edition of Terry’s letters is innovative in retaining Terry’s highly distinctive punctuation.⁶⁸

Before Cockin, Auerbach, Booth and Manvell emphasised a limited number of first-night, strongly negative reviews, exclusively published in London, when assessing Terry’s reception. Importantly, all three were writing well before 2008, when the British Library databases expedited research into performance reception in a mode unthinkable before the electronic archive.⁶⁹ Rediscovering the vast polyphony of regional, peripheral responses to Terry’s performances reveals the diverse contexts in which Terry’s performance was seen. For the

⁶⁶ ‘Mme. Sarah Bernhardt as Lady Macbeth’, *PMG* (5 July 1884), 12.

⁶⁷ Katharine Cockin. *Ellen Terry and Edith Craig Database* [hereafter *Terry/Craig Database*] [<http://www.ellenterryarchive.hull.ac.uk>, accessed 1 September 2012].

⁶⁸ *ET Letters*.

⁶⁹ Auerbach, *Ellen Terry*; Michael Booth, ‘Ellen Terry’; John Stokes, Michael Booth and Susan Bassnett, *Bernhardt, Terry, Duse* (Cambridge: 1998); Roger Manvell, *Ellen Terry* (London: Heinemann, 1968). The sorts of synchronic and diachronic (re)search methodologies invited by the electronic archive brought about the discussion of the Ripper case’s proximity to the Lyceum *Macbeth*.

Leicester Chronicle, Lady Macbeth was a religious archetype of the female sinner: Terry's interpretation became a missed opportunity to warn against 'spiritual suicide'.⁷⁰ Resituating the provincial reviews highlights Terry's national significance, in constructing popular interpretations of Shakespeare's heroines for 'families and places' beyond 'reach of the Lyceum'.⁷¹

Until now, privileging of metropolitan, negative reviews has oriented scholarship towards an essentially binary discussion of Terry's success or failure. Reiterating Terry's 'failure' as Lady Macbeth upholds critical investment in a historical narrative that polarises depictions of women in late-Victorian theatre as either marginalised pioneers, or oppressed heroines. Auerbach's interpretation of Terry rests on the oppression of a 'banished boy-self', sacrificed to a theatre that 'rewarded women [...] for alacrity in self-sacrifice'.⁷² Booth also uses Shaw's criticism of Irving within his own narrative of Terry as 'trapped in the Victorian ideal which she had done so much to disseminate'.⁷³ However, Shaw's construction of Terry as 'imprisoned' and 'sacrificed' to Irving's theatrical will was a classic Shavian rhetorical trick, designed to attack Irving as much as enlist Terry.⁷⁴ Booth also argues that since Terry 'seemed to content herself with presenting an attractive, attentive and devoted wife, [...] mother, and a Victorian woman', the character seemed not 'tragic' but 'merely pathetic'.⁷⁵ Booth's other major source is also dubious: Edward Gordon Craig. Craig claimed that 'poor Ellen Terry' became 'frightened of that British public' and consequently failed to engage them; Auerbach similarly writes of Terry's awareness 'that she had

⁷⁰ 'Miscellaneous & Local Sketches', *Leicester Chronicle* (5 January 1889), 6.

⁷¹ 'Our London Letter', *SRI* (1 January 1889), 5.

⁷² Auerbach, *Ellen Terry*, 213; 236; 24.

⁷³ Booth, 'Ellen Terry', 108.

⁷⁴ See Chapter Four for a fuller discussion of Terry and Irving's collaboration.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

failed to make the public believe her'.⁷⁶ For Booth, Terry's break from the 'Siddonian ideal' of the part meant a *de facto* failure.

The problem with Booth and Craig's accounts of Terry's 'failure' is that *Macbeth* ran to rapturous applause for over one hundred and fifty performances, with Sargent's 'extraordinary picture' of Terry 'in the beetle-wing gown' the talk of London in April 1889.⁷⁷ During *Macbeth*'s run, Terry and Irving were summoned to appear before the Royal Family at Sandringham. Terry would also play Lady Macbeth for her benefit; hardly an appropriate choice if she felt she had 'failed to make audiences believe her'; in 1895, the production was revived for an American tour.⁷⁸ Terry's correspondence reinforces this immense popular acclaim: in January 1889, she wrote that 'the success of this play rivals Faust – I mean success from Bram mama's point of view', i.e. financial, concluding that *Macbeth* was 'likely to go on for all time'.⁷⁹

Although Terry claimed to be glad for 'dear Henry' that *Macbeth* was making money, she also valued monetary gain and critical debate.⁸⁰ Before opening, she exulted in her diary the 'advance booking' was 'greater than ever was known, even at the Lyceum'.⁸¹ Terry's long correspondence with Shaw included arguments where she justified artistic policy with financial success, telling Shaw that he 'spoke like an amateur' and 'should know the receipts [...] before you question H's

⁷⁶ Edward Gordon Craig, *Ellen Terry and Her Secret Self* (London: S. Low, Marston & Co., 1931), 157–8; Auerbach, *Ellen Terry*, 257.

⁷⁷ 'A Run through the Studios,' *PMG* (1 April 1889), 16.

⁷⁸ Auerbach, *Ellen Terry*, 257; Jeffrey Richards, *Sir Henry Irving* (London: Continuum, 2007), 130.

⁷⁹ Letter to 'Mrs Hill', (c. January 1889), *ET Letters* II.2–3; letter to Elizabeth Winter (20 April 1889), *ET Letters* II.11–14, 12.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ *The Story of My Life*, 332.

policy'.⁸² Lady Macbeth was not an instant favourite of Terry's – she wrote that she would 'rather play Ophelia & Rosalind', but Terry's fondness for roles did not correlate with their popularity; the thought of reviving Margaret in *Faust* 'depressed' her.⁸³ As Lady Macbeth, Terry claimed not to be able to 'do what I want', but was also dissatisfied with her hit 1896 performance as Imogen, claiming that if she ever 'acted well' it was an 'accident'.⁸⁴ By 1908, Terry regarded *Macbeth* as the 'most important of all our productions': hardly a failure.⁸⁵ Even at the time, Terry believed her interpretation was 'fresh from Shakespeare'.⁸⁶ Shaw, meanwhile, thought the role and reception typified the kind of Lyceum success that Terry embraced, to his lasting frustration. In 1899, with Terry refusing the role of Lady Cicely Waynflete in *Captain Brassbound's Conversion* (1900), Shaw cited Lady Macbeth when raging at Terry's preference for 'safe' success: 'Here then is your portrait painted on a map of the world – and you prefer Sargent's Lady Macbeth!'.⁸⁷ Sargent's portrait has become her performance's culturally-accepted endpoint and archive; ironically, Terry concluded that the image showed 'all that I meant to do', implying a separation between painting and performance.⁸⁸ Auerbach assumes that this separation was a gulf, with the interpretative 'all' suggesting Terry realised nothing of what she 'meant to do' onstage, ratifying the narrative of her performance as a 'failure'.⁸⁹

⁸² Letters to Shaw: (31 January 1898) *Correspondence* 295–7, 295; (11 May 1897), *Correspondence* 199–201, 200.

⁸³ Letter to Elizabeth Winter (20 April 1889), *ET Letters* II.11–14, 12; Letter to Craig (11 January 1894), *ET Letters* III.5–6, 5.

⁸⁴ Letter to Scott (31 December 1888), *ET Letters* I.214–6, 214; Letter to Shaw (22 September 1896), *Correspondence* 72–3, 73.

⁸⁵ Quoted Richards, *Sir Henry Irving*, 130.

⁸⁶ *Story of My Life*, 235.

⁸⁷ Letter from Shaw to Terry (8 April 1899). *Correspondence*, letter 225.

⁸⁸ *Story of My Life*, 233.

⁸⁹ Auerbach, *Ellen Terry*, 257.

The sources for Terry's Lady Macbeth offer a fascinating nexus of critical gulfs and congruences between Terry's stated intentions and reception in the role. Terry was conscious of this during the run, bemoaning how critics described her 'Lady Macbeth as 'gentle &' dove-like!!! [...] I feel [...] as if I were 'going on' like a Billingsgate lady'.⁹⁰ Terry's exact stage business cannot be retrieved, and archaeological attempts at reconstruction have typically had a biographical focus, while pursuing Booth's mission of trying to 'rescue Terry's performance from the fog of adjectives surrounding it'.⁹¹

Among what is recoverable, there is evidence of 'failure' in two interpretative strategies that Terry tried to introduce. The first was stage business: Terry's faint after Duncan's murder is discovered. Archer, in an otherwise savagely critical piece entitled 'Macbeth and Common Sense', assumed that the faint indicated that Terry accepted the tradition that 'Lady Macbeth is overcome' by Macbeth's 'vivid picture' of Duncan's murder scene.⁹² In fact, Terry's detailed promptbook annotations to Macbeth's speech beginning 'O, yet I do repent me of my fury' specify that Lady Macbeth is not overcome by Macbeth's description of Duncan's 'silver skin lac'd with his golden blood', and 'not (in truth) horrified' by the 'news' of Macbeth's further homicides.⁹³ Instead, Terry argues that Lady Macbeth faints 'really' only when she 'finds [Macbeth] is safely through his story', following 'pent-up agony and anxiety, *from relief*', emphasising Lady Macbeth's self-control over the cultural expectation of feminine horror.⁹⁴ However, in 1913, *The True Ophelia*'s anonymous author lamented the persistent tendency to

⁹⁰ Letter to Elizabeth Winter (20 April 1889) *ET Letters* II.11–14, 12.

⁹¹ Booth, 109.

⁹² Archer, 'Macbeth and Common Sense', *Murray's Magazine* (February 1889), 182–92, 190.

⁹³ Quoted Manvell, *Ellen Terry*, 359.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

‘bundle [Lady Macbeth] offstage’ at the moment of the faint, rather than have it happen onstage.⁹⁵ Foregrounding the moment for critical attention was innovative.

Ambition and innovation

The other miscommunication concerned Lady Macbeth’s ambition. Despite Terry’s promptbook notes, and regardless of whether they believed Lady Macbeth was ambitious, journalists found no personal ambition in Terry’s characterisation. For the *Glasgow Herald*, Lady Macbeth’s lack of ‘the smallest ambition of her own account’ underlined praise for the ‘magnificent style’ of Terry’s ‘completely new’ interpretation, while the *North-Eastern Daily Gazette* attacked it: Terry’s Lady ‘descended to any depths of wickedness’ not for ‘power’ but *only* for ‘devoted love’, whereas Shakespeare’s Lady Macbeth ‘as well as her husband, was unscrupulously ambitious’.⁹⁶

Ambition is central to the self-crowning of the Sargent portrait [*fig. 1*], an artistic space that offered Terry conditions for representation diametrically opposed to those of the Lyceum. Shown alone, the Sargent-Terry Lady Macbeth demands analysis independently of Irving’s protagonist. *Macbeth*’s reviewers frequently considered her in subordinate relation to Irving’s performance, with the *Birmingham Daily Post* criticising Terry for ‘failing to give’ Irving ‘due support’.⁹⁷ This reflects the enduring trend of emphasising male over even popular female Shakespearean roles. Despite Terry’s popularity, Irving’s eminence forced Terry into a particularly specific second billing: on 29 December, the *Penny Illustrated* called them ‘the Prince of Actor-Managers and

⁹⁵ *True Ophelia*, 180.

⁹⁶ “‘Macbeth’ at the Lyceum”, *Glasgow Herald* (31 December 1888), 7; ‘Macbeth’, *North-Eastern Daily Gazette* (3 January 1889), 7.

⁹⁷ ‘Lyceum Theatre’, *Birmingham Daily Post* (31 December 1888), 12.

Miss Ellen Terry'.⁹⁸ Significantly, the critics who most enjoyed her performance regarded Irving and Terry's performances as 'inseparable', implying a correlation between interest in female performance, and acceptance of female artistic innovation.



Figure 1. 'Ellen Terry as Lady Macbeth' by John Singer Sargent (1889). Tate Gallery, London. © Tate, 2013.

⁹⁸ 'Our London Letter', *Penny Illustrated* (29 December 1888), 402.

The Sargent portrait's self-crowning doesn't occur in *Macbeth*. The image equates Lady Macbeth with the Histories' male protagonists, several of whom are crowned onstage. A woman who crowns herself bypasses the British monarchy's legitimate coronation rituals, wherein an ideally male monarch receives the crown from male bishops, God's representatives. Terry's two hands on the crown and ambiguous expression, in the moment before transformation, evoke the doubtful legitimacy of Bolingbroke's first touch of the crown in Act IV of *Richard II*. However, Terry's pose most closely echoes Ronald Sutherland Gower's (1845–1916) statue of Prince Hal in Stratford-upon-Avon's Gower Memorial (*fig 2*), with a similarly rapt gaze. The bronze, 202 cm-tall figure had been widely exhibited – including in the Paris Salon – since 1880.⁹⁹ The monument also included a statue of Lady Macbeth, sketched while Gower was finishing Hal in March 1880, and with a pose conceived by Sarah Bernhardt. The monument's Stratford home was only confirmed in spring 1887; the increasingly well-known statues were unveiled on 10 October 1888, eleven weeks before *Macbeth*.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ Philip Ward-Jackson, 'Lord Ronald Gower, Gustave Doré and the Genesis of the Shakespeare Memorial at Stratford-on-Avon', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* (1987), 160–170, 167.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 169.



Figure 2: Prince Hal, Gower Memorial, Stratford-upon-Avon (2013). (c) Emily Oliver.

The occasion's speechmaker was Oscar Wilde, on surprisingly Imperialist form. Wilde identified Shakespeare as responsible for Britain's cultural dominance over both 'the greatest empire the world has certainly yet seen' and 'the great new world of America'.¹⁰¹ The *Herald* also reported that Wilde's references to England as 'our land', and to Shakespeare's 'healthy English enjoyment of delightful things' provoked applause.¹⁰² However, to the metropolitan *Birmingham Post*, Wilde stressed his knowledge of the 'beautiful green-and-gold bronzes', whose *avant-garde* 'imaginative character' was 'not common in Europe, much less in England'.¹⁰³ Terry's portrait pose's aesthetic antecedent was thus a Shakespearean artwork publicised as both imperialist celebration, and aesthetically *avant-garde*. Moreover, although *Macbeth*'s reviews suggest Terry failed to convey personal ambition to her theatrical audiences, none of the comment on Sargent's ambitious queen evinced disjunction in the popular imagination between the painted figure and Terry's performance; if they weren't unlike, then Terry's 'failure' cannot have been total.

Although Terry's interpretation was not wholly new (as those who recalled Faucit recognised), she broke the Siddonian stranglehold on the role, establishing the feminine, siren-like Lady Macbeth that would influence performers including Campbell. While not a failure, Terry's performance was clearly both troubling and provocative. Moving away from an archaeological approach to reconstructing performance, examining Terry's intentions and reception reveal how Terry's Lady Macbeth challenged critical paradigms for describing women's bodies and the existing tendency to pathologise female experience. Terry also asserted actors' authority to

¹⁰¹ *Stratford Herald* (12 October 1888), 4.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ 'Unveiling of the Gower Memorial', *Birmingham Daily Post* (11 October 1888), 5.

reconceive Shakespeare's characters for their cultures. Her performance had implications for Victorian understandings of the nature of acting.

Terry's performance intervened in the contemporary dialogue between theatrical innovation and traditionalist bias. In addition to the typically negative male response to Victorian women's criticism of Shakespeare (particularly actresses' criticism – see Chapter One), critical bias against performers' interpretative assertions constructed the latter as inferior. Archer's objections to *Macbeth* rested not only on his belief that Terry 'would have made Mrs. Siddons stare', but also (ironically, given his championing of Ibsen) on a strong anti-innovative bias against the Lyceum reinterpretation. He accused Irving of releasing a 'swarm' of 'theories, paradoxes, interpretations, fantasies and fallacies', the semantic prosody of 'theories' and 'interpretations' rendering them as pejorative as 'paradoxes' and 'fantasies'. This attitude spread, prompting Frank Marshall's complaint to the *Standard* that 'a certain class of critics' regarded the suggestion that 'an actor or actress has any brains at all' as a sign of 'extravagant credulity'.¹⁰⁴

At least one critic felt that Terry's performance revealed this culture of over-interpretation. Claiming hyperbolically that 'almost any hypothesis could be made to fit in with the text', a Middlesbrough journalist (who presumably meant that the performed text could be forced to fit any hypothesis) scoffed that 'every intelligent reader [...] with no desire to be wiser than the rest of the world' would emphatically say no' to Terry's conception.¹⁰⁵ Implicitly, Terry was thus also guilty of this 'desire to be wiser than the rest of the world'. Similarly, Comyns-Carr's essay constituted 'the kind of nonsense to which minds of minute cleverness are extremely liable'. Only

¹⁰⁴ 'The Lyceum "Macbeth"', *Standard* (3 January 1889), 3.

¹⁰⁵ 'Macbeth', *North-Eastern Daily Gazette* (3 January 1889), 2.

a ‘microscopic examination’ of *Macbeth* could discover the ‘metaphysico-psychological differences’ the Lyceum was advancing.¹⁰⁶

Predictably, there were continuities between critical anxieties before and after *Macbeth* opened. A significant section of the press condemned Terry for ‘perhaps *wilfully* [failing] to fulfill’ Siddons’s ‘ideal’, with journalists sympathetic to innovation noted audiences ‘saturated’ with the ‘Siddons tradition’.¹⁰⁷ The *Scots Observer*’s judgment that Irving ‘was not born to play *Macbeth*, and Miss Terry is not Mrs. Siddons’ equates Irving’s missed destiny with Terry’s failure to be Mrs Siddons: the equivalent of lacking a kind of theatrical birthright. Even the progressive *Saturday Review* struggled to countenance ‘such an actress in such a part’. Combination and interpretation were equally problematic.¹⁰⁸ Rejecting the idea that Lady Macbeth was ‘depraved [...] far below the ordinary level of badness’ meant rejecting the ‘lesson’ of *Macbeth*, supposedly ‘plainly visible on the surface’ of the play.¹⁰⁹

A sense of predictable performance was not unique to Terry at the Lyceum. Back in 1883, Archer had claimed that anyone familiar with Irving’s work might ‘form a pretty fair preconception of what he is likely to make of a new Shakespearean part’, prompting Frank Marshall’s furious injunction to Archer to ‘give us a criticism on Mr. Irving’s *Lear* before he plays it [...] you will have a very excellent chance of following Iago’s sage advice by putting money into your

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ ‘London Letter’, *York Herald* (1 January 1889), 4; ‘Lyceum Theatre’, *Birmingham Daily Post* (31 December 1888), 402.

¹⁰⁸ ‘The New Macbeth Music’, *Saturday Review* (5 January 1889), 12–13, 13.

¹⁰⁹ ‘Macbeth’, *North-Eastern Daily Gazette*, 2.

purse'.¹¹⁰ By 1888, reviews of Terry had become interchangeable. Her repertoire included an 'ideal' Portia of 'exquisite womanliness and enchanting grace', the 'lovely and tender' Beatrice, and an aestheticised Ophelia who resembled 'a broken lily': 'tenderly plaintive' and 'ideally pathetic'.¹¹¹ Her comic Shakespearean heroines 'disciplined gaiety' ensured that 'not for an instant is womanliness abandoned'. Similarly, Ophelia was characterised by 'marked maidenliness' and Juliet, (Terry's 'more usual part') by 'irresistible charm' as the 'girlish wife'.¹¹² As a perceptive Bostonian reviewer noted, Terry excelled at 'reconstruct[ing]' Renaissance heroines on a charming 'nineteenth-century plan'.¹¹³

On beauty: style and semiotics

This antecedent ideal of Terry as the embodiment of charming womanhood created problems for *Macbeth*'s audience. The critics who most enjoyed Terry's performance could accept a Lady Macbeth of 'genuine womanliness' as both 'a pretty picture' and 'eminently suited to her Macbeth'.¹¹⁴ Terry was variously 'beautiful and bewitching', 'divinely beautiful', 'hauntingly beautiful', and 'indescribably beautiful'.¹¹⁵ Booth, noting this critical tendency, speaks of 'rescuing an Ellen Terry performance from the fog of adjectives surrounding it'.¹¹⁶ This is problematic. As well as implying that the 'rescue' or reconstruction of performance is possible, Booth's broader narrative of Terry's oppression means that to 'rescue' an Ellen Terry

¹¹⁰ William Archer, *Henry Irving* (London: Field & Tuer, 1883), 91; [Marshall, Frank] 'An Irvingite', *Henry Irving* (London: Routledge & Sons, 1883), 80.

¹¹¹ 'The Merchant of Venice at the Lyceum', *Examiner* (8 November 1879), 1437–1438; Austin Brereton, *Henry Irving* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1908), 65; Clement Scott, *Some Notable Hamlets* (London: Charing Cross & Co., 1900), 191.

¹¹² Scott, *From 'The Bells'*, 164; *Hamlets*, 912; Frederick Wedmore, 'The Stage', *Academy* (5 January 1889), 14–15, 14.

¹¹³ C.H. Shattuck, *Shakespeare on the American Stage* (Cranbury, NJ: AUP, 1976), 168.

¹¹⁴ 'The Playgoer', *Penny Illustrated Paper* (5 January 1889), 10.

¹¹⁵ 'London Correspondence', *Freeman's* (31 December 1888), 133; *MP* (31 December 1888), 2; Archer, 'Macbeth and Common Sense', 184; *MP* (31 December 1888), 2.

¹¹⁶ Booth, 109.

performance represents the need to ‘rescue’ Terry herself. More importantly, this narrative of Terry’s reception as an oppressive ‘fog’ evades the responsibility of analysing the ‘fog’ itself.

Booth’s metaphor of Terry’s reception as a ‘fog’ constructs responses to Terry’s performance as entirely beyond her control. However, rather than subsuming the woman into the pictorial, we could read Terry’s critics’ aestheticising rhetoric as a response to Terry’s deliberately pictorial stagecraft. Terry’s description of Sargent’s portrait as revealing ‘all I meant to do as Lady Macbeth’ indicates her awareness of portraiture’s potential to improve her control over her own presentation and representation.¹¹⁷ Terry’s memoirs discuss this aestheticising process’s consequences for *Macbeth*. Describing Burne-Jones as one of the production’s ‘most ardent admirers’, she attributes this to the fact that ‘my acting appealed to his eye’, asserting that ‘drama is for the eye as well as the ear and the mind’.¹¹⁸

The new Lady Macbeth’s ‘grace and tender beauty of mien’, full of ‘soft smiles’, made her an ‘exquisite creature’.¹¹⁹ She was an ‘enchanted being’ who in the sleepwalking scene resembled a ‘woman angel’; the opposite of Siddonian ‘dark locks and sobriety’.¹²⁰ It is essential not to underestimate the impact of a traditionally ‘depraved’ stage character who looked good. Four years later, Graham Robertson considered it ‘a startling innovation’ that Mrs Patrick Campbell ‘did not look wicked’ as a melodrama villainess.¹²¹ If *Macbeth*’s audiences could not accept a reinterpretation of Lady Macbeth as enchanting, ‘*not* a fiend’ and a woman who ‘*did* love her

¹¹⁷ MS. annotation to Ellen Terry’s copy of Hiatt, *Ellen Terry* (1898), 215.

¹¹⁸ Ellen Terry, *Memoirs* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1933), 235.

¹¹⁹ ‘Our London Letter’, *Northern Echo* (31 December 1888), 8; ‘The Theatres’, *Daily News* (31 December 1888), 6; ‘Macbeth at the Lyceum’, *PMG* (31 December 1888), 4.

¹²⁰ ‘The Week’, *Athenaeum* (5 January 1889), 25; ‘Miscellaneous and Local Sketches’, *Leicester Chronicle* (5 January 1889), 6; *Daily News* (31 December 1888), 6.

¹²¹ Graham Robertson, *Time Was* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1931), 248.

husband', the alternative was to accept a forcible dislocation between Terry's inviting appearance and the character's historical significance.¹²² Although *fin-de-siècle* women's performance traditions could not be traced, like Betterton's had been, 'to Shakespearian instruction', the implications were huge.¹²³ Terry's audiences had to accept the dissonance between Lady Macbeth's aesthetics and her ethics, between the 'innocent flower' and 'serpent under', disrupting the prevailing way that audiences understood both Terry's performances, and theatre itself.¹²⁴ Taylor has written extensively on early-Victorian audiences' need for 'semiological clarity' in performances, and their desire to 'know exactly what was happening' to characters 'in psychological terms' from their appearances.¹²⁵ This need did not abate: the bewildered *Glasgow Herald* critic's observation that Terry's Lady Macbeth had 'no outwards resemblance to any other character that she has played' evinces discomfort at Terry's disrupted 'semiological clarity' in both outward and inward terms.¹²⁶ The disruption continued when Wilde's *Lady Windermere's Fan* opened on 20 February 1892. On the first night, the delayed revelation that Mrs Erlynne was Lady Windermere's mother disconcerted the audience. Scott described their confusion as to whether Mrs Erlynne (who, like Terry's Lady Macbeth, had 'Venetian-red hair') was 'an adventuress, or can she be a mother?'.¹²⁷ Casting another Terry increased the semiotic ambiguity: even more than Ellen, Marion Terry was known for playing good women, and was described by the Terrys' biographer as 'more tender and more feminine' than her sisters.¹²⁸

¹²² *Memoirs*, 235.

¹²³ Prescott, 'Doing All That Becomes a Man', 84.

¹²⁴ *Macbeth* I.5.65–66.

¹²⁵ Taylor, *Players and Performances*, 122; 43.

¹²⁶ Quoted Hiatt, *Ellen Terry*, 206.

¹²⁷ Joel H. Kaplan, 'A Puppet's Power', *Theatre Notebook* (1991), 59–73.

¹²⁸ T. Edgar Pemberton, *Ellen Terry and Her Sisters* (London: Pearson, 1902), 21.

Anxieties over the ‘adorable feminine killers’ of sensation literature, archetypes who linked beauty and criminality, and over women’s changing professional and political status, influenced this desire for ‘semiological clarity’.¹²⁹ Comyns-Carr’s psychological narrative for Lady Macbeth aligned Lady Macbeth with the sensational, criminal heroine in having her experience ‘every phase of the woman’s nature, from the first passionate impulse of evil to the remorse that cannot find refuge even in madness’.¹³⁰ Lady Macbeth and other ‘adorable’ transgressors disrupted performance tradition and scientific thinking, refusing the male gaze an easy ‘reading’ of their appearances. In 1888, the *Athenaeum* resented this ambiguity as strongly as Scott would resent feeling unable to ‘read’ the potential adventuress Mrs Erlynne. Importantly, the *Athenaeum* critic deemed the ambiguity anti-male: the notion that Terry’s Lady Macbeth, a ‘spiritual and ineffable creature’, could ‘prompt to murder and assist at its committal’ was ‘an insult’, not to women but to ‘masculine estimate of women’.¹³¹

The critical ‘fog of adjectives’ detailing Terry’s beauty might have had another contemporary association for readers and audiences. Simon James has argued for the Aesthetic movement’s attempt to monopolise the concept of ‘beauty’ in 1870s and 1880s public discourse.¹³² Terry’s performance, in its designedly dazzling visuality, deserves consideration as a contribution to the Aesthetic tradition. The constant journalistic emphasis on Terry’s appearance mirrored the cultural priority Aestheticism gave beauty. Simultaneously, Terry’s opposition of beauty and morality anticipated the elements of Wilde’s work that were found most problematic: his

¹²⁹ Auerbach, *Ellen Terry*, 254.

¹³⁰ *Macbeth and Lady Macbeth*, 22.

¹³¹ ‘The Week’, *Athenaeum*, 25.

¹³² Simon James, ‘Only Half Aesthetic: Trilby’s Textual Body’, Conference paper at *Taking Liberties*, Newcastle University (15 June 2012).

‘superfine Art which admits no moral duty’.¹³³ Terry’s assertion of creative authority mirrored Aesthetic attitudes to artistic practitioners. In 1884, Wilde had called Bernhardt’s roles ‘her creation’, deeming it ‘impertinent to talk of Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* or Shakespeare’s *Othello*. Shakespeare is only one of the parties. The second is the *artiste* through whose mind it passes’.¹³⁴

Henry Labouchère also identified Terry with the Aesthetic movement via her ‘aesthetic, Burne Jonesy, Grosvenor Gallery version of Lady Macbeth’.¹³⁵ W.S. Gilbert had satirised the Gallery and Aestheticism in *Patience* (1881), and Terry was a recognised element of ‘greenery-yallery’ culture.¹³⁶ As a Magdalen undergraduate, Wilde had claimed to ‘find it harder and harder every day to live up to [his] blue china’.¹³⁷ This inspired Du Maurier’s cartoon (*Punch*, October 1880), depicting a Wildean ‘Aesthetic Bridegroom’ inspecting, with his ‘Intense Bride’, ‘The Six-Mark Tea Pot’ of the cartoon’s title: ‘It is quite consummate, is it not?’. Ecstatically, the Bride replies, ‘It is, indeed! O Algernon, let us live up to it!’.¹³⁸ By May 1881, post-*Patience*, the Wildean ‘Bride’ was Terry herself. A *Punch* ‘Design for an Aesthetic Theatrical Poster’ foregrounded Terry in Grecian garb, with a sombre and meditative Irving seated upstage. The composition, including staircases and discarded wreath, parodies Burne-Jones’s *The Golden Stairs*, first exhibited at the Grosvenor Gallery in May 1880.¹³⁹ Terry holds aloft a piece of china (a teapot, as in Du Maurier’s cartoon), beneath the slogan ‘Let us live up to it’. Burne-Jones, of course, was

¹³³ *Daily Telegraph* (6 April 1895), quoted Michael S. Foldy, *The Trials of Oscar Wilde*, 54.

¹³⁴ ‘Paris, Tuesday, June 10th, 1884’, *Morning News* (10 June 1884), quoted Richard Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf: 1988), 569.

¹³⁵ Labouchère, quoted Manvell, 200; *Story of My Life*, 235. As Terry noted, Burne-Jones was indeed a fan.

¹³⁶ W.S. Gilbert, *Patience* (London: Chappell, 1881), 37.

¹³⁷ Ellmann, 41.

¹³⁸ George du Maurier, ‘The Six-Mark Teapot’, *Punch* (30 October 1880)

[<http://punch.photoshelter.com/image/I00003zmBdajNLiE>, accessed 24 September 2012].

¹³⁹ Edward Linley Sambourne. ‘Design for an Aesthetic Theatrical Poster’, *Punch* (7 May 1881), 215; Mary Gilhooly, ‘The Image of Aestheticism’, *Journal of William Morris Studies* (Autumn 1998), 55–64.

Pre-Raphaelite rather than Aesthetic; Graham Robertson would also look back on Terry as ‘the accepted type of the pre-Raphaelite school’ and the ‘embodiment’ of its ‘glamour’.¹⁴⁰ The *Patience* parody, illustrating Terry as the ‘accepted type’ of Aesthetic woman, reiterates the extent to which, as Alan Fischler notes, Gilbert conflated the two supposedly antithetical movements in *Patience*, reinforcing public perception of both movements as a rebellion against conventional, bourgeois existence.¹⁴¹ Terry’s significance as the aesthetic actress who became the aesthetic Lady Macbeth, implicated her performance in Aestheticism’s dubious morality.

Even before the 1895 trials resulted in Wilde’s conviction, the *Echo* hoped his disgrace would discredit Wilde’s ‘aesthetical teachings’, which prioritised beauty over morality.¹⁴² Similarly, the *Telegraph* rejoiced in the silencing of one whose art had not been ‘sane, moral and serious in its object’.¹⁴³ The *Telegraph* felt that ‘life’ could not be ‘wholesomely lived’ with Wilde, not because he was guilty of gross indecency, but because his ‘system’ relied on ‘brilliant paradoxes’.¹⁴⁴ In 1889, *Leicester Chronicle* castigated Terry for depicting her sleepwalking Lady Macbeth as an ‘angel’, rather than as a depiction of ‘spiritual suicide’.¹⁴⁵ Fanny Kemble had argued that Lady Macbeth was ‘destroyed by sin as by a disease’ (a view with which the *Chronicle* presumably concurred).¹⁴⁶ Instead, Terry told Scott that Lady Macbeth ‘was brought, through agony & sin to repentance & was just forgiven’: an assertion that brought her closer to

¹⁴⁰ Robertson, *Time Was*, 158.

¹⁴¹ Alan Fischler, “‘It Proves that Aestheticism Ought To Be Discarded’: W.S. Gilbert and the Poets of *Patience*”, *Nineteenth-Century Literature* (December 2011), 355–382, 371.

¹⁴² *Echo* (6 April 1895), quoted Foldy, *The Trials of Oscar Wilde*, 76.

¹⁴³ *Telegraph* (6 April 1895), quoted Foldy, *Trials*, 76.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ ‘Miscellaneous and Local Sketches’, *Leicester Chronicle*, 6.

¹⁴⁶ Quoted Dennis Bartholomeusz, *Macbeth and the Players* (Cambridge: 1969), 176.

Wilde.¹⁴⁷ In 1883, Wilde had sent Terry the ‘First copy of [his] First play’, *The Duchess of Padua* (1883).¹⁴⁸ The play’s ponderously slow iambic pentameter and tragic, Medieval setting evoke Shakespeare and Webster. For Terry, Lady Macbeth was guiltless of ‘the *one* murder’, infanticide, of which she is directly accused: the Duchess of Padua ‘never harmed a little child’ but murders an ‘old man sleeping’ for her lover.¹⁴⁹ Horrified by the reality of murder, the Duchess confesses that she ‘did not think he would have bled so much’ and, repentant, hopes ‘love/Can wipe the bloody stain from off her hands’.¹⁵⁰ This is the trajectory Terry imagined for herself, as one who might ‘blindly’ kill for love, then ‘see & regret & repent in deepest sincerity’.¹⁵¹ Similarly, the Duchess notes that ‘love of man/Turns women into martyrs; for its sake/We do or suffer anything’.¹⁵² Wilde’s Duchess dies in agony, before her face is revealed, at the curtain, as ‘the marble image of peace, the sign of God’s forgiveness’.¹⁵³ Five years before *Macbeth*, Wilde’s play offered a similar exploration of woman as lover and murderer, who is ultimately ‘just forgiven’ within an aestheticised schema, an exploration which Terry read.

On beauty: Terry’s dangerous sexuality

Terry made her performance’s sexuality clear. In the *Athenaeum*, Terry was ‘radiant in robes of indescribable beauty’ and ‘with such rhapsody of passionate longing [...] lean[t] back to wait for the coming of her lord’, juxtaposing the ‘passionate longing’ of sexual and political desire.¹⁵⁴

¹⁴⁷ Letter to Scott (31 December 1888), *Letters* I.214–216, 215.

¹⁴⁸ Letter from Wilde to Terry, undated, on display at Smallhythe Place, Kent.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 214; Wilde, *The Duchess of Padua*, *Complete Works of Oscar Wilde* (London: Harper Collins, 2003), 606–680. 637; 645.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 646;

¹⁵¹ Letter to Scott (31 December 1888), 215.

¹⁵² *Duchess*, 645–646.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 680.

¹⁵⁴ ‘London Correspondence’, *Freeman’s Journal* (31 December 1888), 6; ‘The Week’, *Athenaeum* (5 January 1889), 25.

Terry's 'robes' were an early collaboration between herself and Alice Comyns-Carr, whom Terry appointed and whose aesthetic tastes matched her own.¹⁵⁵ The famous beetle-wing dress's luminosity was based on one worn by professional beauty Lady Randolph Churchill, whom an admirer described as 'panther'-like.¹⁵⁶ Further increasing the dress's possible eroticism, its medieval design meant no corsets were worn. The *Star* argued that the 'great fact about Miss Terry's Lady Macbeth is its sex. It is redolent, pungent with the *odeur de femme*'.¹⁵⁷ Womanliness was Terry's stage persona, but the gulf between enticing sexuality and crime troubled critics. *Graphic* felt any character delivering 'incitements to treason' via 'love and caresses' was 'obviously not Lady Macbeth', just as *PMG* was bewildered as to *why* such an 'exquisite creature' should 'turn [Macbeth] in the direction of crime'.¹⁵⁸

Auerbach has called Booth's claim that Terry exuded 'dark, dangerous sexuality' 'perplexing'.¹⁵⁹ However, many highly evocative and specific accounts of Terry's performances evince less what Watt calls Auerbach's 'hagiographic description of "Our Lady of the Lyceum"' than Terry's evolving erotic appeal.¹⁶⁰ Terry's first Lyceum role was Ophelia, opposite Irving's Hamlet. For John Martin-Harvey, Terry's performance was characterised by an erotic, inviting physicality. In 1933, he recalled her as 'absolutely irresistible' with 'long virginal limbs', a 'husky voice' and a 'great red mouth': the definition of 'physical attractiveness'.¹⁶¹ Booth identifies the coexistence

¹⁵⁵ Veronica Isaac, 'The Art of Costume in the Late Nineteenth Century,' *NCTF* (Summer 2012), 93–111, 101.

¹⁵⁶ Valerie Cumming, 'Macbeth at the Lyceum, 1888', *Costume* 12 (1978), 53–63, 58; Mary Lovell, *The Churchills* (London: W.W. Norton & Co., 2011), 65.

¹⁵⁷ *The Star*, reprinted Michael Holroyd, *A Strange Eventful History* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2008), 198.

¹⁵⁸ *Daily News* (31 December 1888), 6; 'Macbeth at the Lyceum', *PMG* (31 December 1888), 8.

¹⁵⁹ Auerbach, *Ellen Terry*, 206.

¹⁶⁰ Stephen Watt, review of Auerbach, *Ellen Terry*; Joy Meville, *Ellen and Edy. Victorian Studies* (Autumn 1989), 206–208.

¹⁶¹ Sir John Martin-Harvey, *The autobiography of Sir John Martin-Harvey* (London: Sampson Low, Marston & Co., 1933), 29.

of ‘the unblemished surface and the spotted soul’ here, noting ‘the fusion of a sexually and dangerously attractive Ophelia and an innocent Ophelia weak in mind and soul, very much in need of male protection’.¹⁶² Martin-Harvey explicitly uses Ophelia’s ‘weakness’ to justify Polonius and Laertes’s sexually-charged ‘protection’.¹⁶³ Terry’s enticing virginity vindicated male obsession, providing ‘ample excuse for Hamlet’s “Get thee to a Nunnery,” as for her father’s and even the Queen’s fear for her honour’. For Martin-Harvey, Terry’s corporeality suggested a latent sexuality, ‘prepar[ing] one’s mind for the pitiful direction taken by her thoughts when she could no longer control them’.¹⁶⁴ Terry’s Ophelia is implicitly inviting in her ‘virginal’ limbs and graphically ‘great red mouth’. Terry’s unbridled eroticism and mental frailty justifies the court’s paternalistic policing of Ophelia’s body and its sexual potential. Martin-Harvey’s emphasis on Terry’s Ophelia as ‘unable to stand still’, full of pent-up, potentially sexual energy, further implies the necessity of a controlling, restraining male gaze, perhaps suggested by Polonius’s statement to Ophelia that Hamlet ‘with a larger tether may [...] walk/Than may be given you’.¹⁶⁵

Although the congruence between virtue and ‘spotted’ sexuality was key to Ophelia and Lady Macbeth, Terry’s sexuality invited critical discussion even when playing characters not ‘weak in mind’.¹⁶⁶ As Nance Oldfield, Terry was both ‘the most charming of women’ and a ‘veritable “tom-boyish” hoyden’.¹⁶⁷ ‘Hoyden’, with its various meanings of ‘romp’, ‘roistering’, ‘boisterous’ and ‘noisy’ suggests an irrepressible, transgressive, perhaps Dionysian energy: Davis

¹⁶² Booth, 72.

¹⁶³ Martin-Harvey, *Autobiography*, 29.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., *Hamlet*, I.3.125.

¹⁶⁶ Booth, 72.

¹⁶⁷ *Ellen Terry and her sisters*, 279.

uses the same term to characterise the ‘saucy’ and ‘captivating’ nineteenth-century *soubrette*.¹⁶⁸ Similarly, when in 1881, Terry played Letitia Hardy in *The Belle’s Stratagem*, Scott praised her ‘wilfulness and abandon’.¹⁶⁹ However, Scott also specified that Terry’s ‘romp’ was hoydenish only in ‘the finest spirit of refined and disciplined fun’.¹⁷⁰ Charles Reade similarly felt that ‘whether in movement or repose, grace pervades the hussy’, ‘grace’ connoting both aesthetic control and underlying morality.¹⁷¹ It is possible to read Scott as policing and eliding his own enjoyment of Terry’s eroticism by stressing a framework of control and decorum, however lexically incongruous. This elision is particularly interesting, reread in the light of Simon James’s claim that critical discussion of ‘beauty’ could serve as a signal for sexual content.¹⁷² Similarly, Martin-Harvey depicts Ophelia in a way that legitimises his reading of her as sexually inviting and ‘irresistible’: the court are ‘right’ to fear for her ‘honour’, given her madness’s obscenity.¹⁷³

Ultimately, however, Nance, Letitia and Ophelia all offer safe objects of sexual attraction. Ophelia’s thoughts may be obscene, but the plot of *Hamlet* eliminates her. Letitia Hardy ends by marrying the man to whom she has been promised since childhood, reaffirmed as an ‘English wife’, who will never ‘sacrifice to foreign glare the grace of modesty’.¹⁷⁴ Lady Macbeth, however, assists in regicide and is implicated in her husband’s destruction. Moreover, Ophelia’s latent desire, the ‘romp’ and ‘abandon’ all imply artless, unselfconscious sexualities. Lynn Voskuil has written persuasively on how, despite privately stressing the importance of

¹⁶⁸ OED entry for ‘hoyden’; Davis, *Actresses as working women*, 22.

¹⁶⁹ Clement Scott, reprinted *Ellen Terry and her sisters*, 280.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.; Reade, quoted Auerbach, *Ellen Terry*, 20.

¹⁷² Simon James, ‘Only Half Aesthetic’.

¹⁷³ Martin-Harvey, *Autobiography*, 29.

¹⁷⁴ Hannah Cowley, *The Belle’s Stratagem: a new comedy* (Dublin: 1781), 79.

ECCO [Gale Document: CW112017936 accessed 25 September 2012].

professional technique and hard work, Ellen Terry similarly encouraged mainstream perception of herself as an ‘artless’ actress.¹⁷⁵ Disrupting this, Terry’s Lady Macbeth, ‘pungent with the *odeur de femme*’, used her sexuality to manipulate Macbeth, ‘clinging, kissing, coaxing’, her ‘taunts [...] sugared with a loving smile’.¹⁷⁶

This sexuality, and its implications, were the most disturbing aspects of Terry’s performance. Hermeneutically, this ‘siren in place of a virago’ was theatrically disruptive, aligning Terry with Bernhardt.¹⁷⁷ Bernhardt’s 1884 Lady Macbeth had ‘depict[ed] for the present generation the kind of woman in whom alone apparently it is strongly interested, the dangerous siren-like creature by whose fascinations men are enslaved’.¹⁷⁸ Aston has argued that Bernhardt’s malnourished French exoticism ‘distanced her [...] in the eyes of the puritan from the notion of chaste and virginal womanhood’.¹⁷⁹ Conversely, Terry, as ‘an English actress’ who embodied womanliness for theatregoers, could not ‘enslave’ with Bernhardt’s cultural ‘impunity’.¹⁸⁰ As Edward Percy argued after Terry’s death, while Bernhardt was ‘something oriental’, her ‘very conscious art’ reinforcing her unreality, Terry was ‘our greatest actress, as the Duke of Wellington was our greatest soldier’: the object of national pride and emotional investment, and implicated in national identity.¹⁸¹

‘[A]n early Victorian hysterical heroine’: Macbeth in 1888

¹⁷⁵ *Acting Naturally*, 215.

¹⁷⁶ *Star* review, reprinted in *A Strange Eventful History*, 198.

¹⁷⁷ P. Pennyng, ‘Art and Artistes’, *Jackson’s Oxford Journal* (5 January 1889), 8.

¹⁷⁸ *PMG* (5 July 1884), reprinted Elaine Aston, *Sarah Bernhardt* (Oxford: Berg, 1989), 76.

¹⁷⁹ Elaine Aston, 81.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁸¹ Edward Percy, *Remember Ellen Terry and Edy Craig* (London: English Theatre Guild, 1948), 5; 9.

Terry's Lady Macbeth also had disturbing cultural consequences for Irving's Macbeth. Despite Terry's assertions that Lady Macbeth did not bully her 'little husband', her promptbook annotations to the banquet scene feminise and infantilise Macbeth.¹⁸² For Terry, Macbeth 'works himself up, rather in the style of an early Victorian hysterical heroine', subsequently 'giving way' to 'acting before people' in the banquet scene.¹⁸³ Even this hysteria's cause is feminine and infantilising. Macbeth, Terry decides, 'must have had a neglectful mother – who never taught him the importance of self-control'.¹⁸⁴ Terry dichotomised Macbeth as 'a brave soldier + a weakling'.¹⁸⁵ Unlike the critical gulfs between some aspects of Terry's interpretation and her reception, Terry's notes on Macbeth's character anticipate the responses of unsympathetic reviewers: against a Lady Macbeth who 'nerve[d] herself to give him renewed courage', critics saw Irving as 'wanting virility'.¹⁸⁶ Significantly for performance history, which categorises Irving as one of the 'flop Macbeths', Irving's modern Macbeth was 'craven': an impression recalled in 1945, when Arthur Colby Sprague wrote censoriously of Macbeth as being 'never [...] before Irving's time a craven'.¹⁸⁷

Terry found Macbeth culpable, as well as craven. Her Lady Macbeth was forced to behave as she did, responding, as an obedient wife, to Macbeth's wishes. In one *Macbeth* promptbook, Terry noted that Lady Macbeth's statement 'Thy letters have transported me' implied 'Letters more that noone read', in which Macbeth persuaded his wife.¹⁸⁸ For Terry, the 'longed for' crown was already Macbeth's 'secret thought', with Lady Macbeth's demand as to what 'made you break

¹⁸² Letter to William Winter, reprinted Auerbach, *Ellen Terry*, 260.

¹⁸³ *Macbeth I* MS. annotation to 'Dramatis Personae'; MS. annotation 46v.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, MS. annotation to 'Dramatis Personae'.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁶ *Daily Chronicle*, quoted Hiatt, *Ellen Terry*, 206.

¹⁸⁷ Prescott, 81; *Shakespeare and the Players*, 224.

¹⁸⁸ *Macbeth I*, MS. annotation 22v.

this enterprise to me?’ revealing that ‘“He suggested the murder, + she caught on’.¹⁸⁹ By Lady Macbeth’s ‘Nought’s had, all’s spent’, Terry felt that Lady Macbeth’s ‘rooted sorrow’ stemmed from ‘a half dulled knowledge of [...] her husband’ after ‘having been all the while deceived in him’.¹⁹⁰ The real problem was Macbeth’s failure to fulfil his wife’s ideal of him; while Terry’s Lady Macbeth upheld standards of wifeliness, continuing to ‘Cheer up for him’, Macbeth lacked necessary masculine ‘executive power’.¹⁹¹ Terry diminished Lady Macbeth’s culpability for the subsequent crimes by asserting Lady Macduff’s murder as only ‘one of the murders Mac never told her about’: ‘his crime was more deliberate’.¹⁹² This inverted the tradition of the Siddonian ‘Monstrousness’ overwhelming Macbeth. In 1888, Macbeth the failed husband who corrupts a loving spouse clearly registered as more disturbing than his propulsion by a terrifying virago.

‘[A] mistaken woman [...] but first of all a wife’: Terry as the good woman

Crucially, Terry’s promptbook and correspondence assert that her performance’s ‘*odeur de femme*’ is that of a woman with normative gender and sexual identities. Terry’s reiterations in her promptbooks are almost obsessive, insisting Lady Macbeth is ‘full of womanliness’, recording an American correspondent’s reminder: ‘My dear Miss Terry remember ‘She is very feminine’.¹⁹³ Elsewhere, comments are underscored with increasing intensity as Terry’s thoughts progress; the Thane’s wife is ‘capable of affection – She loves her husband – Ergo – she is a woman = + she knows it + is half the time afraid [...] as she loves a man = women love men –’.¹⁹⁴ Terry’s notes on Duncan’s murder conclude emphatically: ‘She loved her babies + she could not kill the man

¹⁸⁹ *Macbeth* promptbook 2, Smallhythe EV2.19 (hereafter *Macbeth 2*), MS. annotation 15; *Macbeth 1*, MS. annotation 26v.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, MS. annotation 42v.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*; *Ibid.*, 21.

¹⁹² *Macbeth 2*, MS. annotation, p. 63; *Macbeth 1*, MS. annotation 64v.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, MS. annotation opposite 64v; *Macbeth 2*, MS. annotation 20v.

¹⁹⁴ *Macbeth 1*, MS. annotation to unnumbered endpage.

who looked like her Father = (Woman)'.¹⁹⁵ 'Woman' is written largest; the mathematical symbology of '+' and '=' reinscribes her note as a logical proof.

In 2004, Carol Rutter argued that 1990s theatre used *Macbeth* 'to think through a cultural crisis in "childness"', tracing connections between *Macbeth* and reportage on the young Royals, legislation on children's rights, and high-profile child murders.¹⁹⁶ For Terry, *Macbeth* was primarily a play in which to think through 'wifeness' and 'motherness'. Critics troubled by Lady Macbeth as a loving wife were also offered, in Terry's references to 'babies' and 'Father', a Lady Macbeth who embodied all the socially-accepted roles and relationships for Victorian womanhood: filial love, marriage and motherhood. Not only do those institutions appear in Terry's writings on the part, but Terry also incorporated them in their most colloquial familiar forms, in her lexis of 'babies' and 'Mrs. McB'.¹⁹⁷ She also argued that Lady Macbeth's criminality was entirely congruent with her status as wife (and, as the promptbooks indicate, a mother). From Terry's assertion that 'most women break the law during their lives, but few women realize the consequences of [...] that they do to day', she confesses that she 'might, kill for my child, or my love [...] blindly - & see & regret & repent in deepest sincerity after':

I don't believe you think I'm very bad – I am – Perhaps when I tell you I loved, you won't believe it, when at the same time tell you I broke the law & forged for my love – I tell you I did love & forged – said money was owed by him to me when it wasn't – in order to get it again for him of course – Do you think I thought that wicked then? I thought it was right – I couldn't have done it with my baby at my breast if I had seen it as I see it now¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., MS. annotation f28.

¹⁹⁶ Carol Rutter, 'Remind Me: How Many Children Had Lady Macbeth?' *Shakespeare Survey* 57 (Cambridge: 2004), 38–53, 40.

¹⁹⁷ Letter to Winter, Auerbach, *Ellen Terry*, 259.

¹⁹⁸ Letter to Scott, 214–216.

Terry asserted that the affective bonds demanded of women could motivate crime: radical transgression in pursuit of the deeply conservative goals of love and motherhood. Terry's defiant determination to 'tell' Scott she 'broke the law & forged for my love – I tell you I did love & forged' highlights the declarative, even theatrical impulse underlying the non-naturalistic repetition of 'tell'. More audaciously still, Terry syntactically equates love and forgery, chiasmically interchanging them as 'forged for my love' and 'love and forged'. The 'love' in question, as Scott may well have known, was E.W. Godwin, Terry's lover from 1868 to 1875. Intensifying the letter's mood of defiance and transgression is the knowledge – which, again, Scott probably shared – that 'the baby at [Terry's] breast' was one of her two illegitimate children. The image of Terry as Godwin's mistress, nursing her illegitimate baby while lying and forging for her lover, transposes the 'fiend-like queen' who has both 'given suck' and murdered, into a mother who commits crimes to defend her love. Although Terry anticipates that Scott 'won't believe' that she could simultaneously love and commit crime, she crucially asserts that her forgery seemed 'right' – implicitly because of her situational specificity as lover and mother. Heightening the cultural stakes in Terry's argument, this equation of love and forgery is precisely that of Ibsen's *A Doll's House* (1879), where Nora forges her father's signature to save her husband's life and preserve their 'beautiful happy home': radical behaviour, in pursuit of conservative goals.¹⁹⁹ Although the first professional British production was not until summer 1889, *A Doll's House* had already premiered in countries including Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Germany, Finland, Austria, Poland, the USA, Russia, Ukraine, and the Czech Republic.²⁰⁰ Anglophone adaptations included Modjeska's *Thora* (1883) and Henry Arthur Jones and Henry

¹⁹⁹ Henrik Ibsen, *A Doll's House*. (London: Dent, 1911), 31; 18.

²⁰⁰ A Dramatic Society [sic] gave two performances in March 1885. [<http://ibsen.nb.no/id/11168796.0>, accessed 1 July 2013].

Herman's *Breaking A Butterfly*, which retained the forgery plot, and opened at the Princess Theatre in 1884.²⁰¹ If conscious, Terry's parallel had two effects. First, she alludes to a female sense of morality and justice that refuses to accord with conventional legal frameworks. Shaw's 1932 defence of Terry, in the introduction to their published correspondence, asserts that 'Ellen Terry could be a woman of very exceptional virtue without having the smallest respect for the law'.²⁰² Secondly, in identifying herself with Nora in *A Doll's House* and using this to justify a theatrical interpretation, Terry gave Shakespearean hermeneutics a source in Ibsen.

Terry superimposed her own transgressive experience – and, potentially, the most controversial contemporary playwright – on theatrical tradition. She also challenged Scott's attitude to the complicated, composite interpretation of herself she revealed: 'I don't believe you think I'm very bad – I am', moving to 'I am a real bad person [...] you think I can't assume bad 'cos I'm good', and ending with an implicit accusation of hypocrisy, 'You say I can't be Lady M whilst all the time you see that I am quite as bad'.²⁰³ The Lyceum *Macbeth* complicated categories of identity.

Although Terry claimed 'now' to see her crime as 'bad', her admission that she might kill for love (regardless of subsequent repentance), and her continued linking of love with criminality demand interrogation of 'badness' itself. Terry and Lady Macbeth's conventional, even praiseworthy motivations — love, desire to support a partner — reveal the central thesis of Terry's interpretation: that sometimes, to be a 'good' wife requires being a 'bad' woman (as Nora Helmer discovered). The *Athenaeum* critic felt Terry's Lady Macbeth violated 'masculine estimate of

²⁰¹ 'Prince's [sic] Theatre', [<http://ibsen.nb.no/id/65368>, accessed 1 July 2013.]

²⁰² *Correspondence*, xvii.

²⁰³ Letter to Scott (31 December 1888), 214–216.

women': Terry argued to Scott that this 'masculine estimate' was the flawed when 'most women', including her supposedly 'good' self, were potential criminals.²⁰⁴ In 1932, Shaw revealed Terry's assertion that 'what had supported her through all her trials was the consciousness that she had never done anything wrong'; Shaw concluded that Terry 'walked through' social constraints 'as if they were not there [...] for her, they were not'.²⁰⁵ Moreover, Shaw concludes, the *fin-de-siècle* theatrical milieu punished 'real wickedness, not mere disregard of the law'.²⁰⁶ This ideology, rooted in her profession, is exposed in Terry's letter to Scott, and in her subsequent message to Winter: Lady Macbeth is not a monster, but 'a mistaken woman - & weak [...] but first of all a wife'.²⁰⁷ The *Daily Chronicle*, perhaps *Macbeth*'s most sympathetic reviewer, affirmed the 'joy [Lady Macbeth] feels in [Macbeth's] presence', 'the delight with which she hears him praised' and 'her readiness to subordinate everything to his ambition'.²⁰⁸ Despite Terry's other discussions of Lady Macbeth's ambition, the role emphasised in the Winter letter is 'wife' rather than 'queen'; the Glasgow critic noted that 'had she been a labourer's wife she would probably have schemed to obtain for her spouse a farm of his own'.²⁰⁹ Indeed, Terry cited real-life wives when building her interpretation, noting that it was the wife of 'Beaconsfield [...] who made higher things possible' and that

Grant, the greatest stalwart of America, stalwart in the field, was the least ambitious of men – His wife ten times more than he craved the highest place²¹⁰

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Shaw, *Correspondence*, xiv.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., xv–xvi.

²⁰⁷ Letter to William Winter, reprinted Auerbach 260.

²⁰⁸ *Daily Chronicle*, reprinted Austin Brereton, *The Lyceum and Henry Irving* (London: Lawrence and Bullen Ltd., 1903), 242.

²⁰⁹ 'Macbeth at the Lyceum', *Glasgow Herald* (31 December 1888), 7.

²¹⁰ *Macbeth I*, MS. annotation 19v.

‘Beaconsfield’ was Benjamin Disraeli (1804–1881), and his wife Mary Anne Lewis (1792–1872). As Disraeli’s ‘manager’, Lewis ‘campaign[ed] tirelessly and tactfully’ to further his career.²¹¹ Ulysses S. Grant’s wife, Julia Dent (1826–1902), was the daughter of a slaveholding merchant and Grant’s devotedly ambitious First Lady. Terry’s *Lady Macbeth* is, as far as we know, the first to draw on real-life political figures. Her 1888 references to Lewis and Dent (who was still alive) anticipate modern political commentary, in which political wives including Cherie Blair, Michelle Obama, Gu Kailai, and Asma Al-Assad have all been likened to *Lady Macbeth*.²¹²

If Terry believed herself not to have done anything ‘wrong’, or to have undertaken real ‘wickedness’, the ‘badness’ she admits to Scott has two major connotations.²¹³ First, there’s the widespread capacity for transgression which she asserts in ‘most women’ for whom the ‘masculine estimate of women’ is inaccurate. Secondly, there’s the purely legalistic ‘badness’, which – as Terry’s wider representation indicates – is less important than positive qualities of love and devotion.

²¹¹ Jane Ridley, ‘Disraeli, Mary Anne, Viscountess Beaconsfield (1792–1872)’ *DNB*, [http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/39791, accessed 25 September 2012].

²¹² Paul Waugh, ‘Cherie Blair is the “Lady Macbeth” of British politics’, *Independent* (8 August 2000) [http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/cherie-blair-is-the-lady-macbeth-of-british-politics-711023.html, accessed 1 January 2013.]; James Delingpole, ‘Was “Lady Macbeth” behind Barack Obama’s snub of Gordon Brown?’ *Telegraph* online (5 March 2009) [http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/news/jamesdelingpole/9095137/was_lady_macbeth_behind_barack_obamas_snub_of_gordon_brown/, accessed 1 January 2013]; Jonathan Fenby, ‘The Bo Xilais’, *Observer* (29 January 2012) [http://www.guardian.co.uk/theobserver/2012/jul/29/observer-profile-bo-xilai-neil-heywood, accessed 1 January 2013.]; Angelique Chrisafis, ‘The Arab world’s first ladies of oppression’, *Guardian* (28 February 2012) [http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/feb/28/arab-first-ladies-of-oppression, accessed 1 January 2013].

²¹³ Letter to Scott (31 December 1896), 214.

It is illuminating to consider the kinds of ‘wifeliness’ Terry might have represented in 1888. In 1932, Shaw sharply distinguished Terry from the ‘*grande amoureuse*’ with ‘infatuations and extravagance [...] the jewels, the caprices’ – in his reference to ‘the menagerie of strange pet animals’ – the proclivities of the tiger-owning Bernhardt.²¹⁴ Terry’s letters to her son suggest the wifely Ruskinian helpmeet, emphasising the qualities of duty, self-denial and subordination to Irving that she summarised to Shaw as a desire for ‘usefulness – to my lovely art, and to H.I.’.²¹⁵ However, as I discuss in Chapter Four, Terry was primarily Irving’s professional partner, sharing his commercial concerns and deputising in the Lyceum’s technical departments in his absence.²¹⁶ Terry frequently played Irving’s wife or lover, but in one of their greatest hits, *Olivia*, she was his daughter. Terry and Irving were, of course, married to other people. Nevertheless, it is notable that Wilde’s poems figured Langtry as ‘The New Helen’, famous beauty and adulterer, and Bernhardt as the dynasty-destroying, quasi-incestuous ‘Phèdre’, but represented Terry as ‘Queen Henrietta Maria’, her primary significance as a wife who ‘tarrieth for her Lord the King’.²¹⁷ Publicly, professional collaboration and celebrity characterised their partnership; Wilde’s poem also recognises Terry’s loyalty and symbolic status as England’s leading actress.

***Macbeth* as society drama**

Macbeth’s audiences would have been particularly attuned to the potential for contemporary comment in the characters’ interactions. The Lyceum performances emerged from a theatre culture which increasingly emphasised performance’s interpersonal and social resonances. Taylor

²¹⁴ *Correspondence*, xvii.

²¹⁵ Letter to Scott (31 December 1896), 214; *Daily Chronicle*, reprinted Brereton, 272.

²¹⁶ Letter to Shaw (15 December 1897), *Letters* III.312–13, 312. For a fuller discussion of their collaboration, see Chapter Four.

²¹⁷ ‘Queen Henrietta Maria’, *Complete Works of Oscar Wilde*, 835.

characterises the nineteenth-century shift in acting styles as moving from the stock system's emphasis on 'extravagant expression of passion' and 'solo cadenzas' of emotion, towards 'social interaction in the drama'.²¹⁸ On *Macbeth*'s first night, the Lyceum's intensely fashionable audience from 'Bohemia' included Gilbert, the Wildes ('quite in front'), the Pineros, and Augustus Harris; one critic deemed it the greatest 'gathering of notabilities' in 'the memory of the present generation'.²¹⁹ The society press emphasised the audience as much as the performance, with the prominence of actors in the audience – including two of Terry's sisters – evincing the close relationship between the two spaces of stage and auditorium.²²⁰ *Macbeth* emerges as a socially-reflexive production. For Labouchère, not only was *Macbeth* saturated with the contemporary signifiers of a fashionable, 'Grosvenor Gallery' society, but Terry was also 'the most popular actress on the stage at the present time', with the Lyceum interpretation designed to 'catch the shifting straws of public opinion'.²²¹ Similarly, Frederick Wedmore called Terry 'the sympathetic actress, whom not to admire is to be [...] out of the fashion'.²²²

The contemporary quality of Terry's performance was vital. Where Comyns-Carr had rejected the 'forensic', Terry transposed Lady Macbeth into a nineteenth-century lover with an illegitimate 'baby at [her] breast'. Although Terry's writings on Lady Macbeth indicate a drive to universalise her experience that was unique amongst her responses to her roles, Lady Macbeth clearly belonged to her schema of 'Renaissance heroines reconstructed on a nineteenth-century

²¹⁸ Taylor, *Players and Performances*, 21.

²¹⁹ 'Latest London News', *Aberdeen Weekly Journal* (1 January 1889), 5; 'The First Night of Macbeth', *Daily News* (31 December 1888), 6; 'Notes from London', *SRI* (5 January 1889), 5.

²²⁰ 'The First Night', *Daily News* (31 December 1888), 6.

²²¹ Henry Labouchère, review of *Macbeth* in *Truth*, reprinted Manvell, 200.

²²² Frederick Wedmore, 'The Stage', *Academy* (5 January 1889), 14–15, 14.

plan'.²²³ In particular, Terry's promptbook annotations highlight the Macbeths' social context, frequently resituating them within Victorian society, and emphasising Lady Macbeth's self-aware, duplicitous public display. To Duncan, Lady Macbeth is 'Most modest – Humble – knowing her place', adopting her own instructions to Macbeth and personifying the 'innocent flower'.²²⁴ In the banquet scene, Terry's interactions emphasise Lady Macbeth's self-presentation and manipulation of her peers in the dual role of monarch and hostess. Attempting to restore order after the line 'Fie, *for shame!*', Terry notes 'Catch the eye of 1st lady guest + go to her then speak to all the others + lean back + call for wine': she is also seen 'kissing her hand with pretended gaiety'.²²⁵ Terry's interaction with the court ladies was sufficiently memorable to inspire Sargent's initial painting of her in character. The banquet scene's layering of audiences (the guests who observe the Macbeths, and the theatre audience observing both) let Terry play to multiple networks of observers, 'guests' and public, whom she 'allow[ed]' to 'see that she reproves' Macbeth for his apparent madness.²²⁶ Emphasising the fact that the guests 'see' her reprove Macbeth (which could easily have been played as an aside) reinforces both Macbeth's infantilisation, and the artificiality of Lady Macbeth's social identity. Even before this dexterous stagecraft, Terry's paraphrase to the speech beginning 'Gentle my lord, sleek o'er your rugged looks' was 'Come Come you must pluck up courage - remember the tea party tonight', reiterating Lady Macbeth's potential as a contemporary hostess, heading up a 'Damned party in a parlour – the "Banquet Scene" as it is called'.²²⁷ At least one reviewer identified Terry's performance as staging a 'nineteenth century wife' who acts the 'hostess in magnificent style' and pursues the

²²³ Shattuck, 168.

²²⁴ *Macbeth* 2, MS. annotation p. 28; *Macbeth* 1, MS. annotation, p. 24.

²²⁵ *Macbeth* 1, MS. annotation to p. 47; *Macbeth* 2, MS. annotation 45v.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, MS. annotation 47v.

²²⁷ *Macbeth* 2, MS. annotation 43v; *Macbeth* 1, MS. annotation to 'Dramatis Personae', page unnumbered.

trappings of fashionable life – such as ‘a new dress which can be ill afforded’ without thought for ‘pinching and economy’.²²⁸ Wilde similarly quipped that Lady Macbeth clearly bought ‘local’ Scottish clothes for her household, but did ‘all her own shopping in Byzantium’.

The Lyceum *Macbeth* was staged on the eve of the 1890s, a decade that debated women’s identities and experiences, and a decade whose society dramas would interrogate the artificiality and instability of social identities. Terry’s argument that Lady Macbeth was ‘all over a woman’ had disturbing implications for womanhood’s meaning.²²⁹ Her erotic and enticing interpretation suggested to sexually-enthralled male audiences that the qualities they most admired might well be aligned with criminal potential. *Punch* concluded that men ‘would be sooner led to the commission of a crime by a Syren than driven to it by a Gorgon’ – the polysemy of ‘sooner’ suggesting that sexual persuasion would work faster than bullying, and acknowledging the pleasurable eroticism of being complicit in such a downfall.²³⁰

Terry’s legacy and influence

Although Terry’s previous significance as a performer made her interpretation controversial, two factors contributed to her interpretation’s influence and longevity. While Faucit’s interpretation had also stressed ‘conjugal affection of a most devoted kind’, the length of Terry’s Lyceum tenure, her pre-eminence as a canonical Shakespearean actress, combined with her international touring allowed her to influence views of characters ‘not in reach of the Lyceum’.²³¹ Another factor reflected the cultural moment: despite mainstream concern regarding Terry’s rejection of

²²⁸ ‘Macbeth at the Lyceum’, *Glasgow Herald* (31 December 1888), 7.

²²⁹ *Macbeth I*, MS. annotation to ‘Dramatis Personae’.

²³⁰ *Punch* (12 January 1889), 15–16, 15.

²³¹ ‘The Theatres’, *Daily News* (24 December 1888), 6; ‘Our London Letter’, *SRI* (1 January 1889), 5.

the Siddonian ideal and conservative opposition to hermeneutical change, Terry's reception as Lady Macbeth does evince a slowly-burgeoning discomfort with Shakespeare criticism's privileging of theatrical tradition at all costs. The *Liverpool Mercury* parodied the reactionaries: "Miss Terry is not like Faucit," cries one. "She does not give the sleepy breathing of Ristori in her final scene,". The satirical press had also begun problematising the entire process of artistic inheritance. This is exemplified by Du Maurier's September 1888 *Punch* cartoon, in which an Actor, Painter, Statesman and Poet debate artistic posterity. The Actor, who strongly resembles Irving, laments that despite being 'the Pet of the Public' and 'the Spoilt Child of Royalty', his ephemeral art 'dies with him'. The Painter retorts that posterity, able to revisit the work of the other practitioners, will deem them 'overrated Duffers', the actor will 'never be found out, old Man. So you score again!'.²³² This attack on contemporary reports of performance suggests not only their unreliability, failing to help us 'find out' the truth about past theatrical 'Duffers', but that performances do 'die' with their performers, making the veneration of Siddons and other past actors meaningless.

When *Macbeth* opened, some London papers praised its stylistic innovation, identifying those who disparaged Terry as 'wedded to the thunder of the old-fashioned declamatory school'.²³³ Again, however, the regional press most supported both Terry's 'newness' and her claims to 'scholarly' authority; her 'entirely new and scholarly reasoning' was deemed 'truer to nature and truer to the author's own idea' than the Siddonian version of the character.²³⁴ Comments made by Terry's contemporary, Madge Kendal, in 1903, also suggest that Siddons's status was waning.

²³² George du Maurier. 'A Chapter on Fame', *Punch* (29 September 1888), 50.

²³³ 'The Playgoer', *Penny Illustrated* (5 January 1889), 10.

²³⁴ 'Theatrical Gossip', *Blackburn Standard* (5 January 1889), 3.

Kendal argued that although Siddons was still ‘casually called the greatest of all English actresses’, her actual influence was limited: she was ‘nowadays but a name’ and ‘no one really believe[d] in her supremacy’.²³⁵ Terry’s ‘entirely new and scholarly’ reading turned the theatrical tide away from Siddons.

While Faucit’s ‘conjugal’ Lady Macbeth had scarcely registered in Terry’s reception, Terry’s interpretation helped determine the reception of Mrs Patrick Campbell’s 1898 performance. A decade post-Terry, Campbell’s Lady Macbeth again drew ‘all fashionable and artistic London’ to the Lyceum, and ‘succeeded in charming the audience’ with another Lady filled with ‘love and devotion’ and ‘womanliness’, whom regional journalists praised for an ‘intelligent’ performance.²³⁶ Campbell’s dress even had sleeves made of ‘overlapping luminous scales’.²³⁷ Significantly, shortly after Campbell’s Lady Macbeth, Shaw wrote to Max Hecht, describing Johnston Forbes-Robertson (Campbell’s Macbeth) and Campbell as ‘more like the heir and heiress apparent to Irving and Ellen Terry than any other pair’.²³⁸ Without Terry’s precedent, Campbell’s uxorious ‘touches of femininity’ could not have been so readily accepted as a plausible ‘mainspring of [Lady Macbeth’s] character’.²³⁹ But where Terry’s Lady Macbeth embodied contemporary fascinations with aestheticism and nascent debates on marriage, Campbell’s queen, who similarly ‘clings and kisses and casts a spell’, and emerged from a ‘pre-

²³⁵ Kendal, Madge. ‘Some Pros and Cons of Theatrical Life’, *The Women’s Library Vol. 1* (London: Women’s Library, 1903). 223–254. 245.

²³⁶ ‘Her Majesty’s Theatre’, *Dundee Courier* (19 October 1898), 4; ‘The Theatre’, *PMG* (19 September 1898), 4; ‘London Letter’, *Western Mail* (19 September 1898), 5; ‘Our London Letter’, *Belfast News-Letter* (19 September 1898), 5.

²³⁷ ‘Theatrical Gossip’, *Era* (24 September 1898), 12.

²³⁸ Letter to Max Hecht, quoted Peters, *Mrs Pat*, 173.

²³⁹ ‘London Letter’, *Western Mail* (19 September 1898), 5.

Raffaelite' visual schema, offered a '*femme serpent*' for the 1890s.²⁴⁰ According to A.B. Walkley, Campbell was 'Baudelairean' and 'an Aubrey Beardsley type'.²⁴¹ While Walkley enjoyed the '*femme serpent*', Campbell's detractors objected to her sexuality as 'modernity'; for one Northern critic, hers was a 'mood, admirable for the "Second Mrs. Tanqueray" but out of place' in Shakespeare.²⁴² Post-Wilde, the aesthetic 'greenery-yallery' milieu of the Lyceum was more suspect than in 1888: in 1898, Scott condemned those who enjoyed Campbell's performance because she 'look[ed] a picture' ('looking a picture' had, of course, been key to Terry's appeal).²⁴³ For Scott, the new production was a 'fantastic dream' of artistic effeminacy'.²⁴⁴ However, despite both objections to Campbell's modernity and the widely varying responses to the performance as a whole – she was variously 'tame and colourless', 'perfectly possible and plausible', 'too monotonous' and 'very beautiful' – there was almost no mention of Siddons.²⁴⁵ The closest theatrical correspondents came to comparison was the *Standard*'s complaint that Campbell lacked 'tremendous will' and 'great force'; but Siddons is not named, and the direct comparisons Terry suffered are nowhere.²⁴⁶ There is, perhaps, another echo of Terry's Lady Macbeth in the Gertrude of Charlotte Granville, who featured in the Lyceum's 1897 *Hamlet* (with Forbes-Robertson as Hamlet, and Campbell as Ophelia). Several publications noted sympathetically that this Gertrude was 'younger and prettier' and 'more

²⁴⁰ A.B. Walkley, reprinted Peters, *Mrs. Pat*, 171; Clement Scott, reprinted 'The New Macbeth', *Belfast News-Letter* (21 September 1898), 7; Walkley, *ibid.*

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*

²⁴² 'The Stage', *Newcastle Weekly* (24 September 1898), 5.

²⁴³ Clement Scott, reprinted 'The New Macbeth', *Belfast News-Letter*.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁵ 'Macbeth at the Lyceum', *Lloyd's* (18 September 1898), 1; Walkley, reprinted *Mrs. Pat*, 171; 'Macbeth at the Lyceum Theatre', *Standard* (19 September 1898), 3; Max Beerbohm, *Saturday Review*, reprinted *Mrs. Pat*, 172.

²⁴⁶ 'Macbeth at the Lyceum Theatre', *Standard* (19 September 1898), 3.

comely' than usual.²⁴⁷ Hawes Craven, the production's designer, also illustrated the published text; Granville's long, braided plaits and girdle are strongly reminiscent of Terry's costume.²⁴⁸

Besides her memoirs, Terry's lectures were her last published comment on Lady Macbeth's character. Her published lecture is essentially contiguous with her promptbook notes, rejecting the 'robust muscular woman' in favour of the 'delicate' woman with 'hyper-sensitive nerves'.²⁴⁹ The anti-Siddons, normalising lexis persists; Terry's Lady Macbeth was 'by no means abnormally bad', and Terry's lectures reject the conception of her as 'abnormally hard, abnormally cruel'.²⁵⁰ A report on a version of the lectures given in New York further claimed that Terry 'objected to the placing of Lady Macbeth in the category of unregenerates', believing her to be a 'normal woman', anxious for 'her husband's advancement'.²⁵¹ Returning to Hiatt's *Ellen Terry* some time after 1898, Terry was similarly consistent, claiming in her annotations that Lady Macbeth 'died of remorse' and 'a woman this' [sic].²⁵²

This is not necessarily the last word on Terry's influence. *The True Ophelia* (1913) is a polemic on various Shakespearean female characters, presenting a series of ideal performances and discussions of performance context.²⁵³ The anonymous 'Actress'-writer never specifies whether the accounts are frustrated, projected or realised interpretations. Lady Macbeth stands out as the

²⁴⁷ "'Hamlet" at the Lyceum', *Era* (18 September 1897), 13; 'The Theatres', *Graphic* (18 September 1897), 374; "'Hamlet" at the Lyceum', *Lloyd's* (12 September 1897), 1.

²⁴⁸ Illustration to *Hamlet, as arranged for the stage by Forbes Robertson*, 70r. Bram Stoker Collection, RL2/2/7, Shakespeare Centre Library and Archive.

²⁴⁹ *Four Lectures*, 125.

²⁵⁰ Quoted Hiatt, 166; *Four Lectures*, 160.

²⁵¹ 'Ellen Terry Acts Heroines', *New York Times* (undated clipping). British Library Loan MS 125 / Polling 1, 5103/4

²⁵² Charles Hiatt, *Ellen Terry an appreciation* (London: George Bell & Sons, 1898), Ellen Terry's copy (Smallhythe Place Library) MS. annotations to 201 and 206.

²⁵³ *The True Ophelia* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1913).

‘Lady of Undaunted Mettle’: a more rebellious Lady Macbeth is given recognisably Terry’s body. The grey eyes are of ‘smoky grey steel’, with Terry’s ‘proudly cut’ nose and specifically ‘wide’ nostrils.²⁵⁴ Tall, with the ‘long, thick’ and ‘sheeny, sandy’ plait that recalls Terry’s wig, the ‘Lady of Undaunted Mettle’ also has the ‘vivid vermillion’ lips of Sargent’s painting.²⁵⁵ She is also explicitly Macbeth’s ‘equal’ and ‘partner’, the ‘panther to her mate’, just as Terry’s Macbeths experienced ‘the terms of equals’.²⁵⁶ Echoing Archer’s ‘domestic drama’, the ‘Undaunted’ queen is fundamentally both housewife and socialite, reproaching her ‘stupid man!’ for a ‘breach of etiquette’, and, at the Banquet, ‘not[ing] the conduct of the feast [...] ever ready tactfully to resolve any discord back to harmony’, just as Terry co-ordinated her ‘party in a parlour’.²⁵⁷ Biographical information strengthens the link with Terry: Jess Dorynne, the suffragist actress and Craig’s mistress, has been identified as *Ophelia*’s author.²⁵⁸ It is, however, more helpful to read *Ophelia* as an archive of Terry’s influence (Terry ‘very much liked’ Dorynne) rather than an account of her performance.²⁵⁹ Dorynne’s dates are unclear, but being younger than her lover, she would have been a child when Terry first performed in *Macbeth* (and was, in any case, writing twenty-five years after the first production).

Moreover, Terry’s ‘hyper-sensitive’ Lady Macbeth, although an ‘instinctive ruler’, was hardly ‘Undaunted’.²⁶⁰ Instead, Dorynne’s reimagining of Terry’s performance makes Terry’s body the site of grand theatrical rebellion, reorienting *Macbeth* to emphasise a usually marginalised queen.

²⁵⁴ Ibid., 165.

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

²⁵⁶ Ibid.; *Four Lectures*, 162.

²⁵⁷ *True Ophelia*, 179; 201; *Macbeth I*, MS. annotation to ‘Dramatis Personae’.

²⁵⁸ The South African-born Dorynne was the mother of Craig’s daughter Kitty (born November 1900). On the 1901 census, Dorynne called herself Jess Craig and claimed to be married. Holroyd, *A Strange Eventful History*, 307.

²⁵⁹ Ibid., 237.

²⁶⁰ *Four Lectures*, 125; *True Ophelia*, 196.

The wider text is simultaneously a laudatory archive of Terry's 'feminine and gentle personality', and a call for radical Shakespeare performance that indicates an ambiguous relation to the older actress.²⁶¹ Another character Dorynne seeks to rewrite is Gertrude, and again her demands for innovation circulate around Terry. Dorynne's consideration of Terry's unplayed, 'ideal' Gertrude swings sharply towards criticism: Terry would have excelled 'provided, [...] she assumed the character Shakespeare has drawn [...] and did not play it simply on the surface, according to custom'.²⁶² Terry's custom, or the wider trends of theatrical culture? The text is never explicit. These 'surfaces', the *Ophelia* author implies, are part of the 'conventional thing' in acting; to 'play for safety'; in other words, to please the eye and ear [...] it is probably owing to the beautiful modesty of our natures that we never question the psychological correctness of these superficial poses'.²⁶³ The irony is heavy: the *Ophelia* author did question her own 'superficial poses' when playing Gertrude, her copy of *Hamlet* beginning 'to bristle with restless questions and comments' just as Terry's promptbooks did.²⁶⁴

Although Bernhardt and Campbell were less associated with 'playing for safety' than Terry, Terry remains the starting point for Dorynne's reimaginings. The *Ophelia* polemicist reveals her emotional and professional investment in Terry; ultimately, the imagined Terry of 1913 is neither attack nor apologia, reflecting a sensed performative and political potential in Terry's work. For Dorynne, 'to "play" [Lady Macbeth] is a "liberal education"'.²⁶⁵ Recent studies of Terry, such as *Spheres of Influence*, have emphasised Terry's influence on younger women, especially

²⁶¹ *True Ophelia*, 97.

²⁶² *Ibid.*

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, 99.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 100.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 221.

suffragists, as public performers. My final chapter examines the political relationship between suffrage and Shakespeare. But Terry's presence in Dorynne's text reiterates the creative importance of Terry's Lady Macbeth for subsequent actresses.

Despite the hermeneutical space Terry's performance created for her, Campbell found this relationship complicated, commenting in despair backstage during her own *Macbeth* that if Terry had ended up with a 'staccato' delivery while trying to speak Lady Macbeth's verse 'naturally', she couldn't speak the verse 'naturally' herself.²⁶⁶ However, looking at the ways Terry's performance did succeed, despite its controversies, should complicate our thinking about Victorian typologies of performers and roles. Although Terry's mingling of theatrical semiotics and innovative hermeneutics alarmed some critics, others enjoyed it. Terry's cultural impact and lasting theatrical influence illuminates the very complex combinations of performers and roles which *were* occurring in the late-Victorian theatre, and which popular audiences and criticism began to embrace. Terry's significance for Wildean aesthetics, and her Lady Macbeth's intersections with contemporary ideas of gender reveal the restrictions of solely biographical or Shakespearean critical narratives. As an indication of the possibilities that arose when categories of *fin-de-siècle* performance mingled, Terry's Lady Macbeth prepares us to reconsider the resonances of Campbell's Lady Macbeth. Unlike Terry, Campbell's roles in the 'wicked Pinerotic theatre' linked her explicitly with the unacceptable Ibsen, and the New Woman.²⁶⁷ While Terry claimed to love Ibsen 'for herself' and may have drawn imaginatively on Nora Helmer, she upheld Irving's financial decision not to stage him, despite Shaw condemning Irving

²⁶⁶ Peters, 173.

²⁶⁷ Shaw. 'The Independent Theatre Repents', (15 March 1895) *Dramatic Opinions and Essays* (New York: Brentano's, 1906) 48–54. 49.

for 'the utter neglect of the drama'.²⁶⁸ Campbell, however, superimposed anxieties about the New Drama on Shakespearean performance, having already become 'an Aubrey Beardsley type' and a nexus of anxieties about Decadence, female emancipation and female sexuality.²⁶⁹ Where Terry had been the definitive aesthetic Shakespearean heroine, Campbell was now *fin-de-siècle*.

²⁶⁸ Letter from Ellen Terry to George Bernard Shaw (February 5, 1897). Letter 90 in *Correspondence*.

²⁶⁹ Walkley, reprinted *Mrs. Pat*, 171.

Chapter Three:

The ‘femme serpent’: Mrs Patrick Campbell at the Lyceum

Introduction

The critical tendency to isolate performances of Victorian Shakespeare from the rest of the Victorian theatrical repertory is particularly evident in scholarship on Beatrice Stella Tanner (1865–1940), known professionally as Mrs Patrick Campbell. Chapter One suggested how theatrical history has overlooked actresses who do not fit the dominant narratives of Ibsen, New Drama and suffragist theatre. With Campbell, the opposite problem occurs. At the *fin de siècle*, her New and ‘problem play’ roles began with Pinero’s Paula Tanqueray (*The Second Mrs. Tanqueray*, 1893). *Tanqueray*’s ‘unmerited, hurtful and deplorable prosperity’ and perceived iconoclasm in engendering ‘a dramatic current’ of ‘literal, brazen, shameless portrayal[s] of depraved persons, [and] iniquitous conduct’ has made the play central to twentieth-century scholarship on *fin-de-siècle* representations of transgressive women.¹ Campbell’s subsequent non-Shakespearean, socially unconventional or controversial roles included title roles in Pinero’s *The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith* (1895) and Sardou’s *Fédora* (1895), both the Ratwife and Rita Allmers in Ibsen’s *Little Eyolf* (1896) and the heroine of Frank Harris’s *Mr. and Mrs. Daventry* (1900). These roles constitute Campbell’s major contribution to the prevailing narratives of *fin-de-siècle* historiography.

¹ William Winter, *The Wallet of Time* (New York: Moffat, Yard & Company, 1913), II.377; II.425.

Campbell was also a disruptive factor in the New Woman aesthetic. Beardsley's April 1894 portrait of 'Mrs. Patrick Campbell' in the inaugural issue of *The Yellow Book* was formative: while reviewing *Macbeth* in 1898, A.B. Walkley noted her popular significance as 'an Aubrey Beardsley type'.² As Joel Kaplan asserts, Beardsley's portrait of Campbell contains 'nothing' of the stereotypically masculine representations of the New Woman.³ However, as Bridget Elliott argues, extreme slenderness was also a 'hallmark' of 'unnatural, artificial New Woman', having long been linked to women's over-education.⁴ In 1861, Herbert Spencer had attributed the 'pale, angular [...] young ladies, so abundant in London drawing rooms' to 'merciless application' to Italian and other languages.⁵ Campbell's contemporary roles, and Shaw's description of her as 'an Ibsenite enthusiast' affirmed her 'New' allegiances.⁶ Thus, her disconcertingly thin figure could become both a recognisably 'dowdy New Woman' in Act I of *The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith*, and Burne-Jones's *femme fatale*, man-killing *Vampire* (1897).⁷ Simultaneously, the link between masculinity and New Womanesque hobbies, including cycling and smoking, was becoming unstable. An 1889 *Hampshire Advertiser* article, appalled that women were 'constantly [...] assuming the functions of men' reveals the 'awful discovery' that smoking would physically masculinise women by 'promot[ing] the growth of hair upon the upper lip'.⁸ However, the article also lists 'Mrs. Langtry [...] and several Princesses' as famous smokers: hardly masculine, or likely to deter emulation.⁹ Campbell's alliances and professional choices in *femme fatale* and New Woman roles fulfilled the overarching definition Kaplan applies only to the *fin-de-siècle*

² A.B. Walkley, quoted Margot Peters, *Mrs Pat* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1985), 271.

³ Joel Kaplan, 'Pineroticism and the problem play', Richard Foulkes (ed.), *British Theatre in the 1890s* (Cambridge: 1992), 38–58.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Herbert Spencer, *Education, Intellectual, Moral and Physical*. (London: Williams and Norgate, 1861), 186.

⁶ George Bernard Shaw, 'The New Ibsen Play', *Saturday Review* (30 January 1897), 114–115, 115.

⁷ Bridget Elliott, 'New and Not So "New Women" on the London Stage', *Victorian Studies* (Autumn 1987), 33–57.

⁸ 'Notes By The Way', *Hampshire Advertiser* (24 August 1889), 6.

⁹ Ibid.

New Women: ‘embodiments of male fears and fantasies’, implicated in ‘the prospect of female emancipation’.¹⁰ Above all, Campbell complicated theatrical typologies.

In addition to two major biographies (by Dent in 1961, and Peters in 1985), scholarship on Campbell has emphasised her intersections with Pinero, Shaw and Ibsen, while overlooking her Shakespearean roles. Although Gail Marshall identifies a ‘new breed’ of radical Shakespearean actresses in the 1890s, Campbell was the only actress with a New, Ibsenite identity consistently visible in the Shakespearean mainstream.¹¹ Elizabeth Robins offered to rehearse Portia ‘on approval’ for Henry Irving, but was refused. Janet Achurch was an ‘unhappy’ Bensonian for a year (1885–6) and played Cleopatra briefly in 1896.¹² Campbell’s first five years of professional activity were extensively Shakespearean, with roles in *As You Like It*, *Twelfth Night* and *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. Between 1895 and 1899, opposite Johnston Forbes-Robertson, she played three Shakespearean heroines at the Lyceum, which remained Britain’s powerhouse for fashionable classics and sumptuous revivals. These heroines were: Juliet (1895), a performance supporters deemed revelatory in its girlishness and beauty; Ophelia (1897), adored by Shaw for its ‘painful’ madness; and Lady Macbeth (1898–9), dubbed ‘Baudelairean’ and ‘bewitching’ by Walkley and Max Beerbohm.¹³ In this period, Shaw identified Forbes-Robertson and Campbell as ‘more like the heir and heiress apparent to Irving and Ellen Terry than any other pair’.¹⁴ Re-examining Campbell’s movement between Shakespearean and *avant-garde* productions reveals a public interested in the consonances between these apparently irreconcilable areas of the

¹⁰ Kaplan, ‘Pineroticism and the problem play’, 49.

¹¹ Gail Marshall, *Shakespeare and Victorian Women* (Cambridge: 2009), 177. Outside Shakespeare, Langtry was well-known for roles in *She Stoops to Conquer* and *The Lady of Lyons*, and in the anti-Ibsenite Sydney Grundy’s *Esther Sandraz* and *The Degenerates*.

¹² Clement Scott, ‘Two Dramatic Revolutions’, *North American Review* (October 1893), 476–484, 482.

¹³ Shaw, ‘Hamlet’, *Saturday Review* (2 October 1897), 364–5, 365; Walkley, quoted *Mrs. Pat*, 171.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 173.

theatrical repertoire. Although mixed, Campbell's reception in Shakespearean roles includes an appetite for innovation and – as with Campbell's own writings – an enthusiastic defiance of tradition.

The Adelphi 'discovery' myth

Scholarship typically conflates Stella Campbell's theatrical advent with her casting as Paula Tanqueray, when she 'flashed' from obscurity to 'a leading place among the actresses of the world'.¹⁵ Supposedly, the unknown Campbell was 'discovered' in an Adelphi melodrama, thrilling Graham Robertson and Florence Alexander (George Alexander's 'brilliantly business-like little wife', according to Constance Scott) as 'exactly suited to play [...] Paula'.¹⁶ Campbell's 1922 autobiography upholds the myth, speculating on the 'chance' by which her 'personality, or looks, or some histrionic power' reached 'across the footlights' to enthrall Robertson and Alexander.¹⁷ Robertson exulted in how 'unknown' and 'hidden' Campbell had been as the 'wicked woman of the play'. Arresting their attention with a 'wonderful, low, and sweet, yet utterly mocking and heartless' laugh, Campbell was 'painfully thin, with great eyes and slow haunting utterance'. Previously 'almost unknown', Paula made her 'the most talked-of actress of the day'.¹⁸ Although Clement Scott had been fully aware of Campbell before 1893, Margaret Scott's biography of her husband also describes the 'lightning rapidity' of Campbell's success.¹⁹ Such accounts elide five years of sustained theatrical work into overnight revelation.

¹⁵ A.E.W. Mason, *Sir George Alexander* (London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1935), 51.

¹⁶ Constance Margaret Scott, *Old Days in Bohemian London* (London: Hutchinson, 1919), 200; Mrs Patrick Campbell, *My Life and Some Letters* (London: Hutchinson, 1922), 63.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Graham Robertson, *Time Was* [1931] (London: Quartet, 1981), 248.

¹⁹ *Old Days in Bohemian London*, 200.

Before she was *fin-de-siècle*, Campbell was Shakespearean. Campbell's reception in early roles reveals Shakespeare's centrality to her considerable pre-*Tanqueray* profile. While some mid-1890s critics balked at the idea of 'Mrs. Patrick Paula Tanqueray' as a Shakespearean actress, in the early 1890s Campbell primarily received recognition as a Shakespeare practitioner, and moved closer to the Shakespearean mainstream as the decade progressed.²⁰ This argument diverges sharply from the narratives of Campbell's biographers, who describe her struggle and 'failure' to make any 'particular mark' in Shakespeare.²¹ Dent and Peters echo Graham Robertson, who claims Campbell 'could do nothing with Shakespeare', who 'evaded' her behind an undefined stylistic barrier.²² However, Robertson's account is (like Craig's memoir of Terry) historically questionable.

Robertson's 1931 memoir is profoundly critical of modernity, rejecting post-1914 theatre culture as 'an age to which I do not belong and which I do not understand'.²³ Alongside hated innovations such as modern-dress ('no clothes', in Robertson's terminology) productions, he also rejected the pre-1914 stylistic changes he attributed to Campbell.²⁴ His relationship with Campbell was intermittently fraught, with arguments over costumes and her 'super-sensitiveness'.²⁵ For Robertson, Campbell embodied 'The Modern School' who refused to 'deign to learn declamation' from the 'old' school, 'before it can speak Shakespeare with any

²⁰ 'The Stage Coach', *Judy* (22 September 1897), 448.

²¹ Alan Dent, *Mrs Patrick Campbell* (London: Museum Press, 1961), 119.

²² *Time Was*, 251.

²³ *Time Was*, 269.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 252.

effect'.²⁶ He also decried Campbell's perceived tendency to 'take her art and her own great gifts too lightly', compared with the 'golden' and 'goddess-like' Ellen Terry.²⁷

Despite these claims regarding Campbell's failure, her Lyceum performances received significant praise, and were huge commercial successes. A description of *Macbeth* as drawing 'all fashionable and artistic London to the Lyceum' typifies contemporary comment, and even if Shaw deplored the effects of the 'hundred-nights run of *Hamlet*', the long run indicated its popularity.²⁸ Moreover, far from 'doing nothing' with Shakespeare, Campbell used Shakespeare as the launching-pad of her career.

A 'valuable apprenticeship in the country': aristocrats in Arden

After a few amateur performances, Campbell's professional debut occurred on 22 November 1888, in *Bachelors* at the Alexandra, Liverpool. After spending spring 1889 on tour with Millicent Bandmann-Palmer's company, Campbell dates the 'beginning of really fine experience' from her engagement with Ben Greet, in roles including Shakespearian leads.²⁹ In the summers of 1889 and 1890, Campbell played Rosalind in *As You Like It*, Olivia in *Twelfth Night* and Helena in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Of these, Rosalind was most significant.

Campbell's autobiography offers an anecdote of an outdoor performance of Greet's *As You Like It* at Wilton, the estate of Lord Pembroke, before an audience including 'Mrs. Horner and Miss

²⁶ Ibid, 252.

²⁷ Ibid, 254.

²⁸ 'Her Majesty's Theatre', *Dundee Courier* (19 October 1898), 4; Shaw, 'Hamlet Revisited', *Saturday Review* (18 December 1897), 711–712, 711.

²⁹ *Some Letters*, 43.

Balfour’ and ‘dear [...] Aunt Madeline’, identified in footnotes as ‘Lady Horner, of Mells Park, Frome’, ‘The Hon. Mrs. Alfred Lyttelton’ and ‘The Hon. Mrs. Percy Wyndham’: Conservative patrons of the arts, who became Campbell’s ‘great friends’.³⁰ Campbell’s experience was part of a burgeoning tradition. Lillie Langtry had benefitted, almost a decade earlier, from the open-air ‘tableaux’ orchestrated by Lady Archibald Campbell to ‘exceptional’ effect at Cromwell House.³¹ In 1884–5, Lady Archibald had also staged *As You Like It* in Coombe Wood, playing Orlando to Eleanor Calhoun’s Rosalind.

Calhoun’s London debut as Rosalind in 1882 preceded Langtry’s by less than a month. She also played Hester Glazebrook, another of Langtry’s early roles. Originally ‘a rank American, tart as a green apple in [her] ideas of independence’, Calhoun’s subsequent career mirrored Langtry’s transatlantic fame, and her social success eclipsed even the royal mistress: in 1903, Calhoun married Prince Lazarovich-Hrebelianovich of Serbia.³² In performing Rosalind before an open-air coterie of sympathetic, even adoring aristocrats, Campbell thus aligned herself with two star ‘amateurs’, sharing their new, contemporary trajectory towards Shakespearean success. The coterie audience offered Campbell professional opportunities and emotional support, substituting for the theatrical families of earlier performers such as Kendal and Terry. Aristocratic patronage also compensated for the lack of a famous surname, by offering similar associations of history, authenticity and legitimacy, while simultaneously linking Campbell with a far more prestigious, uncontroversial class identity than that of actor. It was ‘under [the] distinguished patronage’ of

³⁰ Ibid., 47–48. George Herbert (1850–1895) was 10th Earl of Pembroke, and a Conservative politician. Frances Horner (1854–1940) was a hostess and patron of the arts. Edith Lyttelton (1865–1940), Shaw’s close friend, was a novelist and activist. Madeline Wyndham (1835–1920), was an artist: she, her husband (a Conservative politician) and the Lytteltons were all members of The Souls.

³¹ Langtry, *The Days I Knew* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1925), 26.

³² Eleanor Lazarovich-Hrebelianovich, *Pleasures and Palaces: The Memoirs of Princess Lazarovich-Hrebelianovich* (New York: Century Co., 1915), 8.

the Pembrokes and Wyndhams (among others) that Greet's *As You Like It* received a matinee at the Shaftesbury Theatre.³³ Moreover, Langtry, Calhoun and Campbell's social networks reflect the *fin-de-siècle* necessity of making the stage one of several sites of encounter between actress and influential audience. This triangulation of actress, performance and fashionable society characterised Campbell's career. Despite Kendal's aristocratic and fashionable friends, by the 1890s her conservative associations and increasingly sour relationship with the press limited her ability to exploit the increasing proximity between the theatrical, social and sartorial moment, as Campbell and her daughter, Stella, did. As the younger Stella entered the profession and Society, boundaries between performance and socialising became increasingly permeable. Not only did Stella play her mother's stepdaughter in the 1907 *Tanqueray* revival, but she also attended the Prime Minister's son's wedding wearing her costume from 'the third act of *Tanqueray*, when "Ellean" returns from Paris'.³⁴

The multiplicity of theatrical encounters has resonances for both theories of *fin-de-siècle* drama and theatrical historiography. This is notable when comparing Campbell's experience to Thomas Postlewait's historiographical model of the theatrical event. Postlewait's framework acknowledges the interaction of 'agent' (performers and theatre technicians) and 'reception' (audience) at the moment of performance. Similarly, his recalibration of the 'aesthetic factors' that affect performance emphasises 'the training of actors in types of characters, specific roles, and particular gestures and modes of delivery' and 'our return to any of these works, players, productions, spaces, buildings, and festivals, for the experience of theatre'.³⁵ Postlewait's

³³ 'Shaftesbury Theatre', *MP* (19 June 1891), 2.

³⁴ *Some Letters*, 216.

³⁵ Thomas Postlewait, *The Cambridge Introduction to Theatre Historiography* (Cambridge: 2009), 12–16.

framework is useful for delineating the agency and impact of an actress who moved between ‘types of characters, specific roles’ and highly contested ‘modes of delivery’.³⁶ However, Postlewait’s model fails to make explicit the agent-reception interactions *beyond* the theatrical space, the implications of which were particularly resonant for *fin-de-siècle* performance.

Extra-performative socialising is sometimes distinct from the theatrical event. However, for Campbell – as for Langtry and Calhoun – social interaction was both a foundational condition of performance (Campbell’s social success brought patronage; Langtry’s celebrity attracted a ‘fashionable audience’), and, as when Stella wore a stage costume to a wedding, a potentially theatrical act in itself. Campbell’s outdoor performance of *As You Like It* at Wilton included an agent-world interaction within the performance space, as when Lord Pembroke’s pugs distracted her. Pembroke, ‘with mingled embarrassment, courtesy and humour’ had to enter the stage area to retrieve the dogs. Avowedly ‘delighted at the interruption’ of the dogs’ ‘bark[ing] furiously at [her] long boots’, worn as Ganymede, Campbell, ‘most surely a fool over dogs [...] stooped down and spoke to them [...] forgetting for the moment all about Rosalind and the smart audience’.³⁷ Pembroke’s later recollections of the ‘freshness and spontaneity that made [Rosalind] so delicious’, and Campbell’s autobiographical foregrounding of the incident, reflect the ongoing investment in feminine ‘artlessness’, which Voskuil identifies.³⁸ In demonstrating an absence of professional ‘technique’, Campbell distinguished herself from the careerist, money-minded working woman, about whom *fin-de-siècle* anxieties were increasing. The financially-minded actress was especially unacceptable: Mrs Kendal was both praised as a ‘home-loving’

³⁶ Ibid, 14.

³⁷ *Some Letters*, 50.

³⁸ Letter from the Earl of Pembroke to Benjamin Greet (27 March 1891), reprinted *Some Letters*, 51; Voskuil, *Acting Naturally* (Charlottesville: UVA Press, 2004) 215.

artist, and condemned for wanting to earn as much as possible to retire by forty.³⁹ Significantly, Campbell in interview presented her career as motivated by ‘choice and love of hard work’, rather than the financial necessity it undoubtedly was.⁴⁰

Meanwhile, Campbell’s demonstration of spontaneous emotional overflow countered anti-theatrical prejudice against the false mimetic emotion, by evincing Campbell’s inability and unwillingness to conceal her (ladylike, appropriate) love of animals. In demonstrating enthusiasm for Pembroke’s ‘special breed’ of dogs, Campbell was not only implicitly complimenting her aristocratic host, but also demonstrating an affinity for aristocratic interests that established her identification with her aristocratic audience (one of whom would briefly share the ‘stage’ with her). Interrupting Shakespeare’s text to ‘stoop down’ and address the dogs in ‘a special dog language of [her] own,’ Campbell was simultaneously mother-like, cooing to small creatures, and infantile.⁴¹ Campbell’s intensely unthreatening stage embodiment of childishness anticipated the popular girlishness of her Juliet: for Pembroke, she evinced ‘freshness’ and ‘spontaneity’, both qualities associated with youth.⁴²

Campbell defends her inattention as ‘making [her] ‘Rosalind’ more natural’; it also made her more contemporary, at a time when J.M. Barrie was arguing against the ‘self-conscious Rosalind’, and shortly after Langtry was praised for ‘forgetting rich costume and pretty face’ in ‘sprightly frolicsomeness’.⁴³ Barrie became Campbell’s fan, and more broadly concerned with

³⁹ ‘Mrs. Kendal’, *Theatre* (April 1883), 214; ‘Mrs. Kendal’s Opinions’, *Era* (27 September 1884), 13.

⁴⁰ M. Griffith, ‘Juliet’, *Strand Magazine* (10 July 1895), 260–266, 264.

⁴¹ *Some Letters*, 50.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 51.

⁴³ ‘Public Amusements’, *Reynolds’s Newspaper* (2 March 1890), 3; J.M. Barrie, ‘What The Pit Says’, *Time* (December 1889), 589.

actresses' self-fashioning: he actually wrote a chapter of Irene Vanbrugh's autobiography, retaining Vanbrugh's persona until the final sentence.⁴⁴ Throughout the 1890s, Campbell's most fervent admirers identified Campbell's 'naturalness' as fundamental to her performance style, across genre Pembroke would praised her Paula Tanqueray as both 'true to nature' and 'completely original on the stage'.⁴⁵ In defending her Wilton behaviour as making 'her "Rosalind" more natural', and thus a valid stylistic choice, Campbell links the performance to a career-wide interpretative schema. Pembroke's praise for Campbell's Rosalind reflects the *fin-de-siècle* enthusiasm for actresses who were 'always unmistakably themselves'.⁴⁶

Distraction by an audience member's dog is presumably unique to open-air performance. However, Campbell's ability to celebrate that distraction without evidence of repercussions reflects both the power of coterie support, and the open-air space's potential as a site for innovation and theatrical departure. In traditional theatre spaces, most Shakespearean actresses generally performed under the management of the space's temporary or permanent male owner, whether a sole or sub-lessee. At Wilton, Campbell operated in a performance space owned by Pembroke, whose ongoing patronage of, and 'courtesy and amusement' at Campbell's unprofessionalism made it harder for manager Greet (dependent on Pembroke for performance space) to rebuke her.

Simultaneously, open-air performance was emerging as both fashionable and particularly associated with female innovation. Calhoun's memoir identifies the Coombe House 1884 *As You*

⁴⁴ Irene Vanbrugh, *To Tell My Story* (London: Hutchinson, 1949).

⁴⁵ Letter from George Herbert to Campbell (June 1893), reprinted *Some Letters*, 76.

⁴⁶ John Stokes, 'Varieties of performance', Gail Marshall (ed.), *Cambridge Companion to the Fin de Siècle* (Cambridge: 1997), 207–222, 210.

Like It as the first of its kind, implicitly crediting herself and Lady Archibald with catalysing ‘the revival of out-of-door pageantry, garden performances, and open-air plays’ that acquired ‘an important place in general education and cultural development’.⁴⁷ Calhoun’s ‘certitude’ that this ‘new kind of presentation’ would prove both popular and distinct from ‘theatre-bound’ performance, liberated from ‘theatrical exigencies’ paved the way for Campbell’s experience.⁴⁸ Conceived and cast by women, the new ‘art form’ allowed the professional actresses, the aristocratic Lady Archibald (despite familial objections) and ‘the cook at Coombe Hill Farm’ to legitimately share a simultaneously genteel and radical stage-space as Rosalind, Orlando and Audrey.⁴⁹ Enthusiastic reviewers felt the Coombe House production offered not ‘semblance’ but ‘Arden itself’.⁵⁰

‘Mrs. Patrick Campbell’s Matinee.’

Little of the Wilton *As You Like It*’s reception survives. However, a matinee of the production occurred at the Shaftesbury Theatre on 18 June 1891. Although A.E.W. Mason retrospectively claimed Campbell as a ‘young tragedienne’ before *Tanqueray*, in 1891 she was in fact becoming established as a comedienne.⁵¹ Scott’s 1890 review of Campbell’s London debut in *A Buried Talent* predicted sustained London success, but in a theatre devoted not to tragedy but ‘refined comedy’. Moreover, Scott traced Campbell’s success in modern comedy to her ‘valuable apprenticeship in the country’, the vast majority of which was Shakespearean.⁵² Although

⁴⁷ *Pleasures and Palaces*, 72.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 74–75.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 77.

⁵⁰ *National Review* (September 1884), quoted Cynthia Marshall (ed.) *As You Like It* (Cambridge: 2004), 59.

⁵¹ Mason, *George Alexander*, 51.

⁵² Clement Scott, undated review of *A Buried Talent*, quoted *Some Letters*, 49.

Campbell's 1895 return to Shakespeare provoked critical anxiety over an actress's departure from her 'line', before 1893, that 'line' was Shakespearean comedy.

Press coverage of the matinee indicates both Campbell's fame and her association with Shakespeare. The *Era* review was entitled 'Mrs. Patrick Campbell's Matinee' – meaningless, were Campbell not well-known.⁵³ Two weeks earlier, two cast members (A.E. Drinkwater and Frank Worthing) advertising their services on the *Era*'s front page repeated the same phrase, highlighting not the West End venue, but the leading lady, as the performance's most prestigious aspect.⁵⁴ The date of the advertisements, still twelve days before the performance, similarly indicates the strength of Campbell's existing reputation and her colleagues' faith in her success.

Problematising Peters's claim that Campbell was 'not a Shakespearean actress', response to Campbell's London Rosalind was positive.⁵⁵ Scott asserted her 'many natural gifts for the greater heroines of the Shakespearean drama' and likened her to Adelaide Neilson; Pembroke, predictably, thought her 'marvelous' and superior to Ada Rehan.⁵⁶ Campbell's verse-speaking, subsequently criticised, was praised for 'good delivery' and 'crisp decision'.⁵⁷ Echoing 1875 commendation of Kendal as 'delightfully piquante', the *Era* acclaimed Campbell's 'repartees' for their 'piquancy and expressiveness'.⁵⁸ As late as 1895, an interviewer recalled her performance as 'most bewitching'.⁵⁹

⁵³ 'Mrs. Patrick Campbell's Matinée', *Era* (20 June 1891), 7.

⁵⁴ Advertisements, *Era* (6 June 1891), 1–2.

⁵⁵ *Mrs. Pat*, 151.

⁵⁶ *Daily Telegraph* (19 June 1891), quoted *Mrs. Patrick Campbell*, 47–48; *Some Letters*, 51.

⁵⁷ 'Shaftesbury Theatre', *MP* (19 June 1891), 2; 'Mrs. Patrick Campbell's Matinee', *Era*, 7.

⁵⁸ 'Opera Comique', *Penny Illustrated* (27 February 1875), 130; 'Mrs. Campbell's Matinee', *Era*, 7.

⁵⁹ M. Griffith, 'Juliet', *Strand Magazine* (10 July 1895), 260–266, 262.

Campbell fulfilled cultural requirements for the *fin-de-siècle* Rosalind: the freedom of physical expression evinced by ‘ease in her doublet-and-hose’, with the necessarily ‘pleasing presence’ to eroticise the dislocation between female body and male dress.⁶⁰ Her ‘histrionic aptitude’ was complemented by ‘cool self-confidence’, replacing the modesty topos of the ‘stranded and unhappy’ Faucit or ‘bewildered’ Kendal.⁶¹ Finally, of course, there was the ‘large and fashionable audience’, whom, the *Morning Post* concluded, Campbell ‘pleased greatly’.⁶²

Acclaim was not universal: the *Daily News*, lamenting a want of ‘vivacity’ and ‘variety’, anticipated the accusations of ‘colourless’ presentation that greeted her Ophelia and Lady Macbeth.⁶³ Similarly, Campbell’s perceived failure to perform a ‘merry and joyous nature’ as Rosalind anticipated Kate Terry Gielgud’s verdict that Campbell’s Shakespearean persona was ‘too *fin-de-siècle*, too much the morbid, introspective modern woman’.⁶⁴ However, in 1891, the *Daily News* attributed Campbell’s limitations to inexperience while the more enthusiastic *Post* felt Campbell ‘accomplished a difficult task in a manner worthy of high commendation’.⁶⁵ There seemed little doubt that Campbell, who ‘decidedly compare[d] favourably’ with ‘the average aspiring debutante’ would fulfil her ‘marked promise’ as a Shakespearean performer.⁶⁶ In particular, her debut Rosalind was far more warmly received than Langtry’s had been. This early acclaim helped legitimise Campbell’s subsequent Shakespearean career by creating continuities

⁶⁰ ‘Mrs. Patrick Campbell’s Matinee’, *Era*, 7; ‘The Drama’, *Daily News* (19 June 1891), 6.

⁶¹ ‘Mrs. Patrick Campbell’s Matinee’; Helena Faucit, *On Some of Shakespeare’s Female Characters* (London: William Blackwood & Sons, 1887), 288; Madge Kendal, *DMK* (London: John Murray, 1933), 68.

⁶² ‘Mrs. Campbell’s Matinée’, ‘Shaftesbury Theatre’.

⁶³ “‘Hamlet’ at the Lyceum”, *Era* (18 September 1897), 13; ‘Macbeth at the Lyceum’, *Lloyd’s* (18 September 1898), 1.

⁶⁴ ‘The Drama’, *Daily News* (19 June 1891), 6; Kate Terry Gielgud, *A Victorian Playgoer* (London: Heinemann, 1980), 32.

⁶⁵ ‘The Drama’, *Daily News* (19 June 1891), 6; ‘Shaftesbury Theatre’, *MP* (18 June 1891), 2.

⁶⁶ ‘The Drama’; ‘Mrs. Patrick Campbell’s Matinée’,

between the two phases; the *Strand* reprinted Pembroke's praise for Rosalind as part of its commendation of *Romeo and Juliet*.⁶⁷ In 1893, the supposedly 'unknown' Campbell's performance at the Adelphi reminded Scott of Terry. Campbell was what Terry 'ever is, whatever she plays – a woman heart and soul', without being Terry's 'slavish copy or servile imitation'. In 1893, Terry, 'the greatest actress of our time' remained primarily Shakespearean.⁶⁸ Scott's comparison thus added a further classical actress to Neilson and Rehan, as Campbell's professional analogues.

'Ridiculously thin, and fragile-looking': Campbell's sickly aesthetic

Despite being historically dubious, the discovery myth remained determinative in Campbell's 'personal possibilities'.⁶⁹ Describing her Adelphi performance, Robertson highlighted the disjunction between appearance and role that proved controversial and complicated when Campbell returned to Shakespeare: 'She did not look wicked – a startling innovation'.⁷⁰ Instead, she was 'almost painfully' thin and ill-looking.⁷¹ Campbell confirms that, having been 'ridiculously thin, and fragile-looking' at the start of her career, she was 'scraggy and plain' by 1893, her white face and 'exceptionally slight figure' evincing 'fearlessness and fragility' in equal measure, body and 'nerves [...] strained by illness'.⁷² This is a statement of artistic allegiance, linking her professional genesis with that of Sarah Bernhardt. Bernhardt's autobiography emphasises her own youthful ill-health and emaciation, describing herself as 'this poor little trembling thing' at the Comédie Française, at her debut 'seized by a cold sweat from

⁶⁷ *Daily Telegraph* (19 June 1891), quoted *Mrs. Patrick Campbell*, 48; *Some Letters*, 51, and M. Griffith, 'Juliet', 262.

⁶⁸ Clement Scott, *Daily Telegraph* (23 April 1893), quoted *Mrs. Patrick Campbell*, 50.

⁶⁹ John Stokes, 'Varieties of Performance', 215.

⁷⁰ *Time Was*, 248.

⁷¹ *Time Was*, 248.

⁷² *Some Letters*, 40; 64.

head to toe [...] trembling, staggering, my teeth chattering' and told by her godfather, 'my poor little one, what thin arms you have'.⁷³ Bernhardt connects her ill-health and suffering to wider dramatic tradition, describing her first encounter with the tubercular Rachel Félix, who 'had to be sat down in the garden because she couldn't breathe [...] She was so pale, so pale that she upset me'.⁷⁴ Bernhardt asserts thinness as 'especially' desirable for actresses; composer Daniel Auber tells the young Bernhardt 'fat is the enemy of women and artists'.⁷⁵

Robertson and Campbell's emphases on Campbell's thinness highlight her relevance to 1890s culture. What Peters calls Campbell's 'fin-de-sickly' aesthetic helped make her 'always unmistakably herself' onstage.⁷⁶ As Auerbach notes, Campbell's unwell appearance positioned her as the 'loved culture heroine' of the 1890s 'neurotic age'.⁷⁷ *Fin-de-siècle* interest in illness, pain and the unhealthy-looking body made the ill young woman a popular artistic subject. Bram Dijkstra highlights Roll's 'Sick Woman' (c. 1885), Larsson's 'The Invalid' (1899) and Tayler's 'In Sickness and In Health' (1900) as examples.⁷⁸ This trend of fetishising illness alarmed conservative commentators. In 1895, Hugh Stutfield warned that 'neurasthenia and brain-exhaustion' and 'debased emotionalism' were destroying the upper classes, thanks to 'social faddists' in stage and society.⁷⁹ The relationship between performance and death also intensified as the New Journalism theatricalised the latter. In 1894, a *PMG* journalist in the 'wings' of the Paris morgue presented it as 'a stage where the most pathetic of all tragedies [were] presented' to their 'audience', an 'ever-changing gaping crowd'. 'The actors', *PMG* concluded, were 'the

⁷³ Sarah Bernhardt, *My double life* [1907] (Albany: State of New York Press, 1999), 44; 69–71.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁷⁶ *Mrs. Pat*, 171; 'Varieties of Performance,' 215.

⁷⁷ Nina Auerbach, *Ellen Terry* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1987), 233.

⁷⁸ Bram Dijkstra, *Idols of perversity* (Oxford: 2006), 31–33.

⁷⁹ Hugh Stutfield, 'Tommyrotics', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* (June 1895) 833–845, 833.

corpses', who offered 'a drama of real life' – a description recalling the 'real life' situations of *fin-de-siècle* problem plays – in which the 'principal actor' lay 'cold and lifeless before them'.⁸⁰ Campbell was photographed corpse-like for *Fédora* (1895). Bernhardt had been famously photographed as 'dead' in her coffin. Sprawled across the carpet, Campbell's pose's also recalls George Frederick Watts's *Found Drowned* (1867), depicting a female suicide.⁸¹ Elisabeth Bronfen has argued convincingly for the female corpse as epitomising two concepts – femininity and death – to which Victorian culture gave 'the position of alterity'. This accordingly provoked fascination with the female corpse as 'superbly enigmatic'.⁸²

Illness and the unwell body became significant aspects of fans' emotional investment in Campbell and other female performers during the 1890s. Decadents including Theodore Wratislaw and Arthur Symons, whose poetry biopsied *fin-de-siècle* concerns, increasingly depicted performance and reception through a lexis of lethargy and sickness, with Wratislaw's audience in 'At The Empire' endangered by their own *ennui* and 'like to perish with a yawn'.⁸³ In 'At A Music Hall', Symons's poetic voice feels 'the weariness of feet/And how the footlights' mirror blinds/The aching eyeballs soaked with heat' before 'sigh[ing]/For the renewal of the sea;/I hear the cool waves calling me'.⁸⁴ Symons's somatic and aural hallucination allows him to both experience the pain of the female performer and fantasise escape to the Mediterranean. Significantly, Campbell's fans and detractors both resorted to the lexis of pain to describe their theatrical encounters. Archer aligned this pain with modernity. Campbell's Paula Tanqueray

⁸⁰ 'The Anonymous Dead. By a Visitor to the Morgue', *PMG* (28 December 1894), 1–2, 1.

⁸¹ Nina Auerbach, *Woman and the Demon* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: 1982), 35.

⁸² Elisabeth Bronfen, *Over her dead body: death, femininity and the aesthetic* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1992), xiii. The sleeping and/or unconscious female body also had particular theatrical and erotic resonances, which I shall discuss in the next chapter.

⁸³ Theodore Wratislaw, 'At The Empire', *Orchids* (London: Leonard Smithers, 1896), 20.

⁸⁴ Arthur Symons, 'At A Music Hall', *PMG* (24 August 1893), 4.

presented ‘haggard truth’ (again connoting illness), and was thus simultaneously ‘modern’ and ‘painful’.⁸⁵ For Shaw, Campbell carried this into Shakespeare, subverting traditional representations of Ophelia’s madness by making ‘something that has always been pretty’ abrasively ‘painful’, and thus ‘good’ for audience and theatre.⁸⁶

The Adelphi discovery myth also carried suggestions of the unwell mind. Robertson emphasises the sonic ephemera of Campbell’s onstage laugh; ‘low and sweet, yet utterly mocking and heartless’.⁸⁷ Paradoxically, the ‘heartless’ laugh signifies an absence of appropriate emotion (happiness or pleasure) within a vocal function indicative of emotional excess. Laughter has long been associated with hysteria, implied by paradoxical mental state which Campbell describes, ‘laughing as the tears rolled down [her] cheeks’.⁸⁸ Inscribed and reinscribed by herself and others, Campbell emerges as the ideal theatrical vessel for exploring and embodying *fin-de-siècle* fascination with the volatile, unhealthy female body.

‘Crazy and offensive drivell’: arguments against modernity

Campbell’s movement between the problem play and Shakespeare carried high cultural stakes. In order to maintain Shakespeare’s unimpeachable morality and didactic privilege, it was necessary to polarise the two traditions as antithetical. Stutfield’s 1895 diatribe decried the ‘generation that nourished its early youth on Shakespeare and Scott’ spending ‘its declining years with Ibsen and Sarah Grand’. The ‘crazy and offensive drivell’ of the problem play was catalysing ‘an epidemic

⁸⁵ William Archer, quoted S.J.A. Fitzgerald, *A chronicle of the St James’s Theatre* (London: Guild of Women Binders, 1900), 24.

⁸⁶ George Bernard Shaw, ‘Hamlet’, *Saturday Review* (2 October 1897), 365.

⁸⁷ *Time Was*, 248.

⁸⁸ *Some Letters*, 155.

of suicide': Paula Tanqueray embodied both the 'offensive' and the 'suicide'.⁸⁹ Irving, the country's leading Shakespearean, refused to stage Ibsen. Even Shaw, who championed Campbell's return to Shakespeare felt that 'the question of [Campbell's] right' to her 'very important place' in Forbes-Robertson's Shakespeare productions was not 'settled' finally in her favour' until *Hamlet*.⁹⁰ Despite his iconoclasm, Shaw wrote within a theatrical marketplace that had inherited Robertson's taxonomies of 'Leading Ladies, Walking Ladies and Heavy Women' for demarcating different areas of female performance.⁹¹ As Postlewait notes, theatrical reception depends partly on managing audience expectations regarding 'types of characters' and 'specific modes of gesture and delivery'. In 1895, the hierarchy of those 'types' was more explicit, further problematising those who disrupted it by departing from their 'congenial line' and 'specially appropriate character'.⁹² Thus, an article asking who the greatest living English actress was devalued Kendal because 'modern comedy' was 'innately less distinguished' than full-time 'poetic drama'; Terry was 'over-tops' by default.⁹³ Terry was herself prescriptive about Campbell's generic shifts, telling Shaw that 'if she plays [Ophelia] rightly then she played Mrs. Ebbsmith wrongly'.⁹⁴ Stylistic, as well as generic shifts disconcerted. In 1885, the Kendals' *As You Like It* revival at the new, fashionable St. James's Theatre provoked mockery at the 'Piccadillying' of Shakespeare.⁹⁵ *Fun* deplored Shakespeare's recreation as a 'swell' in a 'masher

⁸⁹ Stutfield, 'Tommyrotics', 840–1.

⁹⁰ Shaw, *Shaw on Shakespeare* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1961), 86.

⁹¹ T.W. Robertson, 'Theatrical Types. No. iv - Leading Ladies, Walking Ladies and Heavy Women', *Illustrated Times* (13 December 1864), 107.

⁹² Postlewait, *Cambridge Introduction to Theatre Historiography*, 14; J.F. Nisbet, in Joseph Knight, Nisbet, Clement Scott, W. Davenport Adams, Alfred E.T. Watson, R. Jope Slade, Reginald Gerrard, and Addison Bright, 'Who is the Greatest Living English Actress – And Why?', *Idler* (November 1893), 393–399, 394.

⁹³ T.W. Robertson, 'Theatrical Types', 107; 'Who is the Greatest Living English Actress', 397.

⁹⁴ Letter from Terry to Shaw (1 October 1897), *Correspondence*, 259–260, 260.

⁹⁵ 'Slashes and Puffs', *Fun* (18 February 1885), 66.

collar' and 'painful eyeglass', and criticised W.H. Kendal's 'drawling' performance.⁹⁶

Campbell's Lyceum heroines engendered complaints regarding her contemporary style, whether for her 'drawing-room' delivery, or conception of Juliet as a 'nineteenth century young lady [...] essentially modern'.⁹⁷

There are complex reasons for this aversion to stylistic change. Given the 'hysterical and foul' New Drama's 'putrid eroticism', the incorporation of 'drawing-room' style into Shakespeare threatened to infuse Shakespeare's antecedent moral function with *fin-de-siècle*, 'drawing-room' morality.⁹⁸ In this moral schema (according to Archer), 'every vicious person seems to succeed, every virtuous person suffers horribly'.⁹⁹ Shakespeare, conversely, whose 'words are household words', and whose plots were 'familiar' seemed to a female columnist to offer 'an agreeable feeling of certainty' and, rather a 'painful' ordeal, 'a delightful rest' (presumably the writer hadn't read *Titus Andronicus* or *King Lear*).¹⁰⁰ Modernising *fin-de-siècle* Shakespeare jeopardised this emotional restorative, at a moment when conservatives were most defending Shakespeare against contemporary appropriations. In January 1887, the *Girl's Own Paper* announced the results of an essay competition on Shakespeare's heroines. The paper condemned entrants for making Shakespeare 'a vehicle for expressing their ideas on [...] 'women's rights'.¹⁰¹ The notion that the 'great writer' might have advocated 'a more important position' for women was 'inapropos', and to 'transport Portia to the nineteenth century', as some had done, was both

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ William Winter, *Theatre* (December 1895), quoted *Some Letters*, 105; 'Waftings from the Wings', *Fun* (1 October 1895), 138.

⁹⁸ Stutfield, 'Tommyrotics', 840–841.

⁹⁹ William Archer, quoted *A chronicle of the St James's Theatre*, 24.

¹⁰⁰ 'Penelope', 'Our Ladies' Column', *Leicestershire Chronicle* (24 October 1891), 1.

¹⁰¹ 'Essay writing on a great English author – my favourite heroine from Shakespeare', *GOP* (10 March 1888), 380–381.

antithetical and alarming.¹⁰² Shakespeare's co-option by the suffrage movement was still two decades away (see Chapter Five), when the girls alarming *GOP* in the 1880s would be in their thirties and forties – the right age for suffragist action. It's fascinating to wonder whether any young essayists made the transition. At least two entrants did enter public life in pioneering ways: the first-prize winner, Edith Edlmann, published a feminist polemic on Jane Austen (anti-sentiment and pro-education) before becoming an inspector of British and German schools.¹⁰³ Second prize went to nineteen-year-old Annie Wilson Patterson (1868-1934), subsequently a journalist, composer, biographer, and the first woman to achieve a Mus. Doc. from the Royal University of Ireland.¹⁰⁴

Modernising Shakespeare was also economically alarming. Inflecting Shakespeare with society drama, whose plots and sources were frequently French, or with the style of Ibsen, threatened the 'Englishness' central to the burgeoning cultural and academic industries surrounding Shakespeare's life and work. In the theatrical marketplace, diversifying Shakespeare performance styles threatened managers such as Harris and Irving, who maintained 'a practical monopoly on spectacular pantomime and spectacular Shakespeare', according to Archer.¹⁰⁵ It also jeopardised the supremacy of actors – including Terry – who had trained from childhood in Shakespeare performance.

¹⁰² Ibid, 381.

¹⁰³ Edith Edlmann, 'A Girl's Opinion on Jane Austen', *Temple Bar* (1892), 343–50 and *Education and Peasant Industry* (London: Board of Education, 1912).

¹⁰⁴ Ruth Stanley, "'Gaelic Songs and Foreign Arrangements': Issues of Authenticity and Race in the Reception of Annie Patterson's 'Traditional Irish Airs'". Conference paper, *Women and Music in Ireland*, Royal Irish Academy of Music, Dublin (15 September 2012)

[http://www.academia.edu/2219909/Gaelic_Songs_and_Foreign_Arrangements_Issues_of_Authenticity_and_Race_in_the_Reception_of_Annie_Pattersons_Traditional_Irish_Airs_1924_, accessed 18 July 2013].

¹⁰⁵ William Archer. 'The Drama in the Doldrums', *Fortnightly Review* (August 1892), 146–167, 146.

‘Un-dog-eared by “tradition”’: Campbell, Juliet and Mélisande

Campbell’s autobiography celebrates her separation from the cultural hegemony outlined above. She states boldly that ‘not coming from a theatrical family [...] the “Phelps School” meant nothing to me’, nor did ‘the influence of Sir Henry Irving’.¹⁰⁶ Immediately afterwards, Campbell presents her interpretative and stylistic choices as an ‘unpretentious’ attack on antecedent tradition, describing how ‘declamatory’ delivery, ‘exaggerated gesture, rhodomontade [...] a sense of one’s own importance [...] the unnatural lifting of the voice at exits’ and ‘any meretricious form of stage effects’ all ‘exasperated’ her as ‘ridiculous’.¹⁰⁷ Although, like Campbell, Irving and Phelps had been born outside the ‘fag of stage life’, like Campbell, they are the passage’s obvious targets. By 1895, both Irving’s sons were actors (as was Dorothea Baird, who married H.B. Irving in 1896). Phelps’s son and daughter-in-law were performers, and Johnston Forbes-Robertson’s brothers included actors Ian and Norman Forbes-Robertson.¹⁰⁸ Beyond genetics, a web of professional and personal alliances interlinked the Shakespearean mainstream. Norman Forbes-Robertson, for example, would organise Irving’s funeral, with Johnston Forbes-Robertson as a pallbearer.¹⁰⁹ Campbell’s own coterie community had fractured: the loyal Pembroke had died in May 1895.

As well as criticising traditional acting styles, Campbell’s autobiography also refuses to privilege Shakespeare over new writing, deeming ‘the intelligent play of a friend’ more ‘exciting’ than Shakespeare, ‘covered from his crown to his toes with tradition’, who necessarily rendered a

¹⁰⁶ *Some Letters*, 102.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ William Robertson Davies, ‘Irving, Sir Henry (1838–1905)’, *DNB* [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/34116>, accessed 24 June 2011]; John Coleman, *Memoirs of Samuel Phelps* (London: Remington, 1886), 30; Ralph Berry, ‘Robertson, Sir Johnston Forbes- (1853–1937)’, *DNB* [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/35784>, accessed 24 June 2011].

¹⁰⁹ ‘The Late Sir Henry Irving’, Unattributed cutting, *Fitzgerald* XV.108 (Garrrick Club Library).

performer a ‘fly on the wheel’. Crucially, in stark contrast to Langtry, Campbell found Shakespearean rehearsal conditions particularly prescriptive: ‘if you want to do things your own way, in Mr. Shakespeare’s play, you are called “difficult” – until you almost burst with indignation’.¹¹⁰ Conversely, a ‘living author’ available to ‘be a “friend”’ could legitimise Campbell’s choices. Campbell’s autobiography offers Maurice Maeterlinck (1862–1949) as an alternative to Shakespeare. The ‘only’ review Campbell claims she can find of her first *Mélisande* presents the heroine as an alternative Juliet, ‘un-thumb-marked and un-dog-eared by “tradition”’.¹¹¹ The reviewer describes the scene where ‘*Mélisande* leans out of the window and *Pélleas* tries to kiss her hand’ as one that ‘challenges comparison with the most beautiful in the world’, then further unseats literary hierarchies by claiming that it is immaterial whether the play ‘as a piece of literature [...] bear[s] comparison with *Romeo and Juliet*’, since ‘nobody who saw it could judge it merely as literature’.¹¹² Campbell provides the play’s transcendence, with her distinctive physicality and gifts ‘not given to many women in a generation’.¹¹³

Campbell’s description of *Mélisande* as someone she ‘*knew* [...] as though she had been part of me before my eyes were open’ contrasts with earlier actresses’ self-actualisation through Shakespeare, from Faucit’s dramatisation of ‘what was best in myself’ to Langtry’s freedom in becoming ‘my own mistress’.¹¹⁴ For Campbell, it was in Maeterlinck’s ‘poem of beauty, passion and loveliness’ that she found ‘peace and certainty – I had come into my own’. Shakespeare, then, was not ‘her own’.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁰ *Some Letters*, 202.

¹¹¹ *Some Letters*, 125–126.

¹¹² Anonymous *Guardian* review, reprinted *Some Letters*, 129.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ *Some Letters*, 126; *On Some of Shakespeare’s Female Characters*, 238; *The Days I Knew*, 181.

¹¹⁵ *Some Letters*, 126.

However, while Campbell dichotomises her experiences as *Mélisande* and *Juliet*, reviews suggest strong stylistic continuities. The *Guardian* described how Campbell stressed *Mélisande*'s 'unconscious innocence' that betrayed developing sexuality: 'behind every word and gesture of the girl at play there was the woman latent'.¹¹⁶ As well as evoking the broader nineteenth-century tradition of ascribing 'latency' to Shakespearean heroines, the review's timing is important. Campbell played *Mélisande* in June 1898, and the description of *Mélisande*'s girlishness strongly echoes Campbell's best reviews for her 1895 *Juliet*. Whether or not Campbell consciously interpolated elements of her Shakespearean heroine into *Mélisande*, or whether *Juliet*'s impact established a critical paradigm for reading Campbell is impossible to reconstruct. However, the continuities suggest Campbell's Shakespearean performance informed reception of the modern.

Walkley, reviewing *Romeo and Juliet* for the *Star* and *Album*, rhapsodised over Campbell's apparent juvenility, emphasising her 'child's face [...] her ways are the ways of a child' and her poisoning, in which Juliet fell 'asleep in an instant like a tired child'.¹¹⁷ Her 'mere slip of a body' appeared 'slim and girlish' and apparently under-developed, 'to all seeming not a month over the fourteen years'. The specificity was important. 1875 legislation had raised the female age of consent from twelve to thirteen; the Criminal Law Amendment Act (1885) had raised it to sixteen.¹¹⁸ These changes legally lengthened childhood, creating a period in which girls aged thirteen to sixteen, who before 1885 could have legally consented to sex, became sexually unavailable. Walkley, as well as reiterating Campbell's apparent pubescence, argued that her

¹¹⁶ *Some Letters*, 129.

¹¹⁷ A.B. Walkley, review of *Romeo and Juliet* in the *Star*, reprinted *Mrs. Patrick Campbell*, 119; A.B. Walkley, untitled review of *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Album* (7 October 1895), reprinted *Some Letters*, 103–104.

¹¹⁸ Anne Varty, *Children and theatre in Victorian Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 59.

Juliet remained ‘absolutely naïve’ even when ‘the hot passion wells out from her heart in the balcony scene’.¹¹⁹ Anticipating the *Guardian*’s emphasis on the ‘woman latent’ in Mélisande, Walkley’s preoccupation with the disjunction between Juliet’s ‘naïve’, childish body and the ‘hot passion’ she cannot understand reveals a ‘dissociation’ which (as the sexologist Kincaid notes) history has ‘heavily eroticised’.¹²⁰ Campbell’s performances as Juliet and Mélisande highlight late-Victorian cultural investment in the female child’s innocence and putative sexuality. A naïve heroine, who did not ‘understand’ her own ‘hot passion’ also precluded the evidence of female sexual knowledge that was so problematic when Kendal, a wife and mother (like Campbell), ‘perfectly well under[stood] the obscenity’ of her 1885 Cuckoo Song as Rosalind.¹²¹ Simultaneously, there was a taste for seeing real child actors performing plays whose suggestive content they were presumed not to understand. Lewis Carroll objected to hearing ‘sweet little girls’ say ‘damme’ in the *Children’s Pinafore* (1881) and seeing ‘pure young lips sporting with’ adult concepts, but defended child performance to Clement Scott because ‘ignorance [...] of the meaning of the most of the words they hear, is a protection enjoyed by young children’.¹²² Carroll also argued that child performers were in less sexual danger as performers than adult actresses, writing that ‘their extreme youth is a powerful safeguard’.¹²³ Several accounts undermine Carroll’s assertion. As a child performer, Marie Wilton was stalked by a mentally-ill young man who threatened murder if she refused his advances.¹²⁴ At thirteen (while advertised as twelve), another man in the audience became fascinated with her as Juliet, trying to elope with her at

¹¹⁹ *Some Letters*, 103.

¹²⁰ James R. Kincaid, *Child-loving* (London: Routledge, 1992), 6.

¹²¹ ‘From Our London Correspondent’, *Manchester Times* (7 February 1885), 4.

¹²² Richard Foulkes, *Lewis Carroll and the Victorian Theatre* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 172; letter from Carroll to Scott (3 December 1889), quoted *Lewis Carroll*, 114.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 115.

¹²⁴ Varty, *Children and theatre*, 45.

fifteen.¹²⁵ Theatre reformer Ellen Barlee described how one child actress was subject to ‘coarse jokes’ from the theatre’s ‘male habitués [...] who discussed her appearance, shape and physique’.¹²⁶ Walter Sickert’s painting *Little Dot Hetherington at the Bedford Music Hall* (1889) displayed the child performer in a ‘diaphanous white frock’ revealing ‘the dark shape of her body’.¹²⁷ In 1895, the picture was re-exhibited as *The Boy I love is up in the Gallery*, the name of music hall star Marie Lloyd’s signature song.¹²⁸ Lloyd’s performances were famous for their innuendo, and the song (describing the performer’s love for an unseen audience member) tends to confirm the child performer as, in Anne Varty’s words, the ‘vessel of adult fantasy’.¹²⁹ One of Lewis Carroll’s child models recalled that Carroll kept children’s theatrical costumes in which to ‘dress [her] up’.¹³⁰

Walkley found Campbell’s portrayal of Juliet both innovative and attractive: ‘it is the child in Juliet that makes her the sweet figure she is, and Mrs. Patrick Campbell gives us – as no other actress to my knowledge has given us – the child in Juliet’.¹³¹ Edmund Gosse also praised Campbell’s conception of Juliet as ‘a romantic, passionate child’, an ‘idol’ and ‘incarnation of girlhood’.¹³² Critical praise for Campbell in sexually naïve roles also indicates the degree to which she was accepted in roles other than the fallen woman personae. Walkley also used Campbell’s Juliet to sympathetically re-read Paula: the ‘tenderness and delicacy’ of ‘the child in

¹²⁵ Ibid., 46.

¹²⁶ Quoted Varty, *Children and theatre*, 47.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 44.

¹²⁸ ‘Marie Lloyd’, *V&A* (2013) [<http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/m/marie-lloyd/>, accessed 1 July 2013].

¹²⁹ Varty, 45.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 134–5. The model, Beatrice Hatch, and her sister Evelyn were also photographed nude by Carroll.

¹³¹ Dent, 119.

¹³² Letter from Edmund Gosse to Mrs. Patrick Campbell, undated, quoted *Some Letters*, 105.

Juliet' was 'no surprise' to Walkley, since 'the remnant of the child she showed us in Mrs. Tanqueray' was 'more than half the charm of the performance'.¹³³

Fascinatingly, Shaw's review of *Romeo and Juliet* claimed that Campbell's Juliet 'danced like the daughter of Herodias'.¹³⁴ Trying to trace what dancing 'like' Salome might have meant for *fin-de-siècle* readers is difficult, given the multiplicity of late-nineteenth-century artists and writers obsessed with Salome and the Dance of the Seven Veils. Paradoxically, Campbell's closest theatrical analogue was a performance that never occurred. Wilde's *Salome* was not performed until 1896 (and then in Paris), but the casting and banning of an 1893 production starring Sarah Bernhardt had been well-publicised. Bernhardt's health did not start to decline until 1898, when she had a large ovarian cyst removed, and sustained the leg injury that eventually necessitated amputation.¹³⁵ However, by 1893, she was nearly fifty and beginning to gain weight. Her Salome dance would have been slow and seductive rather than athletic. As well as Campbell's self-fashioning as Bernhardt's peer in somatic suffering and emotional intensity, an early 1890s reviewer had described her as 'effectively undulant and Bernhardtesque'. Shaw's allusion might, in 1895, have suggested a Bernhardtesque aesthetic. However, it's equally, perhaps more likely that Shaw's allusion would have evoked one of the many late-Victorian Salomes realised in art or print. Gustave Moreau's (1826–1898) many works on Salome created an iconography that juxtaposes Salome's virginal, desirable body with Herod's lust and John the Baptist's violent death. Flaubert's 'Herodias', published in *Trois Contes* (1877), blames Herodias and Herod's priests for John's death. Salome, who barely remembers John's name, is intensely

¹³³ *Some Letters*, 104.

¹³⁴ Shaw, 'Romeo and Juliet.' *Saturday Review* (28 September 1895), 409–410.

¹³⁵ Caroline de Costa and Francesca Miller. 'Sarah Bernhardt's missing leg', *Lancet* (25 July 2009) 284–285; Alastair Horne, *Seven Ages of Paris* (London: Pan Macmillan, 2003), 339.

‘childish, lisping’ and only unconsciously erotic. Like Campbell’s Juliet, she remains naïve; unaware of the sexual impact of a dance she has been ‘trained’ to perform, depicting ‘the passionate desire which insists on being slaked’.¹³⁶ Massenet’s opera *Hérodiade* (1881) also juxtaposes an innocent Salome (albeit one in love with John) and a machinating Herodias. In the decadent *À Rebours* (1884), however, Huysmans’s protagonist re-reads Moreau’s Salome as ‘the symbolic incarnation of world-old Vice’, whose ‘Curse of Beauty’ is innately ‘indifferent, irresponsible, insensible, poisoning’.¹³⁷ This transference of sexual blame, with Salome – however naïve – being ‘irresponsible’ for being desirable, and ‘poisoning’ Herod simply by existing, creates what Dijkstra calls the trope of the ‘virgin whore’. In Dijkstra’s analysis, the ‘virgin whore’, epitomised by Salome, embodies women’s ‘ability to destroy the male’s soul’ by exciting their sexual desire, while remaining ‘nominally chaste in body’.¹³⁸ Because ‘in her virginity, woman maintains her self sufficiency’, the disenfranchised man is forced to ‘wait in impotent longing for her compliance’.¹³⁹ By exhausting his ‘patience’, the woman supposedly incites her own destruction, and ‘perversely “forces” him to rape her’.¹⁴⁰ Dijkstra’s conclusion on this cultural schema, that ‘enticement is thus revealed to be the virgin’s capital crime’ neatly prefigures the rhetoric of twentieth- and twenty-first century rape culture.¹⁴¹ Mallarmé’s ‘Herodiade’, written between 1864 and 1898, similarly depicts a ‘virgin whore’. Symons’s poem about the ubiquity of Salomes in *fin-de-siècle* culture, ‘The Dance of the Daughters of Herodias’, asserts that ‘a man’s head falls because of them’.¹⁴² Symons also echoes Shaw’s review of Campbell as ‘danc[ing] like the daughter of Herodias’, claiming ‘They dance, the daughters of

¹³⁶ Gustave Flaubert, ‘Herodias’, *Three Tales* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1923), 79–118, 114–5.

¹³⁷ *À Rebours*, 53, quoted Dijkstra, *Idols of Perversity* (Oxford: 2006), 382.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 384.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 385.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² Arthur Symons, ‘The Dance of the Daughters of Herodias’, *Selected Writings* (London: Routledge, 2003), 54.

Herodias / Everywhere in the world'.¹⁴³ The 'virgin whore' is a paradoxical figure: Victorian women had to incite men's romantic and sexual interest in order to marry. Meanwhile, social emphasis on men's wealth implicated marriageable women in a 'mercantile' process, which, as Dijkstra notes, brought their sexual commerce closer to that of prostitutes.¹⁴⁴ To *fin-de-siècle* readers familiar with both Salome and Shakespeare, Shaw's allusion to Salome, who fails to submit to the desire her dancing provokes in Herod, might have suggested Juliet's refusal to marry the besotted Paris at her father's behest.

Crucially, the exact nature of Salome's 'dance' remained mysterious, despite its numerous *fin-de-siècle* interpretations. Pre-Biblical in origin and not described by the Gospels, the dance offered a space for imaginative, erotic speculation and the projection of desire onto Shaw's evocation of a sexually-charged trope. Shaw's 1895 readers may or may not have attributed sexual knowingness to Campbell's dancing 'daughter of Herodias'. However, they would know that the dance was enticing, whether or not deliberately so. If Shaw agreed with Walkley's assessment of Campbell-Juliet's naïveté, he, too, was participating in the eroticisation of the dislocation between Juliet's desirability and her unselfconsciousness. Shaw also stressed Campbell's professional immaturity: none of her successes were 'conscious', and the performance was 'immature'. Later, Shaw doubted Campbell could 'fully appreciate the value' of her Ophelia.¹⁴⁵

Reading Campbell as childish could also be a conservative practice. By 1895, Campbell's thin body had become part of the New Woman iconography. Reinscribing her body as childlike let

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ *Idols of Perversity*, 353–4.

¹⁴⁵ Shaw, 'Hamlet', *Saturday Review* (2 October 1897), 364–5, 365.

observers reimagine the ‘New’ body as that of a docile, controllable, easily-fetishised child. Walkley’s reviews constantly emphasise Campbell-Juliet’s ‘simple obedience’ and inability to ‘understand’ her parents’ rejection. When, ‘numbed and bewildered’, she drinks the potion, she is ‘a child who does what she has been told’.¹⁴⁶ Reducing the nightmarish New woman to a ‘naïve’ child who ‘cannot understand’ herself or others legitimised the behaviour of husbands like Torvald Helmer in Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House*. After the play’s 1889 English premiere, Scott argued that since Nora was evidently a ‘child wife’ and ‘spoiled baby’, Torvald could not ‘by any possibility have treated his restless, illogical, fractious and babyish little wife [...] otherwise than he did’.¹⁴⁷

Peters upholds Campbell’s self-fashioning as an oppositional, radical Shakespearean actress, claiming that Campbell’s Juliet ‘brought to a head the question of whether the traditional art of Shakespearian acting was to survive’.¹⁴⁸ Campbell was certainly innovative in her non-Shakespearean acting style, signalling a new restrained presentational style for the ‘fallen woman’ when she refused to make Paula ‘rough and ugly with her hands’.¹⁴⁹ However, rather than moving away from ‘all method’, as Peters claims, positive reviews of Juliet claimed that the performance succeeded because Campbell had used her ‘temperament’ as her ‘guide’. This was a highly conventional paradigm for praising actresses for being naturally similar to their idealised characters. Clearly, Campbell’s ‘personal possibilities’ did not always identify her ‘temperament’ with that of Paula Tanqueray.

¹⁴⁶ Walkley, reprinted *Some Letters*, 103–4, 104.

¹⁴⁷ Clement Scott, untitled review of *A Doll’s House*, *Daily Telegraph* (8 June 1889) [<http://www.ibsen.net/index.gan?id=11199920>, accessed 11 July 2011].

¹⁴⁸ *Mrs. Pat*, 117.

¹⁴⁹ *Some Letters*, 69.

A lack of promptbook and archival evidence makes it hard to investigate specificities of the radical Shakespearean style that Peters describes, although the Shakespearean actresses to whom Campbell was compared, pre-*Tanqueray*, were all relatively traditional. However, few lasting ‘questions’ seem to have been raised by Campbell’s Juliet, and doubts regarding whether ‘the traditional art of Shakespearian acting were to survive’ must have been strictly temporary, given Terry’s ideal Imogen a year later. Rather than definitively rehabilitating Campbell as a skilled Shakespearean performer, the documentary evidence for Campbell’s performances indicates the increasingly heterogeneous tastes of *fin-de-siècle* Shakespeare audiences. Although Campbell’s detractors remained fairly consistent in their objections to her performances, the evolving nature of the praise she received in different roles suggests the kinds of cultural needs that Shakespearean heroines, inflected with Campbell’s ‘personal possibilities’, could fulfil. It also destabilises the prevailing narrative of entirely polarised Shakespearean and ‘New’ traditions. Not only did Campbell’s Juliet help condition the reception of her *Mélisande*, but also the Lyceum recognised her experience in Pinero’s dramas as a commercial asset to her Shakespearean performances. The back page of a surviving *Romeo and Juliet* programme is dominated by an advert for ‘Mr. Wm Heinmann’s Books’.¹⁵⁰ The first headline, opposite a soberly-dressed Heinemann, pictured reading, is ‘The PLAYS of ARTHUR W. PINERO’. Eleven volumes of Pinero’s plays are listed, followed by – in larger type – individual editions of *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* and *The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith*. Crucially, while the eleven volumes were all sold sextodecimo, both *Tanqueray* and *Ebbsmith* were in the larger ‘small 4to’

¹⁵⁰ Undated programme for *Romeo and Juliet*, *London’s Theatres: 21*, Garrick Club Library.

size. *Ebbsmith*, Campbell's most recent 'Pinerotic' role, was also available only in cloth (not paper) covers, 'with *Portrait*', and priced at 5s.¹⁵¹

Such advertising clearly assumed overlapping theatrical audiences: a Shakespeare-going public also attracted by Pinero, and especially by Campbell's performances. That the Heinemann advert specifically highlights 'Introductory Notes by Malcolm C. Salaman' assumes that this public regarded Pinero as an intellectual man of literature, about whom it was important to know more.¹⁵² Campbell's theatrical presence reveals a nexus of supposedly oppositional cultural tastes as commercially compatible in 1895. Her involvement with the 'wicked Pinerotic theatre' was implicated in her renewed popularity as a Shakespearean actress, not merely an impediment.¹⁵³

Suicide and madness: from Juliet to Ophelia

Shaw claimed later that his personal 'infatuation' with Campbell meant that his reviews 'burnt up Shakespear so his sparks might whirl about [her] in a halo of glory'.¹⁵⁴ Nevertheless, he mocked Juliet's suicide: refusing to 'give herself more trouble than she can help', Campbell-Juliet stabbed herself 'with superb laziness [...] lean[ing] against the point, plainly conveying that if it will not go in on that provocation, it can let it alone'.¹⁵⁵ The satirical press was similarly surprised that such a languid application of the dagger 'would penetrate her waistband'.¹⁵⁶ The novel business emphasised the moment of Juliet's suicide to a far greater degree than in Terry or Faucit's

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid. Salaman (1855–1940) wrote theatrical criticism for the *Sunday Times*, *Graphic* and other publications.

¹⁵³ Shaw, 'The Independent Theatre Repents', *Saturday Review* (23 March 1895), 379. Walkley used the word 'Pinerotic' as early as October 1891. A.B. Walkley, 'The Drama', *Speaker* (31 October 1891), 528–529, 529.

¹⁵⁴ Letter from Shaw to Campbell, (4 January 1913), Dan H. Laurence (ed.) *Bernard Shaw, Collected Letters 1911–1925* (London: Max Reinhardt, 1985), 144–146.

¹⁵⁵ Shaw, 'Romeo and Juliet', 410.

¹⁵⁶ 'Waftings from the Wings', *Fun* (1 October 1895), 138.

performances. The combination of the particularly childlike and naïvely youthful in Campbell's Juliet, and the focus on Juliet's suicide gave prominence to an element of the play which resonated with contemporary preoccupations. As well as satisfying interest in the female corpse's alterity, Campbell's reception reflected a specific *fin-de-siècle* fascination with child suicide, amidst concerns over suicide as a whole. In theatre, this preoccupation was not solely Shakespearean. In Ibsen's *The Wild Duck*, given its English premiere by the Independent Theatre in 1894, the adolescent Hedwig (played by Winifred Fraser) 'cre[eps] terrified into the garret after being 'hunted' and rejected by her father, as 'numbed and bewildered' as Campbell's Juliet.¹⁵⁷

Aside from its innately tragic nature, it's clear why child suicide posed such problems for the Victorians. Child suicide represented a shocking failure of familial, educational and religious instruction. The child suicide commits not only a blasphemous act, but asserts autonomy over his or her own body. By removing him or herself from the family, the child undoes the procreative purpose of marriage, and diminishes their parents' posterity. For conservatives, young suicides confirmed degeneration and the *fin-de-siècle* suicide craze. The phenomenon could also be easily co-opted by the burgeoning medical disciplines of psychiatry and paediatrics (Britain's first paediatric hospital, Great Ormond Street, had only opened in 1852). Above all, child suicide linked two objects simultaneously fetishised and sentimentalised by Victorian culture: the child and death. Suicide threatened Victorian ideals of the child as innocent, protected and oblivious to the world's evils. The Edwardians identified child suicide as a specifically Victorian phenomenon. In 1907, American statistician Arthur MacDonald concluded that levels of reported

¹⁵⁷ Henrik Ibsen, *The Wild Duck*, trans. William Archer, *Ibsen's Prose Dramas* (London: Walter Scott, 1907, 4th ed.), 239–381, 275.

child suicide, which ‘the nineteenth century [...] brought to the attention of the public’, remained ‘less than reality’. Increases in girls’ suicides were blamed on ‘female employment’, which engendered ‘special difficulties and hardship which overwhelm [girls’] nervous systems and produce [...] despair’.¹⁵⁸ In 1898, the *Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine* claimed that suicide levels had ‘increased by nearly twenty-five per cent’ since 1893, with children ‘especially in the Southern races’ (such as Juliet) at particular risk of killing themselves ‘in a pet’.¹⁵⁹ Moreover, the *Wesleyan* author, C.H. Williamson, highlighted many child behaviours which, although apparently minor, indicated suicidal ideation, the ‘same disgusted despair which prompts the savage to self-slaughter’.¹⁶⁰

The imaginary central subject of Williamson’s article is ‘a boy of gentle birth and breeding’ who, disappointed by a failed fishing trip, seeks a ‘deep eddy in the stream [...] that, following the example of Ophelia, he may make the weeds his winding sheet’.¹⁶¹ Although Williamson’s narrative claims the boy is not ‘serious’, the article’s overarching emphasis on the hidden dangers of child emotion reiterates the ‘civilised’ child’s proximity to the ‘happy dispatch to which despair drives the untutored inhabitant’ of ‘savage’ lands. The article closes with another *Hamlet* allusion, arguing that ‘most [...] self-murders are verifiably the result of rebellion against the Power which shapes man’s ends, rough-hew them how he may’.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁸ Arthur MacDonald, ‘Statistics of Child Suicide’, *American Statistical Association* (March 1907), 260–264.

¹⁵⁹ C.H. Williamson, ‘A Lay Sermon’, *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine* (October 1898), 764–6, 764.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid, 766.

The Lyceum *Hamlet*, with Campbell as Ophelia, opened on 11 September 1897. Anticipatory coverage of the production indicates that Campbell's inclusion was not automatically problematic. If, in late August, *Moonshine*'s expectation that 'Mrs. Pat' would 'patter pleasantly' as Ophelia suggested both irony and alliteration, *Judy* 'rejoice[d]' to confirm her casting, and the *Sporting Mirror* predicted 'crowds' for the production.¹⁶³ The *Penny Illustrated* merely commented that Campbell might choose a 'novel' costume to make Ophelia 'more girlish', probably evoking her Juliet.¹⁶⁴ Finally, *Judy*'s announcement of 'Paula Juliet Ebbsmith Lady Hamilton as Ophelia' at least assimilated Campbell's last Shakespearean role into her cultural profile.¹⁶⁵ Shaw's claim that Ophelia was the role that 'settled the question' of Campbell's Shakespearean legitimacy may have made the situation sound more controversial than it was. Overall, Campbell's casting as Ophelia was seen as contributing to a resurgence of Shakespearean activity, rather than any threat to tradition. Bracketing Campbell's Ophelia with projected productions of *Hamlet* by Bernhardt and Alexander's *Much Ado About Nothing*, the *Graphic* concluded that 'Shakespeare seems to be doing fairly well, despite the disparaging observations of admirers of Dr. Ibsen'.¹⁶⁶

In May 1897, four months before *Hamlet* opened, Campbell experienced a nervous breakdown. Walkley had claimed that the actress's 'temperament' had been her 'sole guide' as Juliet; Campbell's autobiographical account of Ophelia links her artistic process, profession and breakdown. Confirming that she drew on her 'emotional temperament', Campbell speculates on

¹⁶³ 'Feathers from the Wings', *Moonshine* (21 August 1897), 93; 'The Stage Coach', *Judy* (25 August 1897), 400; 'Amongst the Mummies', *Sporting Mirror* (6 September 1897), 1.

¹⁶⁴ 'Talk of London', *Penny Illustrated* (28 August 1897), 130–131.

¹⁶⁵ 'The Stage Coach', 400.

¹⁶⁶ 'Theatrical Notes', *Graphic* (14 August 1897), 215.

the benefits of an alternative career trajectory, one in which ‘train[ing] in the Dramatic Art’ taught her to ‘spare my emotional temperament, and to depend a little on skill, technique and “tradition” – that awful word – I wonder’.¹⁶⁷ Of course, Campbell’s apprenticeship with Greet must have included vocal training to allow her to succeed in open-air performance. However, in highlighting use of her emotional temperament, Campbell updated Kendal’s anti-Diderot, pro-emotionalist assertion that ‘Those who make others feel/Must feel themselves’, while *also* rejecting Kendal’s background of ‘training’ and ‘technique’ in favour of the volatile, neurotic ‘temperament’ which fascinated the *fin-de-siècle* imagination.¹⁶⁸ As well as demonstrating her acting’s authenticity, Campbell was again identifying herself with the ‘emotionalist’ Bernhardt.¹⁶⁹ Bernhardt’s memoirs emphasise how childhood emotional outbursts frequently left her ‘two or three days at a time in the infirmary’, and how, as an actress, ‘my tenacious will constantly struggled with my physical weakness’.¹⁷⁰

However, Campbell’s attitude to the relationship between her performance and mental health seems contradictory. Her autobiography represents her genesis as an actor via a mystical narrative of self-realisation and strength, while her account of the 1897 breakdown directly attributes her collapse to those professional activities. *Some Letters* describes how an impecunious Campbell spent a night imagining ‘what work I could do’, until ‘with daylight something entered my soul, and has never since left me’. Campbell felt herself covered with a ‘fine veil of steel’, meaning that her decision to become a performer was supported by a ‘strange sense of security’, and the assurance that ‘within *myself* lay the strength I needed, and I must

¹⁶⁷ *Some Letters*, 120.

¹⁶⁸ *DMK*, 222.

¹⁶⁹ Elaine Aston. ‘Studies in hysteria’, 259.

¹⁷⁰ *My double life*, 11; 69.

never be afraid'.¹⁷¹ Deepening the association between personal strength and mysticism, the moment includes 'the birth of self-reliance', a 'sense of responsibility' and 'the call of my "secret"'.¹⁷² As a narrative strategy, Campbell's revelation recalls Langtry, whose quasi-mystical experience of 'prostrating myself before the wonderful portrait of Sarah Siddons' at Grosvenor House, before being 'filled with the desire to become a worker too' is similarly designed to emphasise a sense of vocation over financial desperation.¹⁷³ In fact, Campbell's account exceeds Langtry's subsequent experience of being 'freed from accustomed control', wishing instead to make people 'stand quite still and listen', and becoming an active presence in *Tanqueray* rehearsals, 'wanting always to do, instead of to listen'.¹⁷⁴ A dexterous narrator, Campbell's emphasis on the dusk-to-dawn setting for her epiphany also evokes Bernhardt, who passes the night after her first engagement at the Comédie Française (also the moment she realises her vocation) contemplating a sky that 'was dark. Yes, dark for everybody but starlit for me. I looked for mine, and chose the biggest and most brilliant'.¹⁷⁵

Conversely, *Some Letters* repeats Dr. Embleton's statement on Campbell's nervous collapse: feeling Campbell's pulse, as she 'laughed, with tears pouring down [her] cheeks', he says 'gravely' that 'All the acting has done this'; she has 'worked too hard, and felt too much'.¹⁷⁶ His statements contradict both Campbell's assertion of personal 'strength' and Kendal's depiction of acting as offering 'the blessedness of independence [...] especially to a single woman' (which

¹⁷¹ *Some Letters*, 25.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

¹⁷³ Langtry, *The Days I Knew*, 122.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 15; 67.

¹⁷⁵ *My Double Life*, 63.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 119.

Campbell effectively was, given her husband's absence and penury).¹⁷⁷ Consequently, *Some Letters* apparently upholds conservative Victorian anxieties regarding both acting's dangerous emotionalism, and women as students and artists. These extend throughout the period, from Thomas Laycock's 1840 warnings regarding 'the slow but powerful effects of music, dancing, vivid colours and odours on the nervous system' to *fin-de-siècle* anxieties over women's ability to cope with emotions and public life, given the 'missing five ounces of the female brain' that distinguished them from men.¹⁷⁸

Even the analyst Horatio Bryan Donkin, who attributed female hysteria to social restraint – the 'Thou shalt not' which 'meets a girl at almost every turn' – depicted the female hysteric as strongly reminiscent of the actress.¹⁷⁹ Donkin described the female hysteric as one whose employment was not 'regular', whose 'abnormal action' was based on 'a craving for sympathy or notoriety' and consisted of 'exaggeration [...] willful imposture, simulation'.¹⁸⁰ In 1881, George Henry Savage (who in 1904 treated Virginia Stephen) described the insane child as one in whom 'the power of romancing as a genius and the power or habit of lying' is 'scarcely [...] distinguished'.¹⁸¹ The link between madness and performance is such that performance itself could signify a kind of madness.

¹⁷⁷ Madge Kendal, *Dramatic Opinions*, 31.

¹⁷⁸ Thomas Laycock, *A Treatise on the Nervous Diseases of Women* (London: Longman et al., 1840), 126; George Romanes, 'Mental differences between men and women', *Nineteenth Century* (May 1887), 654–672, 668.

¹⁷⁹ Sir Horatio Bryan Donkin (1845–1929), consulting physician at the New Hospital for Women, and Lecturer in Medicine at the London School of Medicine for Women; instrumental in the creation of the Mental Deficiency Act, 1913.

¹⁸⁰ Donkin, 'Hysteria', Daniel Hack Tuke (ed.), *A Dictionary of Psychological Medicine*, 2 vols (London: J. and A. Churchill, 1892), I.619–621, 621.

¹⁸¹ George Henry Savage, 'Moral Insanity', *Journal of Mental Science* (July 1881), 147–155, 150. Sir George Henry Savage (1849–1921). Senior Physician at Bethlem, and Consulting Lecturer in Mental Disease at Guy's Hospital: treated Stephen for a breakdown following her father's 1904 death. Jenny Bourne Taylor and Sally Shuttleworth (eds), *Embodied Selves* (Oxford: 2003), 408.

Campbell's self-destructive drawing on her 'temperament' also rewrites Helen Faucit's artistic practice of dramatising what was 'best in myself', for the *fin de siècle*, as a fundamentally sacrificial practice. Typical *fin-de-siècle* pro-theatrical discourse promoted acting as either self-realisation or self-improvement. This could either be via moral 'trial' and refinement, as in the anonymous *Diary of an Actress* (1885), or through the mimesis of enacting noble behaviour, as in the careers of Louisa May Alcott's Miss Cameron and Josie Brooke (*Jo's Boys*, 1886), both committed to 'the purification of the stage' for God, the 'great Manager'.¹⁸²

Conversely, Campbell's artistry makes her suffering integral to artistic practice. Much recent scholarship has focused on Victorian interest in the artistic or aesthetic potential of *killing*, including Flanders's *The Invention of Murder* (2011), and Bronfen's work on the female corpse as art object. Nevertheless, works of art involving artists' suffering or death were also a gathering Victorian concern. Notable examples include Henry Wallis's *The Death of Chatterton* (1856). The greatest *fin-de-siècle* exponent was Wilde. In *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890), the picture catalyses the deaths of both artist and sitter, while depicting the latter's ongoing spiritual decay. In *The Portrait of Mr. W.H.* (1889), the forger Cyril Graham's death gives the portrait such significance.

In 1884, Kendal had covertly attacked Terry for allegedly publicising her illnesses to gain sympathy and public respect. Campbell's motivations in highlighting her own breakdown may have been similar. As well as demonstrating her art's authenticity via the extreme emotional investment it required, foregrounding her illness confirmed Campbell's self-aware position as the

¹⁸² Louisa May Alcott, *Jo's Boys* [1886] (London: The Thames Publishing Company, 1955), 127–129.

embodiment of contemporary obsession with sickness. She shrewdly acknowledged illness's contribution to her professional aesthetic, writing that 'I look my best when I am very ill'.¹⁸³ This was an innately *fin-de-siècle* view. When Trilby, heroine of the best-selling novel, is consumptive, she grows 'day by day [...] more beautiful [...] her skin was so pure and white and delicate, and the bones of her face so admirable'.¹⁸⁴

Discussing *Hamlet*, Campbell positions herself as a victim, insisting that she did not want to play Ophelia because she knew she would be 'up against tradition with a vengeance', but 'could not afford to refuse'.¹⁸⁵ Peters accepts this view, claiming that Campbell 'could not accept the secondary nature of parts like [...] Ophelia'.¹⁸⁶ This distorts both Campbell's attitude and Ophelia's status. Following eighteenth-century performances by Jordan, Siddons and Woffington, Ophelia gained additional prominence when Edmund Kean's Hamlet began to 'mingle desire' with the Prince's 'revulsion' at womankind.¹⁸⁷ Notable early-Victorian Ophelias – including Faucit (1844), Ellen Tree (1849) and Kate Terry (1869) boosted the character's theatrical profile and their own celebrity, until the 1864 *Orchestra* correspondent was asserting confidently that 'Ophelia is generally affected by a star'.¹⁸⁸ Later Ophelias included Ellen Terry (from 1879) and Helena Modjeska (from 1881). The latter was identified in 1885 by the *Era* as one of the 'leading ladies' placed beyond 'effective reach' of domination by leading man, or

¹⁸³ *Some Letters*, 371.

¹⁸⁴ George du Maurier, *Trilby* [1894] (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1895), 406.

¹⁸⁵ *Some Letters*, 122.

¹⁸⁶ *Mrs. Pat*, 165; letter from Campbell to 'Lulo' Tanner (August 1897), reprinted *Mrs. Pat*, 152.

¹⁸⁷ Robert Hapgood (ed.), *Hamlet* (Cambridge: 1999), 49.

¹⁸⁸ 'Theatres', *Orchestra* (28 May 1864), 550.

management.¹⁸⁹ There is scant evidence that Ophelia, by 1897, was seen as especially ‘secondary’ within the Shakespearean canon.

Peters describes Campbell’s performance of Ophelia’s madness as autobiographical, with the actress turning ‘her sense of humour against herself [...] after her nervous breakdown, to make Ophelia genuinely mad’.¹⁹⁰ Similarly, Fiona Gregory describes Campbell’s Ophelia as the actress literally ‘performing [her] rest cure’ to create ‘an early and affective feminist reading’ of the part.¹⁹¹ However, Campbell publicly professed extremely conservative intentions. In her last major interview before *Hamlet* opened, Campbell told the *PMG* that the ‘keynote’ of her ‘loveable and attractive’ Ophelia would be ‘favour and prettiness’, even in the mad scenes. Like her 1895 claim that playing Juliet was ‘one of her dearest wishes fulfilled’, her assertion that she had been ‘always [...] greatly attracted’ to Ophelia, and deemed it ‘a distinct privilege to play any of Shakespeare’s heroines’ diverges from the unhappiness of *Some Letters*.¹⁹² In fact, Campbell echoed her public profession in private correspondence with her sister, where she claimed to have ‘always loved’ Ophelia, in August 1897.¹⁹³ The only aspect of *Hamlet* that we can be certain Campbell worried about was her health: in the same letter, she confessed it was ‘only my weak head I am afraid of’.¹⁹⁴

Both Peters and Gregory’s late-twentieth-century feminist accounts present Ophelia as an autobiographical, feminist performance determined by the actress’s mental illness. Female artists’

¹⁸⁹ ‘Patriotism, Politics and the Profession’, *Era* (6 June 1885), 13.

¹⁹⁰ *Mrs. Pat*, 159.

¹⁹¹ Fiona Gregory, ‘Performing the Rest Cure: Mrs Patrick Campbell’s Ophelia, 1897’, *New Theatre Quarterly* (May 2012), 107–121, 120.

¹⁹² M. Griffiths, ‘Juliet’, 264; ‘The Latest Ophelia’, *PMG* (11 September 1897), 3.

¹⁹³ Letter from Campbell to ‘Lulo’ Tanner (August 1897), quoted *Mrs. Pat*, 152.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

mental health problems are too readily read as the ‘reason’ for their work. The British playwright Sarah Kane (1971–1999) committed suicide while hospitalised following a previous suicide attempt. Alek Sierz points out that ‘seeing Kane as an example of the Sylvia Plath syndrome – with her work refracted through the optic’ of her illness and death ‘reduces her art to biography, and limits its meaning’.¹⁹⁵ Although the Plath reference is anachronistic as applied to Campbell – who did not commit suicide – a similar process of over-determination and simplification is evident in critical approaches to Ophelia. As the playwright and dramaturg David Tushingham noted of Kane, Campbell’s ‘career as a mental patient’ was much briefer than her career as an actress.¹⁹⁶ The wider textual evidence for Campbell’s mental and professional processes doesn’t corroborate Peters and Gregory’s narratives. Campbell’s *PMG* interview stated that her ‘one object’ was to avoid anything approaching the ‘maniacal’, and the only praise she quotes in *Some Letters* is Henry Irving’s description of her performance as ‘beautiful’, and the general praise for her ‘singing’.¹⁹⁷ Moreover, Peters’s claim that Campbell ‘turn[ed] her sense of humour against herself’ suggests a levity or self-ridicule absent from Campbell’s writings. Reviewers frequently deemed her Ophelia conventional. Some detractors actually seemed disappointed at the lack of startling innovation, with *PMG* sniffing at an ‘uninspired, ordinary’ performance, and the *Era* having ‘half expected that she would adopt the ancient German and “up-to-date” English theories of Ophelia’s impurity [...] in her embodiment’, suggesting slight regret that the performance was not more salacious.¹⁹⁸ Meanwhile, Kate Terry Gielgud, who elsewhere condemned Campbell as

¹⁹⁵ Alek Sierz, ‘Sarah Kane 1’, *In-Yer-Face Theatre* (2000) [<http://www.inyface-theatre.com/archive7.html#a>, accessed 21 February 2013].

¹⁹⁶ Alek Sierz, ‘Sarah Kane 2’, *In-Yer-Face Theatre* (2000) [<http://www.inyface-theatre.com/archive7.html#b>, accessed 21 February 2013].

¹⁹⁷ ‘The Latest Ophelia’, *PMG* (11 September 1897); *Some Letters*, 160.

¹⁹⁸ *PMG*, quoted *Mrs. Patrick Campbell*, 144; ‘Waftings from the Wings’, *Fun* (21 September 1897), 96.

‘too much the morbid, introspective modern woman’ found Ophelia a conventionally ‘tiresome, walking-lady’.¹⁹⁹

Both mainstream and satirical publications praised Campbell: the *Times* found her ‘sweet and winning’, while *Fun* praised a ‘very gentle and fascinating’ performance for its ‘prettiness’.²⁰⁰ Similarly, *Judy* felt that Campbell’s Ophelia would ‘satisfy the most *exigeant* critic’.²⁰¹ In the mad scene, *Fun* noted that Ophelia’s ‘lapse [...] invoked pity’ rather than horror or revulsion.²⁰² She wore, as the *Glasgow Herald* described, the ‘orthodox white draperies’ with ‘flowing angel sleeves’ and a ‘spangled’ bodice.²⁰³ The *Penny Illustrated* concluded that ‘for soft womanly charm and grace’, Campbell’s Ophelia was ‘hard to beat’ – high praise when, in August, Helen Tree’s Ophelia had been lauded as ‘the most pathetic imaginable’.²⁰⁴ The critical consensus amongst many of Campbell’s admirers suggested an actress firmly integrated in the Shakespearean mainstreams; even those who disliked the performance regarded it as a ‘well-meaning mistake’ rather than the flouting of convention.²⁰⁵

Shaw, Terry, Campbell

Peters’s assertion that Campbell made Ophelia ‘genuinely mad’ strongly recalls Campbell’s most influential reviewer, one who credited Campbell with the most innovation. Shaw acclaimed Campbell’s ‘progress’ in ‘making Ophelia really mad’ and leaving the audience ‘horribly

¹⁹⁹ Kate Terry Gielgud, *Journal of A Playgoer*, 32; 62.

²⁰⁰ *Times*, quoted *Mrs. Patrick Campbell*, 144; ‘Waftings from the Wings’, 96.

²⁰¹ ‘Flaneur, Sock and Buskin’, *Judy* (3 November 1897), 520.

²⁰² ‘Waftings from the Wings’, 96.

²⁰³ ‘Our London Correspondence’, *Glasgow Herald* (11 September 1897), 7.

²⁰⁴ ‘Talk of London’, *Penny Illustrated* (18 September 1897), 178; ‘London Correspondence’, *Freeman’s* (14 August 1897), 5.

²⁰⁵ *Observer*, quoted *Mrs. Patrick Campbell*, 144.

uncomfortable' as a result.²⁰⁶ Shaw's cultural polyvalence and longevity, via his own writings, and biographical studies such as *Bernard Shaw and the Actresses* (which construct the latter in relation to the former) have been central to twentieth-century constructions and reconstructions of Campbell.²⁰⁷ Shaw's personal desire for theatrical change further made him the self-declared master-narrator of theatrical history, constructing his favourite actresses as either restricted victims (see Chapters One and Four) or antagonistic pioneers. Shaw used Campbell's Ophelia to illuminate his conception of the problems of the theatrical marketplace, constructing her performance as a necessary curative, 'good for [the audience], good for the play, and good for the theatre'.²⁰⁸ While her Ophelia offered both 'outrage' and 'progress', Shaw presented Campbell herself as attacked by critical 'petulance', her 'important place' in the Lyceum 'question[ed]'. Unlike the 'imprisoned' Terry, Campbell thus embodied both victim and revolutionary. This agenda underlines Peters' representation of Campbell as an antagonistic, anti-Shakespearean actress.

Shaw's memorialising of Campbell has also had powerful consequences for scholarship on Terry. Auerbach's biography of Terry develops a professional rivalry into a metadrama of contested theories of Victorian womanhood, wherein 'Stella Campbell had to kill Ellen Terry as the angel in the house, the eternally good woman the female artist must either destroy or, to her own destruction, become'.²⁰⁹ Auerbach's main evidence for this is the performance of *Hamlet* in which Campbell, knowing Terry was in the audience, played half the scenes with her own hair,

²⁰⁶ Shaw, 'Hamlet', 365.

²⁰⁷ Margot Peters, *Bernard Shaw and the Actresses* (New York: Doubleday, 1980).

²⁰⁸ Shaw, 'Hamlet', 365.

²⁰⁹ Auerbach, *Ellen Terry*, 250.

and ‘half in a blond Ellen wig’.²¹⁰ Campbell’s own account makes the link less directly, saying that she had been ‘egged on by the continual criticism of playing Ophelia in my own hair’ and used a ‘fair wig’ on the same night that ‘Miss Ellen Terry was among the audience – I wanted to know which she liked best’. There’s a touch of mischief, but no suggestion that Campbell tried or succeeded in ‘killing’ Terry. Graham Robertson describes a despairing Campbell denying the possibility of speaking Lady Macbeth ‘naturally’, while backstage in 1898, on the grounds that ‘Ellen Terry tried and what did she do? She chopped the lines into little bits and pumped them out in staccato jerks.’²¹¹ Campbell clearly saw little point in personally attempting a technique at which Terry failed. Campbell had been equally preoccupied with Terry’s Ophelia, describing it as ‘exquisite, so tender and pathetic’ and the performance that she would ‘most love to see’, a register congruent with her stated idealisation of Ophelia as full of ‘prettiness’, ‘lovable’ and ‘attractive’.²¹² In the previous twelve months, Terry had only played Ophelia once (for the last time, at Nellie Farren’s benefit); crucially, however, Campbell referred to her and not Maud Tree’s more recent interpretation. Shaw’s description of Campbell as Terry’s ‘heiress apparent’ implies stylistic continuities as well as change, and Campbell’s (reported) acting philosophy of ‘The Step – the Gesture – the Word – you must get it all perfect mechanically, before you even *try* to bring the emotion through’ recalls Terry’s mobile, gestural, legible acting style rather than anything more radical.²¹³ Shaw claimed that Julia Neilson experienced ‘attacks of Miss Ellen Terry and Mrs. Patrick Campbell’ that were ‘acute, sudden and numerous’ within a single 1896 performance of *As You Like It*, suggesting their styles were not incompatible.²¹⁴ Similarly,

²¹⁰ *Bernard Shaw and the Actresses*, 235. Terry’s response remains unknown.

²¹¹ *Time Was*, 251.

²¹² ‘The Latest Ophelia’, *PMG* (11 September 1897), 3.

²¹³ *Mrs. Patrick Campbell*, 317.

²¹⁴ George Bernard Shaw, ‘The Manxman’, *Saturday Review* (5 December 1896), 584–586, 586.

although one anonymous correspondent told Dent that ‘Neither Ellen Terry nor Mrs. Kendal could serve [Campbell] as a model’; F.X. Una (the pseudonym for a Manchester critic) found in Campbell’s Ophelia an ‘imitation of the Lyceum actress whose accent overpowers nearly all English contemporaries in her profession’.²¹⁵ These, along with Campbell’s impression that Terry’s Ophelia left ‘no room’ for her own, all position Terry as the Ur-actress.²¹⁶ Post-*Hamlet*, Campbell can hardly be said to have ‘killed’ associations with Terry by returning to the Lyceum to play Lady Macbeth a decade after Terry’s iconic performance (and three years since its revival).

Predictably, Shaw was responsible for the most antagonistic polarisation of Campbell and Terry. He seems consistently to have encouraged their opposition, especially via his 1890s correspondence with Terry. A characteristic compliment on Terry’s beauty accuses her of creating a ‘success of personal beauty, merely to *écraser* Mrs. Pat’; Terry in fact claimed to have ‘always liked’ Campbell.²¹⁷ Shaw also asserted a version of Campbell that stressed her volatility and unprofessional behaviour, claiming that ‘No Manager would engage you a second time if he could help it’ – a claim which further opposed her to Terry. Campbell retorted that she’d had six engagements with Alexander, nine with Forbes-Robertson, four with both du Maurier and Tree, and two with Hare.²¹⁸ The 1895 compendium of attempts to identify the ‘Greatest Living Actress’ does not discuss Campbell and Terry as opponents or rivals. In fact, Campbell and Terry’s relations were no more fraught than those of most mainstream *fin-de-siècle* actresses who weren’t

²¹⁵ *Mrs. Patrick Campbell*, 317; F.X. Una, *The Manchester Stage 1880–1900* (London: Archibald Constable & Co., 1900), 68.

²¹⁶ *Manchester Stage*, 168; *Some Letters*, 160.

²¹⁷ Letter from Shaw to Terry (23 September 1896), *Correspondence*, 65–66.

²¹⁸ Letter from Campbell to Shaw (1 February 1939), *Bernard Shaw & Mrs. Patrick Campbell: Their Correspondence* [hereafter *Shaw/Campbell*] (London: Victor Gollancz, 1952), 381–382.

long-term colleagues within very specific interpretative communities, such as the Bensonians, or Harley Granville-Barker's ensembles: Langtry was criticised by Kendal as 'no artist', and overstated her friendship with Terry; Mrs. Stirling, as whose successor Kendal was recognised, preferred Mary Anderson as her 'best beloved'; Bernhardt and Duse so loathed each other that engaging both for Terry's 1906 jubilee was a major coup; Constance Benson detested Janet Achurch, and Campbell was unusual in maintaining cordial relations with Elizabeth Robins (although some gratitude was obligatory, after Robins resigned the role of Paula to her in 1893).²¹⁹ In fact, the only antecedent Campbell might have wanted to 'kill' was Madge Kendal. Terry called Kendal 'my idea of hell', a view Campbell enthusiastically seconded after Terry and Kendal's deaths: 'I agree with Ellen Terry [...] I know the daughter – the deaf one. I knew in spite of Madge's dignity and her bonnet – she was a devil!'.²²⁰ The deaf daughter was Dorothy, disowned for marrying Bertie Meyer.

Watching Campbell perform Ophelia's mad scenes, Scott also felt the 'shiver' of 'something [...] pretty' made 'painful' that enraptured Shaw. However, Scott was frankly disturbed by an Ophelia that 'makes one shudder' via madness that was 'very realistic, but it strikes the note of pain not pity'.²²¹ The conjunction 'but' is fascinating, opposing the two clauses so that while 'but it strikes the note of pain, not pity' emerges as obvious criticism, the syntax suggests that Campbell's crime was *not* making the madness 'realistic' but apparently refusing to be sympathetic. Only Scott and Shaw, the two extremes of critical attitude, saw Campbell's personation of madness as

²¹⁹ Beatty, *Manners, Masks and Morals* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1999), 202; *DMK*, 251; *The Stage Life of Mrs. Stirling*, 222; Auerbach, *Ellen Terry*, Constance Benson, *Mainly Players* (London: T. Butterworth, 1926), 60; Dent, *Mrs. Patrick Campbell*, 61.

²²⁰ Letter from Campbell to Shaw (25 August 1937) *Shaw/Campbell*, 361–366, 365.

²²¹ Clement Scott, *Some Notable Hamlets* (London: Greening, 1900), 169.

unusual: Scott was as sensitive to deviation from tradition as Shaw, but for opposite reasons. Unlike their provincial critical counterparts, Shaw and Scott were also sufficiently well-connected to know the real nature of Campbell's recent illness, which had not been publicised. It's notable that the only critics who saw her as 'realistically' mad were those most likely to know about her nervous breakdown.

If Campbell was perceived as deliberately personating 'real' madness, either through conscious theatrical practice or because her physical significance as visibly fragile and sickly influenced her reception, this realism was not an entirely new idea. In 1863, psychiatrist John Connolly had urged actresses to visit asylums to avoid Ophelia's traditional 'prettiness', and instead emulate the 'partial rudeness [...] acute observation, the sudden transitions, the broken recollections' of genuine 'mental disorder'.²²² Terry, who visited the 'madhouse' in 1879, claimed to be merely replicating the behaviour of 'all Ophelias before (and after) me'.²²³ Although Auerbach sees Terry's visit to the 'madhouse' as central to her artistic process, Terry's own account prioritises imagination over authentic medical detail: the actor must 'imagine first' and 'observe afterwards'. Ultimately, Terry looked in performance 'like a broken lily' as the 'sweet mad girl'.²²⁴ Campbell does, however, seem to have subverted tacit assumptions regarding Ophelia's sexuality. John Martin-Harvey's account of Terry's Ophelia, written forty years later, emphasises her 'physically [...] irresistible charm', 'long virginal limbs' and 'great red mouth', bodily surfaces and apertures that seem to invite marking and entrance.²²⁵ No equivalent description of Campbell's Ophelia as erotic exists. Instead, the *Standard* was disappointed in Campbell's

²²² John Connolly, *A Study of Hamlet* (London: Edward Moxon & Co., 1863), 180.

²²³ Ellen Terry, *The Story of My Life* (London: Hutchinson, 1908), 122.

²²⁴ *Some Notable Hamlets*, 191–192n; *The Story of My Life*, 122.

²²⁵ John Martin-Harvey, *The Autobiography of Sir John Martin-Harvey* (London: Sampson Low, 1933), 29.

personation of ‘an overgrown child’ who was not ‘sympathetic’. Juliet’s girlish sexuality had been replaced, for one critic at least, by a problematic, alternative childishness. Where Juliet’s desirability had been contingent on her lack of awareness of her sexual potential, Ophelia’s trauma at having ‘seen what I have seen’ of Hamlet’s misogyny and her own father’s sexual mistrust remove this innocence. Similarly, her madness precludes the child’s desirable malleability; the ‘woman latent’ in Ophelia would presumably be even more uncontrollable than the younger madwoman.

One way in which Campbell’s performance was innovative was that *any* significant critical discussion arose from the mad scenes. Forbes Robertson’s text helped her, retaining more of Horatio’s description of Ophelia’s behaviour than was customary (Irving had redistributed Horatio’s lines to Marcellus; the restoration of lines to the more prominent character in turn emphasised Ophelia’s importance), and also Ophelia’s potential threat of suicide: ‘I’ll make an end on’t’.²²⁶ Similarly, Forbes Robertson printed Ophelia’s ‘You must sing, “Down a-down, an you call him a-down-a”’ as naturalistic prose; Irving’s edition presented it as verse, suggesting another musical interlude, or at least controlled, rhythmic speech.²²⁷ This editorial agenda gave Campbell particular scope, and was textually unusual. Although the 1877 *Variorum* edition of *Hamlet* quoted numerous medical as well as literary sources, with over a third of cited works published in the 1870s, the subject was Hamlet’s madness, not Ophelia’s.²²⁸ Similarly, the most detailed essay on *Hamlet* and madness published in the months preceding Forbes-Robertson’s production focused heavily on the Prince. B.N. Oakeshott’s close reading mentions Ophelia only

²²⁶ Forbes-Robertson, *Hamlet* (1897) Bram Stoker Collection (RL2/2/7), 71–73.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, 75. Cf. Irving, *Hamlet, a tragedy* (London: Chiswick Press, 1878). Bram Stoker Collection (RL2/2/6).

²²⁸ Robert Hapgood (ed.) *Hamlet*, 39.

in passing, asserting that Ophelia's 'lewd song' evinces 'one of the most painful and distressing symptoms of mental disease' (the song was cut from the Lyceum production), and instead focuses on Hamlet's 'sudden, spasmodic and unreflecting' insanity.²²⁹ Similarly, although Otis Skinner retrospectively described Modjeska's madness as Ophelia in 1890 as 'so real' that it made him 'shudder', contemporary critics found her 'beautiful', 'sympathetic' and singularly able to 'weep naturally'; Charles Wingate also praised her ability to depict insanity via 'chaste and refined tonings, deeply pathetic'.²³⁰ Theatrically, Victorian and *fin-de-siècle* Ophelias received paradigmatic, interchangeable praise, from Terry's 'ideally plaintive' Ophelia to Helen Tree's 'delicate refinement' and 'musical sweetness'.²³¹ It was not until 1904 that Julia Marlowe offered a revolutionary Ophelia, 'a woman of strong passions and fine intelligence', and it's hard to find Gregory's 'early feminist reading' in Campbell's writing or reviews.²³² However, while Shaw's desire for revolutionary Shakespeare and anti-Irving stance influenced his conviction that Campbell's performance was revolutionary, Campbell was the only *fin-de-siècle* Ophelia to spark significant critical debate within the theatrical mainstream, and the first acknowledged as destabilising the prevailing paradigm of sympathetic, pretty madness. This was a particular achievement for a British actress; while French artist Ernest Hébert and German Georg Richard Falkenberg both painted consumptive and visibly disturbed Ophelias during the 1890s, the only image for a *fin-de-siècle* English Ophelia was Campbell herself.²³³

***Fin-de-siècle* Shakespeare: *Hamlet* (1897) as barometer**

²²⁹ B.N. Oakeshott, 'Hamlet', *Westminster Review* (June 1897), 669–678, 674.

²³⁰ Entry dated 27 January 1890, 'Max O'Rell' [pseud.] *A Frenchman In America* (New York: Cassell, 1891), 62; Charles Wingate, *Shakespeare's Heroines on the Stage* (New York: Crowell, 1895), 315.

²³¹ "'Hamlet" at Her Majesty's', *Era* (14 August 1897), 10.

²³² *New York Herald*, quoted Hapgood (ed.) *Hamlet*, 50.

²³³ Ernest Hébert (1817–1908), 'Ophelia', (1890s, date unknown); George Richard Falkenberg (b. 1850, death unknown), 'Ophelia', (c. 1898). Dijkstra, *Idols of Perversity*, 43–45.

Co-opting Campbell's Ophelia for feminism is problematic. However, Campbell's reception offers a useful barometer for the anxieties and desires framing *fin-de-siècle* Shakespearean practice by 1897. A strong emphasis on the 'picturesque' had been focalised into specific concern with the sartorial. The *Glasgow Herald*, for example, discussed the Lyceum's new *Hamlet* entirely under the heading of 'Dress and Fashion', rather than the 'Musical and Dramatic' section of the same page of the newspaper.²³⁴ Secondly, whether as participants or horrified bystanders, Campbell's reviewers were strongly aware of contemporary desire for innovation and hermeneutical change. Or, as a relieved *PMG* reviewer put it, delighted that the Lyceum production turned out to be relatively traditional, a fashion for 'torturing of the text for the introduction of original readings' and 'hidden meanings'.²³⁵ 'Original readings' were also becoming important in another sense. Forbes-Robertson's *Hamlet* was enthusiastically received for its 'restoration' of Shakespeare's text, in a *fin-de-siècle* marketplace where supposedly 'full' and 'restored' Shakespeare texts proliferated, as managers (according to Shaw) competed to 'offer the public as much of the original Shakespearean stuff as possible'.²³⁶ Shakespeare's longest play, *Hamlet*, was crucial to this process, which climaxed in Benson's 'eternity *Hamlet*' (1899) – a complete First Folio text. Gary Taylor has written persuasively of the editorial desires for 'progress' and 'understanding' that catalysed Furnivall's chronologies of plays via the New Shakespeare Society.²³⁷ Meanwhile, William Poel's productions attempted 'original' performance practices, and Forbes-Robertson's 1897 *Hamlet*, offered a text 'not at all unlike Shakespeare's play'.²³⁸ Staging an unusually full *Hamlet* could satisfy *fin-de-siècle* desires for

²³⁴ 'Our London Correspondence', *Glasgow Herald* (11 September 1897), 7.

²³⁵ 'The Theatre', *PMG* (13 September 1897), 4.

²³⁶ Shaw, 'Hamlet', *Saturday Review*, 365.

²³⁷ Gary Taylor, *Reinventing Shakespeare* (Oxford: 1991), 164–165.

²³⁸ Shaw, 'Hamlet', (2 October 1897), *Our Theatres In The Nineties* 3 (London: Constable & Co., 1931), 210–218, 210.

newness, as well as authenticity. *Moonshine* praised the ‘novelties’ in Forbes-Robertson’s text, which restored both Fortinbras and Reynaldo, noting that ‘no play-goer of our time has seen’ the latter.²³⁹

Campbell’s reception as Ophelia also reflects the gathering awareness of Shakespeare’s potentially unstable and limited characterisation of Ophelia, to which several critics attributed Campbell’s apparent difficulties in the role. The *Graphic* argued that Ophelia was too ‘soft and passive’ to be an effective dramatic character, while the *Belfast Newsletter* felt that if Campbell were ‘weak’, it was because the role was ‘altogether unsuited to an actress’ of ‘considerable tragic power’.²⁴⁰ The tenor of 1897 criticism differs sharply from the negative responses to Terry’s 1888 casting as Lady Macbeth. Then, it was a case of Terry being unsuitable for Lady Macbeth; in 1897, Ophelia was ‘unsuited’ to Campbell. The *Belfast* correspondent also voiced contemporary discontent with Ophelia, ‘an insipid creature even before [...] the lunacy stage’, and ‘the absurdities of Shakespeare’s plot’. Were *Hamlet* ‘a modern creation’, argues the correspondent, ‘our critics would not hesitate to liberally turn it inside out’.²⁴¹ In 1882, Langtry had experienced the same private misgivings about the psychological consistency of *As You Like It*. In 1897, Campbell’s reception as Ophelia exposed a burgeoning critical refusal to continue privileging the ‘rank improbability, and insufficiency of motive’ of a sacred cultural text.²⁴² Finally, *Freeman*’s suggestion that if Campbell were not ‘born’ to play Juliet or Ophelia, she ‘might make a fine Cleopatra or Lady Macbeth’ didn’t carry with it the automatic preference for,

²³⁹ ‘Feathers from the Wings’, *Moonshine* (18 September 1897), 136.

²⁴⁰ ‘The Theatres’, *Graphic* (18 September 1897), 374; ‘Our London Letter’, *Belfast News-Letter* (13 September 1897), 4.

²⁴¹ ‘Our London Letter’, 4.

²⁴² *Ibid.*

or moral superiority of, the young innocent heroines who (*Freeman's* felt) eluded Campbell, over the transgressive *femmes fatales*.²⁴³

The *femme serpent*: Lady Macbeth in 1898

Johnston Forbes-Robertson's *Macbeth* opened at the Lyceum on 17 September 1898, with Campbell as Lady Macbeth. The traditional perception of Lady Macbeth as automatically less important than her husband was changing. One anticipatory article, published in *Belgravia* (August 1898), reconstructed Lady Macbeth as not only 'the central figure in the Shakespearian tragedy', but 'a character unsurpassed in literature'.²⁴⁴ A.S. Nelson's exegesis centralises Lady Macbeth as tragic heroine, who both displays 'heroism' in experiencing the reverse 'flow of fortune', and who is ultimately Miltonic in achieving 'that bad pre-eminence' in *Macbeth's* performance history.²⁴⁵ *Macbeth's fin-de-siècle* performance history is central to this shift. Stokes dates the 'star' actress's emergence to around 'the turn of the century' – although, as I have argued, British female stars appeared somewhat earlier, the *fin de siècle* saw a concentration of 'star' and emerging actresses play Lady Macbeth. After Terry, both Langtry and Modjeska played Lady Macbeth in 1889, and continued to do so intermittently for the next decade. Moreover, although Modjeska claimed to have 'never seen a performance of *Macbeth*', the reception of her 'nervous, emotional' Lady, 'led by love of her husband' bears critical traces of Terry.²⁴⁶ Lady Macbeth could boost an actress's celebrity. In her amateur debut in 1895, Lillah McCarthy was decisively acclaimed as 'very nearly thrilling' in the role, and a 'valuable recruit'

²⁴³ 'Our Ladies' Letter', *Freeman's* (20 September 1897), 2.

²⁴⁴ A.S. Nelson, 'Macbeth', *Belgravia* (August 1898), 416–425, 422.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 422.

²⁴⁶ 'Modjeska as Lady Macbeth', *NYT* (19 November 1889), accessed 20 July 2011

[<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=F20913FC3C5F15738DDDA00994D9415B8984F0D3>, accessed 20 July 2011].

for the stage.²⁴⁷ By 1896, McCarthy was playing leading roles with Wilson Barrett.²⁴⁸ Henry Irving revived his *Macbeth* in 1895; the reviews were exponentially better for Terry than in 1888, and worse for Irving, further diverging focus. By 1898, Lady Macbeth could be seen as a bad woman, a good wife, and a woman of ‘genius’. Lady Macbeth was one for whom ‘underneath [...] [her] queenly dignity, there beats a genuine woman’s heart; she never forfeits sympathy in her hour of triumph, nor respect in her fall’.²⁴⁹ The reference to a ‘genuine woman’s heart’ irresistibly recalls the praise applied to Campbell by Clement Scott, before *Tanqueray*, that Campbell recalled Terry by being ‘a woman heart and soul’.²⁵⁰

The positive influence of Campbell’s career as a ‘sex-problem play’ heroine is not to be underestimated: after all, the psychological arc which Comyns-Carr had plotted for Lady Macbeth in 1888 – ‘remorse [...] which can only be silenced by death’ – was also that of Paula Tanqueray.²⁵¹ Bernhardt had also played Lady Macbeth in 1884, in Richepin’s ‘badly mutilated’ translation; although this performance was critically unpopular, *PMG* felt it depicted ‘for the present generation the kind of woman in whom alone apparently it is strongly interested, the dangerous siren-like creature by whose fascinations men are enslaved’.²⁵² Given her deliberate attempts to align herself with Bernhardt’s aesthetic, Campbell was well-placed to embody this type of performance.

²⁴⁷ Shaw, ‘A New Lady Macbeth and a New Mrs. Ebbsmith’, *Saturday Review* (25 May 1895), 693–4.

²⁴⁸ Dennis Kennedy, ‘McCarthy, Lila Emma married names Lila Emma Barker; Lila Emma Keeble, Lady Keeble (1875–1960)’, *DNB* [<http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/34682>, accessed 1 July 2013].

²⁴⁹ Nelson, ‘Macbeth’, 422.

²⁵⁰ Scott, review of *The White Rose*, *Daily Telegraph* (23 April 1893), quoted Dent, 50.

²⁵¹ Joseph Comyns-Carr, *Macbeth and Lady Macbeth*. (London: Bickers & Son, 1888), 22.

²⁵² ‘Mdme. Sarah Bernhardt as Lady Macbeth’, *PMG* (5 July 1884), 4.

As in 1888, anticipatory coverage speculated on the new Lady Macbeth's interpretation. *Country Life* predicted Campbell would rely 'entirely on the charm and magnetism of her own charming and magnetic character', creating a 'decidedly sinuous' Lady Macbeth, 'dangerous with the danger of a snake; soft and feminine, with the femininity of the feline kind; a sorceress in whose hands Macbeth will be as clay'.²⁵³ The belief that Campbell's 'charming and magnetic character' would beget a serpent-like Lady Macbeth reflects the diverse qualities critics ascribed to Campbell; her own 'temperament' had supposedly been her 'sole guide' for the girlish Juliet.²⁵⁴

Campbell's Lady Macbeth was also her most popular Shakespearean heroine. Although *Country Life* had closed its anticipatory article by conceding that 'likely as not Mrs. Patrick Campbell has a big surprise in store for us', the eventual lack of surprise helped determine her success.²⁵⁵

Country Life's lexis anticipates the register of several, disparate *Macbeth* reviews. For the *Courant*, Campbell offered 'the feline type of wickedness; *Country Life*'s imagined 'sorceress' was recognised in Walkley's Lady who 'casts a spell'; similarly, *Country Life*'s 'magnetism' became a Lady who 'magnetises her Thane'.²⁵⁶ In *Country Life*'s snake-like Lady, Walkley recognised a '*femme serpent*' who rendered Forbes-Robertson's Macbeth 'wax'.²⁵⁷ Rather than her controversial, contested 'girlishness' as Juliet, Campbell could now embody the brand of 'womanliness' most closely aligned with her extra-Shakespearean 'personal possibilities'.

Terry's influence was also crucial. Her creation of a loving wife provided a hermeneutical space in which Campbell's interpretation – similarly filled with 'love and devotion' and 'womanliness'

²⁵³ 'Dramatic Notes', *Country Life* (3 September 1898), 284–285, 285.

²⁵⁴ Ibid.; *Some Letters*, 103.

²⁵⁵ 'Dramatic Notes', 285.

²⁵⁶ 'The Stage', *Newcastle Weekly* (24 September 1898); 'Dramatic Notes', 284–5; A.B. Walkley, review of *Macbeth*, reprinted *Mrs. Pat*, 171.

²⁵⁷ 'Dramatic Notes', 284–5; *Mrs. Pat*, 171.

– could exist unchallenged. *Pall Mall Gazette* approvingly observed that Campbell’s portrayal emphasised the wifeliness that was ‘after all, the mainspring of her action, and the key to her character’.²⁵⁸

Scott hated virtually everything about the production, which he called ‘the newest of the new, modern and incomprehensible Macbeths’.²⁵⁹ Campbell herself was, by implication, talentless, as Scott attacked her fans for simply enjoying the performance of ‘a very beautiful and gracious lady’ who ‘looked a picture’.²⁶⁰ In fact, the aesthetic of the 1898 *Macbeth* was relatively close to that of 1888; Scott noted the ‘pre-Raffaelite [sic] colours’, evoking Terry as the Pre-Raphaelite actress, and Campbell’s first dress consisted of ‘overlapping luminous [...] scales’ – not unlike Terry’s beetle-wings – and a similarly ‘encrusted’ girdle.²⁶¹ Scott had understood that production: Forbes-Robertson’s efforts were a ‘fantastic dream of pre-Raffaelite colours, designs, and artistic effeminacy’. While Irving had been attacked as insufficiently martial, Scott and the *Era* now condemned Forbes-Robertson as ‘emasculated’ and ‘effeminate’.²⁶² There are also traces of a post-Wildean backlash. The Lyceum’s highly aestheticised style had been relatively non-contentious in 1888; on the other side of Wilde’s 1895 trials and imprisonment, an ‘emasculated’ and ‘effeminate’ Macbeth was, in conjunction with a ‘pre-Raffaelite’ stage picture, potentially problematic.²⁶³ Walkley’s enthusiastic identification of Campbell as ‘Baudelairean’ and ‘an Aubrey Beardsley type’ makes these influences, which so enraged Scott, more explicit.²⁶⁴ With Wilde’s vilification, the ‘greenery-yallery’ intertext of Terry’s performance had been replaced by

²⁵⁸ ‘The Theatre’, *PMG* (19 September 1898), 9.

²⁵⁹ Clement Scott, quoted ‘The New Macbeth’, *Belfast Weekly News-Letter* (21 September 1898).

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁶¹ ‘Theatrical Gossip’, *Era* (24 September 1898).

²⁶² *Ibid.*; *Belfast Weekly News-Letter* (21 September 1898).

²⁶³ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁴ A.B. Walkley, quoted *Mrs. Pat*, 171.

a more transgressive ideology of *fin-de-siècle* culture, in which, for the conservative press, modernity and effeminacy were linked evils.

Walkley also identified and commended Campbell's 'substitution of a mysterious sensuous charm for the conventional domineering of a virago': the substitution of the ambiguous for the obvious, the complex for the traditional, *querelle*-inherited constructions of gender and agency.²⁶⁵ Again, there are clear continuities with Terry's performance, but Campbell also achieved one moment of innovation. The *Western Mail*, who felt Campbell 'greatly improved the part', described the 'subdued horror' of her understated sleep-walking scene as both a 'distinct change' and 'weirdly awesome'; even if the *Illustrated London News* found the scene 'unimpressive', they conceded that it was 'realistic'.²⁶⁶ By contrast, Terry's sleepwalking had been pathetic and beautiful. Besides Walkley, another crucial advocate for Campbell was Max Beerbohm, Shaw's recent replacement as the *Saturday Review*'s dramatic critic. Beerbohm went even further than Walkley in praising Campbell's depiction of gender and agency, positioning her not merely in a contemporary tradition of 'zeitgeist and [...] neurotic subtlety and pre-Raphaelitism' but in a tradition of eternally good acting.²⁶⁷ Beerbohm explicitly traced Campbell's artistic inheritance back to Shakespeare himself, whom, 'we may be sure [...] acted in much the same way as Mrs. Patrick Campbell or, for that matter, Miss Ellen Terry'.²⁶⁸ While the *Sporting Journal* complained that Campbell 'scarcely raise[d] her voice', Beerbohm argued that this move towards understatement characterised good, innovative acting in every age.²⁶⁹ As evidence, he quoted

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

²⁶⁶ 'London Letter', *Western Mail* (19 September 1898), 5; 'The Playhouses', *Illustrated London News* (24 September 1898), 435.

²⁶⁷ Max Beerbohm, "'Macbeth" and Mrs. Kendal', *Saturday Review* (1 October 1898), 434–435.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

Samuel Pepys's approval of his 'dearest' Mrs Knipp's 1667 performance 'without brawl or overmuch tragick gesture' as Lady Macbeth.²⁷⁰ Specifically, Knipp had been 'natural' in the sleepwalking scene, just as Beerbohm now found Campbell. More than simply praising innovation for innovation's sake, Beerbohm gave Campbell legitimacy through identifying her culturally-accepted analogues and antecedents. Moreover, Beerbohm also offered a new understanding of theatrical success and evolution, in which elements of acting are constantly being debated, and where the best acting always involves the elimination of 'brawl' and the paring of the 'overmuch' or excessive. Rather than necessarily imitating an antecedent ideal, change becomes essential to theatrical canonicity. Beerbohm thus uses Shakespeare performance to assert resemblance between apparently irreconcilable, and aesthetically and temporally disconnected performers.

In 1888, Terry had been criticised for not giving Irving 'due support'.²⁷¹ Although only one 1898 correspondent complained that Forbes-Robertson 'had not a partner worthy of his mettle', Beerbohm's view of the relationship between the protagonists was striking.²⁷² He stressed the 'perfect harmony' of Campbell and Forbes-Robertson's styles, arguing that 'Macbeth and Lady Macbeth' must be 'played well in the same method. A violent Lady Macbeth and a gentle Macbeth, or *vice versa*, would be a nuisance'.²⁷³ Beerbohm's suggestion of negotiation and reciprocity between the main players implies that this mutuality is more important than whether the 'method' itself is theatrical gentleness or violence. Consequently, theatrical style is less

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

²⁷¹ 'Lyceum Theatre', *Birmingham Daily Post* (31 December 1888), 5.

²⁷² 'The Playhouses', *Illustrated London News* (24 September 1898), 435.

²⁷³ Beerbohm, "Macbeth" and Mrs. Kendal, 435.

effectively dictated by a single actor (or actor-manager) in the Romantic tradition of ‘solo cadenzas’ of emotion, than worked out collaboratively.²⁷⁴

Beerbohm’s transhistorical understanding of acting also refuses to privilege any particular interpretation or performance. Campbell’s performance had catalysed a debate in which Beerbohm could argue that ‘there can be no final or binding interpretation of so complex a part as Lady Macbeth’.²⁷⁵ Again, this destabilised the need for performers to reiterate the ‘binding’ antecedent tradition that put particular pressure on Shakespearean actresses, given his heroines’ didactic value. Beerbohm’s rejection of any ‘final’ interpretation posits a willingness to see critical tradition become protean, multiple and fragmented.

Country Life, which had expected Campbell to fail to ‘differentiate’ Lady Macbeth, never lost its hostile tone towards her.²⁷⁶ Similarly, the *County Gentleman* objected that Campbell remained ‘an end-of-the-century product’.²⁷⁷ However, *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*’s long runs and revivals indicate that audiences wanted to see Shakespeare done in an ‘end-of-the-century’ way. Critical responses to this depended on attitudes to the way that century was ending. In turn, these attitudes were projected onto Campbell as the *fin-de-siècle*’s emaciated, seductive, even vampiric signifier. Thus, Scott positioned Campbell as a disaster, Shaw as a beacon of progress, and Walkley as the embodiment of all that he found most fascinatingly seductive in *fin-de-siècle* culture. If Terry was the Painter’s Actress, Campbell was the Critic’s Actress – whether or not the critic was a fan. To those critics who found them most disturbing, Campbell’s Herodias-like Juliet, realistic Ophelia

²⁷⁴ George Taylor, *Players and performances* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1993), 21.

²⁷⁵ Beerbohm, ‘“Macbeth” and Mrs. Kendal’, 435.

²⁷⁶ ‘Dramatic Notes’, *Country Life* (3 September 1898), 285.

²⁷⁷ ‘The Man About Town’, *County Gentleman* (24 September 1898), 1238.

and ‘*femme serpent*’ Lady Macbeth, whose ‘uncontrollable ambition’ seduces her husband, were a trio of potentially disruptive *fin-de-siècle* women: the virgin whore, the madwoman, and the uncontrollable wife. However, Campbell’s triumvirate of Lyceum heroines was also read as successes and disappointments, as radical innovations and conventional realisations. This multiplicity and fragmentation characterises Shakespearean reception in the 1890s, especially of the kinds of Shakespeare Campbell performed, which expose the contested values and high cultural stakes within the Shakespearean marketplace.

Campbell is not the only actress who can be usefully seen as ‘an end-of-the-century product’. Comparing her understudied early career in *As You Like It* with those of Lillie Langtry and Eleanor Calhoun reveals a group of actresses whose *fin-de-siècle* careers wouldn’t have been possible before. Although Marshall identifies the ‘new breed’ of 1890s Shakespearean actresses as predominantly radical, leading radical performers like Achurch and Robins were relatively unsuccessful in classical roles.²⁷⁸ Those whose new Shakespearean profiles persisted beyond 1900, like Langtry, Calhoun and Campbell, were aligned with Victorian society, rather than being oppositional figures. These polymorphous *fin-de-siècle* performers used Rosalind to inscribe their legitimacy in new kinds of theatrical spaces, and before coterie audiences who could replace the supportive theatrical family that nurtured actresses in the stock system. These performers’ experiences broaden our understanding of *As You Like It*’s performance history, demonstrating how Rosalind’s historical association with establishing female legitimacy persisted even through the fragmentary *fin de siècle*. Campbell’s importance to this nexus of Shakespearean activity

²⁷⁸ *Shakespeare and Victorian Women*, 177. For the importance of Victorian training within the Shakespearean mainstream to actresses’ Edwardian success, see Chapter Five, 343.

indicates the need to pay attention to previously understudied pathways to performance in *fin-de-siècle* mainstream, used by multiple actresses within a short space of time.

Legacy

Although Campbell did not match Terry's theatrical innovation and influence, her Shakespearean roles are resonant for twentieth-century stagings and studies of Shakespeare. Open-air would become increasingly popular in the twentieth century, and persists in the work of companies including Regent's Park Open-Air Theatre, Grassroots Shakespeare Company, Oddsocks, Oxford Creation Theatre, Stafford Festival Shakespeare and Stamford Shakespeare, in Britain alone. The simultaneous sexuality and extreme juvenility of Campbell's Juliet can be seen as the start of a twentieth-century way trend in staging Juliet, exemplified by Zeffirelli's 1968 film, in which fifteen-year-old Olivia Hussey played Juliet. Regardless of Campbell's actual intentions in depicting Ophelia's madness, elements of her reception focused attention on the theme of Ophelia's madness in a way that was unusual within contemporary discourse, but which would increasingly define twentieth-century approaches to the role, both theatrical and academic. Harriet Walter assimilated R.D. Laing's case studies into her own interpretative process, in order to use 'real' mental illness and avoid the 'tradition' of 'mad acting'.²⁷⁹ Elaine Showalter's essay on Ophelia positions Ophelia as both a barometer of societal attitudes to female mental health and sexuality, and as a catalyst for feminist scholarship, wherein academics seek to 'become [Ophelia's] Horatio, in this harsh world reporting her and her cause aright to the unsatisfied'.²⁸⁰ Campbell's Lady Macbeth is paradigmatic among *fin-de-siècle* English Shakespearean tragic

²⁷⁹ Harriet Walter, *Other People's Shoes* (London: Nick Hern Books, 2003), 146–147.

²⁸⁰ Elaine Showalter, 'Representing Ophelia: women, madness, and the responsibilities of feminist criticism', Patricia Parker (ed.), *Shakespeare and the Question of Theory* (Oxford: Routledge, 1985) 77–94, 78.

heroines. Her interpretative associations with exoticism, the unhealthy, and death were closer to Bernhardt's than Terry's had been. Campbell, like Langtry, broadens and disrupts our understanding of what a Shakespearean actress could be and mean at the *fin de siècle*, through her association with a *fin-de-siècle* aesthetic that destabilised Shakespearean performance's 'semiological clarity'.²⁸¹

Despite conservative opposition (which waned after Scott's interview 'Does The Theatre Make For Good?' alienated actors and diminished his influence) Campbell continued to move between Shakespeare and the New Drama, leading to Walkley's evocation of Paula Tanqueray in Juliet, Heinemann's advertising space in the Lyceum programme, and the satirical press's stress on Campbell's mingled Shakespearean and 'Pinerotic' experience.²⁸² She also took her Shakespearean experience into the new medium of film. James Whale's *One More River* (1934) was based on John Galsworthy's novel *Over The River* (1933), part of the Forsyte Saga and dealing with a woman's escape from an abusive marriage. In the film, Campbell plays the eccentric, mildly outrageous society wife Lady Mont. In one scene, ascending the staircase at bedtime, she breaks off a conversation about ill-health to call a small dog up the stairs, and then begins quoting Lady Macbeth as she disappears with her candle.²⁸³ As ever, Campbell mingled her artistic identities: the sickly society woman; the feminine and 'natural' dog-lover; and the tragedienne.

²⁸¹ Taylor, *Players and performances*, 121.

²⁸² Raymond Blathwayt, 'Does the Theatre Make For Good?' *Great Thoughts* 1.249 (1898), 228–231.

²⁸³ James Whale, *One More River* (1934), [<http://youtu.be/DwqjiaxEjGE>], accessed 17 February 2013.]

The scholarly obscurity of Campbell's Shakespearean roles indicates the problems of a theatrical historiography that fails to accommodate women who complicate its predominant historical narratives. Campbell's performances reveal how, far from being antithetical traditions, *fin-de-siècle* New and Shakespearean drama had overlapping performers, audiences and concerns. Reconsidering Campbell's Shakespeare performance exposes *fin-de-siècle* Shakespeare's connections between actor, audience, critic and repertory at their most complex. Ultimately, Campbell's activities demonstrate *fin-de-siècle* Shakespeare's potential to both stretch and test our historiographical models for codifying the theatrical event.

Chapter Four:

A British princess: Ellen Terry as Imogen

***Cymbeline*: a success story**

Henry Irving's *Cymbeline* opened at the Lyceum on 22 September 1896, with Ellen Terry as the British princess Imogen, and Irving as the treacherous Italian, Iachimo. On the first night, Terry received the audience's 'first tumultuous welcome'; later, they greeted Irving with a 'great shout'.¹ Irving's 'managerial speech' had to wait until midnight, followed by 'calls, again and again repeated'.² The 1890s were otherwise 'costly and at times even disastrous' for the Lyceum; *Cymbeline*, however, ran for seventy-two performances.³

Crucially, the *Cymbeline* revival absolutely fulfilled audience preconceptions about the play. L.M. Griffith's 1889 handbook for Shakespeare societies, *Evenings with Shakespeare*, made three key statements about the play, which contemporary thought in 1896 still upheld. Griffiths argued that Shakespeare wrote *Cymbeline* 'having passed through his life-gloom into a time of serenity and repose' and 'returned to Stratford'.⁴ Secondly, that *Cymbeline*'s 'non-essential parts' showed 'great carelessness in their treatment', and thirdly, that the 'all-pervading idea of *Cymbeline*' was 'the moral beauty of womanhood'.⁵ Irving's theatrical choices upheld all these ideas. The production's highly pictorial aesthetic included expensively-painted pastoral scenery connoting the necessary 'serenity or repose' – or, as Shaw scathingly claimed, 'a nice Bank-Holiday

¹ "'Cymbeline' at the Lyceum', *Daily News* (23 September 1896), 8.

² Ibid.

³ Roger Manvell, *Ellen Terry* (London: Heinemann, 1967), 207; 213.

⁴ L.M. Griffiths, *Evenings with Shakespeare* (Bristol: J.W. Arrowsmith, 1889), 173.

⁵ Ibid.

afternoon in a charming spot near [...] the river Wye'.⁶ The Lyceum also dealt with Shakespeare's 'carelessness': the 'Henry Irving Shakespeare' text of *Cymbeline* (which included editing by Ellen Terry, perhaps among others) rearranged and heavily cut scenes, omitting sequences including Posthumus's vision of Jupiter.⁷ Of the principal characters, Cloten, Posthumus and the Queen lost most lines. *Cymbeline*'s most explicit sexual imagery – including Cloten's plan to rape Imogen, and Iachimo's satisfaction at convincing Posthumus he'd 'pick'd the lock, and ta'en/The treasure of [Imogen's] honour' – was omitted or euphemised.⁸ Similarly, Irving's Iachimo confined himself to a promise to 'continue fast' to Imogen's 'affection' rather than dedicating himself to Imogen's 'sweet pleasure' and warming her 'cold sheets'.⁹ The production's greatest success was Ellen Terry's Imogen, ideal Victorian heroine, and the epitome of the 'moral beauty of womanhood'.¹⁰

Terry's performance was defined by its popularity and its multiple resonances. Simultaneously idyllically sweet and sexually alluring, Terry's embodiment of a reassuringly loyal and loving wife perfectly fitted a historical tradition of Romantic and Victorian Imogens. While Terry's Lady Macbeth, and Mrs Patrick Campbell's more recent Juliet had defied audience expectation and provoked cultural anxiety with the actresses' casting against type, Terry's 'personal possibilities' made her readily acceptable as Imogen. In addition to benefitting from the popularity of an antecedent ideal, Terry's Imogen was also of the *fin-de-siècle* moment. Her incarnation of the perfect Briton princess resonated with a Victorian audience reappraising ideas

⁶ Ibid.; George Bernard Shaw, 'Cymbeline', *Saturday Review* (26 September 1896), 339–341.

⁷ *Evenings with Shakespeare*, 173; Henry Irving (ed.), *Cymbeline, a comedy as arranged for the stage by Henry Irving* (London: Chiswick Press, 1896). Hereafter *Lyceum Cymbeline*.

⁸ Ibid., 20.

⁹ Ibid., 16.

¹⁰ *Evenings*, 173.

of queenship and succession as Queen Victoria became Britain's longest-reigning monarch, and approached the Diamond Jubilee that seemed to represent her reign's culmination. Even more immediately, Terry's performance – particularly its darker, sexual aspects – influenced disparate *fin-de-siècle* texts, produced in the immediate aftermath of *Cymbeline*, in different ways. Above all, Terry's reception in the role reveals the multiplicity of her performance's significance, and the ability of her multiple audiences to see what they wanted to see in her Imogen, according to the cultural desires they brought with them to the Lyceum. Ellen Terry became everyone's ideal – even when those ideals were divergent or diametrically opposed.

The last 'young' Shakespearean heroine Terry assimilated into her repertoire, Imogen is the British princess who defies her eponymous father (F.H. Macklin at the Lyceum) by marrying the commoner Posthumus (Frank Cooper), instead of her stepbrother Cloten (Norman Forbes). Whether 'careless' or not, *Cymbeline*'s plot is one of Shakespeare's most complex and fantastical. Exiled to Rome, Posthumus wagers on Imogen's chastity and (via a variation on the bed-trick) is duped into believing she has slept with Iachimo (Irving). Posthumus's servant Pisano (Frank Tyars) is dispatched to kill Imogen, but advises her to cross-dress and flee. In the Welsh forests, Imogen is befriended by Belarius (Frederic Robinson) and his 'sons' (Ben Webster and Edward Gordon Craig), in fact Imogen's royal brothers, abducted in infancy. After Guiderius (Webster) kills Cloten and 'Fidele' apparently dies – in fact, Imogen has been temporarily sedated by a poison from her evil stepmother (Geneviève Ward) – the two bodies are laid out together. Waking beside a headless corpse, Imogen mistakes it for Posthumus; the Roman Caius Lucius discovers her weeping over the body. All the major characters are involved in a final battle between the Romans and King Cymbeline, who has failed to pay tribute to the

Emperor. The play ends in revelation and reconciliation, and with the British royal succession secured in the persons of the princes.

Many sources survive for Terry's preparation and performance. Her rehearsal and the early part of *Cymbeline*'s run are particularly well-documented, not only in two promptbooks, but through her correspondence with Shaw: 1896 was the zenith of their love affair by letters. First-night reviews were typically extensive; unusually both the *Morning Post* and *National Observer* also revisited the production in early October, re-reviewing 'Cymbeline Revisited' and 'Cymbeline Again'.¹¹ In stark contrast to Campbell's wildly disparate receptions at the Lyceum from 1895–8, approbation for Terry's 1896 performance was remarkably homogeneous. As this 'most womanly of Shakespeare's heroines', Terry was 'captivating [...] charming' and – a word used by five critics across regional and national publications – 'perfect'.¹²

Terry discussed Imogen in her autobiography, and revisited the role in her lectures. The latter survive in three variant forms: drafts, performance texts, and as edited for publication by Christopher St John. Terry's contemporaries, including Bram Stoker and Graham Robertson, wrote about her performance, using Imogen as an index to memorialising Terry's wider career. Similarly, Imogen survives, with Ophelia, as the only Terry performances on which Mrs Patrick

¹¹ 'Cymbeline Revisited', *MP* (7 October 1896), 2; W.H.P., 'Cymbeline Again', *National Observer* (10 October 1896), 615.

¹² Anonymous, undated *Times* review, quoted Walter Calvert, *Souvenir of Miss Ellen Terry* (London: Henry J. Drane, 1897), 42; W.H.P., 'Cymbeline at the Lyceum', *National Observer* (26 September 1896), 559; 'From Our London Correspondent', *Leeds Mercury* (23 September 1896), 6; W.H.P., op. cit.; 'Lyceum Theatre', *MP* (23 September 1896), 5; 'London Letter', *Yorkshire Herald* (24 September 1896), 4; 'Facts and Faces', *Penny Illustrated* (26 September 1896), 195; W.H.P., 'Cymbeline Again', 615.

Campbell made direct comment.¹³ Finally, there are twentieth-century scholarly retrospectives and reconstructions.

The collaborative Lyceum: the problem of Shaw

Previous chapters have suggested Shaw's problematic status as a theatre historian, particularly as the self-appointed speaker of truth to Lyceum power. As well as hating the aesthetic of 'this silly old *Cymbeline*', Shaw saw Imogen as the nadir of Terry's apparent cultural imprisonment at the Lyceum.¹⁴ Although he agreed with other critics that Terry 'play[ed] with infinite charm and appeal', Shaw used the *Saturday Review* to situate Terry as equally the victim of an 'odious Mrs. Grundyish Imogen' and an 'impossible' Lyceum stage-management guilty of 'gross and palpable oversight'.¹⁵ The correspondence makes his objections even more explicit. For Shaw in 1896, Irving was 'the ogre who has carried [Terry] off to his cave'; by 1899, the Lyceum was 'the ogre's den into which [Terry's] talent' had been 'thrown and eaten'.¹⁶ Auerbach echoes this view of Terry as an actress overwhelmingly sacrificed to Irving's wishes. In Auerbach's feminist retrospect, Irving stages *Cymbeline* out of inadequate 'compunction' for his shoddy treatment of Terry.¹⁷ The role is only significant as 'some atonement for Rosalind', the 'restless ghost' whose absence from Terry's Shakespearean canon signals the absence of Terry's 'suppressed boy-self' from a narrative of relentless professional oppression.¹⁸ Auerbach too readily accepts Shaw's self-positioning as the liberating alternative to the 'hideous affront' of Irving's treatment of

¹³ *Some Letters*, 436.

¹⁴ Letter from Shaw to Terry (6 September 1896), *Correspondence*, 46–52.

¹⁵ Shaw, 'Blaming The Bard', *Saturday Review* (26 September 1896), 339–341.

¹⁶ Letter from Shaw to Terry (8 September 1896), *Correspondence*, 53–57, 57; Letter from Shaw to Terry (6 August 1899), *Correspondence*, 338.

¹⁷ Auerbach, *Ellen Terry* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1987), 213.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 214; 231.

Terry.¹⁹ Similarly, Katherine E. Kelly's otherwise excellent account of Terry's lectures ascribes technical and artistic agency to Terry *only* in this aspect of her career, arguing that Terry became 'a kind of actor-manager, selecting, collaborating and approving of the entire production' as a lecturer, in a way she never had as the Lyceum's leading lady.²⁰

Despite these affirmations of the Lyceum as 'ogre's cave', Terry enjoyed technical and creative scope throughout *Cymbeline*'s production process.²¹ She spent 'all the morning' in 'the scene-painting up-aloft at the Lyceum' as early as 6 July.²² She also stressed her involvement in preparing the script, responding to Shaw's criticism of a particular speech with the assertion '*I* did it, not H.I.'. ²³ The 1893 *Idler* feature on 'The Lyceum Rehearsals' displays Terry in symbiotic directorial relation to Irving. Terry is depicted 'conferring' with Irving about scenery, 'consulted' by him about a stunt, directing a stage 'effect', and demonstrating 'the right emphasis, action and intonation' to a younger actor.²⁴ Terry told Shaw that, rather than victimising her in rehearsals, 'Henry' never 'found fault' with or 'blackguarded' her, even when she would have appreciated criticism.²⁵ Bram Stoker described Irving as a generous, even besotted colleague, prone to 'descant on [Terry's] power' and 'most particular with regard to her having exactly what she wanted'.²⁶ Aside from a single disagreement over a 'hated gag' in the 1882 *Much Ado About Nothing*, Stoker claimed that Terry 'in the studying of her own parts and

¹⁹ Auerbach, *Ellen Terry*, 16.

²⁰ Katherine E. Kelly, 'The After Voice of Ellen Terry', Cockin (ed.), *Ellen Terry, Spheres of Influence* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2011), 65–76, 68.

²¹ Shaw to Terry, (8 September 1896) *Correspondence*, 57.

²² Terry to Shaw (7 July 1896), *Correspondence*, 33–34, 33.

²³ Terry to Shaw (9 September 1896), *Correspondence*, 57–58, 58.

²⁴ G.B. Burgin. 'The Lyceum Rehearsals', *Idler* (July 1893), 122–141, 132–3.

²⁵ Terry to Shaw (24 September 1896) *Correspondence*, 79–81, 80.

²⁶ Bram Stoker, *Personal Reminiscences of Henry Irving* (London: William Heinemann, 1906), II.291; II.295.

the arranging of her own business' had 'a free hand with Irving'.²⁷ Rather than *Cymbeline* being Irving's sole act of 'compunction', Stoker also identifies *Romeo and Juliet*, *Much Ado*, *Twelfth Night*, *The Cup* and *The Belle's Stratagem* as plays 'put on for her'.²⁸ Stoker's hagiography of Irving is not entirely reliable, notably asserting that Irving and Terry's 'affection' remained 'fraternal'.²⁹ However, even given Stoker's account, the evidence of Terry's promptbooks is astonishing: both her *Cymbeline* texts were intensely collaborative documents, freely passed between Irving and Terry (and, perhaps, Tyars and Craig). As well as negotiations with Irving and directorial notes-to-self, Terry wrote direct instructions to other members of the company.

Throughout both promptbooks, Terry gives Irving detailed advice on his performance. In Iachimo's greatest scene (Imogen's bedchamber, II.2), in addition to brief notes on timing, she instructs him (in unusually large, clear writing, suggesting she knew it would be read) to 'Try + remove something from a sleeping person + you'll find yr heart-beating + hear the noise' and 'you'll feel faint + have to sit down'; this would be, Terry asserted, 'good business'.³⁰ Terry also gives notes on the rest of the play, in relation to her own performance, noting that Cloten's scene with the two Lords (II.3) must be taken 'Not too quick' in order to facilitate her quick-change: 'I have to tear into my night gown ='.³¹ It is sometimes unclear whether the promptbooks' directorial wishes – including 'Make Mrs. Tyars [as Helen] come down soft footed' and 'as Iachimo is so slow, Posthumus must be contrasting – get on – get on –' were meant to be imparted by Irving or Terry.³² However, performers are sometimes directly addressed; Frank

²⁷ Terry, *The Story of My Life*, 91; Stoker, *Personal Reminiscences*, II.297.

²⁸ Auerbach, *Ellen Terry*, 213; *Personal Reminiscences*, II.192.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, II.298.

³⁰ MS annotations by Terry, to *Cymbeline* 1, 17r and *Cymbeline* 2, 22.

³¹ MS annotation by Terry to *Cymbeline* 1, 19r.

³² MS annotation by Terry to *Cymbeline* 2, 22; *Cymbeline* 1, 10r.

Tyars is told ‘Please don’t move’ and ‘Don’t cry’, while Craig is told ‘Do wake up Ted’.³³

Moreover, Terry explicitly uses one promptbook to schedule rehearsals that she, it seems, will direct. Arviragus, Guiderius and Belarius’s discovery of the ‘dead’ Fidele is inadequate: ‘You must time this scene better = Come up into the Saloon tomorrow at 10.30 + lets go at it –’.³⁴

Crucially, the *Cymbeline* promptbooks confirm both Terry’s importance to the editing of *Cymbeline*, and the intensely collaborative nature of the process. Both promptbooks contain pages in which lines are reinstated in both Irving and Terry’s hands; a restored speech and dialogue by Caius Lucius is begun by Irving and continued by Terry.³⁵ On another page, Irving and Terry use the same pen.³⁶ Although Terry’s promptbooks reveal others’ influence on her own preparation – she quotes Swinburne and transcribes multiple contributions from Bram Stoker, including “‘Imogen impulsive’ – B.S.’ – the overwhelming impression is of Terry’s centrality and autonomy throughout the production and design process.³⁷ Nor was this necessarily either a rare or new phenomenon. Terry similarly annotated a copy of Irving’s 1883 *Much Ado* text. A lack of notes on Beatrice suggests this was not her personal promptbook. However, cuts to all characters, sound cues, instructive marks regarding Don Pedro and Hero’s verse-speaking, and a query as to whether a Balthazar ‘on tour’ would speak well suggest Terry was correcting Irving’s text for viewing by others.³⁸

Despite Shaw’s best efforts to create or imagine a conflict, Terry’s major anxieties were not about Irving, but her *continual* worries about ‘the words!’, her health and her appearance (‘fat

³³ MS annotations by Terry to *Cymbeline* 1, 37r; 36v; *Cymbeline* 2, 38.

³⁴ MS annotations by Terry to *Cymbeline* 1, 51v.

³⁵ See *Cymbeline* 1 48v; *Cymbeline* 2, 19; 28; 39.

³⁶ MS annotations to *Cymbeline* 2, 19.

³⁷ MS annotations by Terry to back cover of *Cymbeline* 2; to *Cymbeline* 2, 19.

³⁸ Text for *Much Ado About Nothing* (1883), with MS. annotations by Ellen Terry, Bram Stoker Collection (RL2/3/6 1883), SCLA.

and nearly fifty', she feared she would 'look a sight').³⁹ Throughout the correspondence, Shaw constantly self-fashions as Terry's artistic liberator, urging her to reject 'Paragonese', to make extensive cuts, and to simply play 'a real woman'.⁴⁰ Although Terry agreed with Shaw's advice in negotiating various textual emendations, this was because his views coincided with hers: she had 'already cut out nearly everything you tell me'.⁴¹ She calmly deflated his passionate injunction regarding Posthumus's letter: 'oh, my GOD, dont read the letter. You *cant* read it: no woman could read it out to a servant. (oh what a DAMNED fool Shakespear was!)', replying that the letter was 'fine to act, by *not* acting it' and the difficulty 'got over rather well by appearing to read it to myself [...] This is better than your way [...] (pardon me, blessed man) because I can act better than Tyars (You know I can)'.⁴² Moreover, the promptbooks indicate that she and Irving, unknown to Shaw, were continually emending the text together. Terry also refused to trust Shaw with her full professional confidence on matters potentially damaging to the Lyceum: a major disruption to *Cymbeline*'s casting is unmentioned in her letters.

On 16 September, Terry discussed her fellow actors with Shaw, identifying Geneviève Ward as the Queen.⁴³ However, Helen Kinnaird had advertised herself as engaged for the role, in the *Era*, on 22 August.⁴⁴ Her advertisement was re-run a week later, on 29 August; on 30 and 31 August, features on the Lyceum production in *Lloyd's* and the *Glasgow Herald* both identified her as

³⁹ Terry to Shaw (c. August/early September), *Correspondence*, 98–99; Terry to Shaw (7 September 1896), *Correspondence*, 52–3, 53.

⁴⁰ Shaw to Terry (6 September 1896), *Correspondence*, 46–51.

⁴¹ Terry to Shaw (7 September 1896), *Correspondence*, 52–53, 52.

⁴² Shaw to Terry (6 September 1896), *Correspondence*, 44; Terry to Shaw (7 September 1896) *Correspondence*, 52.

⁴³ Terry to Shaw (16 September 1896), *Correspondence*, 28–29.

⁴⁴ 'Miss Helen Kinnaird', *Era* (22 August 1896), 1.

Irving's Queen.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, by Friday 4 September, the *Leeds Mercury* was congratulating Irving on having 'persuaded' Ward 'out of her partial retirement to play the Queen'.⁴⁶ Embarrassingly for Kinnaird, who must have paid for several weeks' coverage in advance (presumably believing herself secure in the role), her advertisement was republished in the *Era*'s Saturday 5 September edition, just as her having 'relinquished the part for some reason at present unknown' was reported by the regional *Dundee Courier* and *Worcester Journal*.⁴⁷ Tellingly, no London publication ever alluded to the casting change; nor is there any journalistic indication of Kinnaird's indisposition. The *Dundee* correspondent also abruptly changed tack, asserting ostentatiously on 10 September that he 'knew' the Queen would be 'safe at the hands' of the 'finished and statuesque' Ward.⁴⁸ The obsequious addition that Irving was 'of course' playing Iachimo strengthens the impression of silent editorial intervention: most critics were surprised by Irving acting 'contrary to the practice of leading actors' in choosing a role others usually 'shirked'; *Theatre* was awed by his 'self-denial'.⁴⁹ Whether Kinnaird had voluntarily 'relinquished' her role, been strenuously encouraged to do so, or simply been ousted following the recruitment of a more famous actress, it must have been an unedifying, alarming episode, only three weeks before *Cymbeline*'s opening. Although surely aware of the circumstances, Terry's correspondence refuses to trust Shaw with the details. Although Christopher St John would head Shaw's major letter of instruction to her 'The Intelligent Actress's Guide To Shakespeare', there's little evidence that Terry really allowed him to guide her. Shaw's later

⁴⁵ 'Miss Helen Kinnard', *Era* (29 August 1896), 1; 'Promenade Concerts at Queen's Hall', *Lloyd's* (30 August 1896), 11; 'Music and the Drama', *Glasgow Herald* (31 August 1896), 4.

⁴⁶ 'Musical and Dramatic Notes', *Leeds Mercury* (4 September 1896) 5.

⁴⁷ 'Miss Helen Kinnard', *Era* (5 September 1896), 1; 'London Letter', *Dundee Courier* (5 September 1896), 5.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ 'Our Watch Tower', *Theatre* (September 1896), 122–124, 122; untitled item, *SRI* (22 September 1896), 4.

comment that, as correspondents, they were ‘both comedians, each acting as an audience to each other’ acknowledges the performativity of Terry’s textual persona.⁵⁰

Imogen: Romantic and Victorian

Rather than realising a Shavian performance, it was Terry’s fidelity to theatrical tradition that made her Imogen ‘one of my best parts’, received with acclaim ‘exceeding all record’ and ‘wild enthusiasm’ on the first night.⁵¹ The critic Bonnie Lander describes Imogen as ‘the darling of the nineteenth-century stage’, the ‘perfect embodiment of Victorian and feminine traits’ and ‘the supreme product of her age [...] shaped exclusively for and by her culture’.⁵²

However, while the *Glasgow Herald* typified enthusiasm for Terry’s Imogen, calling her ‘the noblest woman [Shakespeare] ever drew’, Lander overlooks the strong Romantic inheritance shaping Imogen’s nineteenth-century popularity and influence.⁵³ Romantic celebrations of Imogen’s ‘peculiar excellence’, claiming that she displayed every ‘feature of female excellence’, eulogised her ‘chaste tenderness [...] boundless resignation, and her magnanimity towards her mistaken husband’.⁵⁴ For Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Imogen epitomised what was ‘holy’ in Shakespearean womanhood.⁵⁵ For Hartley Coleridge, Imogen’s fidelity typified Shakespeare’s presentation of heroines strong in ‘household affections’ and ‘perseverant love, unconquerable by peril, by neglect, by unkindness, by hopelessness’ – the ‘unalterable fidelity’ which Hazlitt saw as

⁵⁰ *Correspondence*, xv.

⁵¹ MS. typescript by Ellen Terry, entitled ‘Some Reflections on Shakespeare’s Heroines’, British Library Loan MS. A1,311, f.25; ‘The Lyceum First Night’, *Bristol Mercury* (23 September 1896), 6.

⁵² Bonnie Lander, ‘Interpreting the Person’, *Shakespeare Quarterly* 59:2 (2008), 156–184, 158.

⁵³ ‘Thursday’, *Glasgow Herald* (10 September 1896), 4.

⁵⁴ Hazlitt, *Characters of Shakespeare’s Plays*, quoted Jonathan Bate, *Romantics on Shakespeare*, 300; Schlegel, *Vorlesungen über dramatische Kunst und Literatur*, trans. John Black (1815), quoted Bate, *Romantics*, 297.

⁵⁵ Fragment of a lecture note for Coleridge’s 1812–3 lecture course entitled ‘Shakespeare’s Judgment equal to his Genius’, reprinted Bate, *Romantics*, 531.

Imogen's principal interest'.⁵⁶ Praise for Imogen contrasted sharply with general critical uncertainty regarding *Cymbeline*'s structural and generic slipperiness, described by Hazlitt as its 'straggling and casual links'.⁵⁷ Before the Romantics, Johnson had execrated the 'folly' and 'confusion of the names and manners of different times, and the impossibility of the events'; Schlegel alone deemed *Cymbeline* 'one harmonious whole'.⁵⁸ *Fin-de-siècle* views of *Cymbeline* still explicitly negotiated this Romantic, European inheritance. On the day Irving's *Cymbeline* opened, *PMG* emphasised the 'different views' of critics including Duport, Sainte-Beuve and Sarcey (who, like Johnson, 'despise[d] it') and Voltaire, Schlegel, and Gervinus (who enjoyed it).⁵⁹ Generically, the play was still hotly debated; the *Morning Post*, for example, ranged from viewing *Cymbeline* as 'melodrama' to a serious drama 'indiscriminately and excessively Bowdlerised'.⁶⁰ Other definitions included 'fantasy, a romance of fairyland', a 'fable', a 'comedy, as it has absurdly been called', and – by Irving – 'a romantic comedy [...] singularly modern'.⁶¹ This generic instability was countered by approbation for Imogen – a character, as *PMG* reflected, about whom there could be no 'differences'.⁶²

Fin-de-siècle perception of Imogen as a 'star part' also rested more on pre-Victorian than Victorian stagings. On the day of *Cymbeline*'s 1896 opening, *PMG* noted that 'Nearly every actress to whom the designation great may be applied has attempted the part of Imogen', and then

⁵⁶ Hartley Coleridge, 'Shakespeare a Tory, and a Gentleman' (1828), reprinted Bate, *Romantics*, 232–237, 232–235; William Hazlitt, 'Characters of Shakespeare's Plays', (1817), reprinted *Romantics*, 299–303, 302.

⁵⁷ Hazlitt, quoted Bate, *Romantics*, 299.

⁵⁸ Samuel Johnson (ed.), *Plays of William Shakespeare* (London: [s.n.] 1765) vii, 403; Schlegel, quoted Bate, *Romantics*, 297.

⁵⁹ 'In view of to-night', *PMG* (22 September 1896), 3.

⁶⁰ 'Cymbeline Revisited', *MP* (7 October 1896), 2.

⁶¹ W.H.P., 'Cymbeline at the Lyceum', 558; 'Lyceum Theatre', *PMG* (23 September 1896), 1; 'Music and the Drama', *Glasgow Herald* (28 September 1896), 4; 'Our London Letter', *Aberdeen Weekly* (21 September 1896), 6.

⁶² 'In view of to-night', 3.

listed seven successful exempla between 1746 and 1825, from Pritchard ‘the most conspicuous star in the Garrick galaxy’, via Jordan and Siddons, to Maria Foote.⁶³ Helen Faucit, who first played Imogen in 1837, was (according to *PMG*) ‘the only one meriting mention’ amongst ‘recent’ Imogens; i.e. in the last seventy-one years since 1825.⁶⁴ Despite Faucit’s success as an early- and mid-Victorian Imogen, it was Siddons whose legacy exerted pressure of ‘tradition’ on Terry, leaving her ‘frightened’ before *Cymbeline*’s opening.⁶⁵ Terry’s claim of receiving ‘swarms’ of letters about Siddons’s performance and the ‘right way’ to construct her own indicates popular cultural investment even in Imogen. However, journalistic discussions of Terry’s revival did not reflect particular pressure on Terry.⁶⁶ Only one newspaper, the *Glasgow Herald*, felt Terry might struggle to ‘rival Miss Faucit’s wonderful creation’.⁶⁷ Others, including *Theatre*, disparaged Siddons’s legacy, recalling (despite not having actually seen Siddons) an Imogen ‘ill at ease’ as Fidele, and lacking ‘tenderness’. Terry, meanwhile, was predicted to be ‘ideal’.⁶⁸

Relatively speaking, Imogen’s Romantic stage history created a far from overbearing precedent for Terry. Also, unlike *Macbeth*, performance precedent had established *Cymbeline* as an unusual play in which a woman was legitimately ‘unquestionably the central figure’. Aside from one anomalous comment that Viola Alleyn (an 1884-6 Imogen whom nobody mentioned in 1896) ‘changed the centre of the action’ in playing Imogen as *Cymbeline*’s protagonist, Hazlitt’s assertion that *Cymbeline*’s ‘ostensible hero’ Posthumus was actually secondary to the ‘greatest

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Terry to Shaw (15 September 1896), *Correspondence*, 59–60.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ ‘Thursday’, *Glasgow Herald*, 4.

⁶⁸ ‘Our Watch Tower’, *Theatre* (September 1896), 121–124.

charm [...] of Imogen' reflected Romantic and Victorian thought.⁶⁹ In 1896, Henry James noted that while 'the Kembles and the Keans and Macready used [...] to amuse themselves in their lighter moments' with Posthumus, he was 'scarcely [...] first-rate sport – there is even less to be done than with Iachimo'.⁷⁰ Popular enthusiasm for seeing Terry as Rosalind, and greater support for her Lady Macbeth's prominence in the 1895 revival, indicates willingness to see her in an unquestionably leading role. By 1896, Rosalind was 'more than half the battle' of *As You Like it*, and increasingly the preserve of 'star' actresses without a permanent or pre-eminent leading man, such as Langtry and Rehan.⁷¹ Increasingly, 'star' actresses were – as Terry was described by *Theatre* – 'a powerful and all-sufficient reason for the revival' of certain plays.⁷²

Crucial to Imogen's popular *fin-de-siècle* appeal was the reassuring picture of wifely loyalty and sexuality at a time when those concepts were increasingly problematic and unstable. Terry's promptbook notes emphasise Imogen's devotion, with Imogen speaking of Posthumus 'with love even of his worn out clothes', and furious that anyone 'dare [...] infer anything against my man'.⁷³ Thanks to the 'unwavering love' Terry would highlight in her lectures, Terry's Imogen 'wants only to get to' Posthumus, rather than desiring to clear her own name, 'for she loves him'.⁷⁴ However, this single-minded passion is framed by ideal ladylike behaviour, rather than uncontrollable emotion. Terry's promptbooks are full of injunctions to be 'polite', with Imogen remembering her 'manners' and never becoming more than 'wearied [...] not cross but irritated'

⁶⁹ Untitled review, *Stratford Herald* (1 May 1884); Hazlitt, quoted Bate, *Romantics*, 300.

⁷⁰ Quoted Rees, 'Posthumus in *Cymbeline*', 145.

⁷¹ 'Slashes and Puffs', *Fun* (18 February 1885), 66.

⁷² 'In London', *Theatre* (28 October 1896), 215.

⁷³ MS annotations to *Cymbeline* 1, 26r and 15r.

⁷⁴ Large-print edition of Terry's lecture, 'Some of Shakespeare's Heroines 2. The Pathetic Woman', 51r; MS annotation to *Cymbeline* 1, 18r.

by Cloten.⁷⁵ Crucially, the passionate Imogen also remained ‘impulsive + innocent’ rather than sexually knowing or strident, not even ‘wary’ of Iachimo, and a ‘Baby’ or ‘Lady Baby’ when missing her bracelet.⁷⁶ Imogen’s wifely fidelity and youthful innocence, enticing but reassuringly chaste, were key qualities for Terry’s reviewers, who echoed Romantic critics in praising Imogen’s ‘ravishingly sweet [...] slowness to think ill of Posthumus’ and ‘readiness to believe good of everybody’.⁷⁷

Terry and ‘wifeliness’

Previous chapters have discussed Victorian audiences’ need for ‘semiological clarity’ in identifying performers with their Shakespearean heroines.⁷⁸ Although Campbell’s Lyceum roles indicated that complex and apparently challenging combinations of artist and character could gain some acceptance, it initially seems problematic that Terry, who by 1896 had two failed marriages, two illegitimate children and who was or had been Irving’s mistress, should have been so readily accepted as the embodiment of Imogen’s ‘wifely loyalty and innocence’.⁷⁹ Lewis Carroll, who recommenced their friendship after Terry’s 1877 marriage to Charles Wardell, still refused to introduce friends’ daughters to Terry without telling ‘their mothers’ her ‘history’, and checking whether ‘she still wanted her daughter to be introduced’.⁸⁰ *PMG*’s ‘knowledge’ that Terry could explicitly and especially portray ‘wifely loyalty and innocence’ and Henry James’s praise for Terry’s ‘immense naturalness’ and ‘positive innocence’ as ‘the young wife youthfully in love with the absent husband’ co-existed – for these writers, and some audiences – with an

⁷⁵ MS annotations to *Cymbeline* 1, 18r; *Cymbeline* 2, 29.

⁷⁶ MS annotations to *Cymbeline* 1, 18r; MS annotations to III.1, at *Cymbeline* 1, 25r and *Cymbeline* 2, 27.

⁷⁷ ‘Lyceum Theatre’, *Times* (23 September 1896), 4.

⁷⁸ Taylor, *Players and Performances*, 122.

⁷⁹ ‘Lyceum Theatre’, *PMG* (23 September 1896), 1.

⁸⁰ Auerbach, *Ellen Terry*, 184; letter from Dodgson to Emily Baird (12 April 1894), M.N. Cohen (ed.) *The Letters of Lewis Carroll* (Oxford: 1979), II.1014–105.

awareness of Terry's real personal life.⁸¹ This disjunction seems particularly intriguing in an era that, as Voskuil argues, 'rewarded the performance of one's own personality more than the effective impersonation of character'.⁸²

Two factors are at work. First, it's necessary to unpick the kinds of knowledge about Terry's private life that different groups might have shared. Carroll's need to 'tell' the mothers of young women the 'circumstances' of Terry's life indicates that they were not previously known. Queen Victoria noted the presence of 'a son of [Terry's]' at a court performance without seeming unduly concerned about the absence of that son's father.⁸³ While the Lyceum and the theatrical milieu were doubtless aware of the children's parentage (Kendal wrote to Terry saying 'you have the world at your feet again', once she'd married Wardell), Terry could represent herself as 'Mrs Charles Kelly' as late as 1896 for her father's obituary, despite having separated from Wardell/Kelly before his 1885 death.⁸⁴ Interviews and reportage routinely elided Terry's children's ages and parentage. Notably, the 1902 biography *Ellen Terry and her sisters* claims Terry married Wardell during her 1868–1874 hiatus from the stage (it was in 1877), and describing Charles Kelly's 1885 death as 'leaving his widow with her two children', a statement which neither precludes nor asserts paternity.⁸⁵ Similarly, an 1891 article on the theatrical prospects of 'Miss Daisy Kendal' (the Kendals' eldest daughter, Margaret Grimston) and 'Miss Edie Wardell' (Edith Craig) refers to both daughters solely in terms of their mothers, as children of 'two such distinguished actresses'.⁸⁶ Both the legitimate Daisy and the illegitimate Edie are

⁸¹ Henry James, quoted Rees, 'Posthumus in *Cymbeline*', 145.

⁸² Voskuil, *Acting Naturally*, 185.

⁸³ George Rowell, *Queen Victoria goes to the Theatre* (London: P. Elek, 1978), 106.

⁸⁴ DMK, 27; 'Obituary', *Leeds Mercury* (30 May 1896) 5.

⁸⁵ Pemberton, *Ellen Terry and her sisters*, 137; 255.

⁸⁶ 'People, Places and Things', *Hearth and Home* (3 September 1891), 1–6, 6.

given their mothers' husbands' surnames, implying an equivalence which did not exist. This slight slipperiness was not unique to Terry: the young 'Charles Bancroft', who would marry 'Daisy', was Marie Wilton's son by an unknown father.⁸⁷ The fact that the 2012 discovery of Irving's letters to Terry offers our first conclusive primary evidence that the two were lovers also indicates the amount of secrecy it was possible to maintain, despite speculation.⁸⁸ Later still, a New Zealand report of Terry's 1907 marriage to James Carew noted that 'she has been previously married and Mr. Gordon Craig is one of several children of the marriage'.⁸⁹ Ambiguous reportage allowed variant readings of Terry's biographies for both conservative and progressive, innocent and knowing readers: a naïve reading which could delight in Terry's performances without worrying about Edie Wardell's parentage, and a more sophisticated one which, if able to discern the semantic subtext of Kelly 'leaving his widow with her two children', quite possibly experienced no discomfort.⁹⁰ Whether British or international, Terry's fans could see what they wanted to see.

Secondly, Terry's 'wifeliness' transcended legal structures. Although her complex relationship with Irving was, as discussed in Chapter Two, more nuanced and multifaceted than Marshall's description of her as a 'stage wife', Terry's correspondence stresses qualities that the Victorians would have recognised as 'wifely' virtues. Writing in January 1889, she stressed that she was primarily pleased at *Macbeth*'s commercial success for 'our dear Henry's sake for, "brave

⁸⁷ Charles Edward Wilton's birth (20 October 1863) at 51 Acacia Road, was registered on 30 November 1863, in Marylebone. His mother, Marie Effie Wilton, was the informant. His certificate leaves a blank space for the father's name and occupation.

⁸⁸ Transcripts of letters from Henry Irving to Ellen Terry (c. 21 June 1893 and 26 June 1893), made by Susannah Mayor, Smallhythe Place, Kent.

⁸⁹ 'Miss Ellen Terry', *Auckland Star* (7 May 1907), 5.

⁹⁰ *Ellen Terry and her sisters*, 255.

Macbeth's''', rather than her own.⁹¹ She was Irving's carer and helpmeet during illness, telling Queen Palmer in 1894, that 'poor old H.I.'s indisposition made her 'head nurse, & bottle-washer!!' as well as 'Boss of the Show' in his absence.⁹² Terry's letters to her children constantly urged hard work and self-denial. Moreover, her annotations to Irving's recently-discovered requests for forgiveness suggest she had to learn to tolerate emotional betrayal.⁹³ Oscar Wilde had figured Terry as a royal wife in 1882, as Charles I's devoted queen 'Henrietta Maria', a role in which Wilde deemed her 'made for' the 'love of Man'.⁹⁴ Shaw felt that Terry's 'wifeliness' transcended legal constraints and definitions of women. Not only did Terry 'walk through' prejudices and laws, for which she lacked the 'smallest respect', but she also didn't conform to the stereotype of the '*grande amoureuse*' with her 'infatuations and extravagances', 'menagerie' and 'other affectations and fictions'.⁹⁵

Tracy Davis interprets the lack of public censure for Terry's personal life differently. Davis claims that Terry was 'exempted' from the 'Madonna/whore dichotomy' (which Davis sees as encompassing and defining the status of public women) by virtue of her 'massive popularity', and that the mechanism of her 'exemption' was like those of 'Lillie Langtry, Marie Lloyd and Mrs. Patrick Campbell'.⁹⁶ All of these women lived and were constructed in radically different ways, and at least one – Langtry – achieved artistic 'popularity' partly because of her sexual fame, rather than in spite of it. The 'Madonna/whore dichotomy', while questionable and to some extent outdated, as a frame for understanding constructions of Victorian womanhood, is

⁹¹ Letter from Terry to 'Mrs. Hill' (January 1889), *Collected Letters* II.2–3, 3.

⁹² Letter from Terry to Queen Palmer (28 February 1894), *Collected Letters* III.11.

⁹³ Annotation by Ellen Terry to letter from Irving to Terry (21 June 1893).

⁹⁴ Oscar Wilde, 'Queen Henrietta Maria', *Complete Works of Oscar Wilde* (London: HarperCollins, 2003), 835.

⁹⁵ *Correspondence*, xiv; xvii.

⁹⁶ Tracy C. Davis, 'Actresses and Prostitutes in Victorian London', *TRI* (1983), 221–234, 222.

particularly inappropriate for understanding Terry.⁹⁷ The men in Terry's life attempted to create dichotomous identities for understanding and 'retelling' her in print. For Shaw, Terry was the 'sacrificed' victim vs. the woman of 'generosity' who 'walked through' laws.⁹⁸ Stoker experienced both the day-to-day businesslike Terry of the Lyceum and the 'dancing [...] embodied sunshine' who laughs through *Personal Reminiscences*.⁹⁹ Most strikingly, Craig's *Ellen Terry and her Secret Self* polarises Ellen Terry 'the adversary [...] that very famous person' and 'that little Nelly who was my mother', claiming 'I knew her heart better than anyone else'.¹⁰⁰ None of these models is satisfactory. Terry's letters regarding Lady Macbeth indicate that she regarded categories of 'good' and 'bad' women as inadequate to understanding lived female experience, while Shaw describes her as refusing to acknowledge societal constraints, sustained by the knowledge that 'she had never done anything wrong'.¹⁰¹

The binary is also unhelpful for looking at Terry alongside other women whose sexually liminal performances fascinated or outraged the Victorians. Madge Kendal's wedding-day Rosalind was so culturally provocative partly because it destabilised the binary between sexual innocence and knowledge, poised between ceremony and consummation, implying the performers' postponed desire. Equally erotic was the subsequent critical 'fantasy' of 'Miss Madge Robertson'; an unmarried theatrical innocent invested with the legitimate sexual knowledge of the married 'Mrs Kendal'.¹⁰² Meanwhile, in 1896, savage attacks on theatrical morality were increasingly unpopular as the Victorian era celebrated itself as one which had elevated 'public thought' to

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ *Correspondence*, xiv.

⁹⁹ Stoker, *Personal Reminiscences*, I.194–5; II.194.

¹⁰⁰ Craig, *Ellen Terry and her Secret Self*, vii; 15.

¹⁰¹ Letter from Terry to Clement Scott (31 December 1888), *Collected Letters* I.214–216; *Correspondence*, xiv.

¹⁰² See Chapter One, 55–56.

‘purer pleasures’, and a time in which actors’ respectability had increased.¹⁰³ When, in 1897, Scott attacked theatrical morality by arguing that it was ‘nearly impossible for a woman to remain pure who adopts the stage as a profession’, the furore permanently maimed his career.¹⁰⁴

Sexuality: the changing context

Attitudes to female sexuality were also beginning to change, as medical and popular opinion increasingly asserted a woman’s right to sexual pleasure. In 1886, a married woman sued Liverpool gynaecologist Francis Imlach for performing an ovariectomy with removal of the Fallopian tubes, partly on the grounds of her reported loss of libido. Imlach was only vindicated because expert witnesses failed to prove the link between ovariectomy or hysterectomy and lost sex drive: the plaintiff’s original complaint was not deemed innately unreasonable.¹⁰⁵ As Mason notes, the 1886 trial destabilises ‘modern clichés about the Victorian understanding of sexual function’, and illuminates Victorian understanding of sexual rights.¹⁰⁶ While clitoridectomies still occurred at the *fin de siècle*, medical opinion had been turning away from the procedure since the mid-1860s. The Obstetrical Society censured Isaac Brown for using clitoridectomy to thwart masturbation; Brown’s defence was that he wasn’t preventing all sexual desire, since the clitoris was not the sole site of female arousal.¹⁰⁷ After the Imlach trial, clitoridectomy was debated again. Lawson Tait presented a British Gynaecological Society paper indicating anxieties over clitoridectomy’s potential to impair female sexual response. Although one Society member (Heywood Smith) advocated clitoridectomy as the ‘best [...] remedy’ for women whose ‘lives

¹⁰³ ‘The Queen’s Reign’, *SRI* (23 September 1896), 4.

¹⁰⁴ Raymond Blathwayt, ‘Does the Theatre Make For Good?’ *Great Thoughts* (January 1898), 228–231, 228.

¹⁰⁵ Michael Mason, *The Making of Victorian Sexuality* (Oxford: 1995), 176.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 221.

[...] were a misery to them on account of excessive sexual desire', he notably did so because their lives were a 'misery' to the women themselves, rather than their families or husbands.¹⁰⁸ In fact, metropolitan gynaecologists had economic incentives to prioritise patients' wishes; as Mason demonstrates, middle-class, urban women's tendency to 'compare and change doctors' was shifting the patient-practitioner power balance towards the patient.¹⁰⁹ Equally, London doctor Fancourt Barnes was concerned that women, post-ovariotomy, might feel forced to 'simulate orgasm' out of the 'natural desire to retain the affections of their husbands', presenting female anorgasmia as a reason not to practice ovariotomy, and wives' orgasms as a major concern of husbands.¹¹⁰ Tait defended ovariotomy on the grounds that ovaries 'have as little to do with [women's] sexual appetites as their front teeth'.¹¹¹ Concern over retaining sexual feeling after ovariotomy particularly indicates the growing acceptance of women's right to sexual pleasure: since ovariotomy (unlike clitoridectomy) leaves women infertile, subsequent sexual encounters would be for pleasure, not procreation. As Mason notes, separating 'a woman's sexuality from her reproductive capacities [...] grant[s] her the right to sexual pleasure for its own sake'.¹¹²

The exempla surrounding Tait's paper and the Imlach trial concern married women's sexuality. Some elements of Victorian society saw Terry as Charles Kelly's widow; since it was commonly believed that marriage irreversibly developed sexual appetite, women who had been married were considered inevitably sexual beings.¹¹³ Some scientists were also advocating pre-marital sexual contact as medically beneficial. As early as 1853, Thomas John Graham argued that 'hysteria, in

¹⁰⁸ Lawson Tait, 'Note on the influence of the removal of the uterus', (13 June 1888) *British Gynecological Journal* (London: John Bale & Sons, November 1888), 310–317, 315.

¹⁰⁹ *Making of Victorian Sexuality*, 181.

¹¹⁰ Lawson Tait, 315.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 312.

¹¹² *Making of Victorian Sexuality*, 178.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 221.

nine cases out of ten, arises from continence'.¹¹⁴ George Drysdale's *Natural, Sexual and Physical Religion* (1855) advocated 'regular use of the sexual organs, from puberty onwards, by both sexes in free non-marital unions'.¹¹⁵ Progressive *fin-de-siècle* psychology also attributed female hysteria and depression to the sexual and emotional restraint demanding that "'Thou shalt not" meets a girl at every turn'.¹¹⁶ As a Shakespearean heroine for the *fin de siècle*, Imogen refuses to obey the 'Thou shalt not' in asserting her right to romantic choice and sexual pleasure with Posthumus, within marriage.

Nothing in Terry's public profile made her an unsuitable choice for Imogen. Imogen's sexual fidelity was appropriate to Terry, who seems always to have been monogamous with her current partner. By 1896, Terry had been exceptionally professionally faithful to Irving for two decades, despite 'disastrous' recent setbacks.¹¹⁷ Imogen is a king's daughter deliberately subordinate to her commoner partner: Terry remained professionally subordinate to Irving despite her theatrical antecedents. Moreover, contemporary reminiscences of Terry, and her correspondence, evince the warmth, popularity and generosity that her professional skill enabled her to project as Imogen. Shaw, at least, read Terry's sexual liberality on a continuum with her other self-giving qualities. Those 'in the know' at the *fin de siècle* recognised and willingly prioritised Terry's talent over the conservative considerations which might be expected to dominate Victorian attitudes: a radical (albeit sometimes tacit) rejection of legal marriage as the exclusive framework for women to display uxorial qualities. Terry's Imogen was effusive, but appropriately

¹¹⁴ T.J. Graham, *On The Management and Disorders of Infancy and Childhood* (London: Simpkin, Marshall & Co., 1853), 40–41, quoted *Embodied Selves*, 187–188, 188.

¹¹⁵ Quoted *Making of Victorian Sexuality*, 183.

¹¹⁶ Horatio Bryan Donkin, 'Hysteria', *Dictionary of Psychological Medicine* (1892), quoted Jenny Bourne Taylor and Sally Shuttleworth (eds), *Embodied Selves* (Oxford: 1998), 196–8, 197.

¹¹⁷ Roger Manvell, *Ellen Terry*, 207.

channelled; although a ‘willful madcap and a romp’ according to Scott, she was equally that most unthreatening and vulnerable of animals, the ‘young fawn’.¹¹⁸ Crucially, Terry’s Imogen remained ‘pre-eminently loveable and worthy’ of being loved, the safe recipient of both a husband and a nation’s affections.¹¹⁹ Charles Hiatt, meanwhile, strongly implied that the years Terry spent living with her lover, Godwin, and their children, improved her as an actress. After ‘circumstances took Miss Terry from the stage’, she returned ‘with ripened powers’; Hiatt asserts that ‘the interval can scarcely have been misspent’.¹²⁰

Terry and feminism: a complicated relationship

Shakespeare’s Imogen certainly has rebellious elements. Having defied her father and stepmother through her marriage, she flees, cross-dresses (despite finding it ‘tedious’), and adapts herself firstly to life with Belarius, Guiderius and Arviragus, and then to service with a Roman general.¹²¹ However, Penny Farfan’s inclusion of Terry’s Imogen under the heading of ‘Feminist Shakespeare’ needs unpicking.¹²² In her lectures, Terry’s emphasis on Imogen’s ‘good sense’ as ‘a credit both to royalty and to Britain’ and as ‘the English character at its very best’ reflects *fin-de-siècle* suffragist arguments about the benefits of including women in public life.¹²³ However, in the context of the 1890s, Farfan’s claim that Terry could ‘be imagined as *absolutely* supporting the New Woman cause’ (italics mine) is debatable.¹²⁴ Terry’s impatience with sexual orthodoxies, support for women’s professional activity and collaborative work at the Lyceum are

¹¹⁸ Quoted Sprague, 61–62.

¹¹⁹ ‘The London Theatres’, *Era* (26 September 1896), 10.

¹²⁰ Charles Hiatt, *Ellen Terry: an appreciation*, 83.

¹²¹ *Cymbeline*, III.6.1.

¹²² Penny Farfan, *Women, Modernism and Performance* (Cambridge: 2004), 34.

¹²³ Ellen Terry, performance typescript version of a lecture entitled ‘Some of Shakespeare’s Heroines, 2. The Pathetic Woman’, Ellen Terry Archive SC 10–H2; British Library Loan MS. 125/45, 51.

¹²⁴ Farfan, *Women, Modernism and Performance*, 158.

all contiguous with a ‘New Woman’ perspective. However, to Shaw, Terry argued against staging ‘New Woman’ plays at the Lyceum and deemed Ibsen’s heroines (the most *avant-garde* theatrical manifestation of New ideas) ‘silly ladies’, drawn reductively on ‘straight lines’.¹²⁵ A letter from Terry to Boo (Elizabeth Rumball), probably written around 1906, indicates Terry’s antagonism regarding Edith’s activism: ‘Edy is just killing herself for those rotten Suffragettes – the Idiots’.¹²⁶ She also approvingly quoted (to Shaw) a friend who claimed that involvement with the Independent Theatre would make Edy ‘frowsy, trollopy and dirty’.¹²⁷ Later, Terry would perform at suffrage events including the Pageant of Great Women at the Albert Hall. However, as Chapter Five discusses, she was not consistent in her self-identification as a suffragist (or suffragette).¹²⁸

Terry’s Imogen only became part of an overarching feminist project within her lecture series. These public speech acts, as Kelly argues, ‘dignified women’s public speaking at the height of the suffrage campaign’ and ‘modelled women speaking on behalf of women’ to largely female, often politicised audiences (including, in 1912, the Leeds Society of Women’s Suffrage).¹²⁹ In the earliest handwritten draft of her ‘Shakespeare’s Heroines’ lecture, Terry rejects ‘the fragile domestic heroines of the thirties + forties’ in favour of ‘Shakspeare’s [sic] women’ who ‘certainly have more in common with our modern revolutionaries’.¹³⁰ Simultaneously, however, Terry identified ‘a touch of resignation’ in Imogen’s ‘courage’ and ‘unwavering love’ in ‘meeting a

¹²⁵ Charles Hiatt, *Ellen Terry* (London: G. Bell & Sons), 105.

¹²⁶ Letter from Terry to Elizabeth Rumball, (20 May [?1906]), British Library MS. Polling 1/5091.

¹²⁷ Quoted *Innocent Flowers*, 113.

¹²⁸ See Chapter Five, 322–323.

¹²⁹ Kelly, ‘The After Voice of Ellen Terry’, 65; 70.

¹³⁰ Ellen Terry, untitled MS lecture draft on Shakespeare’s heroines, British Library Loan MS. 125/31/1, f.3.

false accusation'.¹³¹ In her published lecture, 'The Letters in Shakespeare's Play', Terry emphasises Imogen's 'self-abnegation' in forgiving Posthumus's 'dirty trick', itself excused with the resigned comment that 'in all ages a man whose jealousy is roused is forgiven much'.¹³² While Terry's lectures were important to the suffrage movement, there is little evidence that her 1896 performance was particularly important to contemporary suffragists, in strong contrast with the later performances of activists such as Lillah McCarthy and Esmé Beringer at Harley Granville-Barker's Savoy theatre; nor would suffragist commentators on Shakespeare emphasise Imogen as a character.¹³³ Terry's 1896 reviewers saw her Imogen as 'the most womanly woman ever depicted by Shakespeare', 'the most womanly of Shakespeare's heroines', 'the most perfect of Shakespeare's women', and motivated by 'pure womanly feelings'.¹³⁴ 'Womanliness' and the figure of 'woman', rather than being 'ladylike' or a 'lady' were central to *fin-de-siècle* feminism, not least in its political and literary lexis. Debates centred on the 'New Woman' and 'the Woman Question' rather than 'New Ladies'; equally, suffragists pursued 'Votes for Women' in organisations of self-identified women, not ladies, including (from 1889) Women's Franchise League, (from 1898) the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, and the Women's Social and Political Union (formed from a 1903 NUWSS schism). As theatre became a suffragist campaigning tool, events including *A Pageant of Great Women* (1910) retained the term. 'Woman' was importantly free from the classist associations of 'lady'. However, while writers including Caird and Hamilton argued that restrictive education and social values prevented women's potential being fulfilled, the constant reiteration of 'women' in phrases from 'New

¹³¹ Large-print lecture text of 'Some of Shakespeare's Heroines 2. The Pathetic Woman', British Library Loan MS. 125/45, f.3; f.51.

¹³² Ellen Terry, *The Letters in Shakespeare's Plays*, 192; 188.

¹³³ For a fuller discussion of suffragist commentaries on Shakespeare, see Chapter Five.

¹³⁴ "'Cymbeline" at the Lyceum', *Freeman's* (23 September 1896), 5; "'Cymbeline" at the Lyceum', *Daily News* (23 September 1896), 8; 'Facts and Faces', *Penny Illustrated* (26 September 1896), 195; W.H.P., 'Cymbeline at the Lyceum', *National Observer* (26 September 1896), 559.

Women' to 'Wild Women' to 'Great Women' implies a pride and belief in 'woman' as inherently valuable and distinct from men.

Despite semantic overlap between descriptions of Terry's Imogen as 'the perfect type of womanhood' and the emphasis on 'womanliness' in suffragist discourse, it is hard to link Terry's Imogen more fully with the 'modern revolutionaries', given her perceived fidelity to the Romantic ideal of the character. Reviewers found this 'perfect type of womanhood' 'gentle, suffering' and 'sorrowing but ever loving' under the kinds of marital mistreatment which suffragists sought to end.¹³⁵ Her consistent acceptance of abuse was seen as not merely 'delicate and subtle' but also 'true' and easily 'paralleled amongst [critics'] own [female] friends and acquaintance'.¹³⁶ Terry's interpretation meant that 'the true meaning of the fable remain[ed] untouched', rather than seeming progressive.¹³⁷ Equally problematic for Farfan's analysis are the descriptions of Terry-Imogen's 'childish glee' and 'sweet, womanly weakness' evinced by 'little fidgety pats of the foot' and 'pretty shrinking from her own sword'.¹³⁸ The *Times*, *Belfast News-Letter* and *Theatre* reviews all reiterated Imogen's 'artlessness' as Shakespeare's 'most tender and artless' heroine, who displayed the 'artlessness and unostentatiousness' of her 'character [...] at every turn'.¹³⁹ Given Victorian society's privileging of feminine artlessness, this assertion is unsurprising but anti-textual.¹⁴⁰ Whether 'artfulness' connotes admirable intelligence and agency, or manipulative cunning and secrecy, in *Shakespeare's* *Cymbeline*, Imogen contrives a

¹³⁵ "'Cymbeline" at the Lyceum', *Daily News* (23 September 1896), 8; "'Cymbeline" at the Lyceum', *Freeman's* (23 September 1896), 5.

¹³⁶ *Daily News* (23 September 1896), 8; A.B. Walkley, 'The Drama', *Speaker* (26 September 1896), 327–329; *Evenings*, 39.

¹³⁷ W.H.P., 'Cymbeline at the Lyceum', 558.

¹³⁸ 'The London Theatres', *Era* (26 September 1896), 10; Walkley, 'The Drama', *Speaker*, 327–329.

¹³⁹ 'In London', *Theatre* (28 October 1896), 212; undated *Times* review, quoted *Souvenir*, 42; 'Our London Letter', *Belfast News-Letter* (8 September 1896), 5.

¹⁴⁰ Voskuil, *Acting Naturally*, 215.

secret marriage, outwits Cloten, adopts a false identity, and creates a plausible story for Caius Lucius even when heartbroken beside 'Posthumus's' corpse.

For the *Morning Post*, the only visibly proto-feminist element of the Lyceum *Cymbeline* was the play's editing, which seemed insufficiently sympathetic to the male characters. The Lyceum text apparently omitted Posthumus's 'devotion', Cymbeline's 'troubles' and everything indicating Cloten, despite 'rudeness and coarseness, to be a patriot and a prince'.¹⁴¹ Additionally (although unmentioned by the *Post*), the I.1 effusion regarding the 'most prais'd, most lov'd' Posthumus and his ancestry was heavily cut.¹⁴² Irving's *Cymbeline* cast were also resolutely of the 'old school'; Geneviève Ward had already retired, and Walter Lacy (Cornelius) was a resolutely traditionalist advisor to Irving, abetting him in his 1882 conflict with Terry over a *Much Ado* gag.¹⁴³

Imogen and Victoria

Ultimately, the Briton princess's greatest contemporary resonance was not with feminist struggle, but with the figure of the British queen, Victoria. 1896 was not the first time *Cymbeline* had resonated with the depiction of a contemporary queen. In 1820–1, George IV attempted to divorce Queen Caroline by Act of Parliament, citing her infidelity; this led to the queen's 'trial'. In autumn 1820, London audiences for *Cymbeline* wildly applauded lines defending Imogen's chastity, especially Philario's suggestion that 'Who knows if one of her women, being corrupted/Hath not stolen [Posthumus's bracelet] from her'; on 19 October, Iachimo's confession

¹⁴¹ "'Cymbeline' Revisited', *MP* (7 October 1896), 2.

¹⁴² *Lyceum Cymbeline*, 1–2, which cuts I.1.25–54.

¹⁴³ Ellen Terry, *Story of My Life*, 178.

of having ‘belied a lady/The princess of this country’ provoked ‘waving of hats and handkerchiefs’.¹⁴⁴ Thomas Denman, Lord Chief Justice, cited *Cymbeline* alongside *Othello* in Queen Caroline’s defence, noting that whenever ‘our great dramatic poet’ depicted ‘a man anxious to blacken the character of an innocent wife’, Shakespeare laid ‘his scene in Italy’: Caroline’s alleged lover was Bartolomeo Pergami, an Italian ex-soldier and courier.¹⁴⁵ Although perhaps unremembered by 1896, Caroline’s trial demonstrates *Cymbeline*’s potential to reflect contemporary royal issues.

In 1828, Hartley Coleridge’s analysis of Imogen positioned her as key to ‘Shakespeare’s Toryism’. In 1896, Terry’s Imogen again had symbolic political significance beyond contemporary debates over marital roles.¹⁴⁶ Christopher Ricks argues that Tennyson’s *The Princess* (1847) had resonated with contemporary depictions of the young Queen Victoria.¹⁴⁷ Ricks likens Victoria’s ‘kind of presence’ in *The Princess* to ‘James I’s presence in *Cymbeline*’, and links *Cymbeline* and *The Princess* via their thematics of ‘prince and princess’, transvestism and ‘craving peace’ amidst ‘war foreign, civil and domestic’.¹⁴⁸ Ricks (and before him, Emrys Jones)’s ‘Stuart Cymbeline’ is equally a ‘Victorian Cymbeline’. Bonnie Lander also links Imogen and the young Victoria, arguing that ‘applause for [Victoria’s] domestic role’ made her status as ‘leader and sovereign more acceptable’.¹⁴⁹ Consequently, Lander argues that the ‘Victorian Imogen’s most celebrated act was surrendering her position as sole heir to her lost brothers’.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁴ E.A. Smith, ‘Caroline (1768–1821)’, *DNB* [<http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/4722>, accessed 20 Oct 2011]; Russell Jackson, *Cymbeline in the nineteenth century* (MA Thesis, University of Birmingham, 1971), 73–77.

¹⁴⁵ Roger Fulford, *The Trial of Queen Caroline* (London: Batsford, 1967), 207.

¹⁴⁶ Hartley Coleridge, ‘Shakespeare a Tory, and a Gentleman’ (1828), reprinted Bate (ed.), *Romantics*, 232–237.

¹⁴⁷ Christopher Ricks, ‘The Princess and the Queen’, *Victorian Poetry* (Autumn–Winter, 1987), 133–139.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 139.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, Emrys Jones, ‘Stuart Cymbeline’, *EIC* (1961), 84–99, 84; Bonnie Lander, 156–84, 160.

¹⁵⁰ Lander, *ibid.*

This last is dubious: just as Romantic Imogen's chief 'interest' was her 'tenderness and constancy to her husband', in 1896 *PMG* deemed 'the love of Imogen for her banished husband' *Cymbeline*'s entire 'motive'. Similarly, the *Daily News* identified Imogen's speech beginning 'My dearest husband [...]' as 'the keynote of the play'.¹⁵¹ However, Lander's link between Victoria and Imogen is apposite. *Cymbeline*, with its eponymous British king and opposition of British and Roman forces, uses the word 'Britain', and its derivatives, 'more than any other play in the canon', focusing attention on British national identity.¹⁵² *Cymbeline* was read as such in 1896; the Bristol critic emphasised the 'contrast' between the 'subtle Italian' and Posthumus's 'British manliness', while the *Glasgow Herald* found Posthumus's behaviour as, historically, 'to British eyes, quite inexplicable' in a period when British women were 'celebrated for their virtue'.¹⁵³ Beerbohm described Terry as a 'genial Britannia', and her lecture drafts emphasise Imogen as Britannic archetype, the 'princess of Britain' who is 'a credit both to royalty and to Britain'.¹⁵⁴ Aged fifteen, Terry had played Britannia herself in a high-profile, patriotic pageant staged in response to the Princes of Wales's marriage and honeymoon tour.¹⁵⁵

In 1896, *Cymbeline*'s emphasis on succession was apropos. Victoria was elderly and in declining health. Her imminent Diamond Jubilee (1897) would inevitably signal a culmination (a

¹⁵¹ Hazlitt, *Romantics*, 300; 'Theatrical Notes', *PMG* (16 September 1896), 1; "'Cymbeline" at the Lyceum', *Daily News* (23 September 1896), 8.

¹⁵² Catherine M. Alexander, 'Cymbeline: the afterlife', *Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare's Late Plays* (Cambridge: 2009), 135–54, 149.

¹⁵³ 'The Lyceum First Night', *Bristol Mercury* (23 September 1896), 5; 'Music and the Drama', *Glasgow Herald* (28 September 1896), 4.

¹⁵⁴ Quoted Auerbach, *Ellen Terry*, 177; Ellen Terry, performance typescript version of 'Some of Shakespeare's Heroines 2. The Pathetic Woman', Ellen Terry Archive SC 10 – H2; British Library Loan MS. 125/45, f.51.

¹⁵⁵ Playbill for Stirling Coyne, *Buckstone at Home* (Theatre Royal Haymarket, 28 May 1863). Brady Collection, Christ Church, Oxford. Uncatalogued.

‘consummation’, as the Sheffield paper noted), as well as celebration, of her reign.¹⁵⁶ Similarly, the Lyceum *Cymbeline* provoked a flurry of theatrical retrospectives. As Marvin Carlson brilliantly argues, ‘all plays [...] might be called *Ghosts*’; this was especially true of Lyceum Shakespeares.¹⁵⁷ Productions’ frequency and longevity, revivals, codification of characters and performers into human ideals, and the Lyceum’s centrality to the national Shakespearean consciousness uniquely invested Lyceum Shakespeare with the ‘sense of return’ Carlson describes. Even before *Cymbeline*’s opening, the *Glasgow Herald* praised the production as a ‘return to the earlier and better traditions of Sir Henry’s management’: by October, *Theatre* identified *Cymbeline* as one of many ‘debts of gratitude’ the ‘younger generation’ owed Irving.¹⁵⁸

Alongside their stage princess of the Britons, *fin-de-siècle* audiences had to negotiate their own history via another kind of female ideal: their aging queen. Fiction may have seemed more satisfying and less problematic than fact. Victoria, despite six living children, offered a problematic successor in the aging and potentially unreliable Prince of Wales. Accordingly, Coleridge’s ideal of the princess Imogen as one who ‘continuates society’ would have seemed potent.¹⁵⁹ Terry’s Imogen offered two kinds of positive ‘continuation’. Imogen is a desirable heiress for *Cymbeline*, in the eyes of her audience: faithful, brave, honourable and intelligent. Moreover, through her actions, by Act V, *Cymbeline* has three heirs instead of one: two valorous, healthy young men, of whose innate nobility Belarius assures his audience.¹⁶⁰ The princes’ precedence neutralises any doubts regarding Posthumus’s judgment as a consort, or the

¹⁵⁶ Untitled news item, *SRI* (23 September 1896), 4.

¹⁵⁷ Marvin Carlson, *The Haunted Stage* (Michigan: Ann Arbor, 2004), 3.

¹⁵⁸ ‘Thursday’, *Glasgow Herald* (10 September 1896), 4; ‘In London’, *Theatre* (October 1896), 12.

¹⁵⁹ Coleridge, quoted Bate, *Romantics*, 531.

¹⁶⁰ *Cymbeline* III.3.84–87.

implications of his half-commoner children succeeding Imogen. Secondly, the specificity of *Cymbeline*'s casting meant that Terry *herself* offered, or 'ghosted' a positive 'continuation' of theatrical lineage via her son, Edward Gordon Craig as Arviragus, her onstage 'heir' (just as Edith Craig functioned as her successor elsewhere). Katharine Cockin writes persuasively of Terry's contemporary 'influential circle', and of the increasing twenty-first century interest in 'how Terry influenced the next generation'.¹⁶¹ More immediately, however, Edward Gordon Craig (well-regarded as an actor in 1896) both demonstrated the wisdom of 'infusing' the Lyceum company with 'some of that new blood' which it required, and provided a vessel for the continuation of that 'old blood' as Terry's genetic and potential theatrical successor.¹⁶²

Beyond *Cymbeline*'s cast, the entire theatrical event offered a microcosm of all that which literally 'continued' society, constituted by the 'vast and brilliant gathering' of the 'permanent body' that assembled for Lyceum first nights.¹⁶³ The *Yorkshire Herald*'s description of the 'well-dressed ladies' queuing outside the box office on 22 September also included the 'street vendors' doing 'good business' fetching 'tea and coffee [...] from neighbouring restaurants' (in turn doing 'good business').¹⁶⁴ Terry shared the concern for 'good business', arguing with Shaw before *Cymbeline* that 'on the common necessary ground that it pays H.I. to pay so many people in his employment you shd shut up discontiner [sic] a goin' on so, against Shakespeare', which she 'knew' would see the theatre 'fill up'.¹⁶⁵ The Lyceum catalysed diverse, numerous economic transactions – multiplying social prosperity – and unified them around a common theatrical event

¹⁶¹ Katharine Cockin, 'Ellen Terry and her Circle', *Spheres of Influence* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2011), 1–12, 2–3.

¹⁶² 'Thursday', *Glasgow Herald* (10 September 1896), 4.

¹⁶³ "'Cymbeline" at the Lyceum', *Daily News* (23 September 1896), 8.

¹⁶⁴ 'A New Play at the Lyceum', *Yorkshire Herald* (24 September 1896), 6.

¹⁶⁵ Letter from Terry to Shaw (10 July 1896), *Collected Letters* III.159.

of Shakespearean production. Crucially, both images are harmonious: the street vendors do good business in willingly serving the ladies, who are also entertained by ‘street musicians’; Irving’s employees benefit from his Shakespearean success.¹⁶⁶ The images are also based on the maintenance of existing hierarchies: the workers working for the ‘well-dressed’ fashionable and intellectual ladies (each ‘provided with [...] a copy of Shakespeare), and the Lyceum employees’ dependence on Irving’s presence and fame.¹⁶⁷ Royalty’s survival similarly depended on harmonious social and economic hierarchies.

One circumstance further intensified the relationship between *Cymbeline* and the *fin-de-siècle* Crown. The real crux of resemblance was not, as Landers had argued, the links between Faucit’s Imogen and the younger Victoria, but between Ellen Terry’s Imogen and Victoria as the contemporary, aging queen in September 1896. The day after *Cymbeline*’s opening was the day on which the length of Victoria’s reign exceeded that of any previous monarch. 23 September was also the publication date for many national and regional first-night reviews of *Cymbeline* (for which ‘the management’ stated they had ‘never before’ seen ‘so many assembled at so early an hour’), making the juxtaposition of assessments of British theatrical royalty and England’s real queen inevitable.¹⁶⁸ Often the *Cymbeline* review and nationalistic retrospect were published on the same page (as in Sheffield) or immediately opposite each other (as in the *Morning Post*). The structural and linguistic parallels between the different kinds of article are obvious; each functions as a lionising retrospective on their heroine’s popularity. The Sheffield correspondent describes Victoria as having ‘never at any moment’ been ‘so secure in the affection of her

¹⁶⁶ ‘A New Play at the Lyceum’, *Yorkshire Herald*, 6.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

people', irresistibly recalling Terry, for whom *Cymbeline* was not merely a 'triumph', but who, 'it was generally conceded [...] had never appeared to greater advantage'.¹⁶⁹ Victoria's judgment was revered: she had 'never made a serious mistake' during her 'most honourable reign [...] most happy reign [...] most hopeful reign'. Descriptions of Terry were no less so.¹⁷⁰ Imogen was 'an interpretation which [Terry had] never excelled'; as 'leader of the front rank of actresses', she was 'unassailable'.¹⁷¹ Both women were celebrated as responsive to public taste. Victoria's ability to 'move with the times as to be in accord with necessary changes' in a 'State' which 'appeals openly to the people's will' reflected the new reality that queens – as Terry argued of 'players' – must 'feel the pulse of the public'.¹⁷²

Just as Victoria's popularity derived from having lived 'in our midst as one of the people', so too a *fin-de-siècle* star had to be (as Stokes notes) not merely 'famous, charismatic, mythic' but 'palpably, undeniably [...] there' both onstage and 'in the here and now', both accessible and transcendent.¹⁷³ As the Lyceum's queen, 'associated with the higher poetic drama', Terry was central to the theatrical manifestation of the cultural movement seen as defining Victoria's reign, one in which 'literature has been brought down to the people [...] lucidity has been made the first aim [...] the tone of public thought has been raised'.¹⁷⁴ The *National Observer* rejoiced that 'thank Heaven! Miss Ellen Terry is alive to give us the noblest entertainment' on the same day that the *Morning Post* directed patriotic England to 'the simple and beautiful words of the Prayer-

¹⁶⁹ 'The Queen's Reign', *SRI* (23 September 1896), 4; "'Cymbeline" at the Lyceum', *Lloyd's* (27 September 1896), 8.

¹⁷⁰ 'The Queen's Reign', *SRI*, 4.

¹⁷¹ 'Shakespearean Revival', *SRI* (23 September 1896), 4; 'The Lyceum Theatre', *Standard* (24 September 1896), 3.

¹⁷² 'The Queen's Reign', 4; Ellen Terry, 'Actions + Acting', British Library Loan MS A1,311, 1.

¹⁷³ 'The Queen's Reign', 4; John Stokes, 'Varieties of performance', *Cambridge Companion to the Fin de Siècle* (Cambridge: 1997), 207–222, 209.

¹⁷⁴ "'Cymbeline" at the Lyceum', 8; 'The Queen's Reign', 4.

book', echoing the *Morning Post*'s lexis of prayer with the petitionary subjunctive 'Grant her in health and wealth long to live'.¹⁷⁵ This lexis of queenship and triumph continued: in 1899, Clotilde Graves rejoiced that Terry could 'rule us still' and that there were 'never greater days than these'. As Bloodworth recognises, Graves's tribute, 'laced with metaphorical drawings and imperial female majesty' evoked the 'aged Queen Empress and embodiment of female power'.¹⁷⁶ Arguably, Terry's 1906 Jubilee recalled Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. The 1906 committee (which included six Dukes, two Marquises, eleven Earls and seven Lords) both celebrated Terry as one 'whose illustrious name can never fade', and situated her within a theatrical family of 'Twenty Terrys on the Stage at One Time' – a dynasty rivalling Victoria's.¹⁷⁷ However, nine years separated the two Jubilees. The coincidence or resemblance was never so exact as on 23 September 1896.

Both Imogen and Victoria could, as a 'fine type of womanhood', arouse 'a very strong, human, partly pathetic interest', regardless of spectators' 'theoretic views of government', as the *SRI* claimed of Victoria.¹⁷⁸ This ability to transcend political considerations typified Terry's personation of queenship. In 1882, her 'Henrietta Maria' saw Wilde avow himself willing to 'forget' his 'freedom' and 'life republican'.¹⁷⁹ However, above all, the body of texts published on Victoria and Terry's Imogen on 23 September 1896 presented them as wives. Victoria, like

¹⁷⁵ W.H.P., 'Cymbeline at the Lyceum', *National Observer* (26 September 1896), 558–559, 559; Untitled item, *MP* (23 September 1896), 5.

¹⁷⁶ Clotilde Graves, 'See the Globe playhouse in Queen Bess's age,' Ishbel Aberdeen (ed.) *International Congress of Women 1899: Women in Professions* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1900), I. 194–196, 195; Jenny Bloodworth, 'The Burden of Eternal Youth', Katharine Cockin (ed.) *Spheres of Influence* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2011), 49–64, 49.

¹⁷⁷ *Theatre Royal Drury Lane Souvenir for Ellen Terry Jubilee Commemoration* (London: J. Miles, 1906). W.T. Stead, 'Impressions of the Theatre. (41) – Miss Ellen Terry's Jubilee Benefit', *Review of Reviews* (July 1906) 14–17, 14.

¹⁷⁸ 'The Queen's Reign', 4.

¹⁷⁹ Wilde, 'Queen Henrietta Maria', *Complete Works*, 835.

Imogen, had evinced ‘feminine tenderness and desperate grief’ in her public widowhood (although Imogen’s is only presumed, the headless corpse being Cloten’s) and both consistently enacted ‘sweet remembrances of their husbands’.¹⁸⁰

***Cymbeline* and the Gothic**

As well as reflecting and illuminating the contemporary national situation, the Lyceum *Cymbeline* and, in particular, Terry’s performance arguably became a catalyst for two recognisably Gothic, *fin-de-siècle* works, both published in the aftermath of the Lyceum production. The first is virtually unknown: H. Schütz Wilson’s short story ‘An Union with Imogen’, published in *Gentleman’s Magazine* (December 1896). ‘An Union with Imogen’ is the purportedly authentic testimony of a mentally-ill man, Z, whose delusions centre on a supernatural ‘marriage’ to Imogen, who visits Z from a religious-literary heaven.¹⁸¹ The second text is very famous: Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*, published in May 1897, and which I shall consider first.

There is apparent dissonance between the thematics of the Lyceum’s ‘fairyland’ and the madmen, phantoms and vampires of the other texts. However, it is possible to trace where and why audiences might have found catalysts in *Cymbeline* for Decadent and Gothic images, and to discern how both Schütz Wilson and Stoker draw on Terry’s Imogen. Both works have ramifications for our understanding of *fin-de-siècle* Shakespeare, and both offer new afterlives for

¹⁸⁰ ‘The London Theatres’, *Era* (26 September 1896), 10; ‘Facts and Faces’, *Penny Illustrated* (26 September 1896), 195.

¹⁸¹ H[enry] Schütz Wilson, ‘A Union with Imogen’, *Gentleman’s Magazine* (December 1896), 615–619.

Terry's performance: arguably, this mapping of influence between *Cymbeline* and *Dracula* also offers us a new reading of Stoker's work.

The bedchamber scene as Gothic source

Cymbeline's major locus of transgressive, *fin-de-siècle* potential is the bedchamber scene, in which Iachimo scrutinises and partially exposes Imogen's sleeping body, then steals her bracelet, to amass descriptive and physical evidence of her supposed betrayal of Posthumus. During rehearsals, Terry predicted the scene's success, telling the doubtless thrilled Shaw that Irving 'comes out of that box well, I tell you!'.¹⁸² First-night audience enthusiasm approached hysteria. *PMG* found the repeated calls an 'insult to artistic propriety' when the audience's 'yelling and shouting' demanded Irving 'get out of his box again and Miss Terry leave her bed and bow'.¹⁸³ Reviews emphasise the scene's sexuality, and the performers' intimacy: Sprague notes that Irving was frequently described as having visibly 'turned down [Terry's] nightdress to discover the "mole cinque-spotted"'.¹⁸⁴ Whether approvingly or not, most reviewers located much eroticism in Irving's Iachimo. For the *Bristol Mercury*, he was not merely 'the serpent and Judas', conflating Old and New Testament ciphers of evil, but, crucially, a 'very Tarquin'.¹⁸⁵ Echoing Irving-Iachimo's nocturnal evocation of 'Our Tarquin' who 'thus/Did softly press the rushes, ere he waken'd/The chastity he wounded', the *Mercury* presents Iachimo as a potential, imminent rapist.¹⁸⁶ This is despite the fact that Tarquin Superbus (*The Rape of Lucrece*) is motivated entirely by sexual, rather than Iachimo's partly financial desires. In *Cymbeline*, Iachimo specifies

¹⁸² Letter from Terry to Shaw (22 September 1896), *Correspondence* 72–73, 73.

¹⁸³ 'Theatrical Notes', *PMG* (30 September 1896), 1.

¹⁸⁴ Sprague, 61.

¹⁸⁵ 'The Lyceum First Night', *Bristol Mercury* (23 September 1896), 5.

¹⁸⁶ *Cymbeline* II.2.12–14.

the wager, initiates the handshake for the ‘covenant’ and requests legal ‘counsels’ to ratify it.¹⁸⁷ Nevertheless, the *Mercury* emphasised Irving-Iachimo’s sexual ‘treachery’, describing as ‘absolutely his finest line [...] when, speaking of the mark on Imogen’s breast’, Irving ‘hissed out’ the words ‘I kissed it’ with ‘a leer’.¹⁸⁸ Only the *Graphic* felt the sexuality was insufficient, breathlessly demanding even more lust, and lamenting the apparent lack of a ‘professional lady-killer [...] steeped in the wickedness of old Rome’ (not enough Tarquin, then).¹⁸⁹ More typically, however, the *Morning Post* objected to Irving/Iachimo’s ‘ghoul-like postures [...] outspread fingers’ and ‘needlessly protracted and overstrained’ exulting ‘raptures’ over Imogen’s body.¹⁹⁰ Iachimo was ‘a man of birth and breeding’, not a sexual ‘connoisseur’ or ‘sensualist’: his activities in Imogen’s bedchamber were ‘business’, during which ‘wits not passions’ should control him.¹⁹¹

Why was this staging so enthusiastically received, and so culturally inspirational? The *Standard* attributed the sequence’s effectiveness to Iachimo’s ultimate defeat, allowing audiences to ‘constantly rejoic[e] in the comfortable assurance of the happy ending [...] in store’, legitimising audience fascination with evil through the generic assurance that – in this ‘romance of fairyland’ – it would be temporary.¹⁹² However, Irving’s innovative Iachimo also offered a cultured, ‘subtle and cunning’ *fin-de-siècle* man of ‘intellectual suppleness’ to those who wanted one.¹⁹³

Enthusiasts included Graham Robertson, who admired ‘a fascinating Italian gentleman, entirely without morals’, but whose ‘exquisite manners and a compelling charm’ ensured success as ‘a

¹⁸⁷ *Cymbeline* I.5.162–163.

¹⁸⁸ ‘The Lyceum First Night’, 5.

¹⁸⁹ “‘Cymbeline’ at the Lyceum”, *Graphic* (26 September 1896), 398.

¹⁹⁰ “‘Cymbeline’ Revisited”, *MP* (7 October 1896), 2.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹² ‘The Lyceum Theatre’, *Standard* (23 September 1896), 3; ‘Lyceum Theatre’, *PMG* (23 September 1896), 1.

¹⁹³ *Daily News* (23 September 1896), 8.

liar and a scoundrel'.¹⁹⁴ The *Daily News* praised 'a profound study of [...] the intellectual pride and reckless unscrupulousness of [...] a "chercheur de bonnes fortunes"'.¹⁹⁵ Crucially, A. B. Walkley asserted that 'There is something of M. Huysmans' *Des Esseintes*, and something, too, of that author's *Durtal*, in *Iachimo*', who was 'one of Max Nordau's "degenerates"', creating a recognisably *fin-de-siècle* literary correlative for Irving's performance that could be the bibliography of a critical edition of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, or a primer on 1890s culture.¹⁹⁶ As Walkley noted, this contemporary degenerate's Shakespearean and sexual proximity to a beloved contemporary actress was hermeneutically transgressive: whether or not this psychology had been 'fully perceived by Shakespeare' didn't matter: it had been 'fully perceived and rendered by Sir Henry Irving', which was sufficient.¹⁹⁷ Moreover, it offered Walkley, and by implication his readership, 'a keen, if rather perverse pleasure'.¹⁹⁸ This pleasure's 'perversity' centres on the bedroom scene. *Iachimo*, observing, assaulting, and reporting on the female body, enacted a multifaceted fantasy of sexual access to Imogen/Terry. On one level, *Iachimo* is himself a fantasist, wishing he 'might touch!/But kiss, one kiss!' Imogen.¹⁹⁹ He is thus analogous to the sexually-intrigued audience member. Simultaneously, *Iachimo* does perpetrate an assault, acquiring visible sexual access to Imogen-Terry's breast, acquiring knowledge hidden from the audience, who cannot 'see' the 'cinque-spotted mole' even as they witness, from a distance, the dishevelled gesture by which it is apparently bared.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁴ *Time Was*, 237.

¹⁹⁵ *Daily News* (23 September 1896), 8.

¹⁹⁶ A.B. Walkley, 'The Drama', *Speaker* (26 September 1896), 327–329.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁹ *Cymbeline* II.2.16–17.

²⁰⁰ *Cymbeline* II.2.38.

The dislocation between degrees of sexual knowledge possessed by audience and actor would have been further emphasised by the speculation of some regarding Terry and Irving's personal intimacy. Moreover, seeing Britain's two most celebrated performers onstage together was necessarily charged with theatrical excitement – as early as 16 September, *PMG* had anticipated that 'the duologue between [Iachimo] and Imogen and the following scene in Imogen's bedchamber will be the great scenes of the play'; seeing Frank Cooper's Posthumus share the stage with Terry was far less of an event.²⁰¹ This mixture of sexual speculation and celebrity adulation, contextualised in the wider schema of the *dramatis personae* – emphasised the potentially illicit relationship between Iachimo and Imogen, at the expense of that between Posthumus and Imogen.

The potency of Iachimo's fantasy of sexual access to Imogen is clear from critical responses to the production. Notably, the editorial decision *PMG* most regretted was 'the omission of Cloten's boast of what he would do to Imogen in Posthumus's garments': Cloten spells out his desire to 'ravish' Imogen with Posthumus 'on the ground', i.e. rape her beside Posthumus's corpse.²⁰² This is significant. The *Standard*, celebrating Imogen's 'sublime resignation to the cruellest of evil fates', noted parallels 'between Imogen and Desdemona, both equally the victims of a villain's diabolical plot' and exemplifying 'the purest womanhood'.²⁰³ Imogen, however, was more theatrically effective and enjoyable, since her sufferings are 'more varied and prolonged'.²⁰⁴ The critics' fascination with a textual moment of rape imagery, and a particular staging of sexual

²⁰¹ 'Theatrical Notes', *PMG* (16 September 1896), 1.

²⁰² *Ibid.*; *Cymbeline* III.5.139–141.

²⁰³ 'The Lyceum Theatre', *Standard* (23 September 1896), 3.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

abuse reflects a wider cultural investment in the spectacle of female suffering, which *Cymbeline* uniquely satisfied.²⁰⁵

Crucially, the bedchamber scene's eroticism is predicated not merely on female suffering, but on female passivity. The *Penny Illustrated*'s praise for Terry's 'lovely tones and graceful movements [...] most of all in the bed-chamber scene, in which her refinement and the absolute perfection of her art proved of the most value', despite apparently praising Terry's acting, actually highlights a sequence in which, after an abridged opening sequence, Imogen is entirely asleep.²⁰⁶ Generally, scholarship has emphasised the activity of Terry's stage presence and sexuality: perhaps because of *fin-de-siècle* preoccupations with mesmerism, neurasthenia, death and liminal states of consciousness, this catalysing episode in *Cymbeline* staged Terry as a passive sexual object.

Cymbeline* and *Dracula

Dracula was published in 1897, with rehearsals for *Cymbeline* beginning in late 1896. Irving's text of *Cymbeline*, heavily revised for production, was first published before 1890. Stoker's earliest notes for *Dracula* date from the 1880s. However, the editors of the facsimile notes observe that the notes constitute 'just one stage' of *Dracula*'s development, with major missing elements including 'one or more lost drafts of the novel' – moreover, it is 'not possible to determine when most of the Notes were written'.²⁰⁷ Most of the novel's most Gothic and sexually

²⁰⁵ Iachimo not only sees Imogen in her night-clothes, but dishevels them. In *Dracula* (1897), Mina worries that Lucy's reputation will be damaged if someone sees her sleepwalk in her nightdress.

²⁰⁶ 'Facts and Faces', *Penny Illustrated* (26 September 1896), 195.

²⁰⁷ Robert Eigheten-Bisang and Elisabeth Miller (eds), *Bram Stoker's Facsimile Notes for Dracula* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2008), 9–13.

explicit moments are unmentioned in the surviving notes, including Lucy's request for Arthur to kiss her, Lucy's staking, Mina's feeding on Dracula, her request for the men to murder her, the reading of the Burial Service, and Dracula's look of peace after being killed.²⁰⁸ Also missing are the 'bloofer lady' and the direct mention of Terry.²⁰⁹

The Lyceum's role in *Dracula*'s genesis has generated much scholarly analysis, particularly tracing resemblances between Count Dracula and Irving himself. In focusing instead on Ellen Terry's importance to the creation of Lucy Westenra and Mina Harker, I am indebted to Catherine Wynne's 2011 article. Wynne understandably emphasises Terry's roles of Ophelia and Margaret (*Faust*) as contributions to Lucy. However, I am persuaded that Terry's Imogen – her last major role before *Dracula* – was of immediate importance.²¹⁰ *Dracula*'s text bears significant traces of *Cymbeline*, including the name of hero Jonathan Harker: the scene painter who created all the scenes key to Iachimo's wager and the Iachimo/Imogen relationship was Joseph Harker.²¹¹ Wynne argues that Terry 'enhanced' the Lyceum's 'Gothic culture'; I argue that *Cymbeline* was a central contribution, with the bedchamber scene becoming a structuring psychological conceit of *Dracula*.²¹² Whether in symbiotic discussion, or with one artist drawing on another's work, there was clearly some relationship between Irving and Terry's, and Stoker's 'stagings' of this scene. The huge success of both *Cymbeline* and *Dracula* reflects the intensity of contemporary interest in liminal states and transgressive sexuality.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Catherine Wynne, 'Ellen Terry, Bram Stoker, and the Lyceum's Vampires', *Spheres of Influence*, 17–32.

²¹¹ 'Synopsis of Scenery', *Lyceum Cymbeline*, unnumbered page. These scenes were: Philario's House, Iachimo and Imogen's meeting, Imogen's bedchamber, and the palace room in which Imogen hears Posthumus's accusations.

²¹² Wynne, 71.

Plot and thematics make *Cymbeline* an inviting source for *Dracula*. Both are geographically disparate, fantastic texts with letters providing key plot twists: delivering news, and summoning wives to husband – wives whose ‘ecstasy’ is experienced as ‘Joy, joy, joy!’.²¹³ Marital sex and fidelity are key themes. Posthumus and Imogen’s sexual status is uncertain in *Cymbeline*; the only sexual encounter described (Iachimo’s, with Imogen) never took place, and the only time a wife lies beside her ‘husband’, he is in fact her stepbrother’s headless corpse. In *Dracula*, Mina attempts to restrain Jonathan from his ‘lawful pleasure’ once she feels ‘unclean’, while Arthur considers himself ‘married’ to Lucy ‘in the sight of God’, a phrase commonly used to assert the legitimacy of various kinds of extra-marital relationship – Lewis Carroll used it to describe Terry’s relationship with Godwin.²¹⁴ Nevertheless, Arthur and Lucy’s consummation is between separate beds, via blood transfusion; and Lucy has equivalent experiences with three other men, without her consent or knowledge. Cymbeline’s marriage to the Queen may be as celibate as the Harkers’: Cymbeline is an invalid (as is Jonathan at the time of his marriage), and there’s no suggestion of more children. Both Cymbeline and the Queen have consummated marriages with others, producing present (and, in Cymbeline’s case, absent) issue.

Both texts are preoccupied with succession. Just as *Cymbeline* magically restores a full British succession, in *Dracula* the Harkers create a legitimate ‘heir’, spiritual and physical, to both Jonathan and their ‘little band of men’, embodying Quincey Morris’s virtues and the Harkers’ Christian marriage (rather than the vampiric descendants Lucy would have created, vampirising children as the ‘bloofer lady’).²¹⁵ Lucy’s ‘heresy’ in wishing for multiple marriages is negated by

²¹³ ‘Letters in Shakespeare’s Plays’, *Four Lectures*, 191; Bram Stoker, *Dracula* (Oxford: 2011), 94.

²¹⁴ *Cymbeline* II.4.161; *Dracula*, 264; 162; *Letters of Lewis Carroll*, II.1014–1015.

²¹⁵ *Dracula*, 351; 165.

her staking, before she can marry Arthur and create complications including polyandry and vampirism. Arthur is thus free to remarry and safely continue the Holmwood line. Equally, martial brothers supplant the Imogen who defied her father. *Cymbeline*'s reviewers found Terry's Imogen 'pre-eminently loveable and worthy', a 'perfect type of womanhood'; Stoker's Mina is also the perfect wife and princess of the 'little band' of vampire-hunters.²¹⁶ After the agency, activity and technological expertise of her adventures, Mina embodies multiple 'perfect type[s]' of women. Like Imogen, she is the perfect wife, either suspending sexual relations with her husband (like Shakespeare's Imogen) or never having had them (like the Lyceum Imogen, according to *Athenaeum*) out of 'pudency'.²¹⁷ From the Latin *pudentia*, the double meaning is appropriate: 'modesty' in Imogen's case, 'shame' in Mina's.²¹⁸ Importantly for the 'little band' in *Dracula*, Mina moreover prevents the possibility of 'tainting' Harker (and potentially their offspring) with her contaminated blood and potentially corrupted sexuality by conceiving before she is purified, again securing the 'succession' as Imogen's discovery of her brothers does for Britain.²¹⁹ At the novel's end, Mina becomes an ideal mother, full of 'sweetness and loving care'.²²⁰ Finally, she is the chaste focus of the men's *amour courtois*, both accommodating conventional Victorian male virtues of self-sacrifice and courage, and legitimising the men's emotional commitment to each other. Having been 'brave and gallant' herself, she ensures that 'some men so loved her, that they did much for her sake'. In fact, the woman (most of) the men

²¹⁶ 'The London Theatres', *Era* (26 September 1896), 10; *Dracula*, 351.

²¹⁷ *Cymbeline* II.4.163. Delayed consummation is also key to Stoker's *The Snake's Pass* (1891), where Arthur Severn and Norah Joyce are separated for two years.

²¹⁸ Entry for 'pudency, n.' *OED* [<http://ezproxy.ouls.ox.ac.uk:2277/view/Entry/154146?redirectedFrom=pudency&>, accessed 1 June 2013].

²¹⁹ Jonathan Harker (329) and Van Helsing (339) each describe Mina as 'tainted'; Harker's final account in the novel specifies that their son is born on the anniversary of Quincey Morris's death (351).

²²⁰ *Dracula*, 351.

originally ‘so loved’ was Lucy, with Mina as her safer replacement, two halves of the same identity.²²¹

Ultimately, Stoker’s narratorial treatment of female identity controls and negates individualities of desire, activity and experience. Mina’s agency, Lucy’s heterodoxy and sexual appeal; both women’s ambiguous sexual relation to Dracula, their partners, and the wider band of men, are (re)directed into socially unthreatening icons which ‘continue society’: wife, mother, and the safely dead Christian virgin, who can inspire men to better lives.²²² Likewise, the potentially homoerotic intensity of Harker, Seward, Holmwood and Van Helsing during the vampire-hunt is legitimised by Lucy’s death and Mina’s subsequent centrality. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick discusses the ‘erotic triangle’, in which women function as the ‘changeable, perhaps symbolic property’ that ‘cements the bonds of men with men’.²²³ Lucy and Mina are especially changeable and symbolic, given Lucy’s vampirism, Mina’s curse, and the myriad blocked sexual relationships: Van Helsing prevents sexual contact between Lucy and Arthur; Lucy’s preference for Arthur precludes further overtures from Seward and Morris; Mina’s marriage to Jonathan means she can only be a ‘symbol’ to the men, and the Harkers’ marriage is sexless due to Mina’s ‘taint’. *Cymbeline* also assuages late-Victorian anxieties about controlling individual variations and transgressive potential in human sexuality, by raising and then controlling the spectre of problematic sexual relationships. Cloten dies before he can rape Imogen, Imogen repels Iachimo’s sexual advances, and Imogen and Posthumus’s half-Sicilian, demi-royal children are

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² Lucy’s death also resolves the problem of her engagement to Holmwood, which her vampirism makes untenable. Conversely but complementarily, Faucit kills off her ethereal Imogen to solve the problem of her marriage to Posthumus: see Chapter Four, 243–4.

²²³ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men* (New York: Columbia UP, 1985), 26.

unlikely to attain the throne: politically, the couple cease to exist. As Fidele, Imogen's 'death' ends the potentially ambiguous attraction the engaging youth holds for her brothers, while 'Fidele's' sighting of Posthumus catalyses her rejection of Caius Lucius, with whom her relationship might otherwise have become sexual; the Caius/Fidele relationship approximates that between Orsino and Viola – with fewer impediments given the lack of an Olivia-figure, and Imogen's belief that she is a widow.

Terry as Gothic source: Bram Stoker's women

Mina and Lucy's complementary identities strengthen the arguments both for Imogen's influence on Stoker's women, and for Terry herself as a source for both characters. Dichotomous narratives for describing Terry were key to Shaw and Craig's accounts of her; Mina and Lucy signal another narrative of 'splitting'. As a beloved, active, intelligent, vital, business-like but ultimately subordinate woman, Mina's position in the 'little band of men' is analogous to Terry at Irving's Lyceum.²²⁴ Tellingly, in the 1897 copyright reading for Stoker's dramatisation of *Dracula*, Mina was played by Terry's daughter, Edith Craig.

Lucy's resemblance to Terry, and Terry-as-Imogen, is far greater. Like Imogen's suffering, Lucy's vampirism, decline, death and re-killing fulfil contemporary cultural investment in witnessing female suffering. Like Imogen, Lucy's suffering is effective because 'varied and prolonged'; Lucy also unwittingly signals her function as sufferer by comparing herself to Desdemona (like herself and Imogen, the 'victim of a villain's diabolical plot') while having 'a

²²⁴ Ibid.

stream poured in her ear' by the well-travelled Quincey Morris.²²⁵ Both Imogen and Lucy return from the dead: Lucy as the 'Undead', and Imogen both as the restored Fidele, and as herself, after supposedly being murdered by Pisanio.²²⁶

Both Imogen and Lucy experience death and rebirth within texts saturated with liminal states of being: sleep, life-in-death, the afterlife, reanimation, and transitions between the above.

Cymbeline's queen confesses her crimes (via Cornelius) after she has died; Posthumus (whose name connotes another kind of afterlife) is visited by his dead parents and brothers (personated by live actors), and is also seen alive after his own 'death' (which is actually Cloten's). Imogen's dead brothers Guiderius and Arviragus appear onstage as the live Polydore and Cadwal; Imogen herself is placed in a death-like state (similar to coma or mesmerism), 'dies' and is buried as Fidele, an identity which also 'dies' when she rejects Caius Lucius and rejoins her family. Even this reunion includes a final cycle through death and resurrection, as Posthumus's attack on the 'page' who 'plays' him provokes Pisanio's anguished cry that he 'ne'er killed Imogen til now'.²²⁷ Helen Faucit believed that Imogen was dying by the play's end, the 'blow [...] inflicted by that cruel letter' having hit 'the heart with a too fatal force', leaving 'a hurt too deep for mortal leechcraft'.²²⁸ Faucit even imagined Imogen's afterlife, her 'lovely soul' actively 'inspiring' her menfolk to 'worthy lives' and celestial reunion.²²⁹ Dijkstra calls this kind of Victorian death 'a woman's ultimate sacrifice of her being to the males she had been born to serve', with Imogen as

²²⁵ Ibid., *Dracula*, 56.

²²⁶ Lucy's deathbed partially evokes Desdemona's, who revives to exonerate Othello. Similarly, Lucy asks Van Helsing to protect Arthur, while oscillating repeatedly (and paradoxically) between a living-but-dying mortal, and an already dead-but-Undead immortal. *Dracula*, 150.

²²⁷ *Cymbeline* V.5.227–231.

²²⁸ Faucit, *On Some of Shakespeare's Female Characters*, 278–279.

²²⁹ Ibid.

an ideal vehicle for what he terms ‘the consumptive sublime’.²³⁰ Ultimately, *Cymbeline* is a play where the dead refuse to stay dead. As in *Dracula*, the only way to ensure death is by beheading, the ultimate fate of the Undead Lucy and Cloten.

Stoker’s presentation of Lucy evokes his portrayal of Terry in *Personal Reminiscences*. Both are endlessly enthralling, and (initially, in Lucy’s case) ‘embodied sunshine’.²³¹ Stoker’s claim of Ellen Terry that she ‘fascinated every one who ever met her – men, women, and children, it was all the same’ is markedly true of Lucy.²³² Although Mina subsequently inspires the ‘little band’ to become her ‘devoted servants’ (as Stoker says ‘all’ in the Lyceum served Terry), admiration for Stoker’s Terry is much more like that for Lucy. Like Terry, Lucy is ‘a source of joy to all; of envy to none [...] add[ing] always to the sum of human happiness’ before her illness.²³³ Whitby’s geriatrics ‘[fall] in love with [Lucy] on the spot’, Van Helsing declares that ‘she charm [sic] me’, and the three men who propose to Lucy in one day subsequently retain Stoker’s feeling for Terry: ‘reverence and regard and love for her enchanting personality’.²³⁴ The newspaper correspondent in *Dracula* describes children’s personation of the ‘bloofer lady’ by claiming ‘even Ellen Terry could not be so winningly attractive as some of these grubby-faced little children pretend to be’.²³⁵ As well as bringing Terry to mind as we read Stoker’s narrative, Stoker associates the ‘bloofer lady’ with the height of Terry’s charm; although Terry could not be the ‘popular role’ of Lucy, we are implicitly told that to be like Lucy (as the children are desperate to be in their ‘al

²³⁰ *Idols of Perversity*, 29.

²³¹ *Personal Reminiscences*, II.194.

²³² *Ibid.*, II.192.

²³³ *Dracula*, 351; *Personal Reminiscences*, II.193.

²³⁴ *Dracula*, 63; 106; *Personal Reminiscences*, II.206.

²³⁵ *Dracula*, 165–166.

Fresco performances', and may shortly become, if vampirised), it is necessary to be like Ellen Terry.²³⁶

Although impossible for (most) readers at the time, subsequent scholarly collation and republication of Terry's correspondence lets us read as well as see her in Stoker's narrative. The linguistic features of Lucy's correspondence strongly recall Terry's letters. Although still more restrained than Terry's single, double, and occasionally triple underlining (which most editors, before Cockin, uniformly italicised), Lucy's letters are full of emphases. Lucy complains to Mina that 'you tax me *very* unfairly [...] I wrote to you *twice* [...] your last letter was only for *second*', claiming Seward would 'just *do for*' her, and exclaiming 'I *do so* want to [...] hear from you *at once*', before demanding secrecy from '*everyone*'.²³⁷ Like Terry, Lucy is effusive, sending Mina 'Oceans of love and millions of kisses', and lexically variable.²³⁸ Exclamatio ('Just fancy!' is repeated twice) and idiomatic sayings proliferate. These include French (Seward is 'an excellent *parti*'), contemporary British slang, as when Lucy meets Seward at 'the last Pop' and finds 'dress' a 'bore. That is slang again but never mind', or, indirectly, Morris's 'American slang' which Lucy enthusiastically reports.²³⁹ There are also indirect literary allusions: Lucy's remark regarding Morris, that other women would 'worship the very ground he trod on' closely echoes the first recorded use of that phrase in English literature, Lady Lowbrough's description of her husband, who 'worships the very ground I tread on' in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848).²⁴⁰ Conversely, although references to 'hard nuts' date back to the eighteenth century, Lucy's self-

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ Ibid., 54–55.

²³⁸ Ibid., 101.

²³⁹ Ibid., 54–55; 54; 57.

²⁴⁰ Ibid., 59; OED entry for 'worship,

v.' [<http://ezproxy.ouls.ox.ac.uk:2277/view/Entry/230346?rskey=oYU0ty&result=2&isAdvanced=false>, accessed 26 June 2013]. Anne Brontë, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (New York: Harper Brothers, 1858), 200.

declaration as ‘a tough nut to crack’ appears to be new, although now in familiar use.²⁴¹

Completing her letters’ eclectic style, Lucy employs varying epistolary closes and signatures, shifting from the flowery ‘ever your loving Lucy’ to the dramatic ‘Goodbye’, and from ‘Lucy’ to ‘L’.²⁴² This immediately recalls Terry, whose signatures to Shaw during 1896 alone included ‘ET’, ‘Nellen Terry’, ‘Nell (or Nellen) not *Ellen!*’, ‘Nellen T.’ and the full ‘Ellen Terry’.²⁴³

In their various enthusiasms for Lucy, the suitors in *Dracula* anticipate the Terry fans Stoker immortalises in *Personal Reminiscences* as ‘evidences of [Terry’s] fascination’, including the American ‘Attourney-General’ who exclaims ‘What a creature! What a Queen! She smote me with the sword of her beauty, and I arose her Knight!’, in language that might have embarrassed even Quincey Morris.²⁴⁴ Mina, who finds Lucy, ‘sensitive’ and ‘sweeter and lovelier than ever’, also displays lover-like devotion, comparing her own responses to those of Arthur Holmwood.²⁴⁵ This is notable both when praising Lucy’s ‘puckered [...] expression which Arthur says he loves; and, indeed, I don’t wonder that he does’ and, after noting that Lucy, sleeping, looks ‘oh so sweet’, wondering what ‘Mr Holmwood [...] would say if he saw her asleep’.²⁴⁶

‘How bravely thou becomst thy bed, fresh lily’: the sleeping woman and *fin-de-siècle* desire

This central action of watching women sleep (or being asleep and watched) most closely links Imogen and Lucy. In both texts, the sleeping woman is a central erotic object. In *Dracula*, the

²⁴¹ OED entry for ‘nut’ ‘tough, adj. (and adv.) and n.’ [<http://ezproxy.ouls.ox.ac.uk:2277/view/Entry/203905?redirectedFrom=tough+nut>, accessed 26 June 2013]; *Dracula*, 54.

²⁴² *Dracula*, 54–59.

²⁴³ Letters from Terry to Shaw; pages are from *Correspondence*: (15 May 1896), 31; (7 September 1896) 52–53, 53; (9 September 1896) 58; (16 September 1896), 65–66, 66; (18 September 1896), 66–68, 68.

²⁴⁴ *Personal Reminiscences*, II.192–3.

²⁴⁵ *Dracula*, 84; 61.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 93; 85.

association of sleep and death means that the sleeping woman occupies a related position of ‘alterity’ to the eroticised female corpse; somnophilia has been identified as a preparatory paraphilia to necrophilia.²⁴⁷ However, as Iachimo, Mina and other characters in *Dracula* indicate, the eroticism of observing a sleeping woman is more complex. *Cymbeline*’s Imogen is seen in bed, asleep, or unconscious by almost every character in the play, excluding the Queen and Cloten; in *Dracula*, the images proliferate and the boundaries between states of sleep, unconsciousness and death become more porous.²⁴⁸ Lucy is thought ‘dying when she slept/And sleeping when she died’, while the scientific knowledge that she died ‘in trance [...] and in trance she is Undead’ form the novel’s psychological crisis.²⁴⁹ Both Lucy and Imogen are decked with flowers; both ‘wake’ in gravesites which cannot contain them. *Dracula*’s characters continually stress Lucy’s ‘radiantly beautiful’ appearance in sleep and death; all Mina, Seward, and Arthur’s praise of her serves as nineteenth-century glosses on Iachimo’s exclamation of ‘How bravely thou becomst thy bed, fresh lily’.²⁵⁰

Somnophilic assault on women can be motivated by the belief that the sleeping pose is implicitly inviting, and that the sleeping woman desires sexual contact; at the very least, as Leonard Barkan notes, the ‘beautiful woman sleeping, with a notable promise of nudity’ can be ‘watched with impunity’ within the voyeuristic protocols of high Western culture.²⁵¹ Like Mrs Patrick Campbell’s child Juliet, the ‘naïve’ Méliande and the juvenile late-Victorian Salomes, the

²⁴⁷ Bronfen, xi; Eric W. Hickey, *Serial Murderers* (Belmont, California: Cengage, 2010), 149.

²⁴⁸ Helen and Iachimo see Imogen in her bed in II.2; Belarius, Arviragus and Guidierus see her ‘dead’ (unconscious) in IV.2. In the same scene, Caius Lucius (who arrives with Captains and a Soothsayer) assumes she is ‘dead or sleeping’ on Cloten (IV.2.367). In V.5, the characters who see Imogen fall unconscious when Posthumus strikes her (Pisano cries that he ‘ne’er killed Imogen til now’) include her father, husband and brothers, Pisanio, Belarius, Caius Lucius and Cornelius.

²⁴⁹ Thomas Hood, ‘The Death-Bed’ (1831), quoted *Dracula*, 51; 137.

²⁵⁰ *Dracula*, 186; *Cymbeline* II.2.15.

²⁵¹ Leonard Barkan, ‘The Beholder’s Tale’, *Representations* (Autumn 1993), 133–166, 150.

unconsciously erotic female subject could be seen as culturally culpable. Like the ‘virgin whore’, Imogen’s unwitting eroticism threatens to destroy Iachimo’s sexual self-control, just as Lucy’s dangerous beauty encourages Arthur to kiss her and risk vampirism.²⁵² In Imogen’s case, the impression of the sleeping woman as ‘inviting’ is heightened by her status as a married woman who has already exercised sexual choice in marrying Posthumus (making her refusal of Iachimo more pointed).

The sleeping woman, nude or dressed, is a perennial artistic subject, but there was a particular profusion of sleeping women painted in bed at the *fin de siècle*, reflecting what Dijkstra calls ‘the fetish of sleep’.²⁵³ Like the *Cymbeline* and *Dracula* scenes, the domestic setting intensifies the voyeuristic violation committed by the viewer. In the cases of Imogen and the painted women, the bed’s potential as a marital bed offers the viewer the thrill of adultery, heightened by the threat and uncertainty of discovery. As well as the unconscious Lucy being ‘radiantly beautiful’, it’s crucial to Stoker that she is *watched*, closely reiterating the Lyceum staging.²⁵⁴ All the elements of the theatrical staging are in *Dracula*. Mina twice observes the sleeping Lucy from a distance, framed first by the spotlight-like ‘moon’ that ‘struck so brilliantly’, and subsequently by the proscenium arch-like frame of a window, in which Lucy is seen with her ‘head lying up against the windowsill’.²⁵⁵ Lucy’s sleep is highly aestheticised; not only does she ‘always wak[e] prettily’, but she is always arranged so that Mina can see her clearly, whether ‘half-reclining with her head over the back of the seat’, or ‘distinctly’ framed by the window – graceful, picturesque

²⁵² *Idols of Perversity*, 384. For a fuller discussion, see Chapter Three.

²⁵³ See: Charles Chaplin (1825–1891), ‘Reverie’ (c. 1890); Madeleine Lemaire (1845–1928), ‘Sleep’ (c. 1890); Franciszek Zmurko (1859–1910), ‘Dream’ (1890); John William Godward (1861–1922), ‘Endymion’ (1893); Draper, ‘Study for Autumn’ (1898); Corinth, ‘Lying Nude’ (1899). *Idols of Perversity*, 25.

²⁵⁴ *Dracula*, 186.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 87; 90.

poses recalling the Lyceum's aestheticised style.²⁵⁶ Mina, Seward, Van Helsing and Arthur all watch Lucy sleep, but Mina is *also* used to highlight a second watcher's presence. This grouping of Mina, Dracula and Lucy strongly recalls that of the theatrical spectator, Iachimo (played by Irving, inspiration for Dracula) and Imogen; Dracula appears as 'something, long and black, bending over the half-reclining white figure' with 'white face and red, gleaming eyes'.²⁵⁷ Preying on Lucy again in the window, he is a 'good-sized bird'.²⁵⁸ The aforementioned description of Irving's Iachimo as a 'Judas', 'serpent', and 'ghoul' indicate his performance's potential for inspiring degenerate, animalistic images. Moreover, subsidiary aspects of the Lyceum performance also appear, including the dishevelled 'collar of [Lucy's] night-dress' which, worn as Imogen, was 'turned down by Iachimo, and now – on Lucy – was replaced 'close around her throat'.²⁵⁹

Stoker's obsession with liminal states is also evident in *Dracula's* juxtaposition of animated and non-animated bodies: Mrs Westenra and Lucy are found 'on the bed', with the living daughter paradoxically 'more drawn' even than her 'white' mother.²⁶⁰ After Lucy's death, her other self, Mina, is alive in her marital bed, 'white-clad' and drinking from Dracula's 'bare chest' while her husband lies in a 'stupor' from which he initially wakes only to 'partial consciousness'.²⁶¹ Mina describes herself subsequently as having attempted to 'wake Jonathan, but [...] he slept so soundly' before discovering Dracula's presence. Again, Mina's nightdress is important; not merely 'turned down' or 'dishevelled', it is bloodstained, leaving Mina in 'helpless attitude and

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

²⁵⁷ Ibid., 87–90.

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

²⁵⁹ Ibid., 87.

²⁶⁰ Ibid., 137.

²⁶¹ Ibid., 262–263.

disarray'.²⁶² Dracula's assault mingles Iachimo and Cloten's fantasies: Dracula violates Mina in her marital bed, with her husband metaphorically 'on the ground', unable to intervene. Mina subsequently believes herself Jonathan's 'worst enemy' and 'unclean'.²⁶³ This evokes Lucrece (with whom Iachimo identifies Imogen, alongside his self-fashioning as Tarquin)'s belief that she has committed a 'cureless crime', has 'wronged' her husband, and possesses 'foul-defiled blood'.²⁶⁴ Jonathan, by refusing to believe this of Mina, rewrites Posthumus's response to Iachimo's claims. The evocation of Lucrece intensifies with Mina's subsequent report of Dracula's threat to 'dash [Jonathan's] brains out', recalling Tarquin's threat of defaming Lucrece's husband Collatine.²⁶⁵ Moreover, while the juxtaposition of Dracula and Mina (itself restaging the previous Dracula/Lucy encounters we witness and imagine) intensifies the Iachimo/Imogen bedchamber scene by making the husband present in the marital bed which Iachimo imaginatively and Dracula symbolically violates, the juxtaposition of bodies has a source in *Cymbeline*, where the truly dead, decapitated Cloten is the 'headless man' beside the ambiguous body of 'Fidele', who although the living Imogen, has just experienced funerary rites and burial.²⁶⁶ Mina takes 'a sleeping draught' which fails to work; before 'death' and burial as Fidele, Imogen swallows the trance-inducing potion Cornelius substituted for the queen's poison.²⁶⁷ Since Imogen believes the drug to be medicine, Imogen (like Mina) also regards her drug's effect as a failure.

²⁶² Sprague, 61; *Dracula*, 263.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, 266.

²⁶⁴ *The Rape of Lucrece*, ll. 772; 819; 1029.

²⁶⁵ *Dracula*, 267; *Lucrece* ll. 519–20.

²⁶⁶ *Cymbeline* IV.2.308.

²⁶⁷ *Dracula*, 266.

Analysing *Cymbeline* as a potential source for *Dracula* offers a new reading of *Dracula* as a prolonged meditation on, even obsession with, the female body in states of impaired consciousness. Lucy's real significance is as sleeping, unconscious, and dead; if these states deny her agency (her 'sleep-walking', although an 'old habit', becomes the forced response to mesmerism), they are certainly the states in which she is surrounded by activity.²⁶⁸ From an Imogen desired, fantasised about and assaulted by Iachimo, mourned and buried by her brothers, abandoned, struck down and reclaimed by her husband, Stoker creates a heroine who experiences a multiplicity of all these encounters: admired, desired, decorated (with the garlic-flowers), transfused, stripped, washed, dried, nursed and grieved by her 'little band'; violated by Dracula; and ultimately buried, uncovered, hated, attacked, kissed and beheaded again after death. Evoking the Lyceum *Cymbeline*'s eroticised liminal states, Stoker restages the Irving/Terry bedchamber scene in one further crucial way. Arguably, if Iachimo becomes Dracula, then each of Lucy's suitors also becomes Iachimo. Just as Iachimo's observation of and assault on Imogen is itself a fantasy of the sexual intercourse he desires, the various blood transfusions, observations, physical and therapeutic acts which the men who desire Lucy perpetrate on her transpose the marital consummation they all desire, but fail to achieve.

Divine women and 'sham women': *An Union With Imogen*

A simultaneously sexually desirable and ambiguously-dead Imogen appears in Schütz Wilson's *An Union With Imogen* (December 1896). *Union* is the testimony, via reported speech and a letter, of the 'depraved' Z, framed by the narrator's quasi-medical assessment of him. Through Z's 'great intimacy with' and 'love of William [Shakespeare]', he is able to achieve 'blissful

²⁶⁸ Ibid., 70.

union' with Imogen via visions of 'most spiritual, pure and passionate wedlock' brokered with Shakespeare's permission.²⁶⁹ To Z's great grief, this permission is withdrawn when Shakespeare cannot 'find in Heaven any woman that could be compared with Imogen'. Subsequently, Imogen is 'rapt up to Heaven in a hansom of fire'.²⁷⁰

Imogen's afterlife was not a new theme. However, Faucit's figuring of the 'quenched' Imogen is an unstaged but psychologically necessary response to the 'injuries past healing' Faucit felt Imogen experienced onstage.²⁷¹ Faucit presents her narrative as an hermeneutical necessity, asking rhetorically if 'this delicately nurtured creature' could 'go through her terrible ordeal unscathed'?²⁷² Accordingly, Imogen's chastened loved ones must 'watch [Imogen's life] with straining eyes, until it

"Melts from
The smallness of a gnat to air; and then
Will turn their eyes and weep."²⁷³

Schütz Wilson's narrative has different aims, and is arguably a specific response to Terry's performance. In late 1896, Ellen Terry and Imogen were interchangeable in the public imagination. 'Imogen', a poem published in *Speaker*, typifies this, asking 'Who loves not Imogen?' and concluding 'the fair/The finely faithful, or the sweetly merry' is 'Imogen herself – or Ellen Terry'.²⁷⁴ Faucit's etherealising of Imogen predates Terry's performance; however, Campbell's comment on Terry's performance as one which 'had just come from the moon' and 'must presently arrive at the gates of Paradise', as well as journalistic descriptions of her as

²⁶⁹ *An Union with Imogen*, 615; 617.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁷¹ *Some Reflections*, 276.

²⁷² *Ibid.*, 278.

²⁷³ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁴ S.E.W., 'Imogen', *Speaker* (31 October 1896), 468.

‘heavenly’, and a ‘creature of fire and air, who hovered over the stage without appearing to touch it’, indicate that *fin-de-siècle* audiences also ascribed ethereal and transcendent qualities to Terry’s performance.²⁷⁵ Moreover, Z’s description of Imogen as ‘the fairest, tenderest, sweetest, noblest type of ideal womanhood’ reflects the critical commentaries on Imogen provoked by Terry’s Lyceum performance.²⁷⁶ Given the temporal and semantic proximity to accounts of Terry’s performance, it would be extremely hard for 1896 readers not to conflate the two. Both Z and Terry’s critics emphasise Terry as ‘pure, true woman’ possessing ‘magic charm’ – the ‘indescribable charm’ which Pemberton ascribed to Terry in his 1902 biography.²⁷⁷ However, in the second half of *Union*, this adulation catalyses the text’s most shocking element: Z’s vitriolic, misogynist discourse. Like Posthumus, Z leaves England for continental Europe, and compares foreign and ‘New’ women with Imogen. The former are ‘heifers’, the ‘mock woman; the sham woman; a noisome parody upon the glory, the beauty, the loveliness of’ the ‘genuine woman’.²⁷⁸ For Z, to be other than ‘the real woman, the divine and Shakespearian woman’ is to be ‘spurious [...] a mockery, a delusion, and a snare’.²⁷⁹ Although the physicalities of such women vary, being ‘meagre or obese, stringy or dumpy’, all are expressly modern; ‘the “New Woman” is new; but the true woman is as old as loveliness and light’.²⁸⁰ However, Z’s rage encompasses both the scholarly, Ibsenite ‘New’ woman and the ‘grimy, unkempt’ species of aesthetic woman, ‘a faded reminiscence of Maudle-and-Postlethwaite aestheticism’.²⁸¹ Maudle and Postlethwaite (originally Prigsby) were the ‘preeminent dandy-aesthete painter’ and poet created by *Punch* satirist Du Maurier. Although Du Maurier claimed the characters satirised ‘a whole school’, as Denisoff

²⁷⁵ *Some Letters*, 436; ‘Cymbeline Again’, *National Observer* (10 October 1896), 615; *Time Was*, 287.

²⁷⁶ *Union*, 615.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, T. Edgar Pemberton, *Ellen Terry and her sisters*. (London: Arthur Pearson, 1902), 20.

²⁷⁸ *Union*, 618.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 619.

notes, ‘the Wilde influence is undeniable’.²⁸² Moreover, Terry was the subject of two of Wilde’s poems, and was central to aesthetic culture (as I discussed in my chapter on Lady Macbeth). That Z could eviscerate the aesthetic woman without any attack on Terry being implied indicates how far Terry’s Shakespearean image could travel. At the end of Z’s diatribe, Imogen, the ‘divine woman’ moves from a personal to a political entity.²⁸³ Z uses Imogen to map a battleground of Victorian gender controls, where ‘one dear, charming woman will throw into shade thousands of deleterious “heifers”’; one divine woman shines into obscurity *millions* of dim, loathly heifers’ in a kind of spectacular eugenics that recalls the dichotomy between the spotlighted actress and the darkened stage or auditorium.²⁸⁴

Crucially, however, *Union*’s framing narrative, while deeming Z ‘depraved’, doesn’t specifically pathologise his misogyny.²⁸⁵ Instead, the narrator explicitly agrees that the ‘heifers’ or ‘mock-turtle women’ (the narrator’s own term) ‘illustrate the occasionally sarcastic moods of the Unseen Powers’, and concludes that Z speaks ‘a good deal of truth’.²⁸⁶ Women who disagree with Z are obviously ‘heifer[s]’; ‘really charming, good women’ will not object to Z.²⁸⁷ Misquoting *Hamlet*, the narrator concludes that the ‘galled jade may wince; but *their* withers are unwrung’.²⁸⁸ *Union* thus reflects *fin-de-siècle* gender commentary (both social and Shakespearean) at its most conservative and regressive. Simultaneously, *Union*’s juxtaposition of archaic, quasi-Biblical language with thematics of spirituality, mental illness, sexuality and profound self-consciousness render *Union* a recognisably Decadent text in many ways. Although purportedly deploring the

²⁸² Dennis Denisoff, *Aestheticism and Sexual Parody* (Cambridge: 2006), 83.

²⁸³ *Union*, 619.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 618.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 619.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁸ *Hamlet* III.2.237–8, misquoted *Union*, 619.

‘New’ culture as the ‘mean product’ of minds ‘steeped in brain exhaustion and hysteria’, *Union*’s form as the purported testimony of a mentally ill man necessarily contributes to *fin-de-siècle* discourse on madness.²⁸⁹ The disjunction between conservative and Decadent tendencies indicates how far a single performance – Terry’s – has been pulled in two directions by a single transformative work: as ratification of an antecedent female ideal, and as a bearer of Gothic, transformative potential.

This emphasis on Terry’s personal possibilities coexists with *Union*’s textual debt to *Cymbeline*’s wider plot. Z’s fantasy of erotic, conjugal access to Imogen reiterates Iachimo and Cloten’s desires. Fascinatingly, like *Dracula*, *Union* also makes marriage an ambiguous, permeable state. Z and Imogen’s ‘wedlock’ is apparently nullified by Imogen’s recall to heaven.²⁹⁰ Two contradictory reasons are given for dissolving the marriage: that ‘there is neither marrying nor giving in marriage’ in heaven, and ‘William’s’ advancing of a ‘prior and superior claim’ and ability to promote Imogen’s ‘permanent happiness and welfare’.²⁹¹ William’s stated ‘power’ to ‘offer’ Imogen ‘a better establishment’ than Z could evokes the language of marriage settlements, despite Z’s initial positioning of Imogen as Shakespeare’s ‘fairest offspring’, simultaneously child and creation.²⁹² William is both ‘always a giver of good gifts to them that love him’ and arbitrator of the ‘delicate and very peculiar’ situation.²⁹³ Transgressively, however, William compensates Z for withdrawing Imogen by a ‘promise’ that he and Z should ‘live together in even greater intimacy’ than Z ‘had enjoyed with him heretofore’.²⁹⁴ At the very least, this

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

²⁹⁰ Ibid., 615.

²⁹¹ Ibid., 615–617.

²⁹² Ibid., 617.

²⁹³ Biblical allusion. See: Matthew (7:11); Luke (11:13); James (1:17); *Union* 616.

²⁹⁴ *Union*, 617.

presents the homosocial bond as more than compensating for the sexual loss of Imogen, reiterating Kosofsky Sedgwick's erotic triangle. Fascinatingly, the end of *Union* sees the 'truly widowed' Z left in the Imogen role, receiving in parting, in a reversal of *Cymbeline*, the 'royal bracelet' Posthumus gave Imogen.²⁹⁵ Ultimately, *Union* and *Dracula* meditate on what makes a marriage, and specifically on what makes a wife. These are concerns that *Cymbeline*, in its exploration of queenship, fidelity, motherhood and forgiveness generates, and that a consideration of Terry's performed 'wifely loyalty' must also negotiate.

Legacy and succession: Ellen Terry and Judi Dench

Terry negotiated Imogen's connotations for the final time in her lectures, revealing a disjunction between a self-abnegating, ideally wifely princess and the overarching feminist project identified by Kelly. It was the former version of Terry's Imogen that would survive. Despite Terry likening *all* Shakespearean heroines to her Edwardian 'modern revolutionaries', Imogen carried Terry's connotations of embodied wifeliness and charm into the twentieth century, remaining in 1957 'that most ideally Victorian of all Shakespeare's covetable gallery of wifely heroines'.²⁹⁶ In 1979, David Jones directed *Cymbeline* for the Royal Shakespeare Company, with Judi Dench as Imogen and Roger Rees as Posthumus. Writing in 1985, Roger Rees directly compared Dench with Terry, arguing that just as Terry's 'charm and gaiety' made it 'natural' for Irving to stage the 1896 *Cymbeline*, 'in 1979, our Imogen was Judi Dench and our premise was exactly the same'.²⁹⁷ The actresses become interchangeable; Rees's early rehearsal nerves are overcome as 'Ellen Terry held my hand for comfort, or rather Judi Dench did (the same thing really)', and Rees uses

²⁹⁵ Ibid., 617.

²⁹⁶ Derek Granger, 'Cymbeline', *Financial Times* (3 July 1957), 3.

²⁹⁷ Roger Rees, 'Posthumus in *Cymbeline*', *Players of Shakespeare* (Cambridge: 1985), 139–152, 144.

Henry James's 1896 review of Terry's 'young wife youthfully in love' to describe Dench's final performance.²⁹⁸ Ultimately, Rees is identifying not merely an embodied tradition of choosing star vehicles, but the equivalent cultural capital of Terry and Dench, based on a mix of personality, critical recognition, and professional skill. Ned Sherrin and Dench's biographer John Miller both identify Terry as Dench's 'theatrical ancestor', with Sherrin stressing the supreme importance of 'public perceptions'.²⁹⁹ Although the 1979 *Cymbeline* was not entirely successful, critical descriptions of Dench as 'Blonde, impassioned and comely [...] a divine Imogen' and a 'beautiful and winning Imogen' who 'conquered' J.C. Trewin also recall the reviews of 1896.³⁰⁰ However, if Dench cited more immediate influences in the form of Peggy Ashcroft, and didn't have 'any affection' for the play, her autobiography stresses the importance of 'keep[ing] the memories of our predecessors alive', mentioning Terry's 'work' by name alongside Siddons and Irving, and praising 'the mystery surrounding certain actors'.³⁰¹ This is not what Terry expected: her draft of a lecture entitled 'Acting + Actions' concludes that all tradition, however celebrated or useful as a 'reference book', may 'seem worthless in fifty years'.³⁰² In Rees's 1985 account, however, the resonance between Terry and Dench's personal possibilities allowed Terry's performance to define a century of Imogen's performance history, at least for one Posthumus.

Rather than revealing any innovative interpretation of Imogen, Terry's *fin-de-siècle* reception indicates how 'womanliness' remained the gold standard for criticising female performance. However, there are hints of change elsewhere. The *SRI*'s first feature on the Lyceum *Cymbeline*

²⁹⁸ Rees, 'Posthumus', 144–145; Henry James, review of *Cymbeline* for *Harper's Weekly*, quoted 'Posthumus', 144.

²⁹⁹ John Miller, *Judi Dench* (New York: Welcome Rain, 2000), 161; Ned Sherrin, 'Like no other' in Miller (ed.) *Darling Judi* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 2005), 137–148, 137.

³⁰⁰ Michael Billington and J.C. Trewin, quoted Miller, *Judi Dench*, 163.

³⁰¹ Judi Dench, *And Furthermore* (London: Phoenix, 2011), 278.

³⁰² Ellen Terry, MS lecture draft entitled 'Acting + Actions', British Library Loan MS A1,311, f.2.

asserts the value of staged Shakespeare to the move for hermeneutical change. Unusual stagings demonstrated that ‘characters may be analysed and interpreted in a manner different from that which we have conceived for ourselves’.³⁰³ Overall, the article insists that stage representation could ‘aid [...] appreciation’ of plays even within very conservative criticism, becoming ‘of the highest value even to the most earnest Shakespeare student’.³⁰⁴ This inversion of the Romantic anti-stage prejudice is arguably most successful because Terry’s performance didn’t significantly disrupt Romantic tradition; asserting the value of staged Shakespeare carried the least cultural risk when the staging was widely-accepted.

Terry’s Imogen is a useful barometer for *fin-de-siècle* theatre criticism. Notably, critics recognised that ‘Every age refashions’ Shakespeare’s plays and ‘gets its own account of them’, and that ‘how precisely [...] the Shakespeare of *Cymbeline*, affect[s] us now at the Lyceum’ was an important indicator of a wider cultural response.³⁰⁵ That Terry received such homogenous praise in a decade increasingly marked by controversy over stage representation, and by the recognition that Shakespeare’s characters could be mutable, ‘convey[ing] different impressions to different minds’ indicates both the extent of her achievement and her unparalleled ability to embody and fulfil multiple, simultaneous cultural desires. In particular, the perceived sexualisation of the Imogen/Iachimo sequences worked because they expressed desire for sexual access to the actress (and to Terry) that had always existed. Terry’s reception demonstrates that the most successful interpretations of Shakespeare’s heroines had to be simultaneously compatible with tradition and inflected with contemporary concerns.

³⁰³ Untitled item, *SRI* (22 September 1896), 4.

³⁰⁴ Ibid.

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

The broad, transformative and enduring cultural significances of Terry's performance in *Cymbeline* reveal how *fin-de-siècle* Shakespeare generated not merely immediate journalistic and poetic responses. Such was Shakespeare's centrality to *fin-de-siècle* culture that a single performance could successfully cross forms and genres in literary works created in response. Reassessing Terry's involvement in *Cymbeline* both offers us a new reading of the *fin-de-siècle*'s best-known Gothic novel, and, via the sources for Terry's preparation, clarifies the intensely collaborative relationships at the Lyceum.

Chapter Five:

‘The eternal suffragette’: New Women and a new century

Genre and gender

This chapter interrogates the *fin-de-siècle* and Edwardian histories of four Shakespeare plays: *All's Well That Ends Well*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *The Taming of the Shrew* and *The Winter's Tale*. All are generically problematic. Although Folio-classified comedies, *The Winter's Tale*, *Shrew* and *All's Well* are generically destabilised by responses to their female protagonists. *All's Well* and *The Winter's Tale* are tragedies if we find Bertram and Leontes still unworthy of Helena and Hermione. *Shrew*, meanwhile has the ludic Sly induction and farcical set-pieces to complicate responses to Katherine's final capitulation. Just as *Shrew* flirts with farce, *All's Well* and *The Winter's Tale* invert the taming play by bringing the husbands to heel. *Antony and Cleopatra* reworks the epic genre; depending on where Cleopatra is situated on a scale from goddess to 'gypsy', the play can be either the mutual destruction of doomed lovers, or the tragic corrupting of an outstanding soldier. Helena, Hermione and Cleopatra fake their own deaths to provoke male remorse; *The Winter's Tale* includes the real death of Mamilius, the casualty of male jealousy. A strong vein of misogyny runs through each play. The heroines are variously rejected, abused or derided by male characters. Katherine is starved, and Hermione imprisoned by her husband; Helena is abandoned by hers, and Antony calls Cleopatra a 'boggler' in comparison to his wife, 'the gem of women'.¹ Two of the heroines seek sexual autonomy: Helena

¹ *Antony and Cleopatra*,; III.13.115; 13.

asks Parolles how a woman may lose her virginity to her own liking (an improper concern for Jacobean women, let alone Victorian), while Cleopatra has had two high-profile, married lovers. At the *fin de siècle* and beyond, the status of these heroines was fiercely contested, amidst debates over the nature and agency of woman, and over marriage, a central preoccupation in all four plays. While all the plays had the potential to articulate *fin-de-siècle* concerns, Shaw-led theatre history has identified *All's Well's* Helena as a provocative, Ibsenite figure.² In fact, Shakespeare's most important intersection with the New Drama and the most definitive representation of *fin-de-siècle* femininity must be found elsewhere.

Shaw and *All's Well*: the making of the modern Helena

In late January 1895, Shaw attended the Irving Dramatic Club's amateur performance of *All's Well*. Shaw perceived *All's Well* as Shakespeare's gender-radical 'experiment', repeated 'three hundred years later by Ibsen in *A Doll's House*'. Both playwrights, Shaw argued, made their 'hero a perfectly ordinary young man, whose unimaginative prejudices and selfish conventionality' rendered him a 'mean figure' against 'the nobler nature of his wife'.³ For Shaw, Helena embodied both 'exquisite tenderness' and the accomplishments of a 'lady doctor'.⁴ In the latter role, she became analogous to an emerging generation of female professionals: women discovering and enacting, via the fulfilment of work and activism, Nora Helmer's 'duty to myself'.⁵

² Shaw, 'Poor Shakespear!' *Saturday Review* (2 February 1895), *Plays and Players* (Oxford: 1952), 12–14.

³ Ibid.

⁴ 'Poor Shakespear!', 12.

⁵ 'Poor Shakespear!' 12; Ibsen, *A Doll's House* trans. McFarlane, in *The Oxford Ibsen* (Oxford: 1977), 282.

Shaw's 1895 review constitutes the lasting legacy of *All's Well's* nineteenth-century hermeneutics. His perception of *All's Well* as radical, Ibsenite and consequently hated heavily informs twentieth-century accounts of the play as both historically unpalatable and virtually unstaged. In 1981, Carol Chillington Rutter claimed the play 'has no stage history worth mentioning before 1916'; in 1984, Styan went even further, claiming *All's Well* had 'no theatrical history worth mentioning until a few years ago', and was a 'play without a past'.⁶ The rise of directors' theatre has led to more twentieth-century interest in Shakespeare's marginal or marginalised characters and plays. As a 'virtually new play', *All's Well* enables the establishment of an innovative directorial voice within the privileged enclave of the Shakespeare culture industry.⁷ The play's novelty is also potentially lucrative, attracting audiences unlikely to have seen the play before.⁸

Recent critical editions of *All's Well* evince more interest in the times *All's Well* was not staged, than in the details of when it was. Describing the 1916 Stratford Memorial Theatre production (the supposed beginning of *All's Well's* significant performance history), the RSC's 2011 edition of the play unfortunately mistakes the central casting: Florence Glossop-Harris, not Constance Benson, was Frank Benson's Helena.⁹ Rutter attributes *All's Well's* minimal performance history to 'a historical antagonism' that 'labelled [Helena] immodest and ambitious'.¹⁰ *All's Well's* radicalism, and misogynist opposition to Helena, are sites of cultural investment in modern Shakespeare criticism and performance, with historicist, feminist and commercial agendas at

⁶ *Clamorous Voices*, 73; J.L. Styan, *Shakespeare in Performance: All's Well That Ends Well* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1984), 1.

⁷ Styan, 1.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ *All's Well That Ends Well (The RSC Shakespeare)* Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen (eds), (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2011).

¹⁰ *Clamorous Voices*, 73.

play. In 1981, reviewing Harriet Walter's *Helena*, James Fenton demonstrated the persistence of Shaw's arguments by echoing them. Fenton claimed Shakespeare wrote *Helena* as 'the woman of the future for the actress of the future', just as Shaw saw Shakespeare as anticipating Ibsen by 'three hundred years'.¹¹ Walter's own account of her performance uses recognisably feminist rhetoric: her *Helena* is 'proving something in a man's world' by enacting 'properties of maleness' including 'decision-making, pursuing, wooing'.¹² Determined to 'clear away the heroine's reputation', Walter perceived *Helena* as a modern 'female achiever', 'undermine[d]' and 'marginalise[d]' both by fellow-characters and antecedent critics less enlightened than Shaw. Fenton, echoing Shaw's conception of *All's Well's* clairvoyance, claimed 'Shakespeare actually wrote the part of *Helena*' with 'Harriet Walter in mind'.¹³ It is ironic that this late twentieth-century feminist narrative is indebted to one male critic's account. Shaw's self-fashioning as theatre history's iconoclastic narrator has been as determinative for the myth of the Victorian *Helena* as for scholarly narratives of Ellen Terry's subjugation to Irving. Crucially, Shaw's account of *Helena* was not upheld by the emerging, Edwardian generation of 'Ibsenite' women, the real 'women of the future': suffragists. For Muriel Gray in 1911, *Helena* generated 'infinite discussion', but no 'sympathy', having won Bertram via a 'deliberate, intricate and hardly defensible deception'.¹⁴ Equally, Ellen Terry, AFL member, lecturer to suffragist groups and fundraiser for Edith Craig's Pioneer Players, considered *Helena* a 'door-mat' and 'really despicable'.¹⁵

¹¹ *Royal Shakespeare Company: a complete record of the year's work* (Stratford: RSC Publications, 1981), 163; 'Poor Shakespear!', 12.

¹² *Clamorous Voices*, 75.

¹³ *Royal Shakespeare Company* (1981), 163.

¹⁴ Muriel Gray, 'Shakespeare's women', *The Englishwoman* 11.31 (1911), 75–84, 78.

¹⁵ 'Pioneer Players', *Vote* (3 June 1911), 69; Ellen Terry, *Four Lectures*, 151.

Retrospectively, *All's Well* looks like it should have obsessed the Victorians. Late-Victorian culture contested and reassessed 'The Marriage Question' in print; on the mainstream Shakespearean stage, late-Victorian concerns with marriage emerged via celebration of the Kendals' wedding-day *As You Like It*, anxiety over Terry's shockingly uxorial Lady Macbeth, and adoration of her Imogen, the ideal princess-bride. In the 1890s, two of Wilde's society comedies, *Lady Windermere's Fan* and *An Ideal Husband* see young couples risk and then rescue their marriage, balancing honesty with secrets. In 1893, Wilde's *A Woman of No Importance* interrogated a 'fallen woman's' obligation to marry her child's father, while in the same year, Pinero's definitive *fin-de-siècle* drama, *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray*, asked whether a fallen woman could ever successfully make a legitimate marriage.

Thematically, *All's Well* contributes to the debate by completely inverting marriage's expected mechanisms. As Zitner notes, *All's Well* ostensibly 'validates patriarchy' in its generic resemblance to fairy tale, wherein 'weddings of princes to kitchen-maids' augment woman's status via her husband.¹⁶ A 'male Helenus', Zitner argues, seems more offensive.¹⁷ Certainly, Shakespearean heroines who 'marry down' generally end up forfeiting political power: *Cymbeline*'s Imogen is demoted in the British succession, while *As You Like It*'s Celia begins as a ducal heir and ends as 'Aliena' once Oliver vows to 'live and die a shepherd'.¹⁸ However, Bertram's loss of agency dramatically destabilises *All's Well*'s fairy-tale patriarchy. As Aveling and Marx noted in *The Woman Question* (1887), Helena's choice of a husband overthrew the

¹⁶ Sheldon Zitner, *All's Well That Ends Well* (Twayne's New Critical Introductions to Shakespeare) (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989), 95.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ *Cymbeline*, V.5.374; *As You Like It*, V.2.12. Malvolio's desire to marry up is also ridiculed as unacceptable in *Twelfth Night*.

‘rigorous social rule that from the man only must come the first proffer of affection, the proposal for marriage’.¹⁹

Heightening the tension of an already extraordinary situation, Bertram’s response – pleading that the King ‘give me leave to use/The help of mine own eyes’ – echoes not merely Hermia’s wish that Egeus ‘look’d but with my eyes’ but a host of Shakespeare’s assertive heroines who defy male authority to marry men forbidden by rank (Imogen), religion (Jessica) or vendetta (Juliet).²⁰ Crucially, Bertram is emasculated by being denied use of the male gaze. Bertram’s resemblance to Hermia is especially significant. The King of France is both Bertram’s monarch and replacement ‘father’; he thus conflates the Act I functions of *Dream*’s Theseus and Egeus, before whom Hermia must ‘plead her thoughts’.²¹ Both Hermia and Bertram flee their respective courts, Bertram for military action forbidden due to his youth. Similarly, Theseus’s idea that Hermia is in the woods to perform a loyal ‘rite of May’ is merely wishful thinking. Shakespeare rewards the defiant daughter. The soldier son, meanwhile, is humiliated and returned to the hitherto ‘unwished yoke’ of an unwanted partner’.²² Age is also key. Like Hermia, ‘young Bertram’ embodies ‘unharden’d youth’ in the French court.²³ Both Bertram and Helena are sufficiently young to require guardianship after their fathers’ deaths (Bertram is ‘evermore in subjection’, while Helena is subject to the Countess’s ‘overlooking’).²⁴ However, characters repeatedly stress

¹⁹ Edward Aveling and Eleanor Marx, *The Woman Question* (London: Swan Sonnenschein, Lowry & Co., 1887), 9.

²⁰ *All’s Well*, II.3.107–8; *Dream* I.1.56.

²¹ *Dream*, I.1.61.

²² *Dream*, I.1.81.

²³ *All’s Well*, I.2.19; *Dream*, I.1.35.

²⁴ *All’s Well*, I.1.5; I.1.36.

Bertram's extreme youth and inexperience, and as an 'unseason'd courtier' and 'boy' horrified by marriage, he seems the more childish partner.²⁵

Further inverting traditional courtship narratives, Bertram must be 'doubly won' through consummation, subverting the traditional wedding-night.²⁶ Victorian wedding-night literature tended to assume both the sexually knowledgeable man's responsibility for bringing the virginal woman from a pre-sexual to a sexual state, and the incipient dangers of female fear, disease and even insanity if he failed to perform his task.²⁷ Conversely, in *All's Well*, Bertram engages in the sexual encounter of the bed-trick in ignorance of what is occurring. Despite Helen's virginity, she has more knowledge than Bertram, and achieves her sexual agenda (of conception).

Making the bed-trick even more problematic, Bertram has pre-emptively and explicitly refused consent to sex with Helena (via his letter), and is thus effectively raped (although not in Jacobean terms). Marital sexual consent generated much Victorian anxiety. Until 1991, English law maintained a husband's legal right to rape his wife; however, John Stuart Mill described wives' sexual subjugation as 'the lowest degradation of a human being', as early as 1859.²⁸ By 1871, one American marital advice book condemned wedding-night sex that was not 'obviously invited and shared' as 'little else than legalised rape'; as late-Victorian gynaecology increasingly asserted wives' right to sexual pleasure, views of marital rape and conjugal rights were slowly shifting.²⁹ The outcome of *Regina v. Jackson* (1891) saw the Court of Appeal decree that Mr. Jackson had

²⁵ *All's Well*, I.1.5, 36; I.1.67; II.3.121.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, V.3.308.

²⁷ See Chapter One, 38, and Joanna Bourke, 'Sexual Violence', *Victorian Studies* (Spring 2008), 319–346.

²⁸ 'Marital rape', Rape Crisis England and Wales (13 April 2012), [<http://www.rapecrisis.org.uk/maritalrape2.php>, accessed 13 April 2012]; J.S. Mill, 'The Subjection of Women' (1859) in *Three Essays* (Oxford: 1912), 522.

²⁹ Nicholas Francis Cooke, *Satan in Society* (Cincinnati: CF Vent, 1871), 146; see Chapter Four, 218–219.

no right to detain or imprison his wife against her will, and that a 'wife's right to bodily autonomy had to include the right to leave a husband'.³⁰ However, the populace of Clitheroe, where the Jacksons lived, responded by forming a 'mob' and trying to burn Mrs. Jackson's effigy.³¹ Meanwhile, American commentators increasingly linked marital rape with degeneracy. In 1867, Horatio Storer, the American doctor who created the world's first Gynaecological Society (which strongly influenced British thinking), described coercive husbands as 'erotomaniacs' and 'madmen'.³² By the *fin de siècle*, criminologist Henri Colin saw them as covered in 'the stigmata of degeneracy'.³³ In this increasingly emotive, anxiety-plagued discourse, the first marital bed became, as Joanna Bourke notes, a 'site of much terror'.³⁴ Again, *All's Well* emerges as a play potentially able to disturb and disrupt already complex Victorian narratives, positioning the groom in the historically feminised position of powerless, unwitting sexual 'instrument'.³⁵ While suffragists including Susan B. Antony promoted 'voluntary motherhood', *All's Well*'s Victorian audiences would have encountered Bertram becoming a father against his will.³⁶

Even more alarmingly for the Victorians, Bertram's rape is linked to Helena's economic and social volition, as an itinerant female buying up the 'friendly help' of other disenfranchised women.³⁷ Helena's inversion of the bed-trick, commonly used to preserve a heroine's virginity, creates a paradoxical sexual identity. Neely argues that Helena becomes both the exceptional,

³⁰ Mary Lyndon Shanley, *Feminism, Marriage and the Law* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1993), 185.

³¹ 'The Clitheroe Abduction Case', *Times* (30 March 1891), 4.

³² Horatio Storer, *Is It I?* (Boston: Lee & Shepherd, 1867), 107.

³³ Henri Colin, 'Mental and Physical State of Criminals Convicted of Sexual Crime', *Alienist and Neurologist* (1898), 659–662, 659.

³⁴ 'Sexual Violence', 421.

³⁵ Zitner, 94.

³⁶ 'Sexual Violence', 422. This would not have been the Jacobean attitude to Bertram.

³⁷ *All's Well*, III.7.15.

‘clever’ seducer, staging the sexual encounter and achieving access to her husband, and the ‘wench’ Bertram desires: sexually accessible, unthreatening and insufficiently individuated for her husband to distinguish her from the woman she imitates.³⁸ As Kendal’s reception as Rosalind and early public self-fashioning indicate, the Victorians were fascinated by the paradoxical female ability simultaneously to stage both sexual knowledge and innocence. Helena’s implicitly theatrical imitation of Diana, alongside her other impersonations (grieving daughter, pilgrim) imply histrionic ability, potentially refracting audience anxieties about the actress. Helena’s enjoyment of the bed-trick is inevitably loaded. For Katherine Mansfield in 1921, both Helena’s ‘persistence’ and ability to ‘lie in Diana’s bed’ and enjoy ‘embraces meant for Diana’ were ‘terrifying’.³⁹ Zitner attributes Mansfield’s revulsion to feminist horror at Helena’s lack of ‘dignity and self-respect’, which should have ‘precluded’ the bed-trick on ideological grounds.⁴⁰ Arguably, however, the intensity of Mansfield’s revulsion – she can imagine ‘nothing more sickening’ – indicates a more visceral response: what is ‘sickening’ is Helena ‘enjoying the embraces’. This is a transgressive sexuality in which Mansfield posits Helena as simultaneously persistent seducer, ‘pegging away at the odious Bertram’; whore, ‘deliver[ed]’ to Bertram to ‘fill the time’, and client, ‘giving Diana a present afterwards’, in exchange for services.⁴¹ Anxiety over these transgressive sexual identities clearly persisted well beyond the *fin de siècle*.

Further complicating *All’s Well*’s subversion of sexual and marital rituals, Helena commits her radical actions in pursuit of a good woman’s entirely conservative goals. These include marriage

³⁸ Carol Thomas Neely, *Broken Nuptials* (London: Yale UP, 1985), 78.

³⁹ Katherine Mansfield, diary entry (4 July 1921). Katherine Mansfield Society. *KM Today* (2008). [<http://www.katherinemansfieldsociety.org/4-jul-1921/>, accessed 1 July 2013.]

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

for love, a legitimate heir, and upheld wedding vows: as well as fulfilling Bertram's challenge, the bed-trick prevents his adultery. Diana foregrounds the consequences of Bertram's immorality for himself. If Bertram 'loved his wife', he would be 'honest and goodlier'; more acceptable not only to Diana, but to the religious ideal of chastity her name indicates.⁴² However, rather than dissuading Bertram from spiritual self-destruction, Helena allows Bertram to perform the covenant-breaking seduction of Diana without any danger of success: a choice analogous to Edgar's decision to let Gloucester enact an anti-Biblical, suicidal jump from his 'cliff' in a safe physical environment. Both actions, the plays imply, will reconcile their objects to 'heaven'; Gloucester vows to 'bear/Affliction' and Diana predicts Bertram will ultimately 'thank [...] heaven' for the bed-trick that binds him to Helena.⁴³ As a wife who defies sexual and societal convention to manipulate her husband, withdraw his sexual prerogative and humiliate him, for what she sees as his good, Helena is as shocking a version of the 'good wife' as Terry's uxorious, loving Lady Macbeth. Given the debates which Terry's wifely, siren-like Lady Macbeth catalysed, Helena seems, in this reading, an even more subversive reinterpretation of the good Victorian wife, and a potentially significant contributor to contemporary reappraisals of marriage.

The twentieth-century propensity for costuming *All's Well* in turn-of-the-century style indicate that reading *All's Well* as the Victorians' and Edwardians' nightmare play has proved persuasive and attractive for recent theatre practitioners. Trevor Nunn produced 'Shakespeare's most Chekhovian play' in 1981; Carol Rutter also deemed *All's Well* 'like Chekhov', who died in

⁴² *All's Well*, III.5.78–83.

⁴³ *Lear*, IV.6.75–6; *All's Well*, IV.2.67.

1904.⁴⁴ Marianne Elliott's 2009 production for the National mingled high Victorian fashion – Michelle Terry's Helena wore a crinoline – with visual allusions to fairy tale, a genre whose *fin-de-siècle* exponents included Oscar Wilde, writer and illustrator Laurence Housman (brother of A.E. Housman), and Vernon Lee.⁴⁵ Other recent directors, including Daniel Sullivan (Shakespeare in the Park, 2011) have also favoured the Edwardian era to mingle 'exquisite' aesthetics and 'a formal world on the edge of transition' – a recognisably Shavian concept.⁴⁶

Conversely, the 'party atmosphere' Globe's farcical, Tudor-costumed 2011 production failed to convince Michael Billington.⁴⁷ Billington's review is crammed with lexical signifiers of the Victorian staging he would have preferred: he mourns the absence of 'elegiac' style and 'sombre beauty', 'mature sadness' and 'melancholy' (all recognisably *fin-de-siècle* themes); criticises Ellie Piercy's Helena against 'the character Shaw so much admired as a prototype Ibsenite heroine'; and closes with a quotation from John Gielgud (descended from the Victorian Terrys) regarding a production of *The Importance of Being Earnest*.⁴⁸ This persistent association of staging, costume and thematics in *All's Well* reflects not only the potency of Shaw's visionary Helena, but the wider relevance that theatrical culture *expects* the play to have had for the *fin de siècle*.

⁴⁴ Quoted Roger Warren, 'Some Approaches to *All's Well*', in Kenneth Muir et al (eds) *Shakespeare, Man of the Theater* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1983), 114–120, 120; *Clamorous Voices*, 74.

⁴⁵ Caroline Sumpter, 'Innocents and Epicures', *Nineteenth-Century Contexts* (2006), 225–244, 228–229.

⁴⁶ Ben Brantley, 'Flawed Man Draws a Good Woman', *New York Times* (26 June, 2011), [<http://theater.nytimes.com/2011/06/27/theater/reviews/all-s-well-that-ends-well-in-central-park-review.html>], accessed: 28 February, 2012].

⁴⁷ Michael Billington, 'All's Well That Ends Well – review', *Guardian* (6 May 2011), [<http://www.guardian.co.uk/stage/2011/may/06/all-s-well-ends-well-review>], accessed: 27 February, 2012].

⁴⁸ Ibid. Billington also references Shaw when reviewing Elliott's production, describing how he 'yearn[ed] for the Shavian concept of Helena as a prototype of the new independent woman'. Billington, 'All's Well That Ends Well', *Guardian* (29 May 2009), [<http://www.guardian.co.uk/stage/2009/may/29/theatre>], accessed: 28 February, 2012].

What, then, is problematic about these creative and critical impulses? One reason *All's Well's* historiography has over-emphasised Shaw's account is that the 1895 production he saw received remarkably little coverage. Despite several anticipatory items on the Irving Dramatic Club's production (including in the *Morning Post* and *Standard*), besides Shaw, only the *Era* reviewed the play.⁴⁹ Crucially, the *Era* praised Olive Kennett as Helena for conventionally feminine, sentimental attributes: warmth; 'love which dominates the character'; 'rare delicacy and refinement throughout' and 'something approaching intense emotion'.⁵⁰ This review, published in the leading theatrical newspaper, is the antithesis of Shaw's, but is unmentioned in mainstream theatrical historiography. Indirectly, the *Era's* review reinforces a fact which scholarship typically overlooks. Shaw did not identify Helena as Shakespeare's Ibsenite prototype based on Kennett's performance. Instead, he lamented a performance that hadn't occurred: for Shaw, Kennett 'could not conceivably have been even Helena's thirty-second cousin'.⁵¹ However, despite apparently advocating Ibsenite self-assertion, Shaw's comments on Kennett actually attack the characterisation we might expect him to affirm, notably Kennett's 'cool young woman, with a superior understanding' and 'excellent manners'.⁵² This further destabilises our impression of Shaw as promoting radical performance. Beyond these two reviews, Kennett's interpretation of Helena clearly made little impression on contemporary culture, rather than seeming radical or provocative.

All's Well: an Establishment play?

⁴⁹ 'Theatrical and Musical Intelligence', *MP* (7 January 1895), 3; 'Irving Amateur Dramatic Club', *Standard* (22 January 1895), 1; 'Shakespeare at St. George's Hall', *Era* (26 January 1895), 8.

⁵⁰ 'Shakespeare at St. George's Hall', 8.

⁵¹ 'Poor Shakespear!', 13.

⁵² *Ibid.*

The Bensons staged the period's other major production of *All's Well* at Stratford in 1916. Again, there is no evidence that the play was seen as provocative, Ibsenite, or even especially theatrically memorable. Constance Benson (the 1916 Countess) claimed she found *All's Well* 'dull', while F.R. Benson entirely omitted the production from his memoirs.⁵³ The production's major significance derives from having been the Bensons' first Stratford performance following F.R. Benson's knighthood. Benson was knighted on 2 May 1916, during an act-break in the Tercentenary Gala, in which he played Caesar. As Constance's memoir indicates, the ceremony was impromptu, the 'offer of a knighthood' only having reached the touring couple after delays.⁵⁴ *All's Well* clearly was not chosen to celebrate the knighthood (fascinating though the play's appropriation by such a jubilatory, Establishment agenda would have been). In fact, the RSC Performance Database suggests the Bensons opened in *All's Well* before going to London.⁵⁵ However, given the Bensons' notoriously short rehearsal times and vast repertory, a substitution could surely have been made had the play seemed unsuitable as a homecoming performance. *Mainly Players* emphasises *All's Well* as a 'new' production, decentralising the play's plot to focus on the circumstances of its staging. Constance Benson deprecates the play's 'business like rehearsal' (possibly unnecessary if it had already opened), 'very tame' after 'all this delightful adulation'.⁵⁶ Similarly while claiming that a 'detailed account' of *All's Well*'s plot would 'weary the reader', Benson offers a highly detailed account of the first performance after the knighthood, 'another occasion that will live long in my memory'.⁵⁷ In this context, *All's Well* becomes notable not for its radicalism but its malleability, with Shaw's Ibsenite drama a vehicle for celebrating

⁵³ Constance Benson, *Mainly Players* (London: T Butterworth Ltd., 1926), 291; F.R. Benson, *My Memoirs* (London: E. Benn, 1931).

⁵⁴ *Mainly Players*, 285.

⁵⁵ Benson's account does not make this clear. *All's Well That Ends Well*, Press Night: 29/4/1916, RSC Performance Database (SBT), Performance Code: ALL191604.

⁵⁶ *Mainly Players*, 288.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 291; 288.

knighthood. Benson's account emphasises the permeability of both play and 'crowded house', foregrounding direct interventions into the playing space: 'beautiful gifts [...] handed over the footlights', an alderman's 'charming and graceful' speech, and 'all hands' linking to sing 'Auld Lang Syne'.⁵⁸ Even after the performance, Benson describes 'scores of friends [...] coming round to congratulate' them; a memorable – unexpected staging of *All's Well*, but one which overwhelms, rather than interacts with the text itself.⁵⁹

The following two decades saw a relative flurry of *All's Well* productions, including those by William Poel (1920) and Robert Atkins (1921).⁶⁰ Stratford productions included two with largely 'old Bensonian' casts by W. Bridge-Adams (1922), and W.A. Darlington (1935).⁶¹ Birmingham Rep's 1927 production featured Laurence Olivier.⁶² The temporal, personal and geographical proximity to the Bensons suggests, at least, that their 1916 production created a successful precedent. However, there is no evidence that subsequent stagings were inflected by the 'personal possibilities' of the 1916 Helena, Florence Glossop-Harris, who, like Kennett, was little-known and critically insignificant.

Misadventure: the creation of *All's Well*'s reputation

Besides being far from radical, *All's Well* was also far from unpopular. While mainstream historians such as Rutter and Styan attribute the play's apparent lack of performance history to

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ *All's Well* (RSC Shakespeare), 131.

⁶¹ Bridge-Adams's productions opened on 23 April, and 29 July, respectively. RSC Performance Database, Performance Codes ALL192204 and ALL192207.

⁶² Donald Spoto, *Laurence Olivier: a biography* (London: Harper, 1993), 50.

unpopularity, *All Well*'s pre-Victorian stagings were actually characterised by foul luck, not disapprobation.

The earliest known production of *All's Well* 'saw the light' for five or eight performances in March 1741, under Henry Giffard at Goodman's Fields.⁶³ The production was popular enough to reopen Goodman's Fields' winter 1741 season. This was all the luck *All's Well* would enjoy. On 19 October 1741, the unknown David Garrick made his debut as Richard III.⁶⁴ His spectacular success 'dictated a repertory of tragedy', and Giffard promptly sidelined *All's Well*.⁶⁵

Drury Lane's 1742 production was immediately cancelled when Peg Woffington (Helena) collapsed on the first night. During her recovery, the King, William Millward, died of 'respiratory disease'.⁶⁶ Woffington collapsed again when the run resumed, but managed ten performances.⁶⁷ Despite the chaos, Cibber's Parolles 'transported' audiences including the poet William Shenstone; the role was sufficiently coveted for Cibber and Macklin to fall out over the casting. A further revival was cancelled when Woffington fell in love with Garrick and decamped with him to Dublin's Smock Alley.⁶⁸ Subsequent health-related disasters included Giffard's 1746 revival at Covent Garden: Cibber was ill, and two actors, Sacheverel Hale (Bertram) and Thomas Chapman (Lavatch), died 'within a year'.⁶⁹ John Philip Kemble's gout and alcoholism blighted his 1794 production, in which he was 'merry as a funeral' and 'too ill to do anything' as Bertram.

⁶³ Styan argues five (2); *Unfortunate Comedy*, eight (5).

⁶⁴ Peter Thomson, 'Garrick, David (1717–1779)', *DNB* [doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/10408], accessed 6 March 2012]; *Unfortunate Comedy*, 5.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ Zitner, xv.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ Quoted Everett, lx–lxi.

⁶⁹ Zitner, xv.

The production lasted two performances, doubtless not helped by Dorothy Jordan (Helena)'s advanced pregnancy.⁷⁰

Given these disasters, the popularity *All's Well* did achieve is especially striking. Performance frequency in the 1740s 'compares well' with other comedies; Zitner notes twenty-two performances between 1741–46.⁷¹ *All's Well* was the Norwich Company's 'leading' 1750s comedy.⁷² Garrick's Parolles-centric adaptation was performed intermittently from 1756–62; Woodward played Parolles a further seventeen times before 1774.⁷³ Successive actor-managers staged revivals, including Frederic Pilon (1785), Charles Kemble (1811), Reynolds (1832) and Phelps (1852). Charles Kemble's spectacular was praised for its 'delicately supposed' Helena; in the less popular Phelps production, Fanny Cooper garnered acclaim for 'beautifully sustained' characterisation.⁷⁴ While, given a longer run, Dorothea Jordan might have inaugurated a performance tradition, lesser-known actresses such as Cooper, and her successors Kennett and Glossop-Harris could not ensure *All's Well* was 'saved to the stage'.⁷⁵

While Parolles remained the 'star', Helena retained defenders.⁷⁶ Hazlitt praised Helena's 'sweetness and delicacy', while Coleridge adored 'the loveliest of Shakespeare's characters'.⁷⁷ For Jameson, Helena's 'womanliness' offered a 'beautiful picture of a woman's love [...] she

⁷⁰ Peter Thomson, 'Kemble, John Philip (1757–1823)', *DNB* [doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/15322, accessed 12 May 2013].

⁷¹ Zitner, xvi.

⁷² Joseph G. Price, *The Unfortunate Comedy* (Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 1968), 10.

⁷³ Everett, lx; Zitner, xvi.

⁷⁴ Untitled article, *European Magazine and London Review* (June 1811), 380; 'Sadler's Wells', *Illustrated London News* (2 September 1852), 100.

⁷⁵ O'Dell, *Shakespeare from Betterton to Irving*, 339.

⁷⁶ Everett, lx.

⁷⁷ *Collected Works of William Hazlitt* (London and New York: 1902–4), I. 329; Coleridge, quoted David Haley, *Shakespeare's Courtly Mirror* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1993), 123.

loves Bertram *because she loves him!* a woman's reason'.⁷⁸ Helena's situation was 'shocking [...] yet the beauty of the character is made to triumph over all'.⁷⁹ Perhaps most surprisingly, Cowden Clarke's description of Helena evokes Imogen, emphasising her lack of 'reproach' for Bertram's abandonment, and the 'mournful regret' with which she 'takes blame to herself'.⁸⁰ Cowden Clarke's Helena also fulfils gender requirements of 'womanly self-abnegation' alongside more 'vigorous [...] moral courage, perseverance, and steadfast faith'.⁸¹ Notably, however, these are literary, not theatrical sources. It was primarily extra-theatrical commentators who contested *All's Well* status in the nineteenth century. The play simply did not receive comparable theatrical attention. The definitive *fin-de-siècle* heroine, and Shakespeare's most important intersection with the New Drama, were found in *Antony and Cleopatra*.

Cleopatra in the 1890s

During the 1890s, three major British actresses starred in productions of *Antony and Cleopatra*. On 18 November 1890, Lillie Langtry opened opposite Charles Coghlan at the Princess's Theatre, in a spectacular production supervised by Lewis Wingfield. In March 1897, Janet Achurch, better-known for her work in Ibsen, opened as Louis Calvert's Cleopatra at the Queen's Theatre, Manchester. The production transferred to London's Olympic Theatre on 24 May. The final production was the Bensons', which opened on 14 April 1898 at Stratford, and was revived at the Lyceum in 1900. At the time of Langtry's opening, Bernhardt was playing Sardou's

⁷⁸ *Shakespeare's Heroines*, 127.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 125.

⁸⁰ Mary Cowden Clarke, 'Shakespeare as the Girl's Friend', *Shakespeariana* (August 1887), 355–369, 366.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 364.

Cléopâtre at Paris's Porte Saint-Martin Theatre; in 1892, she reprised the role in London.⁸² Duse played Shakespeare's Cleopatra at the Lyric Theatre in 1893.⁸³

Langtry and Achurch had major symbolic status as both professionals and personalities. Langtry combined the newfound Shakespearean legitimacy of a successful *As You Like It* with continuing cultural capital as beauty and royal mistress: powerful credentials for playing the legendarily beautiful queen and emperor's mistress. Fascinatingly, Langtry would ostensibly self-distance from the character in her autobiography, complaining that Cleopatra's love-scenes were too brief, and 'bickering' and 'moods' were 'so foreign to [her] nature' that she 'found them very difficult to portray'.⁸⁴ Famously, Siddons disliked the role for its immorality, claiming she would 'hate herself' if she acted the part 'as it ought to be played'.⁸⁵ Conversely, Langtry disavowed Cleopatra's personality, not her crimes, and criticising her as an unsatisfactory, rather than an immoral lover: nuanced self-fashioning that only reinforces the comparison.

By 1897, Achurch's Shakespearean roles had included Gertrude, Desdemona, and Lady Macbeth. However, she was primarily known for playing Ibsen's heroines in *A Doll's House* (1889, 1892, 1893) and *Little Eyolf* (1896). Bernhardt, Langtry and Achurch constituted a fascinatingly disruptive triumvirate, poised to embody *fin-de-siècle* fantasies and fears about women – in England and beyond. *Demi-mondaines* had long been popular on the English and French stages. The French *défaite* in the 1870s Franco-Prussian war increased anxiety over courtesan figures,

⁸² Elaine Aston, *Sarah Bernhardt* (Oxford: Berg, 1998), 80.

⁸³ Susan Bassnett, 'Duse, Eleonora Giulia Amalia (1858–1924)', *DNB* [<http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/57575>, accessed 7 February 2012]

⁸⁴ *The Days I Knew*, 233.

⁸⁵ John Genest, *Some account of the English stage*, (Bath: H.E. Carrington, 1832), VIII.419.

whom texts such as Dumas's *La Femme de Claude* blamed for the defeat. The courtesan and her analogues were, as Apter notes, 'character-types that both aggravated and countered *fin-de-siècle* anxieties', who possessed 'the monstrous agency of Cleopatra, Sappho, Salome and Delilah'.⁸⁶ These characters were mediated through the bodies of 'the business-minded courtesan', 'liberated *demi-mondaine*' and 'actress-entertainer': performers with resonance for women including 'the female suffragette, cyclist, motorist, aviator, tourist'.⁸⁷ The French epitome was Bernhardt; but Langtry, too, with her resonance for 'advanced women' in Hyde Park, her wealth, her tours, and her private life, was implicated in *fin-de-siècle* cultures as both 'business-minded' and 'actress-entertainer'.⁸⁸ French interest in Salome permeated British *fin-de-siècle* theatre via Wilde's banned play and Campbell's Juliet (see Chapter Three): more broadly, interest in Cleopatra and Salome reflected anxiety regarding the political power and influence of desirable women. Changing attitudes to Cleopatra made this particularly clear.

Cleopatra: inheritance and influence

Romantic accounts of Cleopatra reflected critical 'fascination', and a willingness to overlook the lovers' immorality, instead celebrating Cleopatra's 'ambiguous being' and their tragic deaths: 'As they die for each other, we forgive them for having lived for each other'.⁸⁹ Coleridge thought *Antony and Cleopatra* 'of all Shakespeare's plays the most wonderful', and in 1817, an awestruck and forgiving Hazlitt celebrated a 'noble play' whose queen was its 'master-piece', the

⁸⁶ Emily Apter, review of multiple books, *South Central Review* (Fall 2005), 133–139, 135.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Coleridge, manuscript notes (1808–19), quoted John Russell Brown, *Shakespeare, Antony and Cleopatra: a casebook* (London: Macmillan, 1988), hereafter *Casebook*, 28–29, 29; Schlegel, *Lectures on Dramatic Literature* (1809–11), quoted *Casebook*, 27–28, 28.

virtuous Octavia merely ‘a dull foil’.⁹⁰ In contrast to Victorian criticism, Hazlitt asserted the play’s psychological veracity, with ‘living men and women, who speak and act from real feelings’.⁹¹ By 1875, Cleopatra’s ‘luxurious pomp and gorgeous extravagance’ was more sinister, unredeemed by the ‘grandeur’ of her death.⁹² Dowden argued that Cleopatra’s embrace ‘soiled’ Antony ‘with the stains of passion and decay’. Similarly, where Romantic commentators’ impression of ‘criminality’ in Cleopatra’s ‘passion’ was ‘lessened by our insight into its depth’, Dowden remained ‘at every moment [...] necessarily aware of the gross, the mean, the disorderly womanhood in Cleopatra’.⁹³

Increasingly, the Victorians reconceived Cleopatra as both ‘gypsy sorcerer’ and mesmerist, exerting on Jameson ‘a kind of fascination against which our moral sense rebels, but against which there is no escape’.⁹⁴ Similarly, Dowden acknowledged Cleopatra’s ‘witchery and wonder’ which both ‘subdue’ (a lexis anticipating mesmerism) and ‘fascinate the eye’.⁹⁵ In 1880, Swinburne argued that ‘we feel the charm and the terror and the mystery’ of Cleopatra’s ‘absolute and royal soul’.⁹⁶ Critic Richard Madelaine attributes *fin-de-siècle* obsession with Cleopatra to the analogous fascination of the ‘imperial splendour’ of another ‘great queen’; Georg Brandes’s *fin-de-siècle* account of Cleopatra, meanwhile, became an anxious polemic regarding sex’s potential to create ‘world-catastrophe’ not merely in ‘a corner of Europe’, but

⁹⁰ Hazlitt, *The Characters of Shakespeare’s Plays* (1817), quoted *Casebook*, 32–4.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ Dowden, *Shakspeare* (1875), quoted *Casebook*, 9–42; Coleridge, quoted *Casebook*, 29; Hazlitt, *Casebook*, 32–4.

⁹⁴ Anna Jameson, *Shakespeare’s Women* (London: Saunders and Otley, 1858), II.124.

⁹⁵ *Shakespeare’s Heroines*, quoted *Casebook*, 37; Dowden, quoted *Casebook*, 40.

⁹⁶ *A Study of Shakespeare* (1880), quoted *Casebook*, 43–44, 43.

‘upon the stage of the world’.⁹⁷ Brandes’s rhetoric is relentless, anti-feminist and racist: ‘Just as Antony’s ruin results from his connection with Cleopatra’ (ignoring Cleopatra’s own death), ‘the fall of the Roman Empire result[s] from the contact of the West with the luxury of the East’.⁹⁸ In case readers missed the point: ‘Antony is Rome. Cleopatra is the Orient’.⁹⁹ Ultimately, Brandes concludes, the play carries ‘the sense of *universal annihilation*’; for Brandes, Cleopatra embodies both *fin de siècle* and *fin du globe*.¹⁰⁰

Antony and Cleopatra locks into *fin-de-siècle* anxieties over sexuality and femininity. Brandes’s vision of Cleopatra as sexual destroyer endured; even Granville-Barker, in ‘close and constant contact with suffrage activism’, saw her primarily as ‘the nemesis of sensual man’.¹⁰¹ For those anxious about the intertwined futures of gender and society, Cleopatra embodied the anti-feminist version of the New Woman: one who has achieved power, whose judgment is clouded by her female sexuality, and who corrupts men, sexually and politically.

Langtry, Symons and the *genre fin de siècle*

As the *Graphic* observed, in 1890 ‘Cleopatra’ was ‘the stage heroine of the hour’, and Langtry capitalised on it: ‘M. Sardou and Madame Sarah Bernhardt’ had ‘willed it, and Mrs. Langtry signifies approval’.¹⁰² Although Shaw placed *All’s Well* in conversation with Ibsen, Langtry and Achurch’s casting as Cleopatra was the zenith of *fin-de-siècle* Shakespeare’s intersections with

⁹⁷ Richard Madelaine, *Antony and Cleopatra (Shakespeare in Production)* (Cambridge: 1998), 143; Georg Brandes, *William Shakespeare: a critical study* (New York: F Ungar, 1963), 152.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 158.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ Susan Carlson, ‘Politicizing Harley Granville-Barker’, *New Theatre Quarterly* (2006), 122–40, 123; Harley Granville-Barker, *Prefaces to Shakespeare: Antony and Cleopatra* (London: Nick Hern, 1993), 105.

¹⁰² ‘Theatres’, *Graphic* (25 October 1890), 473.

Ibsenite and society drama. In fact, reading the playtext published alongside Langtry's Princess's Theatre production reveals the combination of Langtry, character, and production, as creating the ultimate *fin-de-siècle* product. Edward John Ellis provided the twenty illustrations; he had also illustrated translations of Maupassant (1850-1893). By 1892, Stead was describing Maupassant as 'infected by leprosy' and one of 'the most dangerous enemies France has nourished in her bosom'.¹⁰³ Arthur Symons's introduction epitomises the production's pervading decadence in form and content: a Decadent poet, identifying 'the present revival at the Princess's' as 'very legitimately, *genre fin de siècle*'.¹⁰⁴ Hermeneutically, the idea that Shakespeare performance could be 'very legitimately' of a modern age, rather than for all time, is innovative. Langtry herself was becoming ever more '*genre fin de siècle*', created and viewed by a sexually and sartorially avid public. Symons was also quoting a *Figaro* review of Bernhardt's *Cléopâtre*, staged as '*genre fin de siècle*'.

In giving Langtry's Cleopatra a European context, at a nexus of hermeneutical, Decadent, political and commercial concerns, Symons's introduction is a masterpiece. Symons's source study traces Shakespeare's inspiration past North's English translation of Plutarch to 'the French of Jacques Amyot' further European analogues in 'Two Latin, seventeen French, six English, and at least four Italian tragedies'.¹⁰⁵ Max Beerbohm, explaining his 1894 satire on Decadence, identified Decadence's creators as French 'jeunes écrivains': a French context increasingly associated with the 'putrescence' and moral danger Stead identified in the 'abominations' of

¹⁰³ W.T. Stead, 'The Decadence of France', *The Review of Reviews* (May 1892), 470.

¹⁰⁴ Arthur Symons, introduction to *Shakespeare's Play of Antony and Cleopatra* (London: Leadenhall Press, 1891), vii.

¹⁰⁵ Symons, *Antony and Cleopatra*, iv.

1890s French literature.¹⁰⁶ Anticipatory coverage of the 1890 production stressed Langtry's French associations; 'Alias, the celebrated costumier Français' designed the 'greater part' of her costumes, and she reportedly rehearsed with 'M. Berton, the 'eminent French actor' and Bernhardt's 'old coadjutor'.¹⁰⁷ However, Symons's French intertext ultimately privileges the English production. After adopting the *Figaro* journalist's lexis, Symons dismisses him as 'facile'; Bernhardt, the embodiment of *fin-de-siècle* France, could only be 'superb' as Cleopatra if she gave 'her allegiance to Shakespeare'.¹⁰⁸

Symons reframed the English commentators, transposing Coleridge's assertion that 'of all [...] Shakespeare's plays the most wonderful is the *Antony and Cleopatra*' to argue that 'Cleopatra is the most wonderful of Shakespeare's women'.¹⁰⁹ Rather than Brandes's horror at a 'stained' affair, Symons refines Hazlitt's description of Cleopatra's 'triumph of [...] the power of giving pleasure' into a 'genius for love'.¹¹⁰ Crucially, Symons argues, Antony and Cleopatra share a 'fatal love which is [their] glory and [their] shame'. In addition to an implicitly thanatophilic glorification of sexual transgression, these antithetical pairs emphasise desire, stigma, and downfall, given 'shame's semantic resonances of disgrace. Symons's lexis maintains this sense of discordance. Cleopatra possesses 'exquisite deceitfulness' amidst a production '[full] of contrasts', realised on a 'stage [...] turbulent with movement', implying a theatrical experience simultaneously disruptive and pleasurable. Symons anticipates Brandes's preoccupation with 'world-catastrophe', describing how the affair is 'played out in the sight of the world, on an

¹⁰⁶ Max Beerbohm, letter to the editor, *Yellow Book* 2 (July 1894), 284.

¹⁰⁷ 'Professional Matinees', *Era* (8 November 1890), 11; 'Gleanings', *Birmingham Daily Post* (4 November 1890), 3; 'Theatrical and Musical Intelligence', *MP* (3 November 1890), 2.

¹⁰⁸ Symons, *Antony and Cleopatra*, vii.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, viii.

¹¹⁰ Brandes, *William Shakespeare*, II.173; Hazlitt, *Characters of Shakespeare's Play*, quoted *Casebook*, 32; Symons, *Antony and Cleopatra*, viii.

eminence' with 'the fate of nations depending on it'. However, the analogy becomes explicitly theatrical, with the aforementioned 'nations' constituting spectators at 'a lover's tragic comedy'; the lovers' deaths are the only 'annihilation' that matters.¹¹¹

Crucially, Symons repackages these amatory, interpretative, and international contexts in their most marketable *fin-de-siècle* form for popular audiences: visual culture, 'appealing as much to the eyes of the spectator as to his purely literary instincts'.¹¹² Symons frames this contemporary colour-craving as theatrical discernment, arguing for 'something spectacular about the play itself', which is 'full of suggestions of colour and pageantry'.¹¹³ Walkley, however, identified the production's pageantry as a response to late-Victorian '*démocratization de la luxe*', not textual affect, arguing that 'a generation [...] educated on Delacroix, Gautier, Gérôme [...] and Messrs. Liberty's shop window, would be satisfied with no less'.¹¹⁴ The two decades before Langtry's Cleopatra saw the opening of London department stores including the Army and Navy (1872), Liberty's (1875), the Brixton Bon Marché (1879), and the Junior Army and Navy (1879).¹¹⁵ Harrods had also been rebuilt following an 1883 fire.¹¹⁶ There are also obvious spatial parallels between Walkley's shop windows, some of which could have framed images of Langtry, or the consumer goods she inspired, during her modelling career, and the Princess's proscenium arch. Dijsktra reads female shopping as a sign of disenfranchisement, in which women, 'impressed with the lesson that they were of value only as consumer goods', surround themselves with 'other

¹¹¹ Ibid., vii–viii.

¹¹² Ibid., vii.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Rachel Bowlby, *Just Looking* (New York: Methuen, 1985), 2; Walkley, 'Antony and Cleopatra' *Speaker* (22 November 1890), 575–576, 575.

¹¹⁵ Reginald Abbott, 'What Miss Kilman's Petticoat Means' *MFS* (1992), 193–216, 196.

¹¹⁶ The present building was completed in 1905. Michael Ball and David Sutherland, *An Economic History of London 1800–1914* (London: Routledge, 2001), 139.

expensive consumer goods' to 'fill the empty prison of their world with trinkets'.¹¹⁷ However, women's shopping could be a radical act increasing their political agency: they could buy goods for new pastimes such as bicycling, golf and smoking, or clothes from the Rational Dress movement, while Dorothy restaurants and women's clubs facilitated unchaperoned shopping. Affluent women could also imitate Langtry and Terry, who were amongst Harrods's first credit customers in 1885.¹¹⁸ More usefully, Dijkstra connects women's consumer impulse with the *femme fatale* persona, originating with Eve, according to Meredith's *After Paradise*: 'From that day forth Eve eyed with tenderness/The Serpent, to whose craft she owed her dress'.¹¹⁹ Cleopatra reprises Eve by bringing about the Fall of Rome; more generally, sexual transgression and conspicuous consumption were associated in the public mentality; Shaw identifies extravagance as characteristic of the *grande amoureuse*.¹²⁰

In the playtext of Langtry's 1891 production, Ellis's illustrations reiterate the emphases on spectacle and Langtry's physicality. Of the fourteen illustrations representing people, twelve feature Langtry as Cleopatra. Five of the nine showing both title characters obviously foreground Langtry; these include their III.3 conflict, where Cleopatra is foregrounded, with Antony in the background, at half-size.¹²¹ Antony is also blurred in the illustration for his own death at the end of Act IV, where his body occupies less than a fifth of the illustrated space, and is depicted in shadow.¹²² Cleopatra is lighter, bigger, descending a staircase with Antony at the bottom. Her lifted arms define the illustration's parameters, breaking its curved edges. Ellis used the same

¹¹⁷ *Idols of Perversity*, 355; 365.

¹¹⁸ Correspondence with Sebastian Wormell, Harrods Archivist (2 May 2013).

¹¹⁹ Quoted *Idols of Perversity*, 365.

¹²⁰ *Correspondence*, xiv.

¹²¹ *Shakespeare's Play of Antony and Cleopatra*, 42.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 19; 56.

technique when illustrating Antony's triumphal reception. Although Antony is closest to the viewer, Cleopatra's sedan chair protrudes above the drawing's borders, reiterating her centrality.¹²³ Four further illustrations show Cleopatra without Antony; only one shows Antony alone. All illustrations of Cleopatra stress Langtry's costumes as potentially revealing; the two for II.3 (which, in Langtry's production, conflated both messenger scenes) highlight her bare arms, while a full-page illustration of Cleopatra and attendants offers 'glimpses of a pretty figure', visible beneath skirts that the satirical press deemed 'only big enough to cover one leg at a time'.¹²⁴ Brandes and Granville-Barker see Cleopatra in relation to Antony; Symons and Ellis resituate *Antony and Cleopatra* as 'the story of Cleopatra', in which her psychology 'impresses' itself 'upon the whole action'.¹²⁵ Similarly, despite acknowledging that the 'splendour of spectacle' was 'thanks to Mr. Wingfield', Symons ultimately identifies 'Mrs. Langtry' as having 'done more for this incomparable drama than anyone has ever done [...] before'.¹²⁶

Langtry's repackaging of *Antony and Cleopatra* for *fin-de-siècle* London's commodity culture created 'a Cleopatra of Mayfair'.¹²⁷ Reviews identified Langtry's performance with the collage of conspicuous consumption Walkley saw in the production's design. She played a 'Cleopatra who deals with Worth, [...] travels in Pullman's cars, and has her novels from Mudie's'.¹²⁸ To some, Langtry's suggestion of 'the most absolutely modern spirit' was 'distressingly modern', suggesting 'the affected levity of a modern fine lady'.¹²⁹ One critic's complaint rested on

¹²³ Ibid., 50.

¹²⁴ 'Slashes and Puffs', *Fun* (3 December 1890), 234; 'Through the Opera Glass', *Pick-Me-Up* (3 January 1891), 230.

¹²⁵ Symons, *Antony and Cleopatra*, viii.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ 'Flashes from the Footlights', *Licensed Victuallers' Mirror* (25 November 1890), 562.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid., Walkley, 'Antony and Cleopatra', *Speaker*, 576.

Langtry's recent, publicised participation in a court case; for him, Langtry's celebrity had become too 'palpable' and insufficiently 'mythic'.¹³⁰ Accordingly, seeing 'Cleopatra as a defendant! Cleopatra claiming damages' jarred.¹³¹ Other critics' 'Association of Ideas' were more ambiguous. For Walkley, Langtry's Cleopatra had all-too-clearly 'gone the round of the best country houses', a statement which might imply that she evoked the familiar figure of the modern high society woman, but which could carry suggestions of sexual use.¹³² Nevertheless, as *Moonshine* concluded, Langtry's celebrity ensured that 'everybody will go; and "have you seen Mrs. Langtry's 'Cleopatra'?" will be the question of the hour'.¹³³ Moreover, *Moonshine* felt Langtry had 'every reason to be satisfied' with her reception.¹³⁴ There was critical disapprobation of her 'thin, inflexible voice' and the legitimacy of her 'Cleolangtry [...] Langtrypatra', unconvincing as 'the subjugator of Antony'.¹³⁵ Others felt Langtry's performance 'spoke wonders for her talent', since 'beauty, mere intelligence, mere training [...] will not carry one through the most tremendous of Shakespeare's women'.¹³⁶ Nevertheless, the cumulative impression from reviews is the relative unimportance of Langtry's acting, versus her presence. As in 1882, it was 'not the acting folk will rush to see', but 'beautiful Mrs. Langtry'.¹³⁷

Typically, Langtry's spectacular appearance overwhelmed 'The Man About Town's' doubts about an interpretation 'not my idea of Cleopatra'. When Langtry appeared 'borne by Ethiopians, with her crown and robe of state on, and sceptres in both hands', both critic and audience

¹³⁰ Stokes, 'Varieties of performance', 215.

¹³¹ *Licensed Victuallers' Mirror* (25 November 1890), 562.

¹³² Walkley, 'Antony and Cleopatra', 576.

¹³³ 'Feathers from the Wings', *Moonshine* (6 December 1890), 273; 'Acts, Actors and Actresses,' *Sporting Times* (22 November 1890), 7; Walkley, 'Antony and Cleopatra', 575; 'Through the Opera Glass', *Pick-Me-Up* (3 January 1891), 230; 'Our Van', *Baily's Magazine* (1 January 1891), 53.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ Walkley, 'Antony and Cleopatra', 576; 'Through the Opera Glass', 230; 'Our Van', 53.

¹³⁶ 'Mus in Urbe', 'Antony and Cleopatra', *Musical World* (29 November 1890), 951–952, 952.

¹³⁷ 'The Man about Town', *Country Gentleman* (22 November 1890), 1646.

responded viscerally: ‘The house shouted with delight, and I shouted loudest of all’, doubting whether ‘anything finer has ever been seen on the stage’.¹³⁸ Coghlan’s Antony was a nonentity in comparison to the queen and her audience. The proscenium arch was both shop window and social mirror; opposite the onstage ‘gorgeous dresses’, scenery and ‘jewels’, the audience’s ‘Silver-Gilt’ included ‘Lady Randolph Churchill, in a cloak that she was so proud of that she never took it off’, ‘Mrs. Alexander, Miss Corelli, Mr. Norman Forbes, Mr. Henry Arthur Jones, Mr. Oscar Wilde and other well-known and beautiful people’.¹³⁹ Gilt, jewels, and beauty in the theatre’s every surface: moreover, just as audience and stage offered arenas for display, the production’s appropriation of popular performance trends (or ‘the vulgar love of aimless display and tedious spectacle’, according to taste) made the theatre space permeable, evoking ‘Drury Lane pantomime and Alhambra ballet’ for one critic and ‘the productions of the Empire’ for another.¹⁴⁰ This hybridisation of different cultural forms, breaking barriers between performance spaces with different prestige, was a further response to commodity culture, allowing Shakespeare to appeal to multiple publics.

Langtry’s performance was also theatrically innovative, performing the first Cleopatra to die enthroned. Denying any contribution from Wingfield, Langtry declared this scene the one she ‘played and stage-managed the best’.¹⁴¹ While the satirical press mocked her putting the asp ‘to bye-bye in her undervest’, serious publications praised ‘the aspect of the queen, motionless and erect in her robes’, her ‘handmaidens dying before her’ as ‘superb’.¹⁴² Achurch and Benson both

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ ‘Feathers from the Wings’ *Moonshine*, 273; ‘Acts, Actors and Actresses’ *Sporting Times*, 7.

¹⁴¹ *Days I Knew*, 233.

¹⁴² ‘Through the Opera Glass,’ *Pick Me Up*, 230; *Athenaeum* (22 November 1890), 318.

imitated Langtry – by 1925, James Agate would object to Edith Evans’s ‘refusal to die sitting bolt upright on the throne’, when this was ‘obviously the proper thing to do’.¹⁴³ Crucially, Agate felt Evans’s death ‘on the sofa’ evoked ‘a naughty consumptive in the reign of Dumas *films*’ – a stereotypically Victorian context which Langtry’s ‘distressingly modern touch’ evidently transcended.¹⁴⁴ Langtry’s ‘stage management’ also included removing Antony to die offstage, subsequently returning his corpse to ‘join the monument furnishings for Cleopatra’s death’, in Madelaine’s words.¹⁴⁵ As well as emphasising Langtry’s ‘unupstageable’ supremacy in the theatrical hierarchy, the production subversively relegates Antony the ‘soldier’, ‘sportsman’ and ‘gentleman’ to the spatial category of ‘handmaiden’.¹⁴⁶

Campaign of ‘The Independent Theatre’: Achurch in 1897

The 1897 *Antony and Cleopatra* was associated with ‘The campaign of “The Independent Theatre”’, its radical context emphasised further by the fact that it replaced a postponed *The Lady from The Sea*.¹⁴⁷ Genre *fin-de-siècle* was shifting: Langtry’s 1890 commodity culture Cleopatra, inflected by ‘her familiarity with royalty and passion’, gave way to Achurch’s performance, described by Archer (Ibsen’s translator) in terms of ‘intelligence’, violence and visceral impact.¹⁴⁸ Achurch’s Ibsenite stylistics, described by detractors as ‘tricks of style which pass for inspiration in Ibsen’, were anti-aesthetic and intensely emotional, interpreted as a refusal to ‘limit’ the drama’s ‘realism’, rather than beautifying it as a ‘poem’.¹⁴⁹ Like Langtry, Achurch’s performance destabilised performance genre boundaries. However, Achurch’s departure from

¹⁴³ Agate, *Brief Chronicles*, 176.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., ‘Flashes from the Footlights’ *Licensed Victuallers’ Mirror* (25 November 1890), 562.

¹⁴⁵ Madelaine, *Antony & Cleopatra*, 67.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., Harley Granville-Barker, *Antony and Cleopatra* (London: Nick Hern, 1993), 113.

¹⁴⁷ ‘Theatres’, *Daily News* (3 May 1897), 9.

¹⁴⁸ Madelaine, *Antony & Cleopatra*, 69; Archer, *Theatrical World for 1897*, 67.

¹⁴⁹ ‘Olympic Theatre,’ *Times* (28 May 1897), 3; ‘Olympic Theatre,’ *MP* (25 May 1897), 2.

aestheticised Shakespeare practice constantly reminded audiences of her radical performances, her political agenda associated by conservatives with unruliness, disruption and degeneration.

Unsurprisingly, Achurch's Cleopatra embodied, for conservative commentators, *fin-de-siècle* fears about passion and power's consequences for female behaviour and sanity. In anti-Ibsenite accounts, 1897 audiences were metaphorically 'taken by the throat' and menaced. Emphasis on Achurch's 'neurotic' and 'hysterical' instability as Cleopatra appeared in several papers (including the *Graphic* and *Times*), indicating the mainstream press's readiness to identify a stylistics of degenerate psychology.¹⁵⁰ According to Stutfield, the 'woman of the new Ibsenite neuropathic school' exemplified this psychology: 'mad herself', she also 'dr[o]ve those around her crazed'.¹⁵¹ In 1897, at least one critic explicitly identified this 'Ibsenite neuropathic' influence, imaginatively locating Achurch's Cleopatra, with 'Rossettian hair and beauty in 'the Doll's House of the Norwegian Shakespeare'.¹⁵²

While Langtry's 'well-known and beautiful' audience willingly participated in commodity culture's display, implication in Achurch's drama had strongly negative connotations.

Nevertheless, Achurch's performed qualities of neuroticism and brutality prefigured twentieth-century characterisations: in 1912, Dorothy Green 'all but strangle[d]' the messenger 'in her madness', while in 1982, Billington deemed Helen Mirren 'certifiable' in her 'hysteria'.¹⁵³ In

¹⁵⁰ *Theatrical World of 1897*, 71; 'Olympic Theatre,' *Times* (28 May 1897), 3; 'The Theatres,' *Graphic* (29 May 1897), 674.

¹⁵¹ Hugh Stutfield, 'Tommyrotics,' *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* (June 1895), 833–945, 836.

¹⁵² Stutfield, 'Tommyrotics,' 836; Shaw, quoted Madelaine, *Antony & Cleopatra*, 70; 'Feathers from the Wings', *Moonshine* (12 June 1897), 287.

¹⁵³ *Times* (25 April 1912); *Guardian* (14 October 1982), quoted Madelaine, *Antony & Cleopatra*, 185.

1897, however, many deemed Achurch's 'natural utterances of extreme passion' 'ugly'.¹⁵⁴ First-night reviews in both the mainstream and satirical presses, exemplified by the *Morning Post* described a 'fury, a wild tigress' who 'reveal[ed] the brute in the woman'.¹⁵⁵ Achurch's Cleopatra was the play's 'most overwhelming character', 'overwhelming' adding further force to previous descriptions of Cleopatra as mesmerist.¹⁵⁶ Even Shaw, despite applauding Achurch as the 'actual' Cleopatra, 'enthroned dead in her regal robes', was uncomfortable with her depiction of Cleopatra's 'weak, treacherous affected streaks' as a 'naughty English *petite bourgeoisie*' and 'unheroic'.¹⁵⁷ His remark typifies *fin-de-siècle* critical anxiety whenever an actress's Shakespearean heroine recalled 'real life' women. Further complicating his position as a Shakespearean radical, Shaw disliked Achurch's Cleopatra's 'modern republican [...] contempt for ceremony', surely plausible given Cleopatra clings to her empire, but interacts familiarly with numerous servants and messengers.¹⁵⁸

The production had been popular in Manchester, the theatre 'crowded and overcrowded'.¹⁵⁹ Despite widespread subsequent criticism, even some London journalists praised Achurch's 'power and originality'.¹⁶⁰ However, the performance failed to establish creative space for Ibsenite, radical actresses to perform Shakespeare within the metropolitan mainstream. This is demonstrated by Achurch's subsequent lack of a Shakespearean career, and the testimony of actresses such as Lena Ashwell who, after 'playing the passions in modern life' in *Leah Kleshna*,

¹⁵⁴ 'Olympic Theatre,' *MP* (25 May 1897), 2.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ Archer, *Theatrical World for 1897*, 70.

¹⁵⁷ Shaw, 'Shakespeare in Manchester' (20 March 1897), *Dramatic Opinions*, 213–22, 217.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 216.

¹⁵⁹ *Theatrical 'World' of 1897*, 66.

¹⁶⁰ 'Olympic Theatre', *MP* (25 May 1897), 2.

Madame X and *Mrs. Dane's Defence*, found herself 'barred from Poetry and the Shakespearean Stage'.¹⁶¹

Beauty and the 'unplayable'.

As well as echoing Langtry's 'enthroned' death, Achurch imitated Bernhardt's 'Titian curls', inaugurating a trend for 'red-haired English Cleopatras' that made Constance Collier's dark hair controversial by 1906.¹⁶² However, these 'English Cleopatras' may have been imitating Bernhardt, not Achurch. The relationship between Bernhardt and Langtry's Cleopatras also illuminate Shakespeare's changing *fin-de-siècle* status. In September 1890, *PMG* had asked whether the 'Jersey Lily' would 'follow' Bernhardt's 'example' in stage business; several such articles compared productions without specifying that Bernhardt was playing Sardou, not Shakespeare's queen.¹⁶³ Even M. Berton, interviewed by *PMG* in October 1890, failed to distinguish the 'drama' he and Langtry were rehearsing from the 'Cleopatra' Bernhardt would play.¹⁶⁴ Publications including the *Manchester Times*, *Morning Post*, *Daily News* and *PMG* inconsistently anglicised the title of Sardou's *Cléopâtre* through late 1890, the erratic reportage increasing the ambiguity as to whose queen was being staged.¹⁶⁵ As the *Graphic* had noted, 'Cleopatra' was 'the stage heroine of the hour': not Shakespeare's queen, or even a particular author's creation, but concepts and contexts which transcended their sources, clustering around

¹⁶¹ Lena Ashwell, *Reflections from Shakespeare* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1926), 8.

¹⁶² *Theatrical 'World' of 1897*, 68; *Daily Telegraph* (30 May 1892), quoted Aston, *Sarah Bernhardt*, 80; Madelaine, *Antony & Cleopatra*, 70.

¹⁶³ 'Stage and Song,' *PMG* (23 September 1890), 1.

¹⁶⁴ 'The English and French Stage,' *PMG* (22 October 1890), 1–2.

¹⁶⁵ 'Society and the Stage,' *Manchester Times* (19 September 1890), 6; 'Afternoon Chat,' *Manchester Times* (7 November 1890), 6; 'Theatrical and Musical Intelligence,' *MP* (3 November 1890), 2; 'The English and French Stage,' *PMG*.

the actress.¹⁶⁶ According to Aston, Bernhardt ‘had only to be herself’ in assuming the role; in 1890, despite rumours she would ‘dye her hair black’ or ‘assume the dusky hue of a native Egyptian’, she used her own hair and complexion.¹⁶⁷ Langtry disclaimed resemblance to Cleopatra. Nevertheless, her ‘familiarity’ with ‘royalty and passion’ ensured she, too, was read primarily as ‘herself’, ensuring popular success.¹⁶⁸ Langtry’s Cleopatra became canonical, included in Ellen Terry’s 1906 Jubilee benefit, even though Terry had never played the role, or worked with Langtry. *Fin-de-siècle* stagings of Cleopatra evince tension between the reluctance to allow Ibsen to encroach on Shakespeare performance, and Shakespeare’s diminishing importance to popular perceptions of Cleopatra. Complicating matters, Shakespeare purists, including some reviewers, continued to deem Cleopatra ‘not playable by mortal woman’.¹⁶⁹

Historically, critics have deemed various Shakespeare characters ‘unplayable’: above all, King Lear, Juliet, and Cleopatra. Studying the judgments at work in deeming the first two ‘unplayable’ illuminates what the assessment might have meant for Victorian conceptions of Cleopatra, and how the *fin de siècle* broadly worked to destabilise notions of ‘unplayability’. When not a criticism of authorial ability, defining a character as ‘unplayable’ privileges the reader’s interior, subjective, mental conception of a character, over any possible dramatic embodiment. In Shakespeare, this privileging of the literary encounter frequently reflects the anti-theatrical belief articulated by Charles Lamb, that staging Shakespeare devalues the plays, reducing ‘every thing to a controversy of elocution’. This belief typifies arguments for King Lear’s ‘unplayability’; Lamb believed ‘the Lear of Shakespeare cannot be acted’, its ‘dimensions’ being too purely

¹⁶⁶ ‘Theatres’, *Graphic* (25 October 1890), 473.

¹⁶⁷ Aston, *Bernhardt*, 80; ‘Society and the Stage’, *Manchester Times* (19 September 1890), 6.

¹⁶⁸ *Bernhardt*, 80; Madelaine, *Antony & Cleopatra*, 69.

¹⁶⁹ Walkley, ‘Antony and Cleopatra’, 576.

‘intellectual’ for an actor to realise.¹⁷⁰ Branding any character ‘unplayable’ diminishes performer agency. That Shakespeare wrote Cleopatra to be staged indicates that he regarded her as ‘playable’; Enobarbus’s assertion that Cleopatra ‘beggared all description’ highlights the limitations of language, which, juxtaposed with Cleopatra’s presence in the play (she is not merely a described, mythical figure) implies actors’ ability to embody that which language cannot describe.¹⁷¹ Even when Shakespeare’s Chorus to *Henry V* recognises that the audience’s imagination must bridge the gap between ‘unworthy scaffold’ or ‘cockpit’ and the ‘vasty fields of France’, the linguistic richness suggests a celebration of theatre (in which you apologise for your best effects) alongside an acknowledgement of the limitations of stage technology. When something, in his view, cannot be staged, Shakespeare tells his audience so; when something instead cannot be described, he indicates that. *Antony and Cleopatra* indicates a faith in the performer not shared by some Victorian critics.

Privileging the literary, interior conception of a character suggests deep emotional investment in the written version of that character, and in encountering that character through reading. *Fin-de-siècle* Shakespeare destabilises and problematises both version and encounter. Editions of individual plays proliferated, as actors issued their own ‘arrangements’ to accompany productions, thus explicitly relating text to performance, and interpolating editorial, promotional and commercial strategies into these publications. Langtry’s edition, with Symons’s adulatory introduction and twelve illustrations of her performance, never permits the reader to forget or decentralise her vision for the production. Moreover, as the texts became memorabilia – theatrical souvenirs like programmes or postcards – theatregoers could own successive editions matching

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 27–8.

¹⁷¹ *Antony and Cleopatra*, II.2.208.

successive productions. Simultaneously, new critical editions' scholarly apparatus reshaped and complicated readers' mental conceptions. *Fin-de-siècle* interest in staging alternative forms of Shakespeare's texts pushed the boundaries of the 'playable': Poel's 1881 staging of the Q1 *Hamlet* offered audiences a new kind of *Hamlet*, while Benson's 1901 'Week of Kings' staged parts of the Histories which audiences had never seen.¹⁷² The text was no longer constant or authoritative, destabilising anterior character conception. Soon, too, there would be silent Shakespeare films, which (barring intertitles) sacrificed text but were popular, indicating character's pre-eminence over text.

The concept of 'unplayability' varies in its application to male and female roles. As Cleopatra, an actress must convey 'infinite variety' and sexual magnetism; Juliet must be beautiful enough to attract Romeo before words are exchanged, but also satisfy the mainstream critical belief that by the time an actress can play Juliet's emotions, she has ceased to look like her.¹⁷³ Conversely, Patrick Stewart is unique in suggesting actors should play Lear twice; 'once when you are young and strong enough to carry Cordelia, and once when you are old enough to know what the part's about'.¹⁷⁴ Female 'unplayability' is far more rooted in physicality: one consequence of the conventional belief about Juliet is that we never see the twenty-six (even twenty-five)-year-old Lady Capulet about whose age Shakespeare is equally specific, but whom theatrical convention

¹⁷² Thomas Clayton, *The Hamlet first published* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1992), 57; Nicholas Greene, *Shakespeare's Serial History Plays* (Cambridge: 2002), 36.

¹⁷³ Ellen Terry, *Four Lectures*, 138.

¹⁷⁴ Bridget Byrne, 'Patrick Stewart goes Western' *Kentucky New Era* (31 May 2002).

has made ‘unplayable’.¹⁷⁵ Cleopatra, conversely, must simply look over thirty; Achurch was thirty-three, Langtry thirty-seven.¹⁷⁶

The *fin-de-siècle* Cleopatra’s ‘unplayability’ was heavily involved with race, having inherited the eighteenth century belief that ‘an English woman’s temperament is incompatible with Cleopatra’s nature’.¹⁷⁷ In 1898, a critic acclaimed Constance Benson’s ability to make ‘a character [...] most foreign to English ideas – comprehensible’.¹⁷⁸ Langtry also used the rhetoric of ‘foreignness’ to distance herself from ‘the Egyptian Queen’.¹⁷⁹ Criticism of Duse’s 1893 ‘passionless Cleopatra’ (Archer) was especially harsh because Duse ‘did not have the excuse of being English’.¹⁸⁰ This exoticising, othering gesture indicates discomfort with the destructive passion Cleopatra embodied as ‘nemesis of the sensual man’ and what Madelaine calls ‘the problem of sexual demonstrativeness’.¹⁸¹ The belief that Englishwomen cannot play Cleopatra became societally comforting, reassuring the British that ‘the worst woman in history’ could not be found in their race.¹⁸²

Fin-de-siècle belief that Cleopatra was ‘not playable by mortal woman’ reflects other aspects of ‘unplayability’: the ‘requirements’ (which Cecil Howard specified in 1890), that she be both ‘she

¹⁷⁵ *Romeo and Juliet*, I.3.72–3. Shakespeare’s youthful Lady Capulet would make any passion for Tybalt less intergenerational. *West Side Story* (1961) gave Maria/Juliet a best friend: Rita Moreno’s Anita, lover of George Chakiris’s Bernardo/Tybalt.

¹⁷⁶ *Antony and Cleopatra*, II.3.28.

¹⁷⁷ Madelaine, 3.

¹⁷⁸ James Boaden, *Kemble*, quoted Madelaine, *Antony and Cleopatra*, 3n; *Birmingham Daily Gazette* (15 April 1898), quoted *Antony and Cleopatra*, 71.

¹⁷⁹ *Days I Knew*, 233.

¹⁸⁰ Archer, *Theatrical ‘World’ for 1893*, 175; Madelaine, *Antony and Cleopatra*, 200.

¹⁸¹ Granville Barker, *Antony and Cleopatra*, 105; Madelaine, 6.

¹⁸² *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News* (12 January 1907), quoted Madelaine, 6.

who could conquer all hearts' and 'the powerful queen'.¹⁸³ It also reflects the part's textual demands, with the impossibility of conveying Cleopatra's 'infinite variety' within a finite, single performance. Enobarbus's description of Cleopatra's allure rests on two concepts: her 'person', as viewed on a barge which the audience never sees, and her charms' endurance despite 'age' and 'custom', unexperienced by an audience who do not see Cleopatra age, or become accustomed to her.¹⁸⁴

By the *fin de siècle*, Enobarbus's reference to 'infinite variety' transcended Shakespeare's text, also used to evoke Sardou's heroine and 'the historical figure'.¹⁸⁵ Potentially, Shakespeare's Cleopatra became necessarily 'unplayable' under the weight of accrued cultural and historical significance. One reason Lear, Cleopatra and Juliet engender such discussions of the playable, the possible and the infinite is that their plays constantly recall attention to these issues. Both *King Lear* and *Antony and Cleopatra* begin with demands that love be quantified – Cleopatra's 'If it be love indeed, tell me how much' could gloss Lear's opening scene.¹⁸⁶ Juliet, meanwhile, glorifies in embodying infinity, declaring:

My bounty is as boundless as the sea,
My love as deep; the more I give to thee,
The more I have, for both are infinite.¹⁸⁷

While Stewart's statement on Lear acknowledges the limitations of a single production, Cleopatra is uniquely historically, sexually and mythologically charged among Shakespeare's characters. Her 'unplayability' is further affected by perceived tensions between how other characters

¹⁸³ Cecil Howard, 'Antony and Cleopatra', *Theatre* (December 1890), 287–288.

¹⁸⁴ *Antony and Cleopatra*, II.2.207, II.2.245–6.

¹⁸⁵ 'Mdme. [sic] Bernhardt's friends and enemies,' *PMG* (7 October 1890), 6.

¹⁸⁶ *Antony and Cleopatra*, I.1.14.

¹⁸⁷ *Romeo and Juliet*, II.2.133–5.

describe Cleopatra, and her onstage behaviour. In 1897, the *Morning Post*'s correspondent opined that Shakespeare presented Cleopatra 'in somewhat peculiar fashion', having detailed her 'waywardness' but 'left her infinite charm to express itself' via 'the effect of her presence upon others'.¹⁸⁸ However, as Laurie Maguire notes, the primary means of depicting beauty is via the effect beauty has on others, given beauty's 'resistance' to the 'narrative closure' implied by description, associated as beauty is with the 'transcendent, the infinite'.¹⁸⁹ Maguire notes that 'the expression of this conclusion' is found in writers including Petrarch, Sir Thomas Browne, Spinoza and Addison.¹⁹⁰

Achurch was left little opportunity to 'show herself as the winsome Cleopatra'.¹⁹¹ Archer described the ideal Cleopatra as 'that incarnation of love and luxury, of all that is superb and seductive in womanhood, which has haunted the minds of men for nineteen centuries' – an extraordinary statement, grouping 'the minds of men' as a single entity experiencing what is nevertheless a highly individualised and subjective process: the 'haunting' of one's mind by a seductive image.¹⁹² Ironically, therefore, among English actresses, only Langtry, the contemporary embodiment of beauty, could popularly create Cleopatra on the *fin-de-siècle* stage, not because she truly was "all that is superb and seductive" but because she was culturally recognised as signifying those qualities: indeed, at the start of her career, it was considered questionable, "emasculated", to find her otherwise.¹⁹³

¹⁸⁸ 'Olympic Theatre', *MP* (25 May 1897), 2.

¹⁸⁹ Laurie E. Maguire, *Helen of Troy* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 37; 49.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 77.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹² Archer, "'Antony and Cleopatra' – the Comédie Française', *Theatrical World for 1893*, 176.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 'Our Omnibus-Box,' *Theatre* (November 1882), 307–14, 313.

Marriage and the Bensons

Fin-de-siècle culture frequently emphasised the transcendent, unique, and exceptional in Cleopatra. However, her *fin-de-siècle* stagings were also inflected by the late-Victorian reappraisal of marriage that was mediated through Shakespeare performance as well as wider theatrical culture. As *All's Well* shows, not every Shakespearean heroine or play with the potential to interrogate contemporary marriage did so; nevertheless, all three 1890s productions can be read in this way. The text supports Cleopatra's identification as a wife; both her women and Dolabella call her 'Empress', in counterpart to Antony's 'emperor'.¹⁹⁴ Moreover, her suicide soliloquy addresses Antony as 'husband'.¹⁹⁵ This line of interpretation was increasingly important to twentieth-century Cleopatras: Redgrave emphasised Cleopatra's fidelity as she 'stays' with Antony 'even when [...] driven away', while Jane Lapotaire read Cleopatra as hoping for a marriage proposal from Antony in I.3.¹⁹⁶

Like the Kendals, the Bensons' real-life marriage was central to their *fin-de-siècle* 'brand'. As Max Beerbohm argued, 'Hymeneal Dramaturgy' fascinated audiences, with the spectacle of 'husband and wife' as 'leading man and leading lady' likely to 'gladden and moisten all eyes'.¹⁹⁷ Constance Benson's Cleopatra was especially read through her marriage, as the couple's 'real passion' made the production successful with fans.¹⁹⁸ Beerbohm, however, was among Benson's detractors, insinuating a power imbalance when reviewing the 1890 London transfer. There was 'no ordinary reason' for F.R. Benson 'allowing Mrs. Benson to appear as Cleopatra', indicating

¹⁹⁴ *Antony and Cleopatra*, III.11.33; V.2.70.

¹⁹⁵ *Antony and Cleopatra*, V.2.286.

¹⁹⁶ John Wilders (ed.), *Antony and Cleopatra* (London: BBC, 1981), 26.

¹⁹⁷ Beerbohm, 'Hymeneal Dramaturgy', *Around Theatres*, 320.

¹⁹⁸ E.A. Bennett, 'At the Play', *Hearth and Home* (12 April 1900), 6.

that they were emphatically not “such a mutual pair” as they are boasted’, and implying that either Constance was unduly persuasive, or that affection impaired Benson’s managerial ‘reason’.¹⁹⁹ Both, of course, were traditional complaints regarding Cleopatra’s relation to Antony. Staging decisions potentially strengthened this impression of imbalance. Where Langtry’s production showed Antony’s triumphal return to Rome, the Bensons added a scene where Cleopatra crowned Antony, emphasising the former’s power.

The 1898 reviewers also stressed Constance Benson’s ‘rage’, which was ‘terrible’.²⁰⁰ Her Cleopatra was so violent to the ‘passionately struck down messenger’ that ‘Charmian’s intervention saved his life’; by 1900, she was embodied ‘force’.²⁰¹ An appalled Beerbohm felt that ‘the shadow of an automaton’ would have been preferable to the violent Constance, fascinating concluding that F.R. Benson must be cursed, ‘on the Olympian black-list’.²⁰² Beerbohm thus identifies Benson with Antony, forsaken by the ‘Olympian’ ‘Hercules/whom Antony loves’ when the god leaves him in IV.3.²⁰³ The tension between Beerbohm’s fascination with the Bensons’ marriage and his discomfort at seeing them personate Shakespeare’s ‘noble monsters’ implies anxiety over categories of performance.²⁰⁴ While it was acceptable to see Langtry play opposite her lover, to see Bernhardt don the ‘heavy coils of Titian red hair’ that exemplified ‘female sexuality’, and to watch Achurch as the ‘wily courtesan’, the Bensons created cognitive dissonance.²⁰⁵ While the young Kendals’ marriage had enhanced the eroticism of their early *As You Like It*, the Bensons’ long-standing marriage, which underlined their

¹⁹⁹ Max Beerbohm, ‘Acting Good and Evil,’ *Saturday Review* (7 April 1900), 424–425.

²⁰⁰ *Birmingham Daily Post* (15 April 1898), quoted Madelaine, 193.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, ‘At The Play’, 6.

²⁰² ‘Acting Good and Evil’, 424–425.

²⁰³ *Antony and Cleopatra*, IV.3.21–2.

²⁰⁴ ‘Acting Good and Evil’, 425.

²⁰⁵ *Daily Telegraph* (30 May 1892), quoted Aston, *Bernhardt*, 80; ‘Olympic Post’ *MP* (25 May 1897), 2.

company's ethos, undermined the erotic connection Antony and Cleopatra traditionally embodied. Not unlike Lady Macbeth or Helena, seeing Cleopatra as wife gave transgressive behaviour a conservative framework. *Fin-de-siècle* commentators typically echoed Maecenas's lament that Octavia's 'beauty, wisdom, modesty' could not 'settle' Antony. Opposing Octavia to Cleopatra's 'wily courtesan' defined marriage as distinct from this relationship.²⁰⁶ Presenting Cleopatra as wife jeopardised the boundary between the Octavia-relationship and the Cleopatra-relationship. By making a 'foreign' character 'comprehensible', Mrs. Benson could bring Cleopatra uncomfortably close to home.²⁰⁷

The century turns: Cleopatra and new technologies

By 1900, Victorian Shakespeare had achieved a great deal. The loving, erotic Lady Macbeth had pushed the Victorian ideal of the wife to its limits, and destabilised the eighteenth century's major legacy for female Shakespeare performance: Siddons's iconic interpretation. Shakespeare performance had also found the character that would take *fin-de-siècle* Shakespeare into the twentieth century's new technologies: Cleopatra.

The first new technology was filmed pornography. The relationship between the figure of the actress and pornography is well-documented. Elizabeth Schafer notes that Madame Vestris 'inspired pornographic literature', while Davis discusses the importance of dressing-room and 'Behind the Scenes' environments to Victorian voyeuristic pornography centring on female

²⁰⁶ *Antony and Cleopatra*, II.2.251.

²⁰⁷ *Birmingham Daily Gazette* (15 April 1898), quoted Madelaine, 71.

performers.²⁰⁸ Tracy Davis concludes from the proliferation of printed erotica with an actress in the titles (e.g. *Queens of the Stage, A Record of Carnal Intimacies with some of the Greatest Actresses* and *Cerisette, or the Amours of an Actress*) that ‘acting was the most often particularized occupation’ for female characters in pornography.²⁰⁹ Several surviving early pornographic films are set backstage. The women in *Peeping Tom* (1897) are in dressing-room environments, voyeuristically removing ‘costume’ elements such as wigs and padded breasts: the film thus fetishises the kinds of objects and actions associated with actresses.²¹⁰ *Peeping Tom in the Dressing Room* (1905) is more explicitly theatrical, extending the sexual narrative to include the observed chorus girls' discovery of the voyeur, whom they then beat with powder puffs.²¹¹

The relationship between Shakespeare and pornography is a neglected critical subfield; regrettably so, given that both Shakespeare performance and pornography articulate cultural fantasies and fears regarding sexuality. One active critic is Richard Burt, analysing late-twentieth-century filmed pornography. Among the scores of films Burt considers, the plays most commonly adapted for pornography (including mainstream adaptations with ‘softcore’ sequences) are *Romeo and Juliet* (by far), *The Taming of the Shrew*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.²¹²

²⁰⁸ Elizabeth Schafer, *Ms-Directing* (London: Women's Press, 1998), 195; Tracy C. Davis, ‘The Actress in Victorian Pornography,’ *Theatre Journal* (October 1989), 294–315.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 296.

²¹⁰ *Peeping Tom* (1897) was produced by the American Mutoscope and Biograph Company, [<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=15gKwzjq3xA>, accessed 1 April 2012].

²¹¹ The American Mutoscope and Biograph Company produced *Peeping Tom* in 1905. Kemp N. River, *Motion Pictures from the Library of Congress Paper Print Collection 1894–1912* (Berkeley: University of California, 1967), 76.

²¹² Richard Burt, *Unspeakable Shaxxxspearas* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998), 77–82.

Burt argues that these plays are best able to ‘undermine the institution of marriage’ and catalyse a ‘sexual pornotopia’ of choice.²¹³ This rationale is unconvincing; the gender-queering, cross-dressing comedies are rarely adapted for porn (the 1972 *Playboy Twelfth Night* is unusual), reflecting mainstream pornography’s heterocentricity. Moreover, there has yet to be a pornographic film of *Pericles*, despite the play’s incest and brothel plots. *Romeo and Juliet*, *Shrew* and *Dream* all focus on the creation and restoration of marriages and family units. As with many of the pornographic titles Davis researches (several of which, she notes, have disappeared from libraries), Burt’s sources are irretrievable and hard to revivify.²¹⁴ However, I suspect two factors, which Burt overlooks, influence the frequency of late-twentieth-century adaptations of these three films. First is the plays’ cultural prominence: as well as enjoying successful mainstream film adaptations, these plays are commonly studied and staged in schools. If any pornography writer, director, performer, financier or consumer has ever encountered a Shakespeare play, it may well be one of the three.²¹⁵ The additional effort of adapting or parodying Shakespeare as pornography is pointless if the source play is unknown. Additionally, choosing a well-known, revered play amplifies the subversion of turning Shakespeare into porn.

The second factor determining play choice is the types of desire the plays interrogate, and the contemporary resonances of those desires. The shrew/battleaxe and the star-crossed lovers are already popular culture tropes, reflecting the plays’ visibility and accessibility.²¹⁶ Burt’s argument that Shakespeare porn destabilises heterocentricity is questionable. The drive to adapt these

²¹³ *Shaxxxspear*, 82.

²¹⁴ Ibid., ‘The Actress in Victorian Pornography’, 296n; *Shaxxxspear*, 77.

²¹⁵ *Hamlet*, the obvious omission, is less frequently adapted for pornography, according to Burt.

²¹⁶ *TVTropes.com* has pages listing *Romeo and Juliet*-derived tropes in popular media, including ‘Star-Crossed Lovers’ and ‘Serial Romeo’. *Taming of the Shrew*’s tropes include ‘Love At First Punch’, ‘Belligerent Sexual Tension’ and ‘Defrosting the Ice Queen’. [<http://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Theatre/RomeoAndJuliet>, accessed 11 May 2013].

particular plays could be mapped onto the late-twentieth-century's socio-political changes.

Romeo and Juliet and *Dream* explore the possibilities of transgressive, contested desires.

Unsurprisingly, the only gay Shakespeare pornographic films Burt identifies adapt *Romeo and Juliet*: *Romeo and Juliet*, *Le Voyage à Venise* (1986) and *Romeo and Julian* (1993), filmed in an era of public struggle for gay equality and landmark gay film-making.²¹⁷ Sado-masochistic versions of *Shrew*, with Kate as both dominatrix 'mistress' and victim, have appeared in film and print, as a culturally inevitable response to the late twentieth-century's attempts to come to terms with the sexually and professionally assertive woman.²¹⁸

Contemporary visibility and socio-political relevance were also key to early filmed pornography and erotica's thematic choices. Orientalism was a 'common guise' in Victorian pornography. Although also indebted to *Salome*, the earliest extant erotic film (the first to be censored) has a recognisable Cleopatra theme.²¹⁹ The gyrating belly dancer in *Fatima's Coochie-Coochie Dance* (1896) was known professionally as 'Little Egypt', aligning her with Cleopatra as 'Egypt' and 'Egyptian dish'.²²⁰ Cleopatra's resonance as pornographic subject reiterates Archer's assessment of her cultural importance to the *fin-de-siècle* 'minds of men': what is more designed to respond to the conception of 'seductive womanhood' in the 'minds of men' than mainstream pornography?²²¹ The history of the 'Little Egypt' brand is unclear, but at least three dancers

²¹⁷ *Shaxxxspeakes*, 81. Landmark 1980s and 1990s gay films and television series included *Another Country* (1984), *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1985) *Maurice* (1987), and *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* (1994).

²¹⁸ *Shaxxxspeakes*, 263n.

²¹⁹ 'The Actress in Victorian Pornography', 313.

²²⁰ *Fatima's Coochee-Coochee Dance* dir. James White and William Heise (1896), MoMA Film Collections, [http://www.moma.org/collection/browse_results.php?object_id=107955], 18 April 2012]. Censored in Chicago in 1903 and available under its alternative title at [<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o0TC9Y4BEvY>], 1 April 2012]; *Antony and Cleopatra*, IV.15.19; II.6.128.

²²¹ Archer, *Theatrical World for 1893*, 176.

capitalised on its popularity: Fahreda Mahzar (c. 1871–1937), Fatima Djemille (d. 1921), and Asheia Wabe (1871–1908).²²²

Fin-de-siècle Shakespeare also inflected mainstream film's depictions of sexuality. Theda Bara's (1855–1955) most famous role was as *Cleopatra* (1917), loosely based on Shakespeare's play. From her debut in *A Fool There Was* (1915), Bara created the film *femme fatale*. In *A Fool There Was*, Bara's destruction of a marriage carries political implications, as the husband is American envoy to Britain. His annihilation evokes Antony's destruction. Bara's character, the 'Vampire', and the film's title, came from Kipling's 'The Vampire', a poem written in response to Burne-Jones's *The Vampire* (1897), persistently identified (despite his denials) as Mrs. Patrick Campbell.²²³ If so, the painting depicted Campbell at the height of her Shakespearean career, in the year she played Ophelia, and two years after a Juliet who 'danced like the daughter of Herodias'.²²⁴ The film *femme fatale* was very much associated with Salome as well as Cleopatra. However, *Cleopatra* was Bara's 'vamp' zenith, blending the *fin-de-siècle*'s sexual inheritance with new technology. Cleopatra's relationship with Hollywood became reciprocal: in 1973, director Tony Richardson encouraged Vanessa Redgrave to base her Cleopatra on the work of silent film stars including Pola Negri (1897–1987).²²⁵ Negri specialised in 'lurid vamp parts'; her

²²² Fatima Djemille is possibly the Edison performer. See: Shirley J. Burton, 'Obscene, Lewd, and Lascivious', *Michigan Historical Reviewer* (Spring 1993), 1–16, 1–2; Renée Rothman, review of *Looking for Little Egypt* by Donna Carlton and *Sisters of Salome* by Toni Bentley, *Dance Research Journal* (Summer 2003), 107–111, 107–109; A.W. Stencell, *Girl Show* (Toronto: ECW Press, 1999), 6–7.

²²³ 'Burne-Jones's Vampire', *New York Times* (16 January 1903), 1; Roxana Stuart, *Stage Blood* (Madison, Wisconsin: Popular Press, 1994), 165.

²²⁴ *Shaw on Shakespeare*, 172.

²²⁵ Redgrave, *Antony and Cleopatra*, 44–5; Maggie B. Gale, 'Miller, Ruby Laura Rose, (1879–1966), *DNB*, [<http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/67829>, accessed 1 April 2012].

breakthrough role was in the horror-melodrama *Die Augen der Mumie Ma* (1918), set partly in Egypt, where Negri played an Egyptian girl mistaken for an undead Egyptian Queen, Ma.²²⁶

The end of *genre fin-de-siècle*: ‘strong’ heroines in the Edwardian era

As the heroine of a play that depicts both the end of the Egyptian pharaohs and (via Octavius) the end of pre-Christian Rome, Cleopatra aptly embodied *genre fin-de-siècle*. Nevertheless, while Cleopatra allowed stage and film actresses to expose contemporary fears and fantasies regarding sexually and politically active women, *fin-de-siècle* depictions of these fantasies remained essentially unchallenging. They intensified the Egyptian Cleopatra’s danger by making her ‘comprehensible’ and proximate, but never challenged her presentation as a ‘wily courtesan’. Significantly, the first such challenging account by an English actress appeared in print, not onstage. In 1926, Lena Ashwell rewrote Granville Barker’s commentary on the ‘gentleman’ and ‘sportsman’ Antony, reinscribing Cleopatra as one who ‘considering the gamble, and the colossal stakes she wagered in the game [...] played it gamely, keeping her head [...] but losing with magnificent courage and never a word of complaint’.²²⁷ Shaw’s ‘New Woman’ *All’s Well* was never realised; Cleopatra only offered potential for staged transgression in an ultimately anti-feminist context.

This begs the question of where, and if, emerging actresses, associated with new movements of Ibsenism and feminism, found strong roles in Shakespeare. Shaw’s project of placing Shakespeare and the ‘New Woman’ in conversation became problematic in the 1900s, as the caricature of the ‘New Woman’ seemed increasingly old-fashioned. As Ledger notes, publication

²²⁶ David Huckvale, *Touchstones of Gothic Horror* (Jefferson, NC: 2010), 184.

²²⁷ Ashwell, *Reflections from Shakespeare*, 198.

of novels about New Women peaked between 1890–1895. One reason for this watermark might be the popular identification of ‘the new woman’ with ‘new criticism’ and ‘new poetry’ as ‘creatures of Mr. Oscar Wilde’s fantasy’: although *Punch* was premature in proclaiming ‘THE END OF THE NEW WOMAN’ in December 1895, Ledger notes that New Woman publications ‘dwindled dramatically’ after Wilde’s imprisonment.²²⁸

Both Ashwell’s recollection of being ‘barred from poetry and the Shakespearean stage’ and Elizabeth Robins’s 1899 offer to ‘rehearse’ Portia ‘on approval’ for Irving, having been ‘barred’ from Shakespeare productions, suggest that openly-politicised actresses struggled to gain classical roles.²²⁹ A survey of early Edwardian, mainstream, metropolitan Shakespeare – a phase Trewin described as ‘Shakespeare of the picture-frame, [...] large, slow and declamatory’ – implies hermeneutical stasis, even when staging Shakespeare’s rebarbative, potentially rebellious heroines.²³⁰ Walkley most fervently praised the Edwardian heroines who upheld his ideal of Shakespeare performance as a ‘catalogue of pleasures’; notably, he enjoyed the Court’s *Two Gentlemen of Verona* for female characters generally defined by ‘complete absorption in love, as the only thing in the world a woman ought to concern herself with’, including a cross-dressing Julia as ‘soft’ and ‘full of mischief as a Persian kitten’.²³¹

Constance Benson’s 1901 *Shrew*, ‘a shrew to the core, a malevolent being’ made Max Beerbohm ‘personally uncomfortable’.²³² The ‘main point of his objection’ was the taming process became

²²⁸ Sally Ledger, ‘The New Woman and feminist fictions’, *Cambridge Companion to the fin de siècle*, 153–168, 157.

²²⁹ *Reflections from Shakespeare*, 8; letter from Robins to Henry Irving (June 1899), reprinted Gail Marshall, *Actresses on the Victorian Stage* (Cambridge: 1998), 176.

²³⁰ Trewin, J.C., *The Edwardian Theatre* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1976), 136.

²³¹ A.B. Walkley, *Drama and Life*, 135.

²³² Beerbohm, ‘Shakespeare in Two Directions’, (5 January 1901), *Around Theatres*, 320.

uninviting – Katherine was no longer ‘in herself a charming creature, worthy to be tamed’ – rather than an objection to Petruchio’s violence.²³³ The production remained farcical. In 1903, Beerbohm Tree argued that Shakespeare’s ‘ideal womanhood’ could, if ‘more widely read in the boudoir and the drawing-room’ bring ‘the good woman [...] into fashion again’, unseating the ‘tiresome’ or ‘restless female of today’, to whom ‘Cleopatra came the nearest, perhaps’.²³⁴

To understand female Shakespeare performance in the increasingly politicised period 1900-1914 requires a broader overview. Although innovative theatre-making did occur, it was at a greater distance from the mainstream than in the past two decades. The publication of ‘first-wave’ suffragist Shakespeare commentaries (approximately 1903-1915) followed a vast expansion of the female acting profession in England in Wales, from 3,696 (1891) to 6,443 (1901): an increase of 74%, versus 44% in the previous decade.²³⁵ Nevertheless, the Edwardian mainstream theatrical profession was in some ways less innovative than the period 1880-1900. The *fin de siècle* had seen the genesis of actor-managers including Beerbohm Tree, Benson and Forbes Robertson, and the zenith of the Irving-Terry partnership. The rise of Ibsen and society drama catalysed the careers of performers including Achurch, Robins and Campbell, all of whom had some early training in Shakespeare. The new open-air productions of Shakespeare offered a contrast to the Lyceum’s monumental popularity. The period saw the first honours given to actors, and a return to command performances, while the stock system’s decline, and the advent of already-celebrity actresses such as Langtry provoked reappraisal of what it meant to be an actress. In theatre criticism, the 1890s saw several watersheds: Clement Scott effectively ended

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ Speech reported *Birmingham Gazette* (24 April 1903) and *MP* (24 April 1903), collated *Shakespeare Centre Theatre Records* 5, 94–95.

²³⁵ Davis, *Actresses as Working Women*, 10.

his own career in 1897; Shaw's tenure as the *Saturday Review*'s critic ended in 1898, while Wilde was imprisoned in 1895.

The monster anachronism: Victorians on Edwardian stages

Continuities ran alongside disruptions, with those pre-1900 managements that did outlast the *fin de siècle* impacting female performance in the pre-war Shakespearean mainstream. However, newer theatrical enterprises were also interested in Shakespeare: chiefly, suffrage theatre and Harley Granville-Barker's Savoy Shakespeare, both of which intervened in the Shakespeare performance mainstream.

The Edwardian era did see the deaths or retirements of several previously innovative performers: Irving died in 1905, while the Kendals retired in 1908 (Madge Kendal's last Shakespearean role was in 1902).²³⁶ Nevertheless, many of the most influential Edward practitioners had gained formative experience pre-1900: Poel's Elizabethan Stage Society formed in 1895, while Beerbohm Tree managed His Majesty's Theatre from 1899.²³⁷ Greet, who in 1904 launched Sybil Thorndike's career, had boosted the early careers of Mrs. Patrick Campbell and H.B. Irving.²³⁸ Although both Campbell and Langtry kept Shakespeare in their repertoires, neither created a new Shakespearean role after 1900. Rather than this creating space for new performers of Shakespeare, pre-war Shakespeare was punctuated by acts of memorialisation and

²³⁶ Richard Foulkes, 'Kendal, Dame Madge (1848–1935)', *DNB* [<http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/34274>, accessed 18 April 2012].

²³⁷ Rinda Frye Lundstrom, *William Poel's Hamlets* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1984), 50.

²³⁸ Richard Foulkes, 'Greet, Sir Philip Barling Ben (1857–1936)' *DNB* [<http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/33548>, accessed 18 April 2012].

commemoration. These included what W.T. Stead called the ‘monster anachronism’: enormous Shakespeare-heavy galas that occurred in 1906, 1911 and 1916.²³⁹

The 1906 gala was Terry’s Jubilee Benefit, a memorialisation of the ‘queen of the English stage’ that Stead found ‘reminiscent of the living waxworks of Madame Tussaud’s’. Adulterated with the ‘Bath Buns’ and ‘comic opera’, Stead found the gala ‘the most conclusive demonstration possible’ of the depths to which performance had sunk.²⁴⁰ The ‘prettiest actresses’ of the younger generation, including Decima Moore, Irene Vanbrugh and Lillian Braithwaite, appeared only in tableaux or as silent jurors in a scene from *Gilbert*. The ‘stage manager had pinned the name of each exhibit in large letters on their breast’, indicating the possibility audiences would not recognise the young performers.²⁴¹

The 1911 Coronation Gala Performance further emphasised the older generation, foregrounding middle-aged and increasingly elderly performers over emerging talent. Madge Kendal, Ellen Terry and Adelaide Calvert, reprising a scene from the 1902 *Merry Wives*, were sixty-three, sixty-four and seventy-five; Beerbohm Tree (Mark Antony) was fifty-nine.²⁴² Mrs Patrick Campbell, reciting a Prologue, was forty-six. Even in the 1916 Tercentenary Gala, when, given the war, women might have been more prominent, younger actresses appeared chiefly in tableaux. Although Violet Vanbrugh, Edith Craig and Lillah McCarthy each organised a section of the ‘Shakespeare Pageant’, the other six ‘organisers’ included Alexander (fifty-eight), Lady

²³⁹ W.T. Stead, ‘Miss Ellen Terry’s Jubilee Benefit’, *Review of Reviews* (July 1906), 14–17, 15.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 15–17.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 15.

²⁴² C.C., ‘The Coronation Gala Performance’, *Academy and Literature* (1 July 1911), 19.

Tree (fifty-three), Greet (fifty-nine) and Geneviève Ward (seventy-nine).²⁴³ This lack of recognition for younger actresses, especially Shakespearean actresses, persisted. Despite knighthoods for Irving (1895), Bancroft (1897), Beerbohm Tree (1909) and Benson (1916), the first British actress to be awarded DBE was May Whitty (1918), for charitable work, rather than her career. Honours followed for Geneviève Ward (1921), Ellen Terry (1925), Madge Kendal (1927) and Sybil Thorndike (1931), the first Shakespearean actresses to be made Dames. Of these, only Thorndike was honoured while still active on the stage— the others, retired, ranged from seventy-eight to eighty-four. No other Shakespearean actress was so honoured until Peggy Ashcroft accepted a DBE in 1956. Moreover, Terry and Kendal received GBEs, something no actress has received since.²⁴⁴

The gala emphasis on actresses born in the mid-nineteenth century reflects the broader assignation of Edwardian prestige.²⁴⁵ Moreover, one forum for emerging Shakespearean talent – the Bensons’ company – had Constance Benson as a firmly-established leading lady. The syndicate that controlled the Benson Company from 1910–1914 ‘wanted a younger leading lady’ and dislodged the ‘partisan’ Constance for eighteenth months between 1911 and 1913, despite F.R. Benson’s protests that ‘[i]n certain parts managers think her a draw’.²⁴⁶ Constance was

²⁴³ DNB.

²⁴⁴ Michael Billington, ‘Ashcroft, Dame Edith Margaret Emily [Peggy] (1907–1991)’, *DNB*, [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/printable/39440, accessed 19 March 2012]. A Dame GBE, Dame Grand Cross of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire, is the British Empire’s highest rank for women, immediately Dame Commander (DBE). Royal recipients of the GBE have included Princess Marie Louise (1872–1956, GBE 1919), and Princess Marina, Duchess of Kent (1906–1968, GBE 1937). Civilian recipients include Olave Baden-Powell (1889–1977, GBE 1932) and Clementine Spencer-Churchill (1885–1977, GBE 1945). ‘Order of the British Empire’, Official Website of the British Monarchy, [http://www.royal.gov.uk/MonarchUK/Honours/OrderoftheBritishEmpire.aspx, accessed 19 March 2012].

²⁴⁵ Actresses Bancroft, Kendal, Terry, Tree and Campbell were all born between 1840–1865.

²⁴⁶ Letter from F.R. Benson to the directors of F.R. Benson and Company Limited (May 1911) quoted Trewin, *Benson and the Bensonians* (London: Barrie & Rockliff, 1960), 187.

absent from the Bensons' first American tour (1913).²⁴⁷ Nevertheless, she retained several leading roles well into the First World War, including Katharine in *Shrew* at four Shakespeare Birthday Festivals at Stratford between 1910 and 1916. Even when Violet Vanbrugh replaced her in 1912, and attempted an alternative Katharine (one 'shivering with fear', not Benson's 'malevolent being'), Benson returned in 1913.²⁴⁸

Simultaneously, in Beerbohm's words, a 'fashion, to clamour for sight of all the plays Shakespeare wrote' shifted the theatrical canon.²⁴⁹ The previous chapters demonstrated the importance of artistic inheritance and canonicity in developing both actresses and certain roles, with heroines and their plays 'saved to the stage' by successive acclaimed eighteenth- and nineteenth-century performances.²⁵⁰ The fashion for little-staged plays disrupted the 'greatest' roles' continuous stage histories, limiting younger actresses' opportunities to gain experience in the kinds of heroines Terry and others had played. The Edwardian period saw revivals of *Two Gentlemen of Verona* (1904), *Troilus and Cressida* (1907) and *Measure for Measure* (1908); the latter two had unpopular heroines, unlikely to develop an actress's fanbase in the same way as culturally desirable figures such as Juliet, Beatrice or Imogen.

This canonical fragmentation reflects a broader decentralisation and fragmentation in pre-war Shakespeare performance. The Lyceum's 1899 move to syndicate control, and Irving's 1905 death, removed what J.T. Grein called 'the National theatre of the English world'.²⁵¹ The Benson

²⁴⁷ Ibid., 200.

²⁴⁸ *Bensonians*, 197.

²⁴⁹ Beerbohm, 'Shakespeare in Two Directions' (5 May 1901) *Around Theatres*, 320–1.

²⁵⁰ G.C. O'Dell, *Shakespeare from Betterton to Irving*, 131.

²⁵¹ J.T. Grein, *Dramatic Criticism* (London: John Long, 1899), 260.

Company's syndicated existence as 'The Stratford-upon-Avon Players Ltd' inevitably made that company and its leadership less cohesive. Newer, proliferating Shakespeare managements (often Bensonian offshoots, such as the Asche-Brayton company) increasingly emphasised regional and international touring, including to Australia. As Cochrane notes, 'the sheer amount of touring product available was enormous' in the Edwardian era, with many former producing and regional houses becoming 'effectively retail outlets', vending theatre 'manufactured elsewhere'.²⁵² Competition did not encourage artistic innovation. The shift from actor-manager lessees to 'dominant corporate theatre providers', who owned multiple theatres, challenged the 'entrepreneurial independence and innovation' the Bancrofts' and Irving's Victorian managements had practiced.²⁵³ With the move to touring and repertory, mainstream Shakespeare performance frequently lacked a geographical base, as new theatres generally did not develop resident companies until the 1920s.²⁵⁴ The 1906, 1911 and 1916 gala performances implied a theatrical cohesion that no longer existed.

Contemporary critical devaluation of Shakespeare only exacerbated this fragmentation. As early as 1898, Max Beerbohm bemoaned the 'dreariness' of the 'comparative criticism' that a 'classic play' made 'inevitable'.²⁵⁵ For Beerbohm, historical overload had killed Shakespeare performance: 'The play is dead. The stage is crowded with ghosts'.²⁵⁶ Beerbohm urged not merely a move away from Shakespeare's best-known plays, but also had 'no desire for the more frequent performance' of lesser-known Shakespearean plays unless they could offer 'more

²⁵² Claire Cochrane, *Twentieth Century British Theatre* (Cambridge: 2011), 28–9.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, 49.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 59.

²⁵⁵ Max Beerbohm, *Around Theatres*, 9.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

chance of progress for modern drama'.²⁵⁷ This privileging of modern drama had implications for the stylistics of Shakespeare when it was staged. *Fin-de-siècle* reviews had evinced anxiety over both Shakespeare's cross-fertilisation with society drama (the 'distressingly modern touch') and any female performance style that wasn't aestheticised or pleasurable: hence journalistic aversion to Achurch's emotionally intense Cleopatra, and to Constance Benson's 'raw' malevolence and 'shriek[s]' as Katharine.²⁵⁸ The last great acting innovation of the *fin de siècle* was a restraint that originated in Campbell's work outside Shakespeare. As Paula Tanqueray, Campbell's 1893 decision to substitute a blown nose for hysterical weeping, and the dropping of one ornament for a tantrum, helped popularise a new tradition of understatement in female performance. Charles Wyndham's advice to Lena Ashwell about her performance in *Mrs. Dane's Defence* (1900) reflected this. In rehearsal, Ashwell wanted to finish the 'culminating scene' with 'a tremendous burst of hysteria'; Wyndham insisted that 'the smaller the sound, the greater your effect'.²⁵⁹ As Maggie B. Gale notes, the subsequent acclaim positioned Ashwell among the 'leading actresses of the day', albeit one unable to break through in Shakespeare.²⁶⁰

In 1896, Shaw argued that *fin-de-siècle* society drama's playing style, which he described as 'emotional facility and neurotic sexuality', was anathema to the 'plastic, picturesque, vigorous action' necessary for classical and verse drama.²⁶¹ Although new writing accommodated 'genuises and the *hystériques*', Shaw felt that the fashion sidelined actresses with 'brains and self-respect' who were 'strong and continent', in favour of those unable to 'deliver a ten-line

²⁵⁷ Beerbohm, 'At the Lyceum' (24 March 1900), *Around Theatres*, 245–8, 246.

²⁵⁸ *Around Theatres*, 341.

²⁵⁹ *Reflections from Shakespeare*, 79.

²⁶⁰ Maggie B. Gale, 'Lena Ashwell', *DNB* [<http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/30476>, accessed 12 March 2012].

²⁶¹ Shaw, 'The Immortal William' (2 May 1896), *Saturday Review*, 452–4.

speech' as 'not a hysterical explosion, but a speech with thought as well as feeling in it'.²⁶² As a playwright, Shaw lamented 'how a dramatic author is hampered at present by the limited compass' of actors, while also condemning the decline in Shakespeare performance as younger actors struggled with the 'ten-line speech[es]' common to Shakespearean, and Shavian plays.²⁶³ However, Walkley's review of H.B. Irving's 1905 *Hamlet* suggested Shavian style formed part of the problem: although seeing H.B. Irving offered a 'sense of theatrical continuity' that was 'excellent', the performance was 'hard', marred stylistically by reminding Walkley of the Shavian 'character-type'.²⁶⁴ Increasingly, though, critics agreed that few young actresses could perform both classical and modern drama to a high standard; Thorndike was a rare exception. W.A. Darlington felt that this stylistic polarisation continued into the 1920s, when 'the great majority even of the more enlightened playgoers' were 'allergic' to Thorndike's Hecuba and Medea. They responded to 'the restrained playing of du Maurier, who suggested strong feeling by a twist of the lips or a tensing of the fingers, but were never so unrealistic (or so ungentlemanly) as to give an emotion its head'.²⁶⁵ Darlington roots this 'clear break between the two kinds' of mainstream theatre, 'the classic and the modern, the theatre of emotion and the theatre of ideas' in the twentieth century. However, *fin-de-siècle* reviews of Campbell, Shaw's anxieties about female performance style, and Ashwell's description of the professional consequences of roles in *Mrs. Dane's Defence* (1900) and *Resurrection* (1903) place this divide before 1900.²⁶⁶

Suffrage and Shakespeare: reading the 1909 Festival

²⁶² Ibid.

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ Walkley, 'Hamlet (Adelphi Theatre, April 1905)', *Drama and Life*, 142–7, 143.

²⁶⁵ W.A. Darlington, *Six Thousand and One Nights* (London: George G. Harrap, 1960), 89.

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

Typically, those managements both modelled after stock or family companies, and nationally famous before 1900, did not produce innovative pre-war stagings of Shakespeare's heroines.²⁶⁷ However, the burgeoning suffragist movement destabilised traditional presentations and interpretations of Shakespeare, both via the new movement of suffrage theatre, and via Shakespearean criticism and commentary from women involved in suffragist politics. Suffragist Shakespeare included productions staged under an explicitly suffragist aegis, such as Edith Craig's 1913 *Macbeth*. Little evidence for this production survives, but one of Craig's few recorded assertions was that Shakespeare offered 'a perfect way to get audiences to think in political ways', with *Macbeth* 'more likely to arouse public sympathy and interest' than 'tracts'.²⁶⁸ It's tempting to speculate on how Craig's production might have sympathetically represented Lady Macbeth and Lady Macduff, amidst a more general condemnation of despotism, oppression and suffering. However, all we can infer is that Craig found appropriating Shakespeare conducive to her political agenda: she found audiences 'willing' to see the play.²⁶⁹

Suffrage theatre's prewar intersections with Shakespeare also included perceived pro-suffrage overtones in single performances (such as Vanbrugh's 1912 *Shrew*) or throughout whole productions and interpretative communities, notably Granville-Barker's Savoy productions. These brought suffragist hermeneutics closest to the Shakespearean mainstream. The productions were *The Winter's Tale* (1912), *Twelfth Night* (1912), and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1914). Although the first was the most visibly suffrage-influenced production, all were inflected by the suffrage cause. A case study of these productions closes the chapter.

²⁶⁷ Benson, on Irving's advice, replicated the stock system in his company.

²⁶⁸ 'Was Shakespeare A Mad Doctor?' *Daily News and Leader* (7 March 1913), 22.

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

Individual actresses could also inflect productions with radical potential. Susan Carlson foregrounds Gertrude Elliott's radical potential as a performer in the 1909 Stratford Festival, which included *Cymbeline*, *Shrew* and *Henry VIII*, all plays emphasising gender politics.²⁷⁰ Elliott was President of the Actresses' Franchise League (AFL), her known political identity having the potential to link the plays with other theatrical and political productions beyond the Memorial Theatre walls. These productions were not exclusively plays. The pre-war Stratford Festivals, an emerging nexus of Shakespearean and suffragist activities, demonstrate the proliferation of different stagings of suffragist and anti-suffragist Shakespeare. Shakespeare-themed parades, sermons and festivities all became sites of suffragist (or anti-suffragist) performance. In 1909, the 'most conspicuous figures in the picturesque procession' to Shakespeare's graves were 'undoubtedly the band of Suffragettes', carrying 'bouquets' in the WSPU's 'colours of purple, green and white'.²⁷¹ Appropriating the Shakespeare industry could be as useful as appropriating Shakespeare himself, and Stratford-upon-Avon was the Shakespeare industry's greatest growth sector in the period. In 1909, the NUWSS's Stratford rooms sported the Shakespearean and Stratfordian heraldic colours of yellow and black on a banner reading 'To be or not to be'.²⁷² The colours were sufficiently associated with Shakespeare performance to eventually become the Royal Shakespeare Company colours.²⁷³ In addition to offering festivalgoers an alternative space to visit, this appropriation of Shakespearean colours and texts aligned the NUWSS rooms with the Festival, and its associations of legitimacy, eloquence and

²⁷⁰ Susan Carlson, 'The Suffrage Shrew', in Jonathan Bate, Jill Levenson and Dieter Mehl (eds), *Shakespeare and the Twentieth Century* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1996), 85–102, 85.

²⁷¹ 'Stratford-on-Avon', *Votes for Women* (30 April 1909), 601.

²⁷² 'Suffrage Shrew', 88.

²⁷³ David Crystal, Ben Crystal, *The Shakespeare Miscellany* (London: Penguin, 2005), 10.

patriotism, a relationship perceived as sufficiently successful to merit a suffragist presence at every Festival until 1914. Notably, although ‘militant suffragists’ were in 1913 accused of planning to ‘tamper with the flags or with the Birthplace’, suffragists never vandalised Shakespearean properties or groups.²⁷⁴ Instead, the 1909 banner quotation from *Hamlet* reinforces the relationship of alliance, appropriation and inclusion which the NUWSS sought to achieve. The banner’s text appropriated Shakespeare’s most famous line from a role which Derek Jacobi has aptly described as ‘the greatest of all acting traditions’ – greatest, in the sense of the most privileged.²⁷⁵ Moreover, the NUWSS banner’s colouring would also have evoked the Shakespeares’ heraldic motto ‘Not without right’ for residents and Shakespeareans familiar with the coat of arms.²⁷⁶ The phrase served as an implicit statement of the suffragists’ right to participation in both the Festival and politics. The 1909 Stratford Festival also coincided with a crucial by-election. Given the massed presence of suffragists, this ensured ‘public meetings [...] once or twice daily’ alongside the programme of plays.²⁷⁷ The Festival’s temporal and geographic overlap with the by-election highlighted the disparity between the suffragists’ right of participation in the procession to Shakespeare’s grave, and their exclusion from the vote they had come to witness. The NUWSS’s choice of banner quotation – a debate between life and suicide – also anticipated the consequences of the suffragist move towards militancy.

Suffrage appropriation of Shakespeare catalysed anti-suffragist responses from other Stratford spaces, including the pulpit. *Votes for Women* identified the Dean of St. Alban’s 1909 Festival

²⁷⁴ Quoted ‘Suffrage Shrew’, 96.

²⁷⁵ Quoted Roger Hapgood (ed.), *Hamlet (Shakespeare in Production)* (Cambridge: 1999), 4.

²⁷⁶ Katherine Duncan-Jones, *Ungentle Shakespeare* (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2001), 96.

²⁷⁷ ‘Suffrage Shrew’, 87.

Sermon as ‘a hit at the suffragettes’.²⁷⁸ He argued that Shakespeare’s women were ‘exemplars for all time of what true womanhood should be’, as demonstrated by their ‘realising and accepting’ their ‘limitations, fixed alike by God and nature’.²⁷⁹ These ‘limitations’ left ‘fullest scope’ for exercising ‘an influence subtle, gracious, far-reaching’: an essentially Ruskinian philosophy of Shakespeare’s women.²⁸⁰

Crucially, describing the Stratford activity of 1909, *Common Cause* highlighted the speculations as to Shakespeare’s attitude to women’s suffrage: the definitive feature of Shakespearean allusion in pre-war suffrage debates.²⁸¹ Beyond Stratford, suffragist appropriation of Shakespeare’s texts to disturb constructions of truth and authority became more loaded. Israel Zangwill’s 1910 speech at the Albert Hall quoted Asquith’s warning to militant women, made from ‘the House’, which ‘quote[d] Scripture to the effect that “they that take up the sword shall perish by the sword!” Well, we know who can quote Scripture for his own purpose’.²⁸² Zangwill’s allusion (to *Merchant* I.3.93) disrupts Asquith’s assumption of Biblical authority (paraphrasing Matthew 26:52) via the only comparable literary authority, Shakespeare. This was a particularly potent gesture after a century in which Bardolatry and religious doubt had disrupted the Bible’s literary pre-eminence. In 1911, F.R. Benson protested that ‘pride in and enjoyment of’ Shakespeare could be an apolitical ‘common ground’ where ‘all the English-peoples may meet without encountering the disturbing influences of religion and politics’.²⁸³ Nevertheless, ‘religion and politics’

²⁷⁸ ‘Press Comments’, *Votes for Women* (30 April 1909), 601.

²⁷⁹ ‘The Shakespeare Sermon’, *Stratford Herald* (30 April 1909), *SCTR* 7, 82.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁸¹ Untitled article. *Common Cause* (29 April 1909), 54.

²⁸² ‘Mr. Israel Zangwill at Albert Hall’, *Vote* (19 Nov 1910), 47.

²⁸³ ‘The Stratford Festival’, *Standard* (19 April 1911), *SCTR* 8, 52.

remained closely implicated with Shakespeare, and each other, in suffragist (and anti-suffragist) literature.

Suffragist Shakespeare: resituating commentary

Suffragists, male and female, performers and non-performers, produced significant Shakespeare commentary and criticism. In particular, little-studied accounts by Nora Stransom, Muriel Gray and Jess Dorynne (the anonymous polemicist of *The True Ophelia*) particularly illuminate the diversity of suffragists' attitudes to Shakespeare, and how these attitudes intersect with the mainstream or non-suffragists' views. Additionally, these accounts reflect and undermine Ellen Terry's better-known lectures.

There was also a small but significant tradition of suffragist transformative works on Shakespeare. This is unsurprising: late twentieth-century theories of transformative works illuminate the process of making transformative work as embedded with ideals of widening participation, inclusivity and personal creativity, culminating in Sheenagh Pugh's definition of transformative and/or fan fiction as an innately 'democratic genre'.²⁸⁴ Suffragist interest in rewriting Shakespeare equally reflects Henry Jenkin et al.'s definition of participatory culture: one with 'relatively low barriers to artistic expression', contributors' perceived strong 'social connection[s]', and an ideological basis for the work, meaning that creators believe their

²⁸⁴ Sheenagh Pugh, *The democratic genre: Fan Fiction in a literary context* (Bridgend: Seren, 2005).

contributions ‘matter’.²⁸⁵ With their newspapers, theatrical enterprises, close affective bonds, and shared beliefs, the suffrage movements catalysed an interpretative community.

Positive suffragist comment on Shakespeare (via commentary and transformative works) inherited a Victorian tradition of Shakespeare as celebrating women. By 1911, the ‘Girl’s Friend’ of Cowden Clarke’s 1876 article had become the woman’s advocate of Edwardian England. However, the new commentators rejected Ruskin’s style of celebration. O’Dell’s February 1911 lecture on ‘Shakespeare’s Women’ condemned the ‘popular ideas [...] formed not directly on Shakespeare so much as on what Ruskin had said about Shakespeare’s women’, according to the *Vote*.²⁸⁶ For O’Dell and the *Vote*, Ruskin’s ‘gift-book’ (*Sesame and Lilies*) describing women as ‘redeemers’ ignored ‘those women [...] unable to do anything except bemoan their lot’ and Queen Katherine, unable ‘to win [Henry VIII] to any better sort of life’.²⁸⁷ Equally, O’Dell argued, Ruskin overlooked ‘the women in Shakespeare’s other plays’, who ‘when there is anything to be done, go ahead and do it’. Portia’s courtroom victory demonstrated that Shakespeare’s ‘feeling of what women ought to do’ was that ‘the great thing is to act, to use the means that will gain some end’.²⁸⁸ Shakespeare thus legitimised militancy: O’Dell ‘wished to urge that this was also the attitude which the modern Suffrage movement should take up towards women’, concluded the *Vote*.²⁸⁹

²⁸⁵ Henry Jenkins, Ravi Purushotma, Katherine Clinton, Margaret Weigel, Alice J. Robison, ‘Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture’ (Chicago: MacArthur Foundation, 2001), [<http://www.newmedialiteracies.org/files/working/NMLWhitePaper.pdf>, accessed 1 April 2012], 3.

²⁸⁶ ‘Shakespeare’s Women,’ *Vote* (25 February 1911), 217.

²⁸⁷ Ibid.

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

In October 1911, the experienced American Shakespearean actress Fay Davis performed Zangwill's Shakespearean 'Prologue' at the Lyceum, for the AFL Matinee.²⁹⁰ Moving beyond a blazon of virtuous heroines including Rosalind and Perdita, the 'Prologue' accused men of 'Making sad mischief with their stupid swords', putting the time 'out of joint'.²⁹¹ Like the 1909 NUWSS banner, the 1911 'Prologue' appropriated *Hamlet*, now reinscribing both Shakespearean plots and misogynist slurs for feminist purposes. Hamlet 'whine[s] and wail[s]', and suffers from 'masculine hysteria', inverting the gendering of mental illness.²⁹² Subsequently, the Prologue wishes that 'instead of suicide-suggestion/To vote or not to vote had been the question', redirecting attention from Ophelia's demise to political activity.²⁹³ The poem implies that Ophelia would neither have killed herself, nor considered a 'Nunnery, forsooth!' had she been able 'at Hamlet's fat form' to 'thunder suffrage'.²⁹⁴ Wishing Ophelia had 'met' Hamlet with 'mocking flout', Zangwill advises Ophelia's analogues in the audience to respond to 'male insolence of sneer and doubt' (the sexual slurs and speculation experienced by Ophelia, suffragettes, and actresses) with political rhetoric. Dorynne similarly emphasised Ophelia's 'horrible' and 'terrible' trauma on learning of the 'gross insinuations' and 'vulgar and malicious gossip' circulating regarding her relationship with Hamlet.²⁹⁵ Campbell's career demonstrates Ophelia's particular fascination for a *fin-de-siècle* culture that fetishised feminine fragility, illness and suicide.²⁹⁶ Increasingly, pro-Shakespeare suffragists would rewrite Ophelia either as a survivor

²⁹⁰ 'Prologue', *Vote* (4 Nov 1911), 19.

²⁹¹ Ibid.

²⁹² Ibid.

²⁹³ Ibid.

²⁹⁴ Ibid.

²⁹⁵ *True Ophelia*, 24–5.

²⁹⁶ See Chapter Three.

(in Zangwill's case), or as 'loving and intelligent [...] a worthy love for Hamlet' in Dorynne's *The True Ophelia*.²⁹⁷

Like Clotilde Davis's oration at the 1899 International Congress of Women, Zangwill's 'Prologue' celebrated Terry: 'Imagine some mere man for Ellen Terry/You might as well replace champagne with sherry'.²⁹⁸ Terry's lectures, with their foundational argument that 'Shakspeare's [sic] women' have 'more in common' with 'modern revolutionaries' than 'fragile domestic heroines of the thirties + forties' have become the prevailing narrative of feminist comment on Shakespeare's relation to suffrage, despite Terry's ambivalent attitude to Edie's involvement with the suffragettes.²⁹⁹ Contemporary suffragist coverage of the lectures certainly emphasised their apparent politics. *Vote*'s report on Terry's July 1911 lecture for the Pioneer Players exemplifies this, asserting beneath the title 'Shakespeare as Suffragist' that 'According to Ellen Terry', Shakespeare was 'one of the pioneers of women's emancipation'.³⁰⁰ Between 1911–1914, Terry's lectures (doubtless helped by *Vote*-style coverage) were eagerly booked and attended by feminist groups including the Leeds Society of Women's Suffrage (October 1912).³⁰¹ Given her prolific lecturing commitments, cultural primacy, and the feminist desire to see Terry, as Farfan does, 'absolutely supporting the New Woman', Terry's current position as the definitive commentator on suffragist Shakespeare is unsurprising. However, *Vote* and subsequent scholarship's version of Terry as suffragist lecturer is problematic. Neither the phrase 'Shakespeare as Suffragist' nor the description of Shakespeare as 'one of the pioneers of women's emancipation' actually appears in

²⁹⁷ *The True Ophelia*, 61.

²⁹⁸ 'Prologue', *Vote* (4 Nov 1911), 19.

²⁹⁹ Ellen Terry, untitled MS lecture draft on Shakespeare's heroines (British Library Loan MS. 125/31/1), f.3.

³⁰⁰ 'Shakespeare as Suffragist', *Vote* (29 July 1911), 180. Farfan identifies the lecture's topic as 'The Triumphant Women', *Women, Modernism and Performance*, 46.

³⁰¹ Programme (24 October 1912), *Terry/Craig Database* (Document ID: ET-D580).

any extant lecture draft, despite Carlson accepting and repeating the attribution.³⁰² My previous chapter outlined the problems with positioning Terry as ‘supporting the New Woman cause’ in the 1890s. Although Lisa Tickner calls Terry ‘an ardent suffragist’, Kelly has argued persuasively for a different kind of Edwardian Terry: ‘a sly, ambiguous and sometimes reluctant feminist’, who insisted a newspaper correct claims her 1910 American and Canadian tour was affiliated with suffrage, yet who claimed to be ‘a suffragette’ in interview with an Australian journalist.³⁰³ Terry’s touring was financially necessary, not a vocation; as well as bemoaning Edy’s political commitments, she declined invitations from regional suffrage societies including the Bristol Conservative & Unionist Women’s Franchise Association.³⁰⁴

Kelly emphasises Terry’s lectures as ‘performances’ rather than ‘a naïve snapshot of an essential Ellen Terry’; crucially, they also inspired audiences of ‘would-be suffrage Rosalinds, enrolled in elocution classes [...] in preparation for platform speaking’.³⁰⁵ Kelly’s argument could usefully be modulated further: while Terry modelled public speaking on Shakespeare and suffrage, as one of several AFL members invited to suffrage societies, she did not define suffragist attitudes to Shakespeare.³⁰⁶ Two substantial suffragist articles on Shakespeare, published in the *Englishwoman*, attacked both Shakespeare’s conceptions of women, and mainstream critical response to the same. These articles were Muriel Gray’s ‘Shakespeare’s Women’ (July 1911) and

³⁰² ‘Suffrage Shrew’, 94.

³⁰³ *Spectacle of Women*, 24; draft letter from Terry to an unidentified correspondent (4 August 1910), *Terry/Craig Database*, Document ID: SC22-A4; Melville, *Ellen Terry*, 209.

³⁰⁴ Letter from Terry to Elizabeth Rumball (20 May 1910), *Terry/Craig Database*, (Document ID: ET-D5,091; British Library MS. Polling 1/5091); handwritten emendation to letter from Nan Mardon to Ellen Terry (9 October 1911), *Terry/Craig Database*, (Document ID: ET-Z1,300).

³⁰⁵ Katherine E. Kelly, ‘The After Voice of Ellen Terry’, Katharine Cockin (ed.) *Ellen Terry, Spheres of Influence* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2011) 65–76, 71, 74.

³⁰⁶ *Innocent Flowers*, 59.

Nora Stransom's 'The Woman in Shakespeare's Plays' (April 1914). Although written three years apart, the two are remarkably consistent in their attacks.³⁰⁷

Suffragist Shakespeare: rediscovering the detractors

It seems likely that Gray was Margaret Muriel Gray (1879–1957), Lecturer in English at the University of Glasgow. Stransom is more obscure, but the available data dates her to c.1883–1960. London-born, she was the daughter of a Master Tailor and seems never to have married or moved out of London.³⁰⁸ Like O'Dell, Gray's article blamed 'the imagination of great critics' for obscuring 'what is actually [...] in the plays' with 'a thick hedge of appreciation'.³⁰⁹ Instead, Gray asserted that Shakespeare offered 'too little material' on his female characters to justify his reputation for psychological perception: his women lacked 'inner vision [...] analysis of motive' and 'mental conflict, which we are accustomed to find in Shakespeare's men'.³¹⁰ For Gray, Shakespeare's reputation rested on problematic gender essentialism: the 'generally approved ascription of certain qualities pre-eminently to men' that was 'mistaken'.³¹¹ Stransom, similarly, regretted that Shakespeare did not treat 'human nature in man and in woman' as 'the same thing'.³¹²

³⁰⁷ Muriel Gray, 'Shakespeare's women', *Englishwoman* (July 1911), 75–94; Nora Stransom, 'The woman in Shakespeare's plays', *Englishwoman* (April 1914), 198–205.

³⁰⁸ 'Papers of Margaret Muriel Gray, 1879–1957,' *University of Glasgow Archives Hub* (20 May 2011), [<http://cheshire.cent.gla.ac.uk/ead/html/gb0248ugc64-p1.shtml#gb-0248-ugc-064>, accessed 10 April 2012]; Nora Esther Stransom (1882–1960). Birth: *England & Wales Civil Registration Indexes*; register of births in Uxbridge (April–June 1882). Censuses for 1891, 1901 and 1911 all place Stransom in St. Margaret's parish, Uxbridge. See: *1891 Census for Uxbridge* (piece 1020, fo. 59, household 70); *1901 Census for Uxbridge* (piece 1178, fo. 35, household 128); *1911 Census for Uxbridge* (piece 6780, household 68). Death: *England & Wales Civil Registration Indexes*; register of deaths in Uxbridge, (January–March 1960).

³⁰⁹ Gray, 'Shakespeare's women', 75.

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 75–7.

³¹¹ *Ibid.*, 75.

³¹² Stransom, 'The woman', 198.

Gray acknowledged that ‘In the comedies Shakespeare lets women reign supreme’, but found this meaningless since ‘this imaginary realm’ evaded ‘great questions of life and conduct’; Shakespeare’s comedy, like his comic women, remained ‘purely artificial’.³¹³ The women of the romances were essentially visual and atmospheric devices, augmenting the plays’ ‘light and colour and atmosphere’, but who were not ‘individuals, character have they none’.³¹⁴ In romance, Shakespeare’s women were ‘purely ornamental [...] viewed rather from the objective side’, anticipating Stransom’s 1914 argument that Shakespeare’s women have ‘the objective quality of creatures’, objects of the male gaze, whose experience the male playwright cannot share.³¹⁵ Rather than offering psychological revelation – indeed, Gray felt Shakespeare’s women ‘seldom’ achieved meaningful ‘self-revelation’ – Shakespeare’s women remained merely ‘the pictures of an artist’.³¹⁶ Stransom argued that Shakespeare offered ‘No woman [...] a deeper insight into herself’, inverting the tradition of Shakespeare’s ‘full appreciation of [women’s] highest qualities’, and ‘accurate perception of their defects’.³¹⁷ Notably, Gray contrasted the ‘wonderful bursts of admiration Imogen has called forth from men critics’ (overlooking Terry and Faucit) with the character’s apparently ‘vanishing and elusive personality’. Gray attributed this to Shakespeare’s construction of women as vehicles for projected male desire: ‘the charm’ of ‘the possibility of weaving’ Imogen’s ‘character from [men’s] own imagination’.³¹⁸

Strikingly, she ascribes a repressive, even misogynist agenda to Shakespeare’s use of genre: ‘One wonders why Shakespeare never put a Beatrice in tragedy; possibly he felt he could not have kept

³¹³ ‘Shakespeare’s women’, 75–6.

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 76.

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 76–7; ‘The woman’, 198.

³¹⁶ ‘Shakespeare’s women’, 77; ‘The woman’, 199.

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 198; ‘Shakespeare as the Girl’s Friend’, 357.

³¹⁸ ‘Shakespeare’s women’, 78.

her sufficiently in the background'.³¹⁹ Shakespeare's tragic women proved most problematic, as Gray attacked their passivity and incomplete, 'vague' revelation of 'the impression made on the minds of his heroines by the crises of their lives'.³²⁰ Predictably, *Hamlet* exemplified this: Ophelia, 'the ostensible heroine of a tragedy' was not seen in the 'pitiful turmoil' that 'flung her mind off its balance', simply in her madness's sensational throes.³²¹ While the Victorian Ophelia cult supplied supplementary detail, via 'studies of [...] character' and 'wax[ing] pathetic over her early life, her motherless childhood' (perhaps a reference to *The Girlhood of Shakespeare's Heroines*), this biographical depth 'has nothing to do with Shakespeare'.³²² Gratuitously killed, like Cordelia, Ophelia had 'no profound influence' on the plot, and represented 'the pitiful sacrifice of a life which neither understood nor shared in the tragedy'.³²³ For Gray, Shakespeare's belief that 'the ideal woman should never ask why, must never seek for herself any explanation' meant his heroines lacked 'definite religious principles', their ideal 'selflessness' leading even to 'complete reticence on the subject of their own individual fate'.³²⁴ In fact, an 'individual fate' was impossible: as the antithesis of the suffragist, self-actualising heroine, Shakespeare's women have 'merged themselves too completely in the lives of others [...] to think of themselves as individual entities'. They remain 'gracious silences', having 'attained the submission of Griselda'.³²⁵

Stransom's language is more nuanced, but her 1914 assessment of Shakespeare's methodologies is no less damning. Shakespeare's women reflect what woman 'is expected by men to count for',

³¹⁹ Ibid., 77.

³²⁰ Ibid.

³²¹ Ibid.

³²² Ibid., 76.

³²³ Ibid.

³²⁴ Ibid., 81–2.

³²⁵ Ibid., 82.

revealing ‘what Shakespeare as an individual *liked* women to be’.³²⁶ Woman serves as ‘the need-filling creature [...] what Shakespeare would like the woman-thing to be’.³²⁷ Unlike Gray, Stransom cleared Shakespeare of ‘exalt[ing] affected conformity’, but agreed that his tragic women remained particularly ‘passive and objective’.³²⁸ She similarly attacked Cordelia, but importantly distinguished dramatic ‘function’ from character, from ‘Cordelia herself’. Although Cordelia was ‘unsurpassed’ in her fulfilment of ‘place and function’, Shakespeare depicted ‘only her static quality’ of reaction, leaving active and traumatic parts of her narrative unstaged, including ‘whether she [...] agonised [...] as an outcast’, exchanging her home ‘for a new and perhaps and undesired life’.³²⁹ Above all, Stransom objected that we ‘know nothing of Cordelia except as she affects Lear’, concluding Shakespeare’s heroines exist to ‘meet the need of’ their play’s ‘hero’.³³⁰

Even pro-Shakespeare suffragists such as Lena Ashwell attacked traditional sympathies by emphasising the domestic realities of character’s lives. Echoing Stransom’s speculation on Cordelia’s ‘new and perhaps undesired married life’, Ashwell’s *Reflections from Shakespeare* (1926) sympathised with Goneril, the married daughter ‘overshadowed in her own house, not mistress of her hearth’, forced to be ‘for ever dancing attendance’ on Lear, who ‘has treated the home as though it were his own’.³³¹ ‘Every householder’, Ashwell concludes, ‘will agree [...] that her position was [...] intolerable’.³³² Reducing Lear to patriarchal, household harasser who ‘comes in calling for his dinner’ contrasts starkly with the ultra-Victorian, unquestioningly

³²⁶ ‘The woman’, 199.

³²⁷ Ibid.

³²⁸ Ibid., 199; 202.

³²⁹ Ibid., 202–3.

³³⁰ Ibid.

³³¹ *Reflections from Shakespeare*, 157.

³³² Ibid.

sympathetic view of Lear exemplified by *fin-de-siècle* journalist John Parnell.³³³ In 1892, Parnell exhorted ‘ye daughters of England, bred and educated in the lap of luxury’ to use Irving’s *Lear* to comprehend ‘the premature whitening of paternal heads working and waiting long periods for your loves’.³³⁴ Parnell claimed ‘no man’ could play Lear like Irving ‘for many nights, and live’ and that audience members would subsequently ‘in the solitude of [their] chambers, gaze upwards and beyond, and read [*Lear*’s] inner meanings’.³³⁵ This assertion underscores Parnell’s staggering triangulation of the self-exhausting patriarch of English theatre, the unappreciated patriarchs of English homes and, of course, God. Ashwell’s account of Goneril implicitly displaces this spiritualised, sexist view of the tragedy.

Ashwell’s focus on Goneril typifies suffragist Shakespeareans’ emphasis on secondary roles, just as Dorynne analysed Gertrude and ‘the Insignificant Mother of Juliet’, and suffragist reviews of the Savoy *The Winter’s Tale* (1912) emphasised Paulina.³³⁶ The publication of ‘first-wave’ suffragist Shakespeare commentaries (approximately 1903–1915) followed a vast expansion of the female acting profession in England and Wales.³³⁷ It is impossible to be certain whether this sudden expansion affected suffragists’ new critical emphasis on minor characters. Certainly, there are more small Shakespearean roles for women than larger ones, as exemplified by three plays of particular interest to pre-war suffragists. In *Much Ado*, Beatrice has 106 speeches (fewer than Don Pedro, Benedick, Claudio or Leonato), while Hero, Margaret and Ursula all have fewer than forty-five; one major role to three minor ones. *Shrew* repeats the configuration with Katherine

³³³ Ibid.

³³⁴ Typescript of John Parnell, ‘Henry Irving as ‘Lear’. 28th November 1892’, Bodleian Library M. adds. 124e.29 (1).

³³⁵ Ibid.

³³⁶ The most recent account of *The Winter’s Tale*’s stage history, the RSC edition, follows Sprague in omitting almost any mention of the actresses who played Paulina; Maud Tree (1906) is an honourable exception. Helen Faucit’s Hermione, and Mary Anderson’s doubling of Hermione and Perdita, dominate Victorian historiographies.

³³⁷ See Introduction, 9.

(eighty-two), Bianca (twenty-nine), the Widow (eight) and the Hostess (three). In *Winter's Tale*, Paulina, Hermione and Perdita have fifty-nine, thirty-five and twenty-five speeches respectively, but a further five female roles each has fewer than fifteen.³³⁸ Moreover, Robins and Ashwell's experiences indicate radical actresses' struggles to gain leading Shakespeare roles.

More importantly, the suffragist critical project of including and interpreting overlooked character parallels the suffragists' political goals of inclusion in the electoral process. Equally, suffragist reviewers' focus on the Beatrice/Hero and Paulina/Hermione relationships shifts hermeneutical focus from typologies of individual women, and their relationships with men, towards supportive bonds between women. These bonds offered analogues for female suffragist experience. Rediscovering suffragists' critical and transformative Shakespeare commentaries could significantly contribute to Shakespeare studies, resituating aspects of late twentieth-century feminist Shakespeare criticism. Suffragist critics anticipate several of Kate McLuskie's concerns in her foundational feminist, cultural materialist essay 'The patriarchal bard'.³³⁹ Gray, Stransom and McLuskie all start from positions of frustration with received attitudes to Shakespeare's treatment of gender, and specifically with character criticism's persistent treatment of characters as 'real' people; Gray and Stransom argue that Shakespeare's failure to make his tragic women psychologically complex precludes reality, while McLuskie highlights *Lear*'s 'representation of patriarchal misogyny'.³⁴⁰ Instead, both Stransom in 1914, and McLuskie in 1985 seek to reorient evaluation of Shakespeare's characterisation towards an emphasis on dramatic function, and on

³³⁸ These are Mopsa (thirteen), Dorcas (eleven), Emilia (four), First Lady (four) and Second Lady (three). Eric M. Johnson, *Open Source Shakespeare* (2012), <http://www.opensourceshakespeare.org/views/plays/characters/chardisplay.php?sortby=lines&searchterm=> [accessed: 1 April 2012].

³³⁹ Kate McLuskie, 'The patriarchal bard', Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield (eds), *Political Shakespeare* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1985), 88–108.

³⁴⁰ 'The patriarchal bard', 98.

how McLuskie's 'patriarchal bard' positions women as Stransom's 'need-filling creatures'. This is true whether those 'needs' are patriarchal or theatrical. McLuskie, for example, argues that Goneril and Regan's villainous psyches are 'evidently a function of the plot'.³⁴¹ Above all, Gray and Stransom prefigure McLuskie's closing challenge to feminists, of 'subverting rather than co-opting the dominion of the patriarchal Bard'.³⁴²

1980s Shakespeare criticism also inherits suffragists' emphasis on female friendship via performers' accounts (which naturally express less anxiety regarding character criticism), notably Juliet Stevenson and Fiona Shaw's 1988 account of Rosalind and Celia's relationship in *As You Like It*.³⁴³ Suffragist emphases on minor characters and women's domestic realities could also provide a useful intertext for an earlier Shakespearean feminist work: Woolf's imaginative biography of Shakespeare's 'wonderfully gifted sister', *A Room of One's Own*, first delivered as a Cambridge paper in 1928.³⁴⁴

From the Shrew to the Savoy

The synthesis of pre-war suffragist and Shakespearean interest culminated in Violet Vanbrugh's 1912 *Shrew*, and the triumvirate of Savoy productions (1912–1914). Both Susan Carlson and Sheila Stowell identify these productions as the clearest pre-war suffragist stagings of Shakespeare, the ultimate interventions of the 'feminist agenda' into the mainstream.³⁴⁵

Interrogating these claims illuminates suffragist Shakespeare performance's actual achievements

³⁴¹ Stransom, 199; 'The patriarchal bard', 98.

³⁴² Ibid., 106.

³⁴³ 'Rosalind: Iconoclast in Arden', *Clamorous Voices* (London: Women's Press, 1988), 97–121.

³⁴⁴ Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* [1928] (London: Penguin, 2004), 54–56.

³⁴⁵ Sheila Stowell, 'Suffrage critics and political action: a feminist agenda,' Michael Booth and Joel Kaplan (eds), *The Edwardian Theatre* (Cambridge: 1996), 166–84, 166.

in the period, and the relationship between this new kind of female Shakespeare performance and its immediate predecessor, *fin-de-siècle* Shakespeare.

Violet Vanbrugh's tenure as the Benson Shrew was brief: Constance Benson returned as Katherine in 1913. Carlson's analysis attempts to implicate both actresses in a narrative of repression and rebellion, claiming Benson recognised in the part 'the incongruities of her own positions as actress, as wife, as woman'.³⁴⁶ The evidence does not support Carlson's narrative of reluctance and oppression. The *Era* reported Katherine as Benson's 'favourite role', and it was a role that Benson fought hard to retain, post-Syndicate. She also unsuccessfully demanded its inclusion on an American tour.³⁴⁷

In 1912, however, Vanbrugh (born Violet Barnes, and given her first engagement and stage name by Terry; she also trained extensively with Kendal) showed Stratford a Katherine 'shivering with fear', whom Benson's Petruchio seemed to be 'not taming' but 'abducting', her vulnerability rendering Benson 'an anachronism in despotism'.³⁴⁸ Rather than Constance Benson's violent 'malevolence', Vanbrugh's stage violence consisted of 'pummelling cushions' and 'dashing a bouquet to the ground'.³⁴⁹ Both actions displace violence: the cushion is an obvious, even therapeutic substitute for a human victim, allowing different audiences different interpretations. On one level, such actions replace aggression with petulance, positioning a childish, tantrumming shrew on a continuum of recognisable if regrettable feminine behaviour. Even when Vanbrugh 'threw cushions about', the *Birmingham Gazette* 'with it all felt there was a soft womanly

³⁴⁶ 'Suffrage Shrew,' 91.

³⁴⁷ 'Shakespeare Festival', *Era* (30 April 1910), *STCR* 8, 5; *Benson and the Bensonians*, 187–190.

³⁴⁸ 'Stratford Festival', *Birmingham Daily Post* (23 April 1912), *STCR* 8, 101.

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

heart'.³⁵⁰ Alternatively, Vanbrugh's business constitutes a far more disturbing gender politics, as attacks on the domestic and ceremonial trappings of female existence amount almost to self-harm with Katherine's destruction of the signifier of bridehood at the moment she is herself a bride. Vanbrugh's personal convictions imply this: in 1913, she expressed contempt for the idea that political violence was antithetical to 'real womanhood. Whether a woman is breaking hearts or post office windows, she is always a woman'.³⁵¹ The suffragist actress was ideally-placed to break both.

Watching the 1912 *Shrew*, the *Stratford Herald* critic balked at Katherine's descent from the 'higher level of outspoken truth' in her 'youth' (which was 'ill-trained and badly-managed', deflecting blame from Katherine) to the 'lower level of dissimulation' Petruchio required.³⁵² Notably, the *Herald* evinced anxiety at a marriage which turned 'suns moons and evil good' at a 'husband's will' – in other words, a marital system which could turn a Katherine into a Lady Macbeth of the Terry variety, capable of anything for her husband's approval or benefit. The *Herald's* anxiety is the closest any non-suffragist publication would come to an imputation of misogyny akin to that made by Gray: 'it is hard', the *Herald* laments, 'to understand why the poet should glory in degrading Katherine'.³⁵³ The *Telegraph*, however, claimed that anyone 'much distressed by Katherine's submission' lacked 'a sense of humour'. The play, as the review's title suggested, augmented 'The Joy of Life'.³⁵⁴

³⁵⁰ 'Shakespeare's Birthday,' *Birmingham Gazette* (23 April 1912), *STCR* 8, 98.

³⁵¹ 'Always a Woman,' *Vote* (13 September 1913), 329.

³⁵² 'The Shakespeare Festival,' *Stratford Herald* (26 April 1912), *SCTR* 9, 1.

³⁵³ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁴ 'The Joy of Life,' *Telegraph* (23 April 1912), reprinted *SCTR* 8, 101.

Less than six months later, the Savoy *The Winter's Tale* appeared more visibly suffragist, even to mainstream critics. Suffragist reviews, particularly those in *Suffragette* and *Votes for Women*, emphasised two major production elements. The first was Leontes's persecution of Hermione. His accusations that Hermione is a 'traitor' and 'bed-swerver, even as bad as those/That vulgars give bold'st titles' would have recalled the use of sexual slurs to discredit actresses and activists, epitomised by the 'male insolence of sneer and doubt' to which Hamlet subjects the disenfranchised Ophelia in Zangwill's 'Prologue'.³⁵⁵ The trial scene's spectacle provoked *Votes for Women* to retitle the play 'The Conspiracy Trial of Hermione', clearly likening Hermione's legal oppression to that of the suffragettes.³⁵⁶ In fact, Hermione's trial had all the elements of a suffrage propagandists' ideal. Her extreme physical weakness, 'lacking strength of limit', having been denied the medical rights of 'women of all fashion', reflected the sufferings of hunger-striking, force-fed or disabled prisoners.³⁵⁷ This was topical: one force-fed prisoner, Mary Clarke had died on Christmas Day 1910, shortly after release from Holloway. Subsequently, the WSPU had foregrounded May Billingham, a disabled suffragette whose 'hand-propelled invalid tricycle' offered 'a special advantage in the propaganda battle' by contrasting the police's 'brutal tactics' with 'the vulnerability of the suffragette demonstrators'.³⁵⁸ Hermione was also eloquent in her self-defence, something which became demonstrably more important post-1912. By 1914, the *Times* was reporting suffragettes' courtroom speeches in detail, including Mary Richardson's claims that the Criminal Code had become 'a comic Valentine', that the authorities 'were afraid of killing her by forcible feeding and torture, but she was not afraid of dying', and that since the

³⁵⁵ *Winter's Tale*, II.1.88 and II.1.93–4.

³⁵⁶ 'The Conspiracy Trial of Hermione', *Votes for Women* (19 October 1912), 16.

³⁵⁷ *Winter's Tale*, III.2.104–6.

³⁵⁸ Fran Abrams, *Freedom's Cause* (London: Profile, 2003), 94.

courts could only ‘repeat the farce of releasing her or else killing her [...] hers was the victory’.³⁵⁹

In light of Kelly’s discussion of Terry as modelling public speech for emerging activists, it is possible that suffragists watching, or reading about the 1912 *Winter’s Tale* would have seen Lillah McCarthy’s Hermione as demonstrating another form of suffragist public speaking: speeches made under imprisonment. McCarthy’s dual status as actress and activist would have made this conflation of theatrical and political action more instinctive. The type of journals particularly interested in the production – *Suffragette* and *Votes for Women* – would have enhanced Hermione’s value for suffragist audiences and readers, as a depiction of a political prisoner. These journals, as Stowell notes, represented and were read by the suffragists’ ‘most radical wing’, those most likely to face imprisonment.³⁶⁰ They were also the women with whom the trial’s outcome would have most resonated. Mamilus’s death, Hermione’s apparent death and her vindication by the Oracle happen almost simultaneously, leaving Leontes discredited and distraught, and offering an effective theatrical statement of martyrdom’s political valence.³⁶¹ Naturally, Hermione’s personal humiliation was equally powerful for female audiences. Socialist artist and writer Christina Walshe asserted that ‘there is not, in all literature, a completer exposition of the humiliation of women’s position as it was yesterday, and is today [...] and will not be tomorrow’.³⁶² Walshe argued ‘all women’ should attend the play, ‘not to learn how to

³⁵⁹ ‘National Gallery Outrage’, *Times* (11 March 1914), 9–10.

³⁶⁰ Stowell, ‘Suffrage critics and political action’, 177.

³⁶¹ *Winter’s Tale*, III.2.132; 151.

³⁶² *Daily Herald* (5 October 1912), quoted Stokes, “‘A woman of genius’: Rebecca West at the theatre’, *Edwardian Theatre*, 185–200, 191.

submit, but to learn the dangers of submission', a claim that nobody had made for Vanbrugh's *Shrew*, six months earlier.³⁶³

However, it was Paulina who emerged as the play's leading suffragist figure. The mainstream newspaper *Referee*'s review (probably by librettist Henry Chance Newton) recognised that Paulina would 'be the darling of all the eager young Suffragettes', opining that 'if there was [...] a female suffrage agitation in Sicilia, Paulina was certainly its prime mover'.³⁶⁴ Newton saw Esmé Beringer's performance and the play choice as evidence that Granville-Barker wanted to 'rope in Shakespeare on the side of the Suffrage angels'.³⁶⁵ Although more restrained, the *Observer* still evoked the lexis of vociferous public speaking: Beringer's Paulina favoured 'irresistible outburst', full of 'fire and intelligence' and 'oratorical'.³⁶⁶ Paulina's action in the prison-visiting scene (II.2) predictably resonated with suffragists, as the *Votes for Women* critic noted,

Waiting in the ante-room to see the Governor, and filled, as so many of us have been at the gates of Holloway since 1905, with a sense of the irony of such imprisonments, she exclaims: "Good lady, /No court in Europe is too good for thee,/What dost thou then in prison?"³⁶⁷

The reviewer reiterates this temporal immediacy: Paulina 'could have been written since 1905'. Shakespeare was writing like 'someone who had just come in contact with the militant suffrage movement' – a bold appropriation not only of Shakespeare for the suffragist cause, but of Paulina as ideal suffragette, seen in the first flush of enthusiasm by someone newly 'in contact' with the

³⁶³ Ibid.

³⁶⁴ Newton, 'Savoy Theatre', *Referee* (22 September 1912), quoted Susan Carlson, 'Politicizing Harley Granville-Barker', *New Theatre Quarterly* 22.2 (2006), 122–140, 133.

³⁶⁵ Ibid.

³⁶⁶ Quoted 'Politicizing Harley Granville-Barker', 133.

³⁶⁷ *Votes for Women* (28 October 1912), quoted Stowell, 177.

movement of which Paulina offered ‘a type’.³⁶⁸ *Suffragette* went further, claiming not merely Shakespeare, but the whole canon. Paulina was ‘the eternal Suffragette whom the greatest geniuses of all ages have loved to portray’.³⁶⁹ Beringer’s performance allowed a feminist, ironic re-reading of Ruskin: just as ‘Ruskin has truly said that Shakespeare has no heroes, only heroines’, Paulina became ‘the real heroine of the play’, not ‘dignified, patient, unprotesting Hermione’, or ‘pretty, affectionate Perdita’.³⁷⁰ Central to court life, Paulina had the mobility all suffragettes desired, able to ‘penetrat[e] to forbidden chambers’ and effect political confrontation, ‘telling tyrants to their faces of the wronged woman and the helpless child [...] turning full on the unjust king the flood of his fierce eloquence’.³⁷¹

Stowell calls this political reading of the Savoy production ‘deliberately perverse’, but excuses it on the grounds that suffragettes were hunting their ‘new world’s [...] confirmation in art’.³⁷²

While this rightly implies Shakespeare’s importance as ideological authority (on both sides) in the suffrage war, and suffrage groups’ desire to demonstrate devotion and allegiance to Shakespeare within the Stratford Festivals, Stowell underestimates Paulina’s unique and pivotal meaning for suffragists (especially suffragettes) as theatregoers and readers. Paulina, as the *Suffragette* critic avows, became ‘the woman who makes things happen [...] just as the real heroines of the twentieth century are the women who make things happen – the militant Suffragettes’, since, above all, Paulina ‘makes things happen’ for women.³⁷³ The critic continues: ‘Were all women like [Hermione and Perdita], Hermiones would continue to be unjustly

³⁶⁸ ‘The Conspiracy Trial of Hermione’, *Votes for Women* (18 October 1912), quoted ‘Politicizing Harley Granville-Barker’, 133.

³⁶⁹ Untitled review, *Suffragette* (18 October 1912), 5.

³⁷⁰ Ibid.

³⁷¹ Ibid.

³⁷² Stowell, 177.

³⁷³ *Suffragette* (18 October 1912), 5.

degraded, Perditas to be unjustly abandoned'.³⁷⁴ Instead, Paulina reverses dispossession and transforms victimhood. Crucially, she undoes the Shakespearean narrative of female destruction about which suffragist performances, criticism and transformative work all evince anxiety. Zangwill's 'Prologue' had lamented Ophelia's lack of a teacher to help her resist 'suicide-suggestion' with political consciousness; Gray dwelt with horror on Ophelia's 'pitiful sacrifice' without being able to 'understand' or advocate for herself.³⁷⁵ Dorynne's narratives, alongside revisionary performance strategies for Ophelia and Lady Capulet, emphasise Ophelia and Juliet's dearth of adequate protectors. Paulina's unique textual position allows her to intervene and protect Hermione, enabling her self-identified analogues to affectively step between persecutor and heroine in ways other plays do not permit. Even Beatrice, heroine of Annie Horniman's 1910 *Much Ado About Nothing* (the earliest Shakespeare reviewed by suffragist journals), praised for 'scorn[ing] the mere protestations of a lover when there is work to do in righting a wrong', needs Benedick to avenge Hero for her.³⁷⁶

The importance of suffragettes' personal affective bonds to acts of political violence indicates how important Paulina's agency might have been to suffragist audiences. Several high-profile public disturbances constituted expressions of solidarity, commemoration, revenge, or devotion to another activist. Mary Richardson attacked the Rokeby Venus to avenge the government's treatment of 'Mrs. Pankhurst [...] the most beautiful character in modern history', while groups of suffragettes met newly-released suffrage prisoners for celebratory breakfasts that, particularly

³⁷⁴ Ibid.

³⁷⁵ Zangwill, 'Prologue' *Vote* (4 November 1911), 19; 'Shakespeare's women', 76.

³⁷⁶ *Common Cause* (27 January 1910), quoted Stowell, 175.

after hunger-strikes, were public acts of care, as well as celebration.³⁷⁷ As Julie Holledge notes, the AFL visibly contributed to these meetings, leading Emmeline Pethick-Laurence's victory procession from Holloway to the Aldwych after her 1909 release.³⁷⁸

The next Savoy Shakespeares were not reviewed as overtly suffragist productions. Nevertheless, Carlson argues that both *Twelfth Night* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* had feminist content. Carlson reads colour symbolism into *Twelfth Night*'s set and costume design, citing 'colour community' between Olivia's 'pink pagoda' (noted by *Sketch*) and Lillah McCarthy's pink, white and green costume as Cesario.³⁷⁹ These were the AFL colours. As Viola, McCarthy offered an unusually 'rational' performance and adept swordswomanship. In the 1914 *Dream*, Granville-Barker restaged I.1 to present Hippolyta within 'a community of warrior women', rather than an isolated prisoner. A production photograph also suggests unusual equality between Hippolyta and Theseus, who share a double, bench-like throne.³⁸⁰ Carlson's arguments for *Twelfth Night*'s colour symbolism are inconclusive. The AFL colours were less well-known than the WSPU colours, which had (for example) been consistently chosen for suffrage bouquets in the Shakespeare Birthday Procession, a theatrical occasion where actress-specific colours might have been deemed appropriate.

Arguably, the best evidence for the Savoy theatre's feminist activity is that suffragist groups continue to recognise the Savoy Shakespeare productions as useful, sympathetic sites of

³⁷⁷ *Times* (11 March 1914), 10; Diane Atkinson, 'Six suffragette photographs', Maroula Joannau and June Purvis (eds), *The Women's Suffrage Movement: New Feminist Perspectives* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2009), 89–100, 95.

³⁷⁸ *Innocent Flowers*, 54.

³⁷⁹ 'Politicizing Harley Granville-Barker', 134.

³⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 138.

representation. *Dream*'s run (6 February – 9 May 1914) was notable for direct intervention by suffragist audience members. On 13 February, a 'lady in a gallery' gave 'a speech' during the interval, while on 13 March, leaflets and a banner backed a speech against 'forcible feeding'.³⁸¹ The audience received February's speech with 'great enthusiasm', but there is no such statement regarding the March protest. The March agitation, which occurred three days after Richardson's vandalism of the Rokeby Venus, might plausibly have been more coldly received at a moment of particular public tension. However, the suffragists' February reception at the Savoy implies the persistence of a pro-suffrage audience, consistently drawn to the Savoy.

In addition to *The Winter's Tale*'s general legacy, one reason for this might be the radicalising effect (as Carlson argued of Gertrude Elliott) of a known activist's presence in a high-profile production. In the *Dream*, an AFL member, Christine Silver, played Titania. However, it was the production's Helena, Lillah McCarthy, whose well-known presence at London suffragist protests against the 'Cat and Mouse Act' during *Dream*'s run implied, in the actress's body, political protest and theatre-making's semiotic equivalence, as public, creative acts.³⁸² The proximity of rallies in February 1914 to action at the Savoy (February and March 1914, the latter specifically protesting force-feeding) implies that McCarthy's dual presences as actress and agitator may have encouraged suffragist use of the Savoy as a protest space. Significantly, however, Carlson's theorising of McCarthy has the aim of 'Politicizing Harley Granville-Barker', McCarthy's then husband. Carlson emphasises Granville-Barker's 'close and constant contact with suffrage activism', arguing that 'his innovative work on Shakespeare should be understood' via his

³⁸¹ *Suffragette* (13 February 1914), 402; (13 March 1914), 495.

³⁸² 'Politicizing Harley Granville-Barker', 122.

‘activist connections’, of which McCarthy was arguably the most important.³⁸³ However, by limiting McCarthy to a ‘connection’, rather than a source and signifier of creative and political interchange on the Savoy stage, Carlson effectively marginalises her, despite being the only critic to discuss Shakespeare and suffrage in any detail. However, Carlson cannot avoid the fact that ‘Granville-Barker is rarely named’ as attending ‘suffrage events, rallies, and performances’. She also quotes his assessment of the Shakespearean actress’s femaleness as ‘a liability not an asset’, given the heroines’ original performance by boys.³⁸⁴

‘Some well-known stage favourite exquisitely dressed’

Critics including Julie Holledge and Lisa Tickner have discussed the centrality of actresses’ appearance to their activism. The suffragist actress’s body carried particular charge as both a signifier of political activity, and a potential propaganda tool. The actress Eva Moore (1870-1955) asserted in December 1910 that ‘The ordinary man in the crowd, whether he confesses it or no, is impressed by the sight of some well-known stage favourite exquisitely dressed [...] bravely carrying her own banner’.³⁸⁵ As a ‘stage favourite’, the ‘well-known’ woman could provoke positive male response, i.e. engage an audience. Moreover, female stage favourites’ well-known propensity to extra-theatrical advertising careers could arguably have made the suffragist’s encounter with the ‘man in the crowd’ reminiscent of a celebrity endorsement. In this case, the ‘product’ towards which the ‘impressed’ spectator was directed was female suffrage. Male performers also endorsed products, but Moore’s stress on the ‘stage favourite’’s ‘exquisitely dressed’ femininity reflects erotic capital’s particular importance to the activist and spectator’s

³⁸³ Ibid., 123.

³⁸⁴ Quoted ‘Politicizing Harley Granville-Barker,’ 127, 135.

³⁸⁵ ‘Miss Eva Moore’, *Vote* (3 December 1910), 64–65.

visual transaction. Fashionable and feminine actresses ‘bel[ie]d every Suffrage caricature and poster’, enhancing the movement’s prestige, and removing male fears that suffrage would render women either sexually threatening or unattractive. Moreover, as in advertising, an erotically appealing ‘advert’ for suffrage was automatically more persuasive on an issue which, given the existing power balance, specifically relied on impressing men to succeed.³⁸⁶ Visible beauty was also a more viable political tactic for actresses than militant activism, which could ‘damage their chances of future employment’.³⁸⁷ Simultaneously, both actresses’ activism and the Savoy Shakespeares occurred within a West End marketplace that, as Bratton argues, instinctively read illegitimate, difficult or subversive performance forms as ‘feminine’.³⁸⁸ Suffrage demonstrations reiterated the theatrical configuration of actress, rehearsed and frequently repeated political demonstration, and male spectator needing to be beguiled. They offered another form of ‘illegitimate’ performance.

Suffragist and anti-suffragist responses to Shakespeare illuminate the diversity of pre-war British attitudes to Shakespeare. The heterogeneity of suffragist attitudes to Shakespeare especially reshapes our understanding of Terry’s place as a Shakespeare commentator within the movement. However, while assimilating accounts such as Gray and Stransom’s clarifies Terry’s influence as a lecturer, the influence of performances such as Vanbrugh’s and those at the Savoy are harder to quantify.

³⁸⁶ Ibid.

³⁸⁷ *Innocent Flowers*, 56.

³⁸⁸ Jacky Bratton, ‘Dangerous women; or, what’s wrong with the history of the West End?’ Conference paper, *The Heart of the West End* conference; Haymarket Theatre, London (25 March 2012).

The August 1914 outbreak of war most obviously limited that influence. As Carlson notes, war halted both ‘Granville-Barker’s new shaping of Shakespeare’ and ‘the suffragists’ increasingly frenetic campaigning’.³⁸⁹ On 6 August, the NUWSS suspended all political activity; on 10 August, the WSPU agreed to end militancy and focus on war work, in exchange for all suffragette prisoners’ release.³⁹⁰ These decisions may have helped divert and halt the militant anti-Shakespeare criticism emerging by 1914. Not only did war change journalistic priorities, but the movement’s new patriotic agenda could have made Shakespeare seem less assailable, given his status as British national icon. Kahn has noted the 1916 Tercentenary’s importance to the vital creation of a ‘self-authorized and racially pure’ Englishness, and to asserting ‘the continuity of a single identity, “England”’.³⁹¹

A fin-de-siècle legacy

Carlson ‘grieves for’ the theatrical and political missed opportunities when the Savoy’s activities were curtailed. However, pre-war suffragist-inflected Shakespeare had not inspired meaningful political change. While Carlson claims that ‘it makes sense’ that the Bensons’ 1909 work would have been ‘affected’ by the ‘vigorous politicking’ of by-election candidates and suffragettes, Benson reiterated his commitment to ‘apolitical’ Shakespeare, and the 1909 Stratford by-election was actually won by the candidate less supportive of women’s suffrage.³⁹² Vanbrugh’s 1912 *Shrew* was followed by several iterations of Constance Benson’s more farcical, fishwife style, while many mainstream newspapers overlooked the suffrage significance of Granville-Barker’s

³⁸⁹ ‘Politicizing Harley Granville-Barker,’ 138.

³⁹⁰ Bob Whitfield, *The Extension of the Franchise* (London: Heinemann, 2001), 70–71.

³⁹¹ Coppélia Kahn, ‘Remembering Shakespeare Imperially’, *Shakespeare Quarterly* (Winter 2001), 456–478, 457–458.

³⁹² ‘Suffrage Shrew’, 88.

productions. This does not indicate either feminism's absence or the 'perversity' of suffragist readings: William Winter, reviewing Terry's New York lecture on 'The Triumphant Women' (November 1910) ignored the 'feminist dimensions' of Terry's work, despite those dimensions' significance for the 'packed houses of women' described by the *New York Times*.³⁹³

Most crucially, however, suffragist Shakespeare's influence was limited by the comparative lack of mainstream 'stars' with their *fin-de-siècle* predecessors' personal possibilities and cultural capital. The galas of 1906, 1911 and 1916 marginalised younger stage actresses. Meanwhile, the cinema produced new stars such as Theda Bara, whose presentational strategies as the 'Vamp' transferred the *fin-de-siècle* qualities of Campbell and Bernhardt to the big screen.

This is not to deny the *fin-de-siècle* actresses' influence on their immediate British successors. Notably, those new actresses who did achieve leading roles in metropolitan Shakespeare tended to be those who could draw on continuities with the Victorian theatrical mainstream, perhaps via the Bensons, or who had a theatrical husband. Lily Brayton, who married Oscar Asche in 1898, had both. Brayton and Asche co-managed the Adelphi with Otto Stuart throughout the Edwardian period, enjoying their greatest success with *The Taming of the Shrew* (1904), also a hit for their Bensonian forebears. The patronage of *fin-de-siècle* stars was frequently necessary. Although Vanbrugh failed to break Constance Benson's stranglehold on *Shrew*, her general agency in the theatrical mainstream demonstrates the advantages of mentoring by Terry and Kendal.

Vanbrugh's most enduring Shakespeare roles both aligned her with these foremothers. From 1910, Vanbrugh played Queen Katharine, previously associated with Terry, who 'talked over the

³⁹³ Farfan, 45–6.

part with her' and watched a rehearsal.³⁹⁴ From 1911, Vanbrugh inherited the role of Mistress Ford from Kendal, playing opposite Terry.³⁹⁵ Vanbrugh, who had toured with Kendal since 1888, depicted her in her autobiography as 'the finest stage manager of them all', excelling 'Sir John Hare, Sir Squire Bancroft [...] Sir Henry Irving, Sir George Alexander, Sir Herbert Tree' and forever influencing Vanbrugh, who would approach 'a difficult scene or an involved bit of characterisation by trying to imagine how Mrs. Kendal would have tackled it'.³⁹⁶ Lena Ashwell's autobiographies, while stressing her work in modern drama, foreground a 'discovery' story in which both Ellen Terry (who 'wept' and 'embraced' her) and 'the great old teacher, Garcia' prophesied she would be a 'great actress'.³⁹⁷

Some performances carried direct evidence of *fin-de-siècle* actresses' influence, often that of Terry. Carlson speculates that Terry's relation to the crowd as Hermione in the statue scene (for Beerbohm Tree, 1906) influenced Granville-Barker's 1912 staging of the same sequence.³⁹⁸ Terry's money and prestige also directly enabled Edith Craig's Pioneer Players. Notably, while Vanbrugh and the Savoy casts destabilised conceptions of Shakespearean comedy and romance, suffragist commentaries by Gray, Dorynne, Stransom and Ashwell particularly problematise Shakespeare's tragic women. Tragedy was the Shakespearean performance genre which had generated most *fin-de-siècle* controversy, from Terry's 1888 *Lady Macbeth*, through Campbell's Lyceum heroines and Langtry and Achurch's reinterpretations of Cleopatra. This thesis's second chapter examined Terry's influence on Dorynne's 'The Lady of Undaunted Mettle'; the *Stratford*

³⁹⁴ Violet Vanbrugh, *Dare to be Wise* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1925), 72.

³⁹⁵ S.R. Littlewood, 'Vanbrugh, Violet (1867–1942)', *DNB* [<http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/36624>, accessed 18 April 2012].

³⁹⁶ *Dare to be Wise*, 54.

³⁹⁷ Terry, *The Story of My Life*, 148; Ashwell, *Myself a Player*, 55; Ashwell, *Reflections from Shakespeare*, 5.

³⁹⁸ 'Politicizing Harley Granville-Barker', 132.

Herald's 1912 response to Vanbrugh's *Shrew* evinced the same anxieties about marriage that Terry's adoring, wifely Lady Macbeth provoked in *fin-de-siècle* audiences. Ashwell's comment regarding Goneril, that 'To make her inhuman makes the play unreal' also glosses Vanbrugh, Terry and Dorynne's interpretations of the tragic heroines, similarly rooted in the *fin de siècle*'s challenging tragedies.³⁹⁹ The growth of suffragist Shakespeare and theatre reviewing can be seen in a continuum with the *fin de siècle*'s proliferating theatrical forms, when pioneers including Ishbel Aberdeen organised the open-air Shakespeare and *tableaux vivants* that helped launched the careers of Langtry, Eleanor Calhoun and (as the form was popularised) Mrs Patrick Campbell.

More broadly, actresses active in the early twentieth century – as Davis shows, a period of sudden professional expansion – benefited from the previous two generations of actresses who had been active and independent in the theatrical mainstream. Increasingly, actresses had found tactics for recognition as 'respectable', whether through assiduous, ostentatious self-promotion (for example, Madge Kendal), or strategies of elision predicated on personal popularity and economic power (such as Marie Bancroft, and Terry). Although Ashwell claimed to be the 'first such' actress-commentator on Shakespeare in performance, she is recognisably part of a hermeneutical tradition practiced by Kemble, Faucit, Terry, Campbell and Langtry (among others) in their writings.⁴⁰⁰ Zangwill's 1911 'Prologue', spoken by Fay Davis, unfavourably compares political life to theatre, where women had already 'won equality on the stage'.⁴⁰¹ This assertion, alongside Moore's praise for the politically powerful 'well-known stage favourite',

³⁹⁹ *Reflections from Shakespeare*, 158.

⁴⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁴⁰¹ 'Prologue', *Vote* (4 Nov 1911), 19.

indicates the ascription of greater professional, social and economic agency to fashionable, attractive actresses: a perception arising from the achievements of actresses active around the *fin de siècle*.⁴⁰² Actresses such as Terry, Kendal and Langtry (all AFL members) moved simultaneously in high society, their professions, and the realm of female empowerment.

Above all, *fin-de-siècle* actresses and actress-managers' legacies provided the blueprint for what Kendal called 'the blessedness of independence', 'a great thing to a woman, and especially to a single woman' in an era accelerating towards Woolf's demand for 'five hundred a year [...] and rooms of our own'.⁴⁰³ Above all, the most prestigious Shakespearean actresses of the *fin de siècle* visibly embodied the professional, social, financial and geographic volition that all suffragists craved.

⁴⁰² 'Miss Eva Moore', *Vote* (3 December 1910), 64–65.

⁴⁰³ Kendal, *Dramatic Opinions*, 31; *A Room of One's Own*, 131.

Conclusions

This study has illuminated the complexity and vibrancy of women's popular Shakespeare performance, and the intricacy of their artistic networks at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century. Actresses' individual performances shifted Shakespearean hermeneutics, as when Terry's Lady Macbeth popularised a loving, attractive interpretation and when Campbell's *fin-de-siècle* performance prompted Max Beerbohm to argue both for transhistorical continuity of good acting and for the merits of innovation for innovation's sake – even in Shakespeare performance.

Their performances also intervened in *fin-de-siècle* culture: in debates over women's riding attire; in the world's most famous Gothic novel; in the creation of celebrity endorsements and lifestyle journalism; and in new media, whether as the *fin-de-siècle* vamp or the subject of pornography. Ellen Terry's Lady Macbeth recalibrated the relationship between marriage and criminality, while Lillie Langtry's Cleopatra put the new department-store consumerism on the metropolitan stage.

After the *fin de siècle*, the late-Victorian actresses' immediate heirs adapted Shakespearean text, character and performance (including performance spaces) as suffragist campaigning tools. Suffragist emphases on secondary characters such as Paulina, on relationships between women, and on Shakespeare's potential anti-feminism reorient our impression of twentieth-century Shakespeare criticism. Focusing on popular Shakespeare performance indicates that there are still rediscoveries to be made in women's theatre history; above all, Kendal, whose status as an

actress, proto-artistic director and mentor has been almost entirely omitted from scholarship. As Chapters One, Three and Five indicate Langtry and Campbell, primarily recognised for other types of performance, also made important contributions to interpretations of Rosalind, Ophelia and Cleopatra. The research also has implications for celebrity studies, as actresses' particular self-promotional strategies reflected Shakespeare's moral status and cultural prestige.

Amidst the Shakespearean performances and criticisms analysed in this study, those intended to challenge established critical assumptions and traditional interpretations demonstrate Shakespeare's continuing cultural value and importance as a frame of reference in British society. Nevertheless, it is impossible to measure the definitive impact of such attempts at reappropriation and interpretation. We cannot be sure exactly how many 'advanced' women adopted Langtry's Ganymede garb; nor did Stratford's 1909 suffragists succeed in getting their preferred candidate elected. Similarly, Violet Vanbrugh's abused Katherine (1912) did not shift mainstream perceptions of the character, and while Shakespeare consistently inspired women's writing, performance and activism, it is tempting to see Terry's Shakespearean fundraisers as the most meaningful contribution to the suffragist cause. However, cultural impact is too diffuse and intangible a force to be measured in such crude ways. Further tracing of early performance, interpretation and reception in successive twentieth-century decades may well shed retrospective light on the *fin de siècle*'s enduring political legacy.

Addressing inherited misconceptions about actresses' receptions in certain roles has been central to this study, especially when looking at Terry's Lady Macbeth, Kendal's 1885 Rosalind, and Campbell's Lyceum roles. Late-Victorian audiences responded well to more complex and

apparently problematic combinations of roles and performers than has been previously assumed. Campbell moved relatively easily between Shakespeare and the society ‘problem play’, before and after her 1896 roles in *Little Eyolf*. Genevieve Ward also appeared twice in minor early productions of Ibsen. However, while a number of high-profile Shakespearean actors appeared both in early Ibsen productions and *fin-de-siècle* Shakespeare – including F. R. Benson, Lewis Waller, Laurence Irving and Oscar Asche – Ibsen’s female pioneers found returning to popular Shakespeare performance increasingly difficult. Achurch’s 1896 Cleopatra is the sole exception. Perhaps surprisingly, this thesis reveals the degree to which Ibsen was not part of the conversation about *fin-de-siècle* Shakespeare. The theatrical identities of Ibsen actress and (even suffragist) Shakespearean actress remained almost entirely incompatible: Lillah McCarthy and Esmé Beringer (Hermione and Paula in *The Winter’s Tale* which so inspired activists) each only acted in one Ibsen play.¹ Not until Peggy Ashcroft would an actress play Portia and Cleopatra (1953), Hedda Gabler (1954), Cordelia and Beatrice (1955), and Shen Teh in Brecht’s *The Good Woman of Setzan* (1956) without apparent incongruity.²

This thesis illuminates the need for scholarship on Shakespeare in performance to be tied more closely to the study of other types of contemporary performance. Rather than existing in an isolated line of descent, the performances I have interrogated clearly show how the most iconoclastic, metropolitan performances of Shakespeare’s heroines crossed cultural forms, influencing artists and activists. In my research, concerted theatre review reading has revealed

¹ McCarthy played Hilde Wangel in *The Master Builder* (the Little Theatre, 1911) National Library of Norway. ‘The Little Theatre’, *All about Henrik Ibsen* [<http://ibsen.nb.no/id/11158195>, accessed 1 July 2013]. Beringer briefly played Mrs Sorby in *The Wild Duck* (Savoy, 1914). National Library of Norway. ‘St. James’s Theatre’, *All about Henrik Ibsen* [<http://ibsen.nb.no/id/74289>, accessed 1 July 2013]. Both were directed by Granville-Barker.

² Michael Billington, *Peggy Ashcroft* (London: Mandarin, 1988), 291.

how events ranging from the Jack the Ripper killings to landmarks in Queen Victoria's reign became a context of performance reception, as readers consumed theatre reviews and reportage simultaneously.

Placing Shakespeare in conversation with the contemporary theatrical scene, and exploring the accrued and inherited meanings of selected female characters shows much about how different repertoires spoke to each other, and about women's creative networks. However, it also reveals how much is left to be done. Crucially, the reciprocal relationship between late-Victorian Shakespeare and contemporary dramatic writing was not an historical anomaly. Iconoclastic twentieth century productions of Shakespeare's plays also responded to and influenced contemporary drama. Deborah Warner's shockingly violent *Titus Andronicus* (the Swan, 1987) anticipated and arguably influenced the brutality and rawness of the 1990s' so-called 'In-Yer-Face' theatre.

The history of *fin-de-siècle* actresses' mentoring by other actresses reveals the history of actor training before RADA. The twentieth-century foundation of drama schools changed the conduits by which actors received their training.³ In some cases, established actresses spoke or taught at the new schools, making them potential conduits for Victorian lines of influence. At RADA alone, both Violet and Irene Vanbrugh directed, Terry was a Visitor, Marie Bancroft lectured, and Mrs Patrick Campbell served as an associate council member.⁴ Constance Benson trained

³ Influential schools founded in this period included RADA (1904) [<http://www.rada.ac.uk/about-rada/brief-history>]; Central School of Speech and Drama (1906) [<http://www.cssd.ac.uk/about-central/history>], and Italia Conti (1911) [<http://www.italiaconti.com/history.html>]. The Guildhall School of Music expanded to drama provision between 1920 and 1935 [http://www.gsmd.ac.uk/about_the_school/about_us/history/] All websites accessed 11 June 2013.

⁴ 'The Academy of Dramatic Art', *Times* (21 February 1910), 11. 'The Academy of Dramatic Art', *Times* (26 April 1904), 11. 'Academy of Dramatic Art', *Times* (7 January 1909), 8.

Gielgud at her school.⁵ World War One interrupted and disrupted the antecedent performance genealogies. Many actors had been killed; the rise of drama schools altered patterns of influence and exchange, levelling the imbalance of professional opportunity between those ‘middle-class recruits tutored in singing, dancing, languages, and recitation at home or in girls’ school’ (such as Stella Campbell) and their working-class counterparts whose backgrounds hadn’t included such ‘systematic training’.⁶

There is scope for future scholarship to fruitfully investigate the survival and persistence of Victorian actresses’ performance traditions and inheritance. In the 1980s, Ashcroft was repeatedly compared to Terry by Gielgud and Peter Hall.⁷ Gielgud, born after the end of the Terry-Irving partnership, was still at school when Terry retired, seventy-three and partially blind; Hall was born two years after Terry’s death. It’s difficult to avoid the impression that Terry was to Ashcroft what Siddons had been to her. Simultaneously, the new medium of film helped disseminate Victorian legacies. While successful Edwardian classical actresses tended to have had Terry or Kendal as a patron, Chapter Five demonstrated how film star Theda Bara offers the twentieth century’s clearest heir to Bernhardt and Campbell, deriving the ‘vamp’ character from their ‘fin-de-sickly’, semi-supernatural image. Meanwhile, professionalisation of actor training accelerated the process that had begun with the advent of actresses like Langtry and Campbell, whose interloper status had so discomfited dynasty members such as Kendal.

⁵ Sheridan Morley and Robert Sharp. ‘Gielgud, Sir (Arthur) John (1904–2000)’, *DNB* [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/printable/74146>, accessed 1 July 2013].

⁶ Tracy C. Davis, *Actresses as working women* (London: Routledge, 1991), 12.

⁷ Billington, *Peggy Ashcroft*, 7–8.

John Stokes's criteria for *fin-de-siècle* female stardom also persist. Twentieth- and twenty-first century Shakespearean actresses have become even more 'protean, multiple' in both their repertoires and public engagement. Dames Judi Dench, Helen Mirren, Maggie Smith and Harriet Walter have all appeared in primetime television sitcoms and/or dramas, and, like other celebrities, present themselves to the public via autobiographies, television and radio interviews, literary festivals and (in the case of Mirren and Walter) on official websites.⁸ Shakespearean actresses also continue the tradition of political activism inherited from the AFL. Vanessa Redgrave, a past member of both the Workers' Revolutionary Party and the Peace and Progress Party, has campaigned for a variety of causes, including the Palestine Liberation Organisation.⁹ In 2008, Juliet Stevenson directed *Motherland*, a piece of verbatim theatre concerning women and children in Yarl's Wood detention centre; her co-stars included the Shakespearean actresses Harriet Walter, Paola Dionisotti and Noma Dumezweni.¹⁰ She was also involved in the MMR vaccine debates. Glenda Jackson, whose Shakespearean roles have included Ophelia (1965), Cleopatra (1978) and Lady Macbeth (1988) has been a Labour MP since 1992.

Leading *fin-de-siècle* actresses' creative relationships with their actor-managers were often more collaborative than has been supposed, and some (including Langtry) enjoyed long-term financial independence. However, many of the professional issues they did face, including the interplay between personal and private lives, the negotiation of career and childrearing, sexual harassment in the workplace, and the critical tendency to read their work through biographical lenses of

⁸ Helen Mirren, 'Helen Mirren', (2011) [<http://www.helenmirren.com>, accessed 11 June 2013]; Harriet Walter, 'Harriet Walter: Official Website', (2011) [<http://www.harrietwalter.co.uk/>, accessed 11 June 2013].

⁹ Andrew Anthony, 'Vanessa Redgrave: A performer of passion, conviction and tragedy', *Observer* (21 February 2010), [<http://www.guardian.co.uk/theobserver/2010/feb/21/observer-profile-vanessa-redgrave>, accessed 12 April 2013].

¹⁰ Women for Refugee Women, 'Motherland', (2012) [<http://www.refugeewomen.com/index.php/what-we-do/events/previous-events/104-motherland>, accessed 10 June 2013.]

sexual experience or mental health, continue to affect women in creative marketplaces. Michael Billington argued of Peggy Ashcroft that her story was ‘the story of British theatre’ in the twentieth century.¹¹ If so, the actresses in this study re-illuminate the story of British theatre at the *fin de siècle*.

¹¹ Billington, *Peggy Ashcroft*, 1.