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Shakespeare without Men: Gendered Violence and Genderqueer Performance

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Abstract

Between 2003 and 2016, director Phyllida Lloyd staged five productions – *The Taming of the Shrew* (Shakespeare’s Globe 2003, The Public Theatre 2016) and the *Donmar Trilogy* (BBC 2016) – with genderqueer casts. In this thesis, genderqueer casting is broadly defined as the casting of actors in roles in a way that subverts the gender of the character in the text. Specifically, I use ‘genderqueer’ to describe the casts of these four productions, which were billed as ‘all-female’ at the time. In this thesis, I examine instances of violence and gender performance in these productions. I combine the work of theatre theorists like Keir Elam, Elaine Aston, and George Savona with the foundational gender theory of Judith Butler and Jack Halberstam, as well as more recent work, including writing by Nora Williams, Sawyer Kemp, Ambereen Dadabhoy, and Nedda Mehdizadeh, to approach Lloyd’s productions from a trans and anti-carceral perspective.

I will investigate how genderqueer casting affects Shakespeare’s text and performance, as well as how genderqueerness intersects with other marginalities. Primarily, I will demonstrate the ways in which gendered violence is a key component of the stringent and arbitrary gender categories that delineate ‘male’, ‘female’, and ‘other’, and that its depiction by non-cis-male performers is a useful tool in highlighting the role of violence in the upholding of hegemonic norms. I will also examine these productions as sites on which liberation is contested – and sometimes left in the balance.

Lay Summary

This thesis talks about productions of four plays by William Shakespeare: *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Julius Caesar*, *Henry IV*, and *The Tempest*. These plays were all directed by Phyllida Lloyd, and they were marketed at the time as having 'all-female' casts. In this work, I refer to these casts as genderqueer. I will look at violence in each play. Specifically, I will look for instances of gendered violence, or violence in which gender plays a role. My main goal in this thesis is to look at how gendered violence helps people in power hold onto it, and how violence itself can define gender.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter discusses transphobia, gender dysphoria, gendered violence, disability, racism, and suicide.

In 2000, Dymphna Callaghan published *Shakespeare without Women: Representing Gender and Race on the Renaissance Stage*. Beyond inspiring the title of this thesis, Callaghan's book lays the groundwork for an intersectional feminist reading of Shakespeare's plays. At the beginning of my doctoral research, I planned to take this lens as far as I could in applying it to my chosen productions – however, as I continued to open up these texts and performances, I was struck again and again by the possibility that this lens itself may not be capable of revealing the whole picture.

Callaghan writes: 'I have chosen to concentrate on Shakespeare...precisely because the idea of exclusion jars with the full and vivid characters who populate his plays and who seem to represent all of us in our myriad and multiple degrees of otherness' (7). As other scholars have argued, and as will emerge in this thesis, the notion of Shakespeare's universality stalls the liberatory project of reading from a marginalised perspective. This is not to say that Callaghan's inquest is not useful. Rather, it is an invitation to look at these sources through a lens that challenges not only racism, for example, but the ways in which Shakespeare's work is informed by racism. Where Callaghan posits Shakespeare's works as a site of unity amongst marginalised groups, I add that a feminist critique of Shakespeare can reveal the ways in which white supremacy and gender essentialism pervade culture – even (and especially) Shakespeare.

1.1 ***Trans Non-Confession***

When I started work on this thesis in September of 2017, Donald Trump had been in office as U.S. President for less than nine months, and the #MeToo movement would rise to popularity the following month. Public transphobia of the virulent, insidious strain we're so used to nowadays seemed to exist on the political fringes – only a handful of 'bathroom bills' had made significant headway in local legislation. And even then, I lacked the fortitude to voice what I had known about myself for a very long time. Since then – with transition and affirming care outlawed for children and even adults in some U.S. states, and amidst an alarmingly loud call in Britain to follow suit – I have come to the conclusion that self-destruction is the only path I refuse to take.

One of the most frustrating aspects of the prevailing discourse among transphobes is that 'coming out' and living as trans (to them, in visible transition) is a choice. It is near impossible to explain to someone who isn't trans that this isn't the case. When we fight for the right to 'be trans', we fight for the right to exist publicly – in effect, they are one in the same. The militant push to erase transness from public life seems constantly centred on the belief that there is something inherently threatening about public subversion. In her video titled 'The Witch Trials of J.K. Rowling,' video essayist Natalie Wynn, better known as Contrapoints, says: 'Transphobes don't think transphobia is a valid concept, because they don't think that trans people are a valid minority' (YouTube). And there it is: the crux of our issue. Transphobes seem to think that changing genders is as easy and optional as changing hairstyles; no matter what Rowling tweets, her supporters continue to demand further evidence of her transphobia

(Contrapoints). In short, following Wynn's argument, it is by definition impossible to change a transphobe's mind until one has convinced them that being trans is not optional – that transition is a choice, but identity is not. The division of transition from transness also poses a threat to hegemony – it suggests (confirms, even) that gender expression is not based on ontology. Rather, the possibility and process of transition exposes the frailty of the boundaries of gender and legibility. This is not to say that, once transphobes accept that being trans isn't a choice, everything will become easier – I mean primarily to point to a point of diversion in the logic of transphobic rhetoric from trans-centred narratives.

As I continue living in this body, I am entering my second year on the NHS's waiting list to receive gender affirming care. After I get off of the waiting list – if I ever do – the process of actually receiving care doesn't begin until months after the first appointment. The effect of this bureaucratic red tape is abundantly clear – it simultaneously erases and prevents the development of a population of publicly trans people in Scotland. Gender affirming care is only one aspect of transition; social transition, as opposed to medical transition, is the process of living publicly in one's gender, with or without the aid of gender affirming care. For me, this has taken the shape of changing my name and pronouns, talking openly about being trans, and actively seeking out trans mentorship and community. For others, it looks completely different. But the reality of knowing that I do not have full ownership of my body – in deferring control over the timeline of my transition to the state, I retain nothing, and I own nothing – weighs on me every day. While writing the second half of this thesis, I take frequent breaks. The feeling of dysphoria is difficult to describe. There is a

pressure behind my eyes, a panic rising in my throat. I am claustrophobic in my own body – I am drowning in myself. At every moment of writing, there is a parallel moment, a companion thought that I cannot live in this body, and I will die before I do. As we have seen in the wake of COVID-19, the state's apathy toward the lives of its individual citizens takes myriad forms. We clap for the NHS; we sign our bodies and lives over to the perpetuation of one great myth – that there is no other way it could have been.

This is where I find the vitality of this work. My motivation lives not in the fear of what might happen if I do not do this, but in the hope that it might bring even one iota of comfort to someone like me. Creating this project is my offering of care – it is a promise to reject self-immolation and instead to embrace joy found in the interstitial matter of struggle. The emotions – fear, anguish, despair – that govern my embodied experience will ebb and flow. What remains of me will be more than those feelings. Nevertheless, this work is emotional. It evokes strong emotions because what I'm writing about matters to me. To divest my analyses and hypotheses from my emotional connection to them would be to produce an incomplete, even meaningless work of fantasy. This fantasy lives in the idea that it is advantageous to divorce ourselves from our position in relation to the work – that impactful scholarship can only come from dispassionate, rational arguments. This is not the case in this thesis – these thoughts and theories are connected to real people. Their import is more than theoretical, I hope. At its most reduced level, my goal is to produce a piece of scholarship that I might have liked to read when I started in 2017. I can't promise to drastically alter the landscape of trans and gender studies, and I can't claim to offer any kind of all-encompassing response to the systematic eradication of transness from public life. I am at all times working to

forget the myth that there is no other way for things to be – to consciously and consistently reject my own status as embodied property of the state. This work is an act of liberation – of desperation.

This project comes with a few essential caveats. Firstly, I am not the arbiter of what is trans, nor of what is liberatory. These categories are nebulous by design – they reject the drawing of boundaries. At times, doing this work has felt counterproductive; it incidentally demands the definition of boundaries that cannot be universally applied, and it demands a degree of confidence in wielding these fictional boundaries that I haven't always felt comfortable asserting. As a result, I have striven for specificity over applicability. While the tenets of gender semiotics developed in this thesis may not apply to every trans and gender nonconforming person, they are a useful framework for understanding the impacts of the productions covered in this thesis.

Secondly, the most recent production discussed at any length in this thesis is over seven years old. This, incidentally, is close to the length of time for which I have been working on this thesis. It is an unfortunate feature of scholarly work that it takes infinitely longer than culture does to arrive at and depart from its conclusions. In the time since the Donmar Trilogy was recorded for the BBC, the lexicon of gender – and, subsequently, the way we think about gender – has evolved massively. Were it made in 2023, I suspect that the Donmar Trilogy would look and feel quite different to the project that began in 2011. But, if it were, then this thesis may not reach completion until 2029. So, in the interest of everyone's time, I have elected to continue my work with these productions, alongside a grain of salt.

Thirdly, this work is merely a beginning. My relationship to it, as well as my relationship to transness and other marginalised identities, will continue to grow and change as I do. I think of this work as itself a promise to continue developing these preliminary notions. It is a promise to care for myself and my community through my work. It's a big ask, as they say: for marginalised scholars, it is not enough to merely participate in existing systems of study. Colby Gordon points to a critical roadblock for trans people: 'So it is that you find yourself endlessly performing your 'story' for a rotating cast of therapists, surgeons, pharmacists, judges, advocates, social workers, and the occasional DMV employee' (196). Gordon's exhaustive (and exhausting) list points to a cisnormative imagination that cannot conceive of neutral trans subjectivity. He highlights the problems with 'trans confession' as a 'lethal gatekeeping mechanism that operates along racial and class lines' – the cisnormative demand that trans people self-narrativise, Gordon argues, rests in the 'medicalized techniques of social control' (197). Therefore, another project arises through this thesis – the project of validating trans readings by resisting the prescribed affect of self-narration. The luxury of thinking for its own sake has never belonged to those who must fight for their right to exist – to write from a marginalised position is to constantly assert one's own validity through the validity of the work. So, beyond my research questions, my question is this: if I finish this work, if it is good, if it is a valid entity in its field of study, will you think the same of me?

1.2 *Research Questions*

To examine the overall impact of the genderqueer cast on a production of Shakespeare and its depiction of gendered violence, I want to lay out the specific parameters of my investigation. To start, I will investigate the history and development of contemporary genderqueer casting and the depiction of gendered violence onstage. How does casting affect the audience's reception of these events? Insofar as gendered violence reinforces heteropatriarchal rule, how does genderqueer casting both highlight and work against this reinforcement? I have had considerable difficulty locating recordings of productions by genderqueer casts that include explicit depictions of sexual violence, but, in my examination of other productions, I have found that gendered violence often seems to underpin the displays of masculinity that populate genderqueer portrayals of male characters. In my subsequent discussions of the relationship between gender performance and gendered violence, a distinction must arise between gender and sexuality – or, more specifically, between gender performance and sexual expression. Sexual violence in particular serves the validation of hetero-masculinity, but the two are not necessarily causally connected. This is to say that not all masculinities are dependent on sexual violence, and sexual violence as an act does not belong solely to masculinity.

My second question, which, I hope, will lead to a newly honed theoretical framework for addressing the four productions listed below, is this: How do these genderqueer productions interact with marginality? How does the performative depiction of gender intersect with depictions of racialisation, incarceration, and so on? In the

chapters that follow, I will demonstrate that gendered violence is a key component of the stringent and arbitrary gender categories that delineate ‘male’, ‘female’, and ‘other’, and that its depiction by non-cis-male performers is a useful tool in highlighting the role of violence in the upholding of hegemonic norms. However, beyond the implications of these productions for conceptions of gender, I hope to interrogate the ways in which the dramaturgies of these productions are incomplete – that is, the ways in which they reproduce and reinforce the hegemonic conditions under which they were produced.

1.3 A Note on Terminology

Language, especially the vocabulary of identity, must constantly be re-evaluated. The words we use to describe ourselves are simultaneously inclusive and exclusive. The word ‘woman’, for instance, refers to a large portion of the performers I will be looking at in this dissertation, but it also excludes key features and identities of non-binary and gender nonconforming performers. Instead, I have chosen to refer to these casts more broadly as genderqueer casts. At some points, I will also refer to these casts more specifically as comprised of ‘women and/or people of marginalised genders’ to reflect the changing landscape of these terms. For the purposes of this dissertation, there is no perfect way to discuss conditions that affect cis women, trans people, and non-binary people without risking the harmful absorption of people who are not cis women into the broader category of women (or wxmen/womxn/wmxn/women*). When referring specifically to Phyllida Lloyd’s work, the term ‘all-non-cis-male’ also comes to mind to describe these casts. The performers in Lloyd’s productions, though often visibly queer-coded, all displayed key characteristics of a woman or feminine person. I have left the

wording intentionally vague in regard to the presence of trans performers in these casts, precisely because it is impossible to deduce someone's assigned gender at birth and/or status as trans simply by seeing them in a play. All of the performers in these productions 'pass' as women, but, as we will find, passing itself has no bearing on gender identity. To interrogate the body and gender expression of each cast member, even in service of scholarly specificity, would constitute a counterproductive and unnecessary violation of privacy. One of the primary limitations of the phrase 'women and people of marginalised genders' is that it risks conflating non-cis genders with women, in that it assumes certain similarities between the gender performance of otherness and of cis femininity. This is not to suggest that all people who aren't cis men are genderqueer; but, by identifying the broad category of Otherness imposed on them, I hope to centre the myriad expressions of gender difference that flourish under genderqueer casting conditions.

The productions in which I am interested for the purposes of this dissertation are performed by a vast majority of cis women – however, calling these casts 'all-women' would only reinforce the hegemonic conditions that make these productions necessary and subversive in the first place. Put specifically as possible, I intend to examine these performances within a framework that subverts not only the conditions of gender performance, but the gender binary itself. This kind of inquest necessitates a broader look at all gender performance outside the category of cis men. Because this project requires the definition of an imperfect, nebulous, and ever-evolving anti-category, that definition itself will be imperfect. To refer to these casts simply as non-cis-male would be to define them using the arbitrary conditions that they highlight as harmful and

hegemonic. Instead, I will refer to them as genderqueer casts with the aim of shifting the locus of their definition off of cis men and onto something else. Instead of the umbrella term 'cross-cast', I will be using 'genderqueer' to better account for the ways in which these casts undermine the gender binary that gives rise to the term 'cross-cast'. As work in this field of study continues to develop, I hope that these terms are repeatedly evaluated and altered to better suit the state of the field.

1.4 Judith Clark and Incomplete Dramaturgy

The Donmar Trilogy was fronted by and developed in tandem with acclaimed English actor Harriet Walter. Much of my discussion of the Donmar Trilogy is informed by Walter's 2016 memoir, *Brutus and Other Heroines: Playing Shakespeare's Roles for Women*. Walter's book chronicles some of the process of creating the trilogy – most importantly, Walter provides insight into the dramaturgical logic underpinning the project. Together with Walter, director Phyllida Lloyd reportedly invented the prison frame that unites the trilogy as a mechanism to make sense of the genderqueer cast. Before diving into gender and its many signs, I want to establish the primary framework through which I read these texts. Drawing from Nora Williams' framework for incomplete dramaturgy, we can begin to measure the unexamined effects of Lloyd and Walter's own cis, white, educated positionalities. Williams writes that incomplete dramaturgy

denotes a failure to adapt and intervene in these plays at a structural level, and represents instead taking a shortcut, hitting on a marketing strategy, picking up on a "trend", or (with all the good intentions in the world) trying to cast marginalized performers in star-making roles – but perhaps failing to think through to the end of the decisions being made and to consider how they will affect the play at a holistic level (5).

In recounting the rehearsal process, Walter says that Lloyd asked each cast member to 'invent a prison character who in some way matched our Shakespeare character' (162). Developed in contingency with formerly incarcerated Clean Break artists, these characters serve as the foundation for the unique lexical field at work in the Donmar Trilogy. The invention of the prison characters feeds into what Walter calls her 'acting mantra' for the project: 'This could be me' (162). This somewhat concrete technique is part of what binds the Donmar Trilogy into a 'post-Stanislawskian mimetic framework that demands verisimilitude' (Williams 16). Walter seems to have difficulty imagining herself incarcerated: 'Given that social advantages and education reduce the likelihood of committing crimes, why might someone like me land up in prison? Driving offences?' (Walter 163). Walter's own lack of tether to the realities of incarcerated women was considered handily dealt with when she came upon the story of Judith Clark, as though all her dramaturgy was lacking was a close enough real-life counterpart on whom to base her version of Brutus.

Judith Clark was imprisoned in 1983 following her auxiliary role in an armed bank robbery. Though she was granted parole in 2019, an end to her incarceration was nowhere in sight in 2011, when the Donmar Trilogy was in its early stages. Walter writes that Clark served as direct inspiration for Hannah, Walter's incarcerated character. Before even mentioning Clark, Walter recounts that '[Hannah] was beginning to shape up into a political prisoner, a revolutionary who in her youth had rebelled against the system of privilege that had formed her' (163). Clark's story – especially coverage in mainstream news publications like *The New York Times* (Robbins, McKinley) – is laden with carceral tragedy. In her writing on the subject, Walter seems to latch onto Clark's

daughter, who was an infant when her mother entered prison. The rhetoric of motherhood also pervades Clark's story (Robbins), and, as a Clark-inspired incarcerated character, Hannah is imbued with the grief of a mother separated from her child. Walter's characterisation of Hannah as a political prisoner quickly fades to the background as she discusses her role as a matriarch amongst the other incarcerated women.

Even in 2012, the rhetoric surrounding Clark's incarceration and bid for parole leaned to the political right. In Robbins' 2012 article for *The New York Times Magazine*, Clark is shown in two side-by-side images, one 'from her militant days' (Robbins) and one from 2012. In the photograph from her youth, a straight-faced Clark looks into the camera lens, her curly hair teased into an afro. The whole image is tinted red. Next to it, the present-day Clark is pictured at a greater distance, her hands clasped in front of her peacefully. She tilts her head and smiles affably past the camera. In contrast to young Clark's red-tinted glare, this unfiltered teal and beige image of an aged Clark paints a racialised picture of her transformation. In particular, Clark's slight angle away from the camera in her more recent portrait throws her mugshot-like portrait into sharper relief. Turned slightly to her right, the older, wiser Clark seems to smile gently towards her younger self. Clark's crime is broadly understood to be in support of Black liberation (Robbins), and the piece visually associates her younger self with the mythically dangerous 'Black radical'. The red tint on the image conceals the lightness of Clark's skin – it suggests that, in this photograph, she could be something other than white. In contrast, the more recent photo of Clark shows her to be a nice, middle-aged, white woman who has given up her radical, race-conscious ways. This recent image of Clark

is much closer to the incarcerated character approximated by Walter in the Donmar Trilogy.

Walter, Clark, Hannah, and Brutus congeal into a unified entity, hinging, perhaps, on Walter's own self-conception as a kind of real-life Brutus: 'Hannah/Judith [Clark] could be me. Hannah would become a mentor figure to the other women, a teacher with a missionary zeal to equip them with an education and skills with which to improve their lives' (164). This paternalistic fantasy exposes the incomplete dramaturgy of the entire collaboration. If one figures oneself as a shepherd, an authority, a superior, over a population that is marginalised in so many ways, then one has already ceded the possibility of a truly equal collaboration. I'd like, I think, to see Walter offer her assistance to these incarcerated women as a comrade, rather than as a guest or an expert. Walter's approach echoes those referenced by Williams in her case studies; Walter continues to position white, Eurocentric literature as a better offering than any radical form of advocacy, as suggested by Clark's centrist reformation. Looking at the genderqueer cast of the Donmar Trilogy, we can see hegemonic throughlines in the way in which queerness – particularly butch or masc queerness – is figured as something inherently deviant, subversive, or Other.

The purportedly progressive project of the all-female prison collaboration against sexism and unfair incarceration is undermined by, as Williams writes, 'The replication of such tropes *through* uncritical performances of them – particularly in performances that take place in the context of a canonical early modern play and are therefore legitimized through their association with heavyweight cultural capital' (15). In her writing, Walter

cannot help but point out over and over again that she herself is unlikely to end up in prison (by dint of her privileged upbringing, which she makes sure to mention). At each turn in which Walter shares empathy for incarcerated women, she almost always follows up with a reminder that distances her from these women – except in her discussion of Hannah/Clark. By aligning both herself and Brutus with Clark, Walter risks perpetuating the cultural narrative that, though we can't control the situation into which we are born, we can (and ought to) control whether we end up in prison (and how long we stay there). An examination of incarceration without an inquest into how communities are policed and legislated can never contribute to a complete dramaturgy; by ignoring the hegemonic, community-wide structures that lead to mass incarceration, Lloyd and Walter effectively absolve themselves of complicity in the process of turning these women's stories into acclaim and profit. While the relationship of the Donmar Trilogy to other modes of marginalisation may seem distant from genderqueerness, it is necessary to establish frameworks not just for naming these modes, but for connecting them to each other. The following sections establish a way of thinking about gender in the Donmar Trilogy in a way that positions gender among an intersecting network of marginalities, many of which are depicted and commented on, whether intentionally or otherwise, by Lloyd's work.

1.5 *Rehearsing Gender in Early Modern Drama*

My research is supported by the work of contemporary gender theorists, early modern trans studies, and performance studies. These fields intersect and provide multiple points of entry into the productions examined in this thesis – where the work of Judith

Butler and Jack Halberstam provide a valuable introduction to trans-inclusive gender theory, their early work is challenged and expanded by current scholars in trans studies. This is not to pit feminist critique against trans studies; rather, I want to demonstrate the liberatory potential of taking a radical approach to gender. I will begin in this section by laying the theoretical groundwork that will prop up my analysis of several recorded performances by genderqueer casts. In this thesis, I will be examining two different productions of *The Taming of the Shrew* (2003 and 2016) and the Donmar Warehouse's Shakespeare Trilogy (or the Donmar Trilogy for short), all directed by Phyllida Lloyd. The Donmar Trilogy is made up of *Julius Caesar*, *Henry IV*, and *The Tempest*. The trilogy, the instalments of which originally opened in 2011, 2014, and 2016, was re-staged in a purpose-built theatre in London in 2016 and filmed for the BBC.

In applying gender and performance theory in concert with these productions – taking into account the fact that four of these five productions were watched via recording, instead of live – I will work toward a conclusion about the role of gendered violence in these plays and the construction of gender through that violence.

1.5.1 Bathroom Invasions

In his book *Female Masculinities* (1998), Jack Halberstam distinguishes between the androgyne and the masculine cis woman. He opens his first chapter with several anecdotes that comprise what he calls the 'bathroom problem', in which women (most often lesbians) who present masculinely are often harassed for attempting to use the women's restroom. Halberstam recounts Leslie Feinberg's *Stone Butch Blues*, in which 'he-she factory worker' (Halberstam 22) Jess Goldberg attempts to enter a public

bathroom at the mall. The police are called, and Jess finds herself using her feminine voice as defence against violence or even arrest. Incorporating the story of the lesbian character Remedios from Nice Rodriguez's *Throw It to the River*, Halberstam summarises the crux of the issue: 'The bathroom problem for Remedios and for Jess severely limits their ability to circulate in public spaces and actually brings them into contact with physical violence as a result of having violated a cardinal rule of gender: one must be readable at a glance' (23).

Halberstam also briefly explores the ways in which the bathroom problem differ depending on a person's gender presentation. He writes, 'The codes that dominate within the women's bathroom are primarily gender codes; in the men's room, they are sexual codes' (24). According to the stereotype which Halberstam invokes, men's restrooms can become the site of illicit sexual encounters. However, women's restrooms are often treated as women-only spaces – that is, men-free zones. These men-free zones mean that, in a hetero-, cis-normative framework, cis women can theoretically exist in the bathroom (sexually) unharassed.¹

In 2016, eighteen years after the publication of Halberstam's book, the North Carolina legislature passed the infamous 'bathroom bill,' or the Public Facilities Privacy and Security Act. The bill stated that in government-operated buildings, including public schools, individuals were required to use the bathroom corresponding with the sex assigned them at birth. Though the act was partially repealed in 2017, the public

¹ Setting aside, for a moment, the capacity of cis women to be sexually violent toward other women.

attitudes that fuel discrimination persist. In a New York Times article from October of 2017, Tammi Fitzgerald, the executive director of the North Carolina Values Coalition, claimed that, with the repeal of the bathroom bill, “L.G.B.T. privileges” had now been elevated “above the rights of common everyday people to privacy and safety in bathrooms and showers” (Fausset). In the years since, we have seen a growing assault on the rights of trans people to exist in public. While multiple US state legislatures are currently attempting (or have already managed) to effectively ban gender-affirming care, the process of receiving gender-affirming care in the UK is a mire of red tape and waiting lists. Simultaneously, the right of trans people (and, by extension, any person) to use public restrooms is under seemingly constant attack, both by political conservatives and by transphobes who use feminism as a Trojan horse to marginalise and exclude trans people. In 2023, while multiple notable cis, white women wrote thousands of words in national news outlets about how viciously they were being silenced, a professor of gender studies at the University of Waterloo was stabbed during a lecture in a targeted attack (NBC). In *The Guardian*, Sarah Shaffi quotes Rowling calling the concept of being trans (often now called ‘transgenderism’, as though it were a religion) ‘illiberal in its methods and questionable in its ideas’ (2023). Posited as reasonable, intellectual scepticism, Rowling’s transphobic views have given ammunition to vocal opponents of trans people. With Rowling’s public support, Maya Forstater won her discrimination case after losing her job over transphobic tweets (Shaffi), effectively giving her and her supporters carte blanche to question the validity of trans existence without professional consequence. The prevailing logic amongst transphobes seems to be a claim to the right to comfort, which often arises in popular discourse about white

supremacy. Describing this concept, Marty Strauss says, 'In white supremacy culture, the only dialogue permitted is that which does not make people uncomfortable. Only when biases are not challenged, and inadequacies are not exposed, is "open dialogue" permitted' (HPLAP). This is not to claim that structures of racism directly map onto structures of transphobia, but this passage highlights the hegemonic logic that undergirds calls to eliminate trans people from public life, and it opens a discursive channel between the languages of transphobia and white supremacy.

The bathroom problem highlights the tension that arises from the inversion or shuffling of gender norms. When a person who does not 'pass' as a woman enters a women's restroom, the cis women in the room may be consciously or subconsciously assessing the situation for danger. In Jess's case, the other women in the room react hostilely, even aggressively, to her presence. Examples like these raise the question: what nature of threat is gender nonconformity? Fitzgerald and other proponents of North Carolina's bathroom bill often cited concerns for the safety of children in public restrooms as impetus for the law. This claim mis-categorises the nuanced reaction that Halberstam details as fear of physical violence or sexual violation, misplacing the locus of the threat onto people of marginalised genders. For Jess, the other women in the bathroom react initially with confusion that evolves into aggression. In recent years, we have seen the locus of this anxiety evolve even further away from butch/masc lesbians. This evolution demonstrates that this anxiety is born out of the conflation of gender and sexuality – out of the fear that one's gender presentation is inextricably connected to one's sexual preferences and behaviour. The coded language of the 'bathroom bill' suggests a misplaced fear that trans women will behave like cis men. In this way, the

language of transphobia is simultaneously bound up in and obfuscated by the language of sexual anxiety. For these particular women, the threat of nonconformity is synonymous with the threat of violence – anxiety about the violence that cis men enact on cis women becomes fallaciously linked to the fear that anyone who cannot be easily categorised as a woman is always at risk being violent like a cis man. This link is not only fallacious but also insidious in its reduction of identity to any physical characteristic. This line of reasoning ultimately reaches the conclusion that the bodies of trans women, because of their presumed physical traits, are capable of the same violence as cis men and therefore should be treated with state violence. A 2021 report for the UK Parliament by Rosa Freedman, Kathleen Stock, and Alice Sullivan states that their source study found no difference between crime rates among trans women, cis women, or cis men (2), despite its claims that trans women are a statistical danger to cis women in public spaces: 'male-to-females...retained a male pattern regarding criminality. The same was true regarding violent crime' (1). Looking past, for a moment, the broad inadequacy of this statement as a research claim, one can nevertheless identify the interest of the state in connecting crime rates to gender. If gender is itself inherent, and crime rates are inherent to gender – as this document suggests – then there is a fascist and eugenicist conclusion suggested by these studies about the inclination of certain groups to crime and, therefore, incarceration.

Halberstam suggests that Jess's masculine presentation itself is most threatening. He writes, 'Ambiguous gender, when and where it does appear, is inevitably transformed into deviance, thirdness, or a blurred version of either male or female' (20). This deviance, as in the case of the Public Facilities Privacy and Security

Act, is often associated with the type of violence people – cis women in particular – go to single gendered bathrooms to avoid. In the case of single gendered bathrooms, the structure in place seems to justify itself on the suggestion that the division serves a purpose. As I continue my exploration of genderqueer performance and reception, the question of whom this structure protects will become central to my argument.

1.5.2 Reflexivity and the Production of Gender

Theories of gender production and performance undergird much of my argument, and looking back at foundational texts in the field lends supporting terminology and ideas to my own discussion of genderqueerness. With the aid of Judith Butler's *Undoing Gender* (2004), I will explore the circumstances under which gender is produced and interpreted.

How should one describe the genderqueer cast? The phrases 'cross-cast' and 'gender-bent' are just a few of many ways of labelling the genderqueer cast as a phenomenon – as something other than the norm. Butler writes: 'Whether one refers to "gender trouble" or "gender blending," "transgender" or "cross-gender," one is already suggesting that gender has a way of moving beyond that naturalised binary' (2004, 42). What Butler calls the 'notion of gender' has arbitrary boundaries made apparent by their vulnerability. In transgressing these boundaries, the genderqueer cast highlights and parodies this vulnerability.

Genderqueer casting defies the 'norms of recognition' (Butler 2004, 32) that legitimise the individual. As Butler says, 'My reflexivity is not only socially mediated, but

socially constituted' (2004, 32). 'Recognition' here lives in the realm of the semiotic – to recognise another individual is to identify that person as human (as opposed to Other). To have reflexivity – to reflect, put simply – is to have the ability to recognise oneself as human through a process which, Butler writes, is governed by social norms. This reflexivity is what allows us to perceive ourselves and, by extension, others as part of the same human category. However, what Butler refers to as the 'category of women' faces the difficulty of gaining legitimacy in the face of sexual difference. Butler writes: 'The category of women has been used differentially and with exclusionary aims, and not all women have been included within its terms; women have not been fully incorporated into the human' (2004, 37). Butler makes a key distinction between women who fit into the predetermined category of women and those who are excluded from it. The arbitrary boundaries of this category create a hierarchy of femininity, with women who are assigned female at birth (AFAB) and who fit easily into the prescription of what a woman should be at the top of the structure, and women who try and fail to perform femininity satisfactorily – for whatever reason – at the bottom. Those who fail to satisfactorily perform masculinity or femininity according to these societal codes lack a crucial element of what makes a person legible as human.

The construction and maintenance of this bounded hierarchy benefits the gender hierarchy overall. Both hierarchies are threatened by performances of gender that do not suit a single category – namely, by performances of masculinity or femininity that do not adhere to one's sex assigned at birth. This dissonance is often marginalised as deviant, unreal, or inhuman. Butler writes that the human cannot exist without the inhuman – these deviances, these transgressions against social construction facilitate

and perpetuate the individual's sense of safety against the threat of non-recognition. The branding of transgressive individuals as somehow Other, as distanced from the category of the human, 'secures the human in its ostensible reality' (Butler 2004, 30). Genderqueerness, then, is constructed and constrained by gender normativity – genderqueer casting can both show these constraints to be arbitrary and inadvertently reinforce them.

This perpetual alienation of the Other has an unforeseen consequence. Individuals who transgress the boundaries of the 'normal' often band together in communities of their own. For example, queer communities have become so extensive and diverse that they have a lexicon of their own. Both Halberstam and Butler bring queer identities to the forefront of their work, legitimising difference in a way that not only secures the Other as human, but that gives the Other voice and agency.

Butler writes, 'That my agency is riven with paradox does not mean it is impossible. It means only that paradox is the condition of its possibility.' The agency of the Other is constantly at odds with a 'social world' (Butler 2004, 3) that denies it. The 'possibility' to which Butler refers encompasses not only the existence of transgressive identity, but also the frameworks allowing these identities to exist. The basis of queer theory gives rise to much of the artistic work of the genderqueer cast.

Ironically, the rejection of Otherness by social construction validates its existence as Otherness. The genderqueer cast is significant because it defies normativity – its agency is in part bestowed by the very hierarchy against which it rages. Because masculine displays by feminine bodies violate the norms of gender performance, these

displays have the power to highlight the structures that marginalise transgressive voices. This paradox is essential to the 'project' of the genderqueer cast. In the context of existing power structures, the genderqueer cast cannot resist interpretation. For the project of the genderqueer cast to be fully executed, it must first recognise and utilise subverted gender performance's position on the fringes of the category of human.

At their most impactful, the genderqueer actor then exists on multiple planes. On one hand, they stand to represent broad concepts of masculinity and gender and are part of a larger functioning body. On the other, their performance of gendered traits expresses deeply internal facets of identity, marrying the intensely personal with the unavoidably political. Butler writes, 'One only refers to "one's own" sense of gender to the extent that social norms exist that support and enable that act of claiming gender for oneself. One is dependent on this "outside" to lay claim to what is one's own' (2004, 6). By emphasising the masculine end of the gender spectrum, the Donmar Trilogy's genderqueer performers simultaneously elevate their own femininity, highlighting the context against which their own identity is constructed. An actor playing a male part against their own gender presentation performs both a parody and representation of masculinity – they both comment on and replicate the conditions of masculinity. However, especially as it relates to the Donmar Trilogy, *The Taming of the Shrew* (2003), and *The Taming of the Shrew* (2016), genderqueer casting alone does not necessarily guarantee that the production will challenge and subvert hegemonic conditions.

In *Gender Trouble*, Butler claims that all aspects of gender are created and reinforced artificially. They write, 'Gender is culturally constructed: hence, gender is neither the causal result of sex nor as seemingly fixed as sex' (Butler 1990, 8). For Butler, gender is fundamentally performative – a never-ending series of actions, performances of mannerisms that are culturally assigned to one gender category or another. What Butler calls the 'unity of the subject' (1990, 8) is achieved through the consistency between one's perceived sex and one's gendered performance. This performance is, as Butler warns, self-perpetuating. Identity expressed 'within available cultural terms instates a definition that forecloses in advance the emergence of new identity concepts' (Butler 1990, 21). Gender performance, then, is described a profoundly anxious and repetitive compulsion to 'pass', or to be perceived by others as naturally fitting into one polar gender category or another. However, not all genderqueer people aim to pass. Instead, genderqueering can take the shape of a deliberate step outside the bounds of the categories of 'man' or 'woman'. Genderqueer performance revels in its own disinterest in passing. By showing the compulsion to pass as male or female to be optional, genderqueerness demonstrates that exclusive membership in either category is not a necessary condition of existence.

In order to question and subvert gender as we see it, one must tacitly acknowledge the norms that produce gender to begin with. For example, the very existence of a genderqueer cast is reliant upon the gender spectrum. 'Women' and 'non-cis-men' must still be defined in relation to 'men' – therefore, the use non-masculine actors to interrogate masculinity may inadvertently reinforce the conception of masculinity itself. In order for an audience member to recognise the dissonance

between the gender-subverting actor and their displays of masculinity, certain ideals of masculinity and femininity must be in place. The signs we recognise as masculine – height, posture, mannerisms – must be acknowledged and represented in a way that makes them recognisable.

Subversive gender performance can, through mimesis and caricature, highlight the conditions under which such replication is compulsory. Mimesis and parody lead gender performance down two different paths, though many genderqueer performances include elements of both. Where parody has a more clearly discernible project of exposing gendered traits as performative, mimesis highlights the nature of the category itself by showing the conditions of gender performativity to be arbitrary and fragile. This is not to pose parody and mimesis as mutually exclusive opposites – mimesis (or its absence) plays a role in parody. Mimesis and parody work in concert in Lloyd's genderqueer productions, especially concerning the Donmar Trilogy's prison frame. In the Donmar Trilogy, mimetic elements construct the prison frame. Beyond gender performance, mimesis and caricature in the Donmar Trilogy are deployed as a means of differentiating the genderqueer cast of the Shakespeare plays from the 'all-female' cast playing the incarcerated actors. In this respect, the term 'genderqueer' applies more neatly to the plays put on by this fictional cast of incarcerated women than it does to the real-life cast.

1.6 *Is It Drag?*

Butler expounds upon the 'norms of recognition' that dictate which behaviours categorise a person as a particular gender. They write, 'The sense of possibility

pertaining to me must first be imagined from somewhere else before I can begin to imagine myself. My reflexivity is not only socially mediated, but socially constituted' (2004, 32). The locus of gender identity, then, is external, originating from an historical set of norms that dictate the appropriate behaviours for each gender. 'Reflexivity' refers to the identity one assigns oneself or, rather, the identity one recognises in oneself. That this self-recognition is both 'mediated' and 'constituted' outside of the sovereign body affirms Halberstam's assertion that gender presentation can only be understood in the context of social norms. The threat of the non-cis-man who exists outside the norms of cis femininity surfaces most strongly in an environment meant for only women or, more specifically, only cis women who pass as women.

Both Halberstam and Butler explore the nature of gender presentation by examining drag performance. Butler writes that drag performers and other people who present outside the gender binary 'show us how the norms that govern contemporary notions of reality can be questioned and how new modes of reality can become instituted' (2004, 29). Drag artists perform the norms of recognition in detectable ways. Drag performance legitimises the space between 'male' and 'female,' simultaneously exposing gender as performative and constructed. The drag performer presents a set of conflicting signifiers, such as a deep voice and breasts. The juxtaposition of these gendered traits highlights them as arbitrary symbols of gender expression, rather than as evidence of ontological gender.

In *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama*, Keir Elam examines the ways in which signs function onstage. He distinguishes between symbols, which are 'conventional and

unmotivated' (20) in their relationship to the signified object, from icons, which are connected to their objects through similitude (19). Elam's analysis of stage spectacle can be applied to gender through drag performance. Elam terms the elements of stage performance 'foregrounding devices, all geared towards presenting the stage spectacle for what it basically is, a "display"' (27). This concept is strongly evocative of the ways in which drag highlights the performativity of gender. In the past decade, female drag (which, as a term, is itself somewhat inadequate) has been catapulted into the mainstream by franchises like RuPaul's Drag Race. While female drag – that is, a male character dressing and performing as a woman – only appears once in the productions studied in this thesis, it is an important point of entry into a more specific discussion of male or masculine drag because of its cultural significance, if not dominance.² Drag performers often adopt gendered language and slurs, which are in a sense among the strongest icons of the gender binary. In her song What's On, drag queen Jinkx Monsoon repeats the phrase, 'Feelin' like pussy, feelin' like cunt.' The use of these slurs for gendered sexual organs highlights the running joke of male-to-female drag: that the performer lacks a vagina.

Drag exists in the liminal territory between illusion and parody. In his discussion of the term 'camp', Halberstam argues that 'incongruence becomes the site of gender creativity' (236). Drawing from the work of Esther Newton, Halberstam defines 'camp' as a representation of the behaviours of gay men rooted in hyperbole and humour. Butler

² I feel two ways about framing drag in these terms: for the purposes of this discussion, it makes sense to divide drag performers into gendered categories. However, some of the most effective drag expresses genderqueerness beyond the remit of male and female 'realness'.

cites the critical incorporation of gender norms into drag performance as a primary method of opposing the structures of binary gender (2004, 35). Drag functions by parodying gendered structures. By equating the presence (or the illusion of such presence) of vaginas with femininity, drag queens highlight the arbitrary nature of these associations.

1.6.1 Drag Kings: Embodying Masculinity

Halberstam resists the application of the term 'camp' to drag kings – simplistically speaking, women who dress up and perform in drag as men. He writes, 'The drag king performs masculinity (often parodically) and makes the exposure of the theatricality of masculinity into the mainstay of her act' (232). In parallel with drag queens, drag kings portray an exaggerated display of masculinity. However, this exaggerated masculinity cannot be equated to drag queen camp so easily, in particular because masculinity and femininity are not perfect mirrors for each other. Halberstam writes: 'Advertisements for Dockers pants and Jockey underwear, for example, appeal constantly to the no-nonsense aspect of masculinity, to the idea that masculinity "just is," whereas femininity reeks of the artificial' (234). Halberstam argues that masculinity – especially white masculinity – functions as the norm against which all other modes of existence are compared. As a result, the traditional concept of camp does not quite fit these performances of masculinity. Instead, Halberstam uses the term 'kinging' to reference the masculine side of gender parody. The word 'kinging', Halberstam argues, 'is the only way to avoid always collapsing lesbian history and social practice associated with drag into gay male histories and practices' (238). Male drag is neither an offshoot nor an

afterthought of femme drag – instead, it is its own art form, with its own conventions and nuances. This terminology also rests in the false binary evoked by ‘king’ and ‘queen’; it is necessarily imperfect in its description of an art form that responds to constraints of language and social custom.

Halberstam writes that masculinity is characterised as ‘non-performative’ in that it must be ‘render[ed] visible and theatrical’ (238) in its performance. Drag king performances tend to range from more subtle representations of masculinity to the parodic and exaggerated performances one might more readily equate with those given by drag queens. Halberstam characterises male drag as an essential outlet for certain lesbian performers. By connecting sexuality with gender performance, these drag performers simultaneously adhere to and parody the conditions under which cis male sexuality is validated through gender and vice versa. Halberstam writes that drag provides the opportunity to ‘expose the artificiality of all genders and all sexual orientations and therefore to answer the charge of inauthenticity that is usually made only about lesbian identity’ (240). Drag kings challenge the native-ness of masculinity to cis men by appropriating and exaggerating it onstage, rendering it ‘suspect and open to interrogation’ (Halberstam 235). Through drag performance, not only can performers expose masculinity as fragile and subjective, but they also have the opportunity to manifest a part of their existence that may otherwise be met with suspicion. In Halberstam’s words, ‘Masculinity does not belong to men, has not been produced only by men, and does not properly express male heterosexuality’ (241). In performing as a man, a drag king has an opportunity to both express and interrogate their own masculinity.

The kinging phenomenon raises the question of how drag ties into the performance of a genderqueer cast. One primary – and perhaps key – difference is that, while drag is most often thought of in relation to an individual personality, the genderqueer cast is an ensemble in which non-cis-male actors play characters of all genders. Are each of these performers ‘doing drag’ in their own right? Or are some simply performing as any actor might? Halberstam’s discussion of the types of male drag elucidates the distinction between, for example, the actors playing men and those playing women in a genderqueer cast.

1.6.2 *The Semiotics of Drag*

In continuing his discussion of drag king practices, Halberstam elaborates on what he sees as the various types of drag king performances. He divides drag king performances into contests and shows. The dividing factor, Halberstam claims, is theatricality. The drag king contests, Halberstam reports, are ‘marked by a notable lack of theatricality and camp and depended utterly on notions of masculine authenticity rather than impersonations of maleness’ (244). In Halberstam’s analysis, theatricality is pitted against authenticity. Authenticity here seems to refer to a convincing portrayal of maleness – known in both drag queen and king communities as ‘realness’ (Halberstam 234).

On the other end of the drag spectrum is the theatricality of drag king shows. Elam writes that theatricality allows the audience to “‘bracket off” what is presented to them from normal social praxis and so perceive the performance as a network of meanings, i.e. as a text’ (11). Drag performances are framed as a system of theatrical

signs to be read by the audience. By using camp or kinking to recognisably depict gender in a theatrical context, drag performers bring gender into the realm of narratives open to interpretation by the audience. Realness, or a version of it, is a major part of the project of the genderqueer casts in Phyllida Lloyd's work. Performances by actors like Janet McTeer and Harriet Walter highlight the arbitrary bounds of masculinity by depicting their male characters with a level of seriousness that might be considered unusual for what is, in part, a drag performance. Moments of camp do arise, especially in the Donmar Trilogy, but these moments are limited to certain types of characters. Most notably, perhaps, is the borderline campy depiction of *The Tempest's* Ferdinand by Sheila Atim, who paints an exaggerated portrait of young, Black masculinity in Britain. In my subsequent discussion of *The Tempest*, I will delve more deeply into the distinction between these two depictions of masculinity.

Elam divides signs into three functions according to the work of Charles Peirce: iconic, symbolic, and indexical. The icon 'represents its object "mainly by similarity" between the sign-vehicle and its signified' (Elam 19). In contrast, the symbol represents its object arbitrarily (20). These symbols are often indicative of a class of objects signified by context rather than similitude or function. Peirce's third type of sign, the index, exists on the spectrum between icon and symbol. According to Elam, the index is connected to its object 'often physically or through contiguity' (19) – that is, through function. A lone door frame on a stage may not denote a door to the world that continues off the stage, but through its use as a stage entrance and exit, it begins to inhabit the realm of a 'real world' door. In drag performance, symbols are often mixed with icons and indices to create dimension – the performer may make no attempt to

disguise their breasts or voice but still wear facial hair and a tuxedo. These signs of masculine or feminine performance create semiotic dissonance for the audience, enhancing what Elam calls the 'richness of the stage spectacle' (21).

Kinging seems to touch on all three of Peirce's sign categories in different respects. However, as drag performers continue to test the boundaries of symbolism, iconicity seems less and less critical. Elam writes: 'Iconism is further conditioned by the law of the transformability of the sign. If one sign-system can do the work usually fulfilled by another, it is clear that direct similarity is quite dispensable' (22). According to Elam, iconism is itself governed by the limits of mutability – that is, if a message can be expressed by a less iconic sign, then the icon itself becomes extraneous. Applied to Halberstam's analysis of types of drag king shows, Peirce's sign categories help us to interpret the disparities between drag king contests and performances. The 'realness' of drag king contests corresponds closely to Peirce's definition of the icon. The drag kings in these contests aim to present a full illusion of masculinity by providing clear, consistent signs of maleness. There is little room for discord; posture, appearance, and voice are all necessary to satisfy the conditions of masculine realness. These traits are semiotic icons: the completeness of the illusion depends almost expressly on the closeness between signifier and signified.

Conversely, Halberstam's accounts of drag king performances suggest that indexical signs bear a stronger presence. Drag king performances demonstrate what Halberstam calls the 'theatricalisation of masculinity' (255) as part of a broader point of view. By exaggerating certain elements of masculinity, the drag king denaturalises it,

highlighting its arbitrariness. As Halberstam says, 'There are no essential links between misogyny and masculinity: rather, masculinity seems bound to misogyny structurally in the context of patriarchy and male privilege' (255). This concept of structural or functional connection between masculinity and misogyny is essential for understanding the relationship between masculinity and gendered violence. If misogyny is a word in the vocabulary of masculinity, then gendered violence is part and parcel of that language. Thinking back to Freedman et al's document, we can catch a glimpse of the pervasive cultural association of masculinity and gendered violence. In order for a (normative) performance of masculinity to have realness, gendered violence – or the threat thereof – must play a non-trivial part. At its most effective, the genderqueer cast not only recognises this relationship but leans into it in an effort to highlight the ways in which gendered violence not only serves but creates masculinity.

Masculinity is difficult to define. For the purposes of this thesis, I recognise masculinity as a compilation of traits, beliefs, and behaviours that collectively are most commonly – but certainly not always – attributed to men. This definition is necessarily circular; because (cis, white) masculinity is so often figured as natural or default, it evades any attempt to categorise its components as anything but obvious. The structural, arbitrary links between masculine behaviours and masculinity transpose onto the sign system of drag to create a category of symbols – or, rather, of symbolic behaviours. These exaggerated behaviours of maleness are both icons and symbols. For example, Halberstam writes that drag king Mo B. Dick often repeats the catchphrase, 'I ain't no homo!' Through the use of this recognisable acclamation, Mo B. Dick references the men who may use it while also parodying the anxiety that

encourages them to do so (265). This duality creates dimension and texture in the drag performance. Mo B. Dick's catchphrase particularly highlights cis straight men's anxiety around being 'hit on' or violated by a gay man – that is, the anxiety that another man will treat them the way they treat women. In parodying this performative eagerness to distance oneself from queerness, Mo B. Dick exposes the misogynist undertones of such a proclamation. By subsuming homophobia and misogyny into his performance, Mo B. Dick seamlessly incorporates the vocabulary of violence into the language of masculinity – in fact, his performance is propped up, enriched by these displays. In Mo B. Dick's performance of male-ness, masculinity not only supports violence, but is in large part created by it.

The drag performer's body is segmented and codified into the lexicon of the stage. Halberstam's theories intersect with Elam's in the work of the genderqueer cast. If we consider McTeer, who plays Petruchio in both productions of *The Taming of the Shrew* examined in this dissertation, as simultaneously an individual persona and part of an ensemble, we can begin to tease out the ways in which she is both performing and not performing drag. McTeer had a few 'kinging' moments in both the 2003 and 2016 productions. In the 2016 staging, McTeer paused to mime urination on a pole. The laughter this received from the audience suggests that the behaviour was recognised as out of the ordinary – as an act of male drag performance. In 2003, McTeer and Hunter portrayed two people deeply in love – momentarily, at least – convincingly. When Petruchio said, 'Kiss me, Kate' (*Shr.* 5.1.122), Katherine hesitated at first, but then the two kissed passionately in a rare moment of genuine tenderness. If we hold Halberstam's discussion of the bathroom problem in our minds, we can begin to draw a

connection between Katherine's willingness to engage sexually with Petruchio and his convincing performance of masculinity – that is, Katherine is able to trust him because of his realness, his nearly exact proximity to the signs of masculinity so fluently espoused by cis men.

1.6.3 Gender and the Stage

Elam writes: 'Much of the richness of the stage spectacle derives from the interplay of varying degrees of semiotic literalness: young actors portraying, with a degree of verisimilitude, the lovers in a Forest of Arden represented by cardboard cut-out trees' (Elam 21). It is the dissonance between the cut-out trees and the 'realistic' actors that brings depth to a production and distinguishes it from the antics of everyday life. While the audience reads 'real' from the actors, they are receiving 'fake' from the setting. This contrast contextualises the actors' performances for the audience and creates the necessary distance between the action onstage and 'real life'.

The question, then, is how much can the audience be asked to believe? If an audience will accept that two wooden blocks on a bare stage are the cockpit of a plane, would they be willing to accept that an actor with breasts and a high-pitched voice is a male character? In their book *Theatre as a Sign System*, Elaine Aston and George Savona suggest that the resemblance between actor and character – between signifier and signified – works to blur the 'distinction between the real and the role' (46). Therefore, when signifier no longer resembles signified, is the illusion shattered? Aston and Savona offer an answer in the form of Brechtian theatre, which identifies itself as performance, rather than a mimetic representation of reality.

The Brechtian actor makes no claim to be Julius Caesar; rather, the actor clearly represents Caesar and, subsequently, the social ramifications of Caesar's position. Aston and Savona remark on this difference: 'The attention of the spectator, rather, is now directed outwards, from the enactment to the social reality inscribed therein' (92). Perhaps, when the distance between actor and role is as great as the distance between masculine and feminine, the audience is invited to do a different kind of imaginary work. Instead of merely accepting what they are seeing, the audience is invited to question the gendered traits being presented to them.

Genderqueer casting also questions the customary distance between the audience and the theatrical narrative. In order for this distance to be created, the audience must harbour some predetermined notions of what femininity and masculinity are. In their 1988 article 'Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory', Butler addresses this distance: 'One can maintain one's sense of reality in the face of this temporary challenge to our existing ontological assumptions about gender arrangements; the various conventions which announce that "this is only a play" allows strict lines to be drawn between the performance and life" (527). What Butler calls 'reality' corresponds more specifically to each spectator's sense of the conventional. The stage is both physical and metaphorical: not only does it physically delineate 'real' space from 'play' space, but the stage also signifies a space where conventions can be reversed without effect on the outside world. Butler mentions 'various conventions', which often take the form of the existence of a physical stage and its design elements.

The audience's sense of the conventional is the site and source of tension during a genderqueer production. In viewing a drag show, the audience is part of the phenomenon – the audience's familiarity with gender conventions is essential to the framework of drag. The audience must know how a 'woman' is expected to behave in order to recognise the interrogation of those norms onstage. This intersection is utilised on a broader, more complex scale by the genderqueer cast. Where the drag performer operates as an individual swimming against the current, the genderqueer cast is itself a microcosm of the current. Shows of exaggerated masculinity – kinging, by Halberstam's terminology – intermingle with more naturalistic performance to highlight the boundary between the two. Lloyd's genderqueer productions capitalised on the expectations of the audience to simultaneously highlight and deconstruct the gender binary and the systematic oppression of women, both in Shakespeare's time and in ours.

1.7 *Performing Sexual Violence: Theory and Practice*

In the depiction of violence, particularly gendered violence, theatre-makers take on a social responsibility to, in a way, justify the presence of such horrors in their production. In this thesis, "gendered violence" refers to violence enacted by one or more people on another (or others) in a way that utilises or references gendered difference; for example, beyond sexual assault, intimate partner violence, violence against trans people, and so on fall under gendered violence here. In witnessing – through what Kim Solga calls 'a performed act' (18) – an act of onstage violence, theatre-goers have the opportunity to participate in the co-creation of a space in which the performance of such violence is both necessary and meaningful. In Shakespeare, onstage violence is both prescribed

by the text and created by inference. Whether an act of violence is strictly notated in Shakespeare's text or added by the production, the audience becomes responsible for carrying a part of the burden shared by the onstage victim – asking, 'Why did this happen?' and 'How do we move forward?' According to Pascale Aebischer, the audience is 'crucial to creating the meaning of these bodies in performance, a meaning that essentially arises out of the relationship between bodies as signs and the contemporary "world" of the spectator' (5). If we frame violence as part of the language of a production, gendered violence in particular functions to both upset and reinforce the stage's semiotic lexicon. This discussion pertains primarily to the physical violence enacted between bodies in (or in service of creating) a power dynamic. Such violence destroys the object's agency to generate signs and asserts the power of the subject to control that creation. Depicted onstage, physical violence highlights theatre's 'economy of substitutions' (Solga 41), in which onstage events create a semiotic dialogue between the audience and the performance. For performance – particularly the performance of violence – to mean something, there must be an interpreter. Violence creates a class of signs within the lexical field of the stage, which, in turn, must be validated and reflected by the audience.

Gendered violence, then, comes to refer to the specific power dynamic between people of different genders. When one enacts violence on another either because of or in service of a gendered power dynamic, that violence takes on a gendered dimension. Gendered violence – from intimate partner violence to rape – poses a particular

challenge to the co-creation of theatre, because it effaces the victim by robbing them of agency, while also compelling the spectator to look away. Gendered violence often demands a certain type of viewing. Watching gendered violence inspires pity, terror, helplessness, disgust – as well as more taboo (but perhaps no less common) feelings like excitement, titillation, and amusement. It can ask the viewer to confront the conditions upon which one's own agency is contingent. Gendered violence grounds the theatrical space in the corporeal, translating action into a material sign. As audience members, we turn this sign over in our minds, bereft of intelligible meaning – that is, until the victim is re/avenged, dead, or both.

1.7.1 Early Modern Performances of Violence

To think about the import of gendered violence in contemporary Shakespeare, we must first look more closely at early modern conceptions of gendered violence. From the thirteenth to sixteenth centuries, written law regarding gendered violence simultaneously saw drastic reform and staunch loyalty to archaic conditions. In *The First and Second Statutes of Westminster* (1275 and 1285), rape was 'enshrined...as a property crime' (Solga 8), in which the offender stole or degraded the lawful property of husbands and fathers. Even in Shakespeare's plays, written over 300 years later, we see the echoes of this fundamental attitude toward the nature of gendered violence. Solga writes, 'Violence against women...was defined by its very social invisibility, by its relationship to patriarchal pride and necessary forms of control' (7). Solga connects pride and control – the loss of one seems to threaten the destruction of the other. In late medieval conceptions of sexual violence, rape was less an obliteration of the victim's

agency – because she was already possessed of so little – and more an attack on her value to her family.

The Lawes Resolutions of Womens Rights (1632), published over 300 years after the *Statutes of Westminster*, gives women responsibility – if not exactly agency – in reporting their own assaults. The document prescribes that women should ‘raise the hue and cry’ (Solga 36) to the nearest group of men, performing in meticulously scripted detail the circumstances and after-effects of the assault. *Lawes Resolutions* lays the groundwork by which victims of assault are expected not only to convince others of the assault, but to perform and recall the assault satisfactorily: ‘A victim’s damaged body, spoken *through* her lamenting voice, will sign the truth of her chaste narration, producing her innocence via the theatrical convergence of action, speech, and sight’ (Solga 39). These early statutes define the re-enactment of assault as a mandatory act of participation in a preconceived lexicon of signs – in order to receive validation and justice, a victim of assault must make successful use of a sign system created not for her benefit, but for the satisfaction of the men who hold the power to avenge her.

In the sixteenth century, Solga writes, the consent of the assaulted woman started coming into play in discussions of rape. Shakespeare’s lifetime saw key changes in legal conceptions of rape: renewed statutes from 1555 and 1597 redefined rape as ‘a crime against the person, not as a crime against property’ (Bashar 41, qtd. in Solga 8). However, the concept of consent, combined with cultural anxiety about women and their ‘sexual appetites’ (Solga 35), created a renewed suspicion of women who brought accusations of rape: ‘Was she raped, or did she give herself (her

husband's/father's property) away?' (Solga 35). Statement of non-consent did not replace the demand for a scripted performance of one's assault, but it instead became an additional burden of proof for victims. In requiring that a woman, who was already suspected of consenting to anything/everything, prove her own non-consent, early modern statutes governing sexual crimes further precluded women's ability to reproduce their assaults satisfactorily.

1.7.2 *Telling Rape*

Following on from the conditions under which survivors of assault were tasked with performing a scripted version of their own assault, 'Early modern culture constructs rape victims as actors in a theatre of trauma built to externalize and thereby instantiate the crimes they are ostensibly reporting' (Solga 30). The constraint of personal narrative into a strict set of performance requirements occludes the beneficial or healing role that narration can play in trauma recovery – instead, early modern statutes demanded that women prove their seriousness by subjecting themselves to extreme scrutiny, risking not only their reputations, but their relative freedom and safety from retribution. The structures of early modern accountability created a yardstick of chastity, against which all women and accusers were measured. As a result, the vast majority of sexual violence in Shakespeare, particularly instances studied in this dissertation, is enacted against virgins or otherwise highly chaste women. The depiction of violence in particular demands a dramatic fall from grace. Because the early moderns conceived of 'loose women' as less able to be raped, assault narratives concerning young and gentle virgins made for much deeper and more compelling tragedy. Solga writes:

The stage heroine's use of standard symbolism and rhetoric and her plain citation of chaste mythical precedents serve to locate her within an ongoing extratheatrical narrative about what rape means and how it should be reported: all her public words and gestures work to confirm her innocence and remind her male friends and relations of what they must do next to avenge her/their honour (31).

In *Titus Andronicus*, Lavinia, Titus' only daughter, is brutally raped and mutilated by brothers Chiron and Demetrius. Beyond its popularity and infamy as a rape and violence-soaked circus of blood, *Titus Andronicus* is notable for its slightly unusual mode of participation in the tradition of the early modern revenge tragedy. '*Titus Andronicus*,' Deborah Willis writes, 'Stands out among revenge plays for its insistent exposure of revenge as cross-gender and cross-cultural phenomenon' (25). In the play, revenge is desired, enacted, and controlled by men and women alike – however, the gendered implications of how Lavinia and Tamora in particular engage in violence and revenge challenge a flatly feminist reading of these characters.

Momentarily setting aside the many political machinations at work throughout the play, we see in Lavinia's inability to tell her family of her rape a depiction of the social script gone horribly awry. Willis writes:

Shakespeare's rich treatment of trauma and its aftermath in *Titus Andronicus* constructs trauma in terms of both cultural and psychological factors. Titus and Tamora, along with other Romans and Goths and Aaron the Moor, share a set of beliefs about honor and revenge, a set of stories, a set of scripts for action. (30)

Willis alludes to the social scripts codified in part by the *Lawes Resolutions*, speaking more broadly of the strict expectations built up over time, and, critically, bought into by both 'sides' in the play. Where Lavinia should be expected to verbally recount the circumstances of the attack, she has no tongue to speak. Where she should be able to

replicate and demonstrate the assault, she has no hands with which to gesture. Lavinia's body is 'little more than a cipher for her family's place in the social economy' (Solga 8). In robbing Lavinia of her ability to adhere to the script set for victims of assault, Chiron and Demetrius rob not only her, but her family of their right to prosecute the rape through the usual channels. Lavinia becomes an inarticulate text to be analysed and defended by her male protectors as they scramble to piece together not just what has happened, but, perhaps more importantly for them, who has done it.

Lavinia's inability to follow the script suggested by *Lawes Resolutions* transfers from her to her family, which transforms her mute suffering into an attack that cannot be avenged. Lavinia's male relatives fall short of a simple way to perform their own masculinity in defending her. It isn't until Lavinia is able to scratch the names of her attackers in the dirt that her family is able to resume their own gendered performances. Solga calls gendered violence an 'in/visible act', which 'argues for performance's power to bear witness to its own complicity in the disappearing act' (17). In obliterating the subject, gendered violence calls attention to its own absence after the fact. Lavinia's return and presentation to her family relocates the assault from her body to 'public space, and...the men who guard that space' (Solga 39). Lavinia's wounds are a continual performance of her trauma – they enact and re-enact her violation and this crime against her family. She becomes an 'object of contemplation' (Aebischer 28) for the men in her family to decipher. Throughout *Titus Andronicus*, Lavinia tries and fails to regain her status as author of signs and text. Her attempts are repeatedly misinterpreted by her family until she is able to scrawl out the word 'stuprum', or 'rape' (*Tit.* 4.1.78), and to name her attackers. In finding innovative ways to approximate the

scripted trauma performance, Lavinia is finally able to bestow her narrative on her family, who then craft a plan for revenge.

In struggling to fulfil her role as self-narrator and accuser, Lavinia exposes the fragility of a structure that necessitates perfect reproduction of assault as part of the process of justice. Without her 'hands and tongue, the means by which all performers participate in the uniquely aural-gestural economy of the theatre' (Solga 45), Lavinia is unable to complete her performance and, therefore, validation as an actor in her own trauma. Because the rape itself happens offstage, the 'truth' of what has happened to Lavinia is remembered only by herself and her attackers – without her reproduction, both her family and the audience are left to speculate, always aware of the absence of the event itself. Lavinia's family are increasingly desperate to know the names of her attackers, and then to avenge her and themselves. Without that knowledge, Lavinia remains a 'stunning failure' (Solga 44) of textual authorship: the Andronici are frozen in time and action until they can continue with the script. Solga writes that 'Lavinia's bloody stumps...also prevent her from accusing her attackers, and thus as indices of *her family's* experience of the rape they are 'incomplete' (47). Lavinia is no longer an active participant in the exchange of signs, but her body itself becomes an index of trauma – both hers and her family's. Recalling from earlier Elam's definition of indices as connected to their meanings through function, Lavinia's stumps stand in for her words. Rather than requiring her gesture, they substitute themselves as perpetual, inescapable evidence. Lavinia's mutilated body is cut off in the middle of her narrative: her stumps tell the partial story of what has happened, but are unable to say who has done it. Lavinia's wounds make a unique addition to her story – they preclude any suspicion that

she was complicit in her own mutilation. Instead, 'Lavinia acts according to the rules of "guilt culture", in which revealing the identity of her rapists and making clear that she was not complicit in the act...should warrant their punishment and her survival' (Aebischer 54).

The excessive violence levied against Lavinia also highlights her role in propping up Roman hierarchy: 'The blazon of Lavinia's raped and mutilated body, that "map of woe" which must be deciphered by those around her, serves as a metaphor for a corrupted and crumbling Roman body politic' (Brockman 350). On such a pedestal, Lavinia can ironically never find human roots; her status as human is subjugated under her role as an allegory for the health of the Roman empire. Likewise, the volatility surrounding Lavinia and her relationships to men in the play reflects anxieties surrounding the potential marriage of Elizabeth I to the duke of Alençon: 'Lavinia's mutilated body dramatizes the people's right not only to consent to be ruled but also to advise their ruler' (Ray 23). These identifications of Lavinia's body with various larger political mechanisms codifies the many ways in which Lavinia is already in pieces at the start of the play – as a woman with social standing, Lavinia's body is never solely hers, but the shared property and responsibility of her male family members and leaders of Rome.

In *Titus Andronicus*, Lavinia as the 'Hysterical performer...thwarts word and gesture, signs missingness, and traps her interpreters within it' (Solga 47). Her rape is both a catalyst and obstruction to the plot; the Andronici encounter their central conflict in it, but are unable to proceed until Lavinia's narration is complete. The sexual violence

in *Titus Andronicus* is both 'ritual' and 'ritual *entertainment*' (Solga 57). In the theatrical space, Lavinia's rape is a political ritual enacted against the Andronici. Simultaneously, the rape is engrossing; it brings entertainment, even pleasure, to the audience. In identifying with Lavinia's father and brothers – rather than with Lavinia, who dies alongside most of her family – the audience is allowed to take part in the satisfaction that comes with witnessing and acting on a performance of trauma and its revenge. Solga writes, 'The theatricalization of sexual violence works to absent the lived complexities of a survivor's suffering as it transforms rape into an experience proper to public space' (63). Because Lavinia is effaced as the victim of assault, she is robbed of ownership of her trauma. Lavinia's authoritative disappearance allows sexual violence to be performed for and shared in by the audience. There is also something to be said for Lavinia's continued presence and role in the rest of the play following her rape as a non-verbal spectator, ranging in activity from total passivity (RSC 1955) to involvement on par with her father (Dubin 2019). In each instance, Lavinia's stunted performance of trauma 'risks, even encourages, pain's affective co-optation' (Solga 54) by the audience. Onstage violence, especially sexual violence, involves the audience insofar as the audience is expected to be both disgusted and enthralled, invited and at times sucked into the all-consuming tragedy of it all. This appropriation of affect by the audience not only echoes the conditions under which rape was reported by the early moderns, but it gives us a clue as to why these violent productions are performed and watched so frequently. As audience members, onstage violence invites us to indulge our own macabre fascination with horror, while also allowing us to indulge our need for reinforcement of the gender categories on which we rely for self-validation.

1.7.3 *Early Modern Domestic Violence and Gendered Sacrifice*

Early modern conceptions of gendered violence tended to keep sexual violence and domestic violence to separate spheres. From the depiction of sexual violence in early modern drama, we can see a cultural connection between rape and the extraordinary; that is, rape fit well into the conventions of theatrical storytelling. On the other hand, domestic violence was both condoned and governed in part by the church. It started at home, and could be intervened upon by a woman's local community (Solga 9).

However, a wife had little legal recourse against an abusive husband – rather, it fell to the couple's community to determine whether a husband's treatment of his wife exceeded the bounds of what was considered 'reasonable correction' (Solga 67). By the time *Lawes Resolutions* was published, the English had only recently begun to conceive of domestic violence as a crime (Solga 68), and drama from the period often depicts what we would today call domestic violence as part of the balancing act between domestic comedy and conflict. In the next chapter, I will give a closer analysis of Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* for the ways in which Lloyd's productions confront or elide violence against women.

Early modern attitudes toward domestic violence are encapsulated in conduct texts, which, often through a religious lens, provide guidelines for both men on women on how to dole out and receive violent correction. These texts, Solga writes, framed women's 'suffering not as injustice but as a form of cultural edification' (71). Looking at *Taming of the Shrew*, we can begin to see how early modern domestic dramas functioned as a kind of conduct text themselves. Especially in the case of

Shakespeare's romantic hero, Petruchio, early modern men saw reflected onstage a debonair and intellectual example of domestic 'correction' for the modern age. Crucially, conduct texts instructed husbands to deliver violent correction with dutiful kindness, not as a vehicle for their anger, but as part of their performance of religious and social devotion to upholding the gendered hierarchy from which they derived their power. As Solga writes, 'Early modern patriarchy encountered its litmus test in the very extremes of violence for which it had no immediate justification' (70). Domestic violence was policed primarily by the community, because, when a wayward husband dealt correction with too heavy a hand, his actions posed a threat to the community structure itself.

The communal response to domestic violence understandably varied from community to community; a wife seeking shelter from a tyrannical husband had no guarantee that her community would, in fact, come to her aid. Solga writes that wives were expected to act as the 'Church's first line of defence against the social and ideological fallout their beatings threatened' (73). In instructing women to hold fast in the face of domestic violence, the Church ensured that it was women who were primarily responsible for preserving the institution of marriage. Wives were expected to be martyrs, to silently and patiently bear any cruelty enacted on them by their husbands: 'It does not matter that he hits her so much as that *she does not hit back*' (Solga 73). Solga cites companionism, in which 'husband and wife are spiritual partners but not social equals' (75). The 'mutual subjection' (Solga 75) of companionism did not extend to a wife's agency – rather, a wife's spiritual duty to uphold her husband's salvation effaced her ability to refuse tyranny.

In *The Taming of the Shrew*, Katherine says, 'My hand is ready, may it do him ease' (*Shr.* 5.2.179), referencing her obligation to proffer to her husband both 'reverence (as her master) and service (as her fellow Christian)' (Solga 75). In *The Taming of the Shrew*, Katherine is abused into submission not necessarily by physical violence, but by 'innovative' taming methods crafted by her husband. The play is often still billed as a romantic comedy, because it lacks the classic hallmarks of domestic violence as physical acts of terror. However, as I will discuss in further detail in the next chapter, Petruchio's methods are abusive nonetheless. In early modern context, Petruchio finds a clever way to elicit the reverence he demands from his wife without facing the risk that his community will deem his methods to be too harsh. He circumvents the paradox put forward by conduct texts, managing to keep both his dominance as husband and his public reputation intact. It is not the presence of tangible violence, but its perpetual threat that upholds Petruchio's power: 'The threat of violence, however outwardly condemned, may well have been in every way socially and spiritually sustaining for the early modern household' (Solga 77). While Petruchio's treatment of Katherine is physically violent, it nevertheless cements her position as subjugated object.

1.7.4 *The Role of Gendered Violence Onstage*

One of my earliest questions about the depiction of gendered violence is why – why offer our audiences and theatre-makers a window into such a certain trauma? This cannot be answered in the scope of one piece of writing, let alone with one answer at all. However, Solga offers some insight into the varied roles gendered violence can play

onstage and posits a framework for thinking about how gendered violence figures into audience experience and affect. Solga writes that 'specific forms of social theatre worked not only to "disappear" acts of violence against women (Taylor, 1997)...but also to normalize their disappearance, making spectacle itself the (invisible) agent of systemic atrocity' (11). 'Social theatre' here refers not only to works of traditional theatre, but to the social script survivors of assault were and are expected to follow. The required performativity of being a survivor of assault may then solicit a similar level of theatricality from those who commit violence.

In *The Taming of the Shrew*, Petruchio's taming method is highly performative. He performs for other men, using Katherine as a prop. Though Katherine has the final speech, Petruchio is director and playwright alike. Katherine's performance as a tamed wife is a spectacle within a spectacle – she performs for Petruchio and the other men, and, in turn, the audience is asked to interrogate their own positionality. Based on Katherine's performance and the other characters' reactions, the audience finds themselves watching the speech either through the lens of the oppressor or that of the oppressed. Solga's assertion that certain social theatres 'disappear' gendered violence feeds into the absorption of Petruchio's abuse of Katherine into the script of a comedy. *The Taming of the Shrew* is unique in format because this disappearance is itself part of the fabric of the plot – the violence against Katherine must be rendered innocuous for the play to have a happy ending. In *The Taming of the Shrew*, the theatre-maker has an opportunity to make a comment, to dredge up the invisible. Solga writes: 'For performance truly to act as a witness to what has been made to disappear from history, it must frame an encounter between the missing and its audience that provokes in the

latter the sense of anxiety and even vertigo attending this movement “beyond recognition” (17). Solga asserts that discomfort is an essential part of witnessing – that empathy demands we internalize at least a small part of the terror unfolding onstage. In productions of *The Taming of the Shrew* that direct empathy to Petruchio as the protagonist, Katherine is reduced to a prop in his theatre of the domestic. This interpretation fails to highlight or challenge social norms – instead, it reinforces the long-held prejudice that renders the suffering of women innocuous, even comical.

However, Solga argues, it can also be dangerous to depict gendered violence through a realist lens. ‘I am not advocating the rehearsal of violence’s missed trauma in order to recuperate it,’ she says. ‘Such a rehearsal would serve only to soothe audiences into believing that they have, finally, been privileged to access what has so long been veiled, that now they know (what others never did know)’ (Solga 18). Essentially, gendered violence is irreplicable. Any staged depiction of gendered violence can only approximate the reality. It can lull us into the false sense that our empathy serves as substitute for experience. It can render us too comfortable as witnesses. The perfect balance ‘provokes in spectators the otherworldly feeling of not-quite-knowing, of radical uncertainty about one’s own historical base-line’ (Solga 18). The ‘perfect’ audience is aware of their own shortcomings, and the ‘perfect’ production encourages self-aware inference. This paradigm gives rise to a different kind of social theatre – one where a story is woven collaboratively to render an unspeakable trauma discrete and, therefore, surmountable.

Offstage, where performance and performativity alike are expected to reside, invisible, under the surface, it is simultaneously mandatory and taboo to recount one's trauma. Solga writes:

The woman in pain is the litmus test for the unmarked as a theory of absence-as-representation, and for the theory of performance-as-witness it inaugurated. To reckon with the in/visible act of violence against women is, perhaps, to realize the unmarked's full potential as both performance theory and performance ethics (26).

Depictions of gendered violence are necessarily manifold. They simultaneously illuminate and obscure trauma. The rendering visible of an invisible act is both effacing and liberating. More than anything, it shines a light on the oft-simplified hegemony of gendered testimony. It responds not just to the adage that 'women must lie,' but it also interrogates the notion that 'women must perform'. In an interview with *The New Yorker*, Sarah Hüller, who played Hamlet in Germany in 2019, said: 'When you show violence, I believe, it must have a strong form... It means something when you show a rape onstage, or when somebody gets slapped in the face onstage. It is crossing a line' (Mead). What Hüller so astutely points to here is also supported by Elam, Aston, and Savona – that violence, especially gendered violence, carries an inescapable semiotic weight that differentiates it from the ordinary processes of storytelling.

1.8 Methodology

In this introduction, I have looked into foundational texts of gender and performance studies; leaning on the works of Judith Butler and Jack Halberstam, this chapter serves as a jumping off point for understanding what boundaries are transgressed by the genderqueer cast, and how the genderqueer cast may itself challenge gender

normativity. My theatrical framework is underpinned by the works of Keir Elam, Elaine Aston, and George Savona – taken together, these theories form the foundation of my inquest into the semiotics of Lloyd's work.

In Chapter 2: Genderqueer Origins in *The Taming of the Shrew* (2003), I examine the earliest of Lloyd's productions featured in this thesis. Staged eight years before the initial run of the Donmar Trilogy's *Julius Ceasar*, this comparably early attempt at genderqueer Shakespeare exposes the fractures in Lloyd's own dramaturgy, some of which are addressed by her later work, and some of which are not. Drawing from the work of Natasha Korda and Emily Detmer-Goebel, I will contextualise the play against an economic and labour-driven backdrop.

In Chapter 3: Marginal Collisions in the Donmar Trilogy, I look at the 2016 re-staging of the Donmar Trilogy, comprised of *Julius Caesar*, *Henry IV*, and *The Tempest*. The trilogy was filmed and broadcast by the BBC. These three productions each highlight different threads of intersectionality. I will examine how these productions mobilise the genderqueer cast as a liberatory framework, as well as how shortcomings in the productions' dramaturgy expose fault lines along race, transness, and fatness. In particular, I will interrogate the instrumental prison frame, which situates the plays in a carceral meta-narrative. Section 3.2 (*Julius Caesar: Making Masculinity*) establishes a way of thinking about the enforcement of gendered expectations through violence, as well as the establishment of a fifth wall between the world of the incarcerated characters and textual characters. In Section 3.3 (*Henry IV: Dichotomous Bodies*), I explore the semiotisation of masculinity in the production through depictions of vice and heroism.

Section 3.4 (*The Tempest: Hegemonic Intersections*) weaves the racialisation at work in the play through a discussion of masculinity and incarceration.

In Chapter 4: Justifying *The Taming of the Shrew* (2016), I return to *The Taming of the Shrew*, looking at a more recent adaptation by Lloyd in the summer of 2016. This production was set against the backdrop of the 2016 American presidential election, and the use of yet another heavy-handed frame is both a culmination and a condemnation of the technique. Drawing from the work of Matthew Reason and Urvashi Chakravarty, I evaluate this production for its relationship to psychical distance and racialisation. In my conclusion, I return to the macroscopic ways in which the genderqueer cast is only a small part of the dramaturgical equation. Looking at the work of Sawyer K Kemp, Emma Frankland, and Subira Joy, I find that theatre with a self-appointed liberatory project can and should comment on hegemonic violence by addressing its own positionality.

1.8.1 Texts in Use

Throughout this thesis, I have relied primarily on the *Norton Shakespeare* (3rd ed) for quotations from Shakespeare's plays. Where I have turned to other editions of the texts, that is noted in the in-line citation. In reference to the texts as they are in the *Norton Shakespeare*, I have used the standard MLA abbreviations to cite them in-line.

The Donmar Trilogy was watched via video recording, now accessible via Digital Theatre+. Where possible, citations from the Donmar Trilogy include a timestamp from the digital recording as accessed on Digital Theatre+. *The Taming of the Shrew* (2003)

was viewed via video recording at Shakespeare's Globe Theatre in London, and *The Taming of the Shrew* (2016) was watched live in New York at the Delacorte Theater.

Chapter 2: Genderqueer Origins in *The Taming of the Shrew* (2003)

This chapter discusses domestic violence, sexual assault, transphobia, and racism.

The Taming of the Shrew serves as a logical jumping-off-point for my examination, particularly as it relates to intimacy and domesticity. Two productions directed by Phyllida Lloyd in 2003 and 2016 chronologically bookend – perhaps even frame – the Donmar Trilogy,³ showcasing developments in Lloyd's style and dramaturgical perspective. These productions, staged thirteen years apart, approach genderqueer casting from perspectives that, while not necessarily in opposition, represent an evolution of Lloyd's own approach to the idea of the genderqueer cast. With a recorded run-time (including any intervals) of over three hours (Lloyd 2003), the play text seems to have been performed with limited cuts, with a few notable exceptions like Lloyd's substitution of the Induction. *The Taming of the Shrew* also provides necessary context to the mechanism by which Lloyd constructs gender and genderqueerness.

Shakespeare's version of the story reflects a cultural shift in expectations placed upon English wives; primarily, expectations that they participate in the construction of a rising middle class (Detmer-Goebel 280). The economic context of the play highlights the inextricable connection between capitalism and gender constructs as they are played out in Lloyd's adaptations. Primarily, this reading exposes the socioeconomic constraints on the validation of masculinity. In this chapter, I will examine Lloyd's 2003

³ At least, the *Shrews* bookend the original run of the Donmar Trilogy, which was then filmed in September of 2016. The precise chronology of these productions is not necessarily central, but it does inform my evaluation of Lloyd's evolution as a director working with genderqueer casts.

adaptation as a preliminary exploration of her own developing ethos of genderqueer casting. Using the works of Natasha Korda and Emily Doetmer-Goebel, I will examine the enactment of gender norms as they relate to early modern concepts of socioeconomics and domesticity. Ultimately, much of the casting elements that make the show genderqueer were absent from Lloyd's 2003 adaptation. This chapter unpicks the places in the production where the potential for the casting to challenge heteropatriarchal norms was incompletely executed, stopping at casting and costuming, rather than approaching the play from a queerly gendered perspective.

2.1 *Framing and the Fifth Wall*

Lloyd's 2003 production shares several key traits with her 2016 production at Shakespeare in the Park, but it also diverges. Lloyd's 2003 rendition adopted a lighter, even flippant, attitude towards gender and gendered violence. Before the play began, a lone actor took the stage. She delivered a rhyming prologue:

The first time this house hosted Shakespeare's Shrew,
All parts were played by men. Weird, yes, but true.
And still today, you'll find our acting brothers
Portraying sisters, daughters, and their mothers.
Vice versa is very rare, but in this piece,
The girls will get the chance to wear the codpiece.
Our new production crowned with female talents
May help in some way to redress the balance. (Lloyd 2003)

The actor went on to warn against the use of cell phones and to give other customary information. In this speech, Lloyd implied that by 'redressing the balance' the production would make some sort of effort to account for the exclusion of women from Shakespeare's stage. The prologue provides some insight into Lloyd's reasons for choosing a cast of all women, but it raises the question: is this fair, and to whom? And is

fairness reason enough? If the prologue serves as a wink at the audience, then what does the word choice here suggest about the attitudes expected of the audience?

The prologue seems to belong to the family of Shakespearean prologues and epilogues that function as a semi-apology to the audience akin to Puck's final speech in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Puck says:

If we shadows have offended,
Think but this and all is mended –
That you have but slumbered here
While these visions did appear. (*MND* 5.1.383-386)

In effect, the epilogue asks the audience to forgive any transgressions witnessed onstage. While Lloyd's prologue did not ask for outright forgiveness, the speech used a mix of formal and colloquial language to incorporate – and implicate – the audience. The speaker said, 'Weird yes, but true,' pre-empting any judgement from the audience. The speaker went on to refer diminutively to the women actors as 'girls.' Masked by humour and wit, this speech subtly asked the audience to put aside the threat posed by a genderqueer cast by pointing out the historical precedent and current imbalance in gender dynamics.

In addition to diminishing the possible threat of the word 'women,' the word 'girl' also runs in parallel with Shakespeare's 'boy' actors. These young men played Shakespeare's women often up to the very cusp of manhood and beyond⁴. The use of

⁴ Harry R McCarthy points to Blaine Greteman, who estimates, for example, that the youngest 'boy' actor in The Whitefriars company of 1610 was seventeen years old. These 'child' actors were often young adults by contemporary standards, which further complicates our understanding of gender and age in these performers.

the term 'girl' invoked the memory of these crossdressing boys of old. To suit the references – both direct and indirect – to original practice, the production itself was done in traditional dress and style. The set was minimal, existing only as stylised curtains and doors to denote the place and time. These production choices immerse the audience as completely as possible in the replicated conditions of Elizabethan theatre, inviting us to wonder what Shakespeare's plays might have been like if they had been performed solely by women instead of men. The audience was asked – 'challenged' feels like too strong a word – to investigate gender in an historical context and to acknowledge the gender disparities in theatre still present today.

The prologue stood in for the textual Induction, in which a cast of working-class comedians set up a convoluted, gender-related prank, and then are never seen again. The prologue also notably foreshadows the speeches preceding each production in the Donmar Trilogy and the extensive beauty pageant frame in Lloyd's 2016 *Shrew*. In this prologue and in the prologues to the Donmar Trilogy, we see Lloyd address the dramaturgical thesis statement of each production, essentially laying out her reasons for doing this play with this cast in a metatheatrical appeal to the audience. Lloyd is not afraid of a heavy-handed approach to storytelling. In my dual perspective as an academic and theatre critic, the prologue to Lloyd's 2003 *Shrew* undermined the social impact of the production in manifold ways. In addition to my reservations about the text of the prologue itself, the notion that a dramaturgical disclaimer is necessary to excuse or explain the genderqueer cast runs counter to the liberatory potential of the production. The textual Induction, with its unresolved focus on gender performance and queerness, references the events of the rest of the play much more obliquely than

Lloyd's prologue, if at all. That the prologue of the 2003 production stood in for the Induction as an explainer for the genderqueer cast suggests that Shakespeare's text alone is not accessible to a genderqueer cast without alteration or addendum.

In the Donmar Trilogy, Lloyd's prologues are more socially minded and more complex in their approach to the play's themes. However, each of these frames is nevertheless underpinned by the idea that audiences must be directly told about the production's dramaturgical point of view. Because of the 2003 production's revisionist reading and apathetic attitude toward abuse, Lloyd's prologue rings particularly hollow. Is the spectator to conclude that, simply because the play is done by women, it has made some kind of novel statement about the conditions of patriarchy? In 2003, maybe the 'all-female', non-male cast was enough to make a mark. The production was part of the Globe's season of single-gendered (to borrow their binary vocabulary) productions, most notably including Mark Rylance's all-male *Richard II* (2003).⁵ Bearing this high-profile season in mind, the insistence of Lloyd's prologue that 'We can do it, too!' feels small-minded, even cynical. In this season, femininity and all it is capable of remains defined by men and masculinity. The 'feminist' demand of this adaptation of *The Taming of the Shrew* seems to be that women should be entitled to the same power that men are: the power to subjugate.

Lloyd's 2003 prologue lays the groundwork for her use of the fifth wall, which emerges more strongly in the Donmar Trilogy. The fifth wall grows out of the division

⁵ More recently, in 2019, Adjoa Andoh directed and played the title role in an all-female and all-Global Majority adaptation of *Richard II* at The Globe Theatre's Sam Wanamaker Playhouse.

between the performers onstage and the characters in Shakespeare's play. In Lloyd's 2003 adaptation, the players may not have had fully fleshed-out meta characters like the incarcerated performers in the Donmar Trilogy, but the prologue suggested a level of performative self-awareness within the cast. By denigrating their own participation – calling early modern single-gender casts 'weird' (Lloyd 2003) – the players of Lloyd's 2003 adaptation distanced themselves from any discomfort or challenge that may have arisen from their own casting, erecting a fifth wall between themselves and the play.

2.1.1 *Psychical Distance*

The fifth wall is perhaps a follow-on from the psychical distance that naturally arises between spectator and spectacle. Citing early 20th century writer Edward Bullough, Matthew Reason applies the notion of psychical distance to Lloyd's production of *Julius Caesar*: 'If there is a seduction to such identification there is also an accompanying history of caution, even of distrust, asserting that over identification renders art as something other than art' (92). Bullough defines 'psychical distance' as 'what enables us to engage in an experience as an aesthetic object, rather than on purely personal terms' (92). For the purposes of this chapter, 'psychical distance' is sometimes broadened to 'critical distance', which describes a more general mode of consumption that is not limited to the realm of semiotics and aesthetics. My initial impulse is to push back against the assignment of intrinsic value to the deployment of psychical distance as the 'better' way to consume art – and while I hold this in my mind, it is also necessary to address the mimetic elements of Lloyd's 2003 adaptation of *Shrew* as a locus of over-identification.

Timothy J Reiss expands on Bullough's concept as it relates to live theatre: 'The dispassionate, intellectual part of the mind is free to watch not only the action but also its own emotions and the manner in which the play manipulates them. This separation, this distance, becomes "theatrical" only when the play does, in fact, *manipulate* them' (5). This harkens back to Elam's writing about audience reception: 'The metaphorical quotation marks placed around the stage object mark its primary condition as representative of its class, so that the audience is able to infer from it the presence of another member of the same class of objects in the represented dramatic world' (8). Taken together, these quotations construct the stage as an essential aesthetic space which is removed from the immediacy of the spectators' own realities. Reiss writes that each staged moment 'contains its own justification' (6), which allows the spectator to be taken in by the action as though it were immediate. Citing a harrowing example in which a white audience member yelled a racial slur at a live production of *Othello* (6), Reiss invokes the spontaneous and violent collapsing of psychical distance echoed by the planned breakout moments in the Donmar Trilogy. In the Donmar Trilogy's breakout moments, suspension of disbelief is supplanted by over-identification, and signification erupts into violence. The choreographed semiotic transgression of the Donmar Trilogy's breakout moments is several steps beyond the way Lloyd employs psychical distance in *The Taming of the Shrew* (2003). Lloyd's use of psychical distance in her 2003 *Shrew* simultaneously grounds the meaning of the play in contemporary issues and circumvents the expectation of a thorough and complete dramaturgy. Through my discussion of Lloyd's 2003 adaptation of *The Taming of the Shrew*, psychical distance

gives a name to the phenomenon by which audiences come to relate to a piece of theatre through its relevance to their own lived experiences.

2.2 Domestic Violence and Systematic Silencing

In reading *The Taming of the Shrew* through a lens conscious of misogyny and abuse, Detmer-Goebel identifies a key measure of psychological distance between audience and performance. She takes aim at critics of the past, many of whom dismiss Petruchio's 'taming scheme' as farcical, harmless, and unproblematic. Similarly to Korda, Detmer-Goebel roots her argument in history, examining the wife-dominating tactics of the past. However, Detmer-Goebel draws a drastically different conclusion. Based on a feminist model of abuse, Detmer-Goebel examines Petruchio's behaviour in both early modern and contemporary contexts. She writes: 'To enjoy the comedy of the play, readers and viewers must work to see domestic violence from the point of view of an abuser – that is, they must minimize the violence and, at the same time, justify its use' (274).

Detmer-Goebel locates her argument in the more immediate violence of the relationship between Katherine and Petruchio, rather than in Korda's metaphysical space of climates and intentions. Detmer-Goebel delves into Stockholm Syndrome, a more recently named condition in which victims of abuse survive their situations by complying zealously, even commiserating, with their abusers. Examining Petruchio's actions during the wedding banquet, Detmer-Goebel writes that Petruchio's show of symbolic violence acts as a subtle threat, reminding Katherine that 'in this early modern marriage a husband can carry out any threat against his wife' (286). For all his displays of rage,

Petruchio never struck Katherine in Lloyd's 2003 adaptation. However, the absence of direct physical violence did not absolve Petruchio of the title of 'abuser'.

Detmer-Goebel echoes Korda's observation that 'gentlemanly conduct' in early modern England saw a shift to the realm of the intellectual: 'Husbands who rely on physical strength rather than reason come to be regarded as less manly and less human' (Detmer-Goebel 278). In her discussion of women's silence, Christina Luckyj writes: '[S]ilence appears to be a simple and monolithic patriarchal injunction, designed to place women...firmly outside the discursive realm of power' (43). In dialogue with Korda and Detmer-Goebel, Luckyj's work figures silence as both an expected and enforced state of being. When Petruchio himself⁶ is later called a shrew (*Shr.* 4.1.30), the success of this performance is called into question. If anything, this moment is a reminder that men's own masculinity is also under constant scrutiny, their gendered performances always subject to review. Detmer-Goebel cites John Wing's *The Crown Conjugall*, in which Wing invokes honour as the primary reason for treating one's wife gently. As Detmer-Goebel writes, 'Reformers were interested not in bettering women's situation but rather in enhancing men's ability to subordinate' (279). Therefore, as England entered the seventeenth century, there was a shift not in the acceptability, but in the model and method of domestic subjugation.

⁶ Throughout this thesis, I use the pronouns of the actors to refer to the actors' choices and of the characters to describe the characters' actions. This will come up against multiple limitations, especially where characters are depicted as somehow subversive regarding gender, or where the pronouns of the actor are either in flux or not known to the public.

In the text, Petruchio follows a classic model of emotional abuse: he isolates Katherine from her loved ones, denies her basic necessities like food and sleep, and rejects her expression of her own voice and thoughts. While these scenarios are often played for 'zesty comedy' (Detmer-Goebel 284), read through a contemporary lens they ring true for a much darker narrative. In the context of Lloyd's 2003 production, McTeer's Petruchio certainly leveraged his physical advantage over Hunter's Katherine. The height difference between the two actors reflected McTeer's above-average height and Hunter's below-average height, actually replicating the physical conditions expected of a cis, straight relationship, rather than a (gender)queer one. Katherine was often lifted off the ground or dragged across the floor, the slow motion of her captivity eliciting laughter, not shock or horror, from the audience (Lloyd 2003). The use of size to enact a gendered power dynamic replicated, rather than interrogated, the conditions of gendered power. It rendered Hunter/Katherine's body inferior to both Petruchio's as a man and McTeer's as a taller woman. The abuse depicted in the play, then, often seemed attributed not to Petruchio's patriarchal status, but simply to his larger size and greater strength. The use of this paradigm relies on sexist and transphobic assumptions about the strength of men in comparison with women. In short, Petruchio overpowered Katherine because he was willing to, as opposed to the other men in the play, who feared her. The assimilation of this couple made of two women with the conditions of cis heteronormativity not only erased the queerness of the casting, but it subjugated the female actors by forcing them to replicate power dynamics, stopping short of exposing or challenging them.

Detmer-Goebel pushes back against critics who ignore the abusive implications of Petruchio's behaviour by placing it in a 'historical' context. The absence of women's voices from early literature on domestic conduct and violence does not necessarily mean that early modern women did not experience 'new' wife-taming tactics as emotional violence, and it does not mean that the women watching Shakespeare's play did not feel a pang of recognition in Katherine's increasing desperation and eventual submission. In her discussion of 'The Mousetrap', *Hamlet's* play-within-a-play, Aebischer writes:

If Gertrude chooses to identify with the character, if she lets herself be interpellated by the play's staging of gender, she will be coerced into a complicity with the male-authored representation of the woman as inherently false and the cause of violence and political unrest. She will have to forge a link between the actions witnessed and her own life (10).

In a similar vein, to link oneself to Katherine through psychical distance is in some small way to implicate oneself in the character of Katherine as a mode of gendered subjugation.

Watching Lloyd's adaptation calls to mind themes of speech acts and silence. Most of the play text was kept intact with a few notable revisions in the prologue and added epilogue, limiting the dramaturgical challenge of the play's misogyny to the temporal margins of the production. Comparing text to performance, one can identify a studious adherence to Shakespeare's words and modes of performance, making this production a kind of archival experiment in presenting the text. Throughout the play, aggressive speech was compared to violence, particularly when describing Petruchio and Katherine's modes of speech. Speaking about Petruchio's mannerisms, Grumio said, 'I'll tell you what, sir, an she stand him but a little, he will throw a figure in her face

and so disfigure her with it that she shall have no more eyes to see withal than a cat' (*Shr.* 1.2. 110-12). Grumio implied that Petruchio used words so harsh that they could physically blind Katherine. In keeping with Detmer-Goebel's reading, this is the language of abuse. When Petruchio compared Katherine's words to the harsh noises of battle, he scorned her voice as weak and inconsequential:

Have I not heard great ordnance in the field,
And heaven's artillery thunder in the skies?
Have I not in a pitched battle heard
Loud larums, neighing steeds, and trumpets clang?
And do you tell me of a woman's tongue
That gives not half so great a blow to hear
As will a chestnut in a farmer's fire? (*Shr.* 1.2.200-206)

Petruchio brought the setting of his speech from the battlefield to the farmer's fire, comparing Katherine's voice not to the sounds of violence, but to the sounds of the pastoral. Petruchio invoked the gendered realms of war and the domestic, implying that a woman's domestic voice cannot outpace the sounds of more masculine arts.

Petruchio used his voice as an instrument of intimidation, meeting Katherine head on in what appeared on the surface as witty banter in Act 2 Scene 1. However, though their banter was rife with jokes, Petruchio was simultaneously using their conversation to confuse Katherine and erase her identity. From that point forward, it seemed that no one cared whether she consented to her own marriage or not. Her voice and desires were erased, and only Petruchio could speak for her:

I tell you, 'tis incredible to believe
How much she loves me. Oh, the kindest Kate!
She hung about my neck, and kiss on kiss
She vied so fast, protesting oath on oath,
That in a twink she won me to her love. (*Shr.* 2.1.304-308)

Despite Katherine's clear protestations – 'I'll see thee hanged on Sunday first' (*Shr.* 2.1.297) – the other men reacted with joy and amazement that Petruchio had won her hand. It became clear that Petruchio's initial meeting with Katherine was a mere formality, that he bought her from her father with or without her consent. Detmer-Goebel writes: 'When their marriage proves how little her consent matters, Petruchio's power over her language and her person is secured' (285).

As Petruchio's taming strategy unfolded, he began escalating and multiplying his abusive behaviours. His witty repartee from Act 2 developed into the erasure of Katherine's very thoughts. Petruchio denied her perception of the world, demanding that she alter not only her speech, but her emotions, to suit him. He said:

Look what I speak, or do, or think to do,
You are still crossing it. Sirs, let's alone.
I will not go today, and ere I do,
It shall be what o'clock I say it is. (*Shr.* 4.3. 188-91)

This demand treated not only Katherine's words, but her thoughts and emotions as themselves disobedient behaviours. Petruchio provided material incentive – a trip to her father's – to encourage Katherine's obedience. This reinforcement created emotional dependency (Detmer-Goebel 287) that enabled Petruchio to gain dominance over Katherine, replacing her sense of self with a sense of her subordinated (and correct) role in marriage. Throughout the play text, the language of discipline and obedience is used with relation to wives and women. Petruchio's threat is nothing short of the contemporary phrase, 'I will turn this car around.' In contemporary thought, discipline is something one does to a developing child or animal. The impact in Lloyd's version of *The Taming of the Shrew*, then, was that women were constantly infantilised and

objectified, treated as pets and property that can be trained to behave against their 'nature'. This is not to say that the mere depiction of an historical mode of violence is equivalent to an endorsement. Lloyd's interpretation was not uncritical, but incompletely critical. By the end of Lloyd's adaptation, the two were ostensibly attracted to each other; the couple shared a passionate kiss just before the final scene (2003). Essentially, Petruchio's taming strategy was successful on Hunter's Katherine. Regardless of the sarcastic delivery that followed their kiss, Katherine's overall willingness to be a romantic partner to Petruchio superseded any rebellion she could have made. Marrying Detmer-Goebel's textual analysis with the production recording, Lloyd's 2003 adaptation emerges as a somewhat straightforward interpretation of the text, which used unconventional casting as hardly more than a marketing ploy.

2.2.1 Taming Practices and the Construction of Masculinity

The straightforwardness of Lloyd's 2003 adaptation arose in the play's depiction of physical threat. As opposed to the public shamings of the sixteenth century and earlier (Boose 185), Petruchio's method primarily occupied the realm of the emotional. In Lloyd's adaptation, Petruchio manhandled Katherine but never struck her:

KATHERINA. That I'll try.
 She strikes him.
 PETRUCHIO. I swear I'll cuff you if you strike again.
 KATHERINA. So may you lose your arms.
 If you strike me, you are no gentleman,
 And if no gentleman, why, then, no arms (*Shr.* 2.1.218-222).

Katherine implied that if Petruchio were to strike her, not only would he be acting below his station, but he could have his rank stripped of him: 'So may you lose your arms' (*Shr.* 2.1.220). Katherine's point squares with Detmer-Goebel's assertion that Petruchio

'adheres to a new model of manhood which locates his status as gentleman in his restraint' (280). Detmer-Goebel refers to Boose's 1991 article, 'Scolding Brides and Bridling Scolds: Taming the Woman's Unruly Member'. In her discussion of the (illegal) use of the scold's bridle against unruly women well into the seventeenth century, Boose touches on the onset of a shift in cultural framework at the turn of the century. Just as Shakespeare was writing his *Shrew*, wife-taming tactics were becoming increasingly stratified across socioeconomic status. In Lloyd's adaptation, audience reception and slapstick performance both suggest that the dramaturgy of the play did not necessarily figure Petruchio's treatment of Katherine as physical abuse. Instead, Petruchio's actions toward Katherine were treated as comedy – as Katherine getting a taste of her own medicine. This attitude could be seen most clearly when Katherine was dragged away from her own wedding. As she reached her hands toward the crowd and ad libbed pathetic cries for help, there was the unmistakable sound of a crowd chuckling (Lloyd 2003). Boose's invocation of the scold's bridle highlights early modern methods of wife-taming that were highly violent, even if they were not seen that way. The violence in the play challenges the reader/viewer to contextualise the play against our own culture, in which certain behaviours that are currently acceptable may someday be looked on with disgust and fascination. Given the 'happy' ending of the production, Lloyd's adaptation did not necessarily address these feelings of aversion. Instead, the text was presented as an historical document in which disgust and fear are all part of the process of Katherine and Petruchio falling in love.

Korda cites the infamous verse tale, 'Here begynneth a merry lest of a shrewde and curste Wyfe, lapped in Morrelles Skin, for her good behayour,' dating back to

1550. In this poem, a husband beats his shrewish wife and wraps her in a salted hide, eventually resulting in her complete submission (Korda 110). This is not to label Petruchio's methods as 'non-physical' or limited to the realm of the emotional, but they do signify a departure from narratives in which physical violence is the driving force. According to Korda, the relevant literature from the sixteenth century suggests that wife-taming methods of this type were common and often played for laughs (110); Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*, written around 1592, is a dramatic departure from this physically violent tradition. Of Shakespeare's *Shrew*, Boose writes: 'Gender is foregrounded through the model of a layered social fabric, with crisis stacked upon social crisis' (184). The 'social crisis' of early modern England was one of the civilisation of the household. Korda describes the early modern household as an economy of its own; at the turn of the century, middle- and upper-class households were transitioning from subsistence producers to consumers of commodities. The housewife, then, gradually took on the role of procurer and maintainer of 'household cates' (111), rather than the producer herself. Shakespeare's depiction of the non-physical struggle for domestic power reflects the housewife's transition from the provider of manual to administrative labour.

As the potential for upward mobility increased, the growing merchant class must have felt the pressure to join the upper classes of early modern society in more than just capital. The language of goods and trade echoes in iterations throughout *The Taming of the Shrew*, particularly in comparison with a young woman's sexual availability. Korda explores the parallel between Katherine – or Kate, as she is called by Petruchio – and the rise of the household cate in early modern England. Korda defines cates as

'exchange-values – commodities, properly speaking – as opposed to use-values, or objects of home production' (109). Throughout *The Taming of the Shrew*, Baptista displays considerable financial anxiety, haggling repeatedly with the suitors of his daughters. Baptista's word choice is a lexicon of financial anxiety: to 'venture madly on a desperate mart' (*Shr.* 2.1.325) betrays apprehension at the prospect of being financially ruined by such a risk. By selling Katherine's hand in marriage, Baptista has a chance to convert a depreciating asset into a more stable one: land and, by extension, status.

The play certainly has economic tones, and Katherine's roles as both property and manager of household property are reflected in her final speech. Korda writes that Katherine's final speech is rife with the 'language of economic debt' (129), harkening back to the days of feudalism, in which serfs owed their lord allegiance in exchange for physical and financial protection. With the consolidation of the market into a centralised, capitalist economy, Shakespeare's time saw a transition away from feudal subsistence.

In her final speech, Katherine says, 'Such duty as the subject owes the prince / Even such a woman oweth to her husband' (*Shr.* 5.2.155-6). Korda attributes this language to Katherine's new understanding of her role in the household economy – of the 'economic invisibility' (129) that makes her indebted to her husband. However, Korda's reading neglects the physical realities of Katherine's situation – her hunger, her exhaustion, and her fear – in favour of a metaphysical, theoretical assessment of her marriage to Petruchio. Regardless of the metaphorical and symbolic implications of Petruchio's 'taming method,' Katherine's experiences are visceral, and they reflect the

harsh reality for many women of Shakespeare's time. In Act 2 Scene 1, Baptista and Petruchio exchange promises of land and money. Petruchio promises all of his father's 'lands and goods' (*Shr.* 2.1.117), material assets which Baptista, wealthy in money but perhaps not in land, is eager to acquire. In return, Baptista promises a dowry of 'twenty thousand crowns' (*Shr.* 2.1.122). Negotiations of this type appear throughout the text, suggesting that financial gain is a significant, if not primary, motive for Baptista. When, later in the scene, Baptista consents that Katherine shall marry Petruchio, he says:

BAPTISTA. Faith, gentlemen, now I play a merchant's part
 And venture madly on a desperate mart.
 TRANIO. 'Twas a commodity lay fretting by you;
 'Twill bring you gain or perish on the seas.
 BAPTISTA. The gain I seek is quiet in the match (*Shr.* 2.1.324-328).

Here, Baptista is implying that he is taking a considerable financial risk by allowing Katherine to marry Petruchio. Tranio responds by suggesting that Katherine was depreciating in value while she remained unmarried, and that now is as good a time as any to sell her off while she is still sexually viable (Greenblatt 381). By comparing Katherine's hand in marriage to a business venture, Tranio equates Katherine's body to the household cate, something bought at market in the growing economy. The household cate surfaces as a pun again and again, beginning with Petruchio's insistence on calling Katherine 'Kate'.

In her discussion of the ballad 'The Wife Wrapped in a Wether's Skin,' Korda observes that, in the early stages of the early modern period, shrews were often depicted as lazy through their refusal to produce household items (110). In this ballad, the shrewish wife refuses to perform household chores because she feels herself to be above them. Her husband, too kind to beat her outright, then wraps her in a wether's

skin and beats her into submission. The husband's victory manifests when his shrewish wife agrees to bake, brew, card, spin, et cetera. Conversely, Shakespeare's shrew is not expected to be producer, but a consumer of household cates. Katherine's role as wife is to manage, rather than produce. Korda writes: 'Cates are, above all, signifiers of social distinction or differentiation' (113). Therefore, the housewife herself becomes a status object, consuming the fruits of her husband's labour. Katherine is a member of what Korda terms the 'symbolic order of things' (115): a hierarchy of valued objects that contribute to and comprise social status. In the text, Petruchio makes ample references to falcon-taming methods. He says, 'My falcon is now sharp and passing empty, / And till she stoop she must not be full gorged' (*Shr.* 4.1.171-172). As an example, Petruchio's extended metaphor validates Korda's observation that he does, in fact, have a planned-out taming scheme. In Lloyd's adaptation, this interpretation was echoed by McTeer's suave, unflappable demeanour (2003). Petruchio's scheme was not simply to threaten Katherine into submission, but to assimilate her into an economy in which she herself was a currency. Played by the genderqueer cast, Petruchio's abuse of Katherine might have been expected to carry a sense of betrayal. However, such a reaction would have to have been brought in by the audience. With Williams' incomplete dramaturgy in mind, it is difficult to pinpoint any sort of dramaturgical point of view in Lloyd's 2003 *Shrew* beyond, 'The men are doing an all-male show, so we are doing an all-female show.' Lloyd's adaptation is rife with unfulfilled potential. Following on from Korda and Detmer-Goebel, Katherine as a character is situated on the threshold of contemporary capitalist logics, especially as they relate to the home and nuclear family. However, Lloyd's depiction of 'feminism' in *Shrew* was, at the time, divorced from class struggle.

The threat that Katherine poses not only to masculine power but also to capitalist power went largely unexplored.

While many stories suggest that shrews were primarily viewed as a 'threat to the symbolic order of language' (Korda 115), Korda suggests that Shakespeare's Katherine represents an additional, economic threat to the evolving order of the household. Korda argues that Katherine shows signs of 'excessive consumption' (122), inspiring Petruchio to centre his taming lessons around material objects. Korda writes: 'He seeks to unmask the lure of status objects for Kate while teaching her to deploy this lure skillfully for others' (124). Korda goes on to unpack Petruchio's 'taming scheme,' which, in her argument, comes off as a wise and sophisticated commentary on social status and the household economy. Korda argues that the tensions of the play arise from the gendered nature of the household economy, rather than from the systemic oppression of marginalised genders. She writes: 'Petruchio's taming strategy is aimed not at closing her stomach up, at abolishing her appetite for cates, but rather at harnessing that appetite, at making it conform to his own economic interests' (127). Korda's judgement that Petruchio's brand of emotional cruelty and denial falls into a different, more genteel category of abuse exposes a disparity between early modern and contemporary conceptions of abuse.

Korda locates Katherine's anxiety in her affinity for fine goods. The suggestion that Katherine is overly dainty and taken in by material possessions (Korda 124) implies that her taming is somehow her fault, and that Petruchio has succeeded in some sort of moral lesson by bringing her to heel. Korda writes, '[Katherine] has indeed been

seduced by the lure of the status object' (126). Korda cites Katherine's line from Act 4 Scene 3, in which Petruchio sends the tailor away with the hat he had made for her: 'This doth fit the time, / And gentlewomen wear such caps as these' (*Shr.* 4.3.70-1). According to Korda, Katherine's anxiety to have the cap is as simple as her desire to possess the heights of fashion. However, Korda neglects Katherine's following lines:

Why, sir, trust that I may have leave to speak,
And speak I will. I am no child, no babe.
Your betters have endured me say my mind,
And if you cannot, best you stop your ears.
My tongue will tell the anger of my heart,
Or else my heart, concealing it, will break,
And rather than it shall, I will be free,
Even to the uttermost as I please in words (*Shr.* 4.3.74-81).

On stage, Katherine's anxiety transformed into anguish. In subsequent scenes, Katherine used her words to display her obedience. In the text, Petruchio's success is ratified by her verbal, and therefore emotional, compliance. The above speech locates Katherine's anxiety to have the cap in her desire to choose her own possessions and appearance. The notion that she wishes to have the cap because she has been 'seduced' by its luxury is tenuous at best and, at worst, it is neglectful of the gendered implications of Petruchio's denial. However, in Lloyd's adaptation, Katherine's final speech was characterised by a sarcastic twist. To understand Hunter's interpretation of the speech, the audience was asked to accept that Katherine had undergone some sort of feminist transformation offstage, in the invisible margins of Shakespeare's script.

2.3 Deconstructing Semiotics

In order to disorient the audience through genderqueer casting, the theatre-maker should assume, to an extent, that the audience's attitudes are influenced by gender

conventions. In Lloyd's 2003 production of *The Taming of the Shrew*, McTeer performed Petruchio using many signs and mannerisms exclusively associated with masculinity. Klett writes that McTeer and Hunter (who played Richard III in the same season at the Globe Theatre) 'used their bodies to denaturalize gender, and to create new readings of the characters' (141). However, none of these actions can be considered 'hard proof' of masculine identity. Instead, they sit in the minds of the audience as accepted masculine performances – of ways of externalising one's internal identity as a man. In *Gender Trouble* (1990), Judith Butler questions the concept of an inward identity: 'There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results' (1990, 34). Instead of one's gender performance expressing a steadfast, internal identity, Butler claims, this collection of gendered acts is gender in and of itself. Therefore, what the audience recognises in McTeer is not Petruchio's ontological maleness, but his inherent proclivity to perform masculine acts. When I speak about the right of genderqueer people to claim an ontology, I do not mean that trans people should have the same claim as cis people to a fixed gender identity in Butler's terms. Instead, genderqueer performance has the potential to liberate not just itself, but cis presentations from the hegemonic constraints of gendered social scripts.

In Lloyd's 2003 *Shrew*, McTeer was rewarded by the audience, in the form of laughter or applause, for a 'convincing' performance of masculinity (Lloyd 2003). Elam writes that the inanimate objects onstage are often representative of a category of objects – a table onstage refers not to a specific table one can find in real life, but to the Platonic idea of 'table', the universal category of tables (11). Extrapolating this concept

to include live bodies is complicated by the transient minutiae of embodiment. People are not tables, but the body of the actor is nevertheless consigned to the same semiotic expectations as other theatrical objects. The inclusion of the actor's body in the theatrical sign system does not necessarily efface their claim to interiority; rather, the assignation of theatrical signs to the actor's body reflects the extent to which our own bodies participate in the generation and validation of signs. McTeer's performance referred not to a particular man, but to masculinity as a category. Thinking back to Brecht, we can say that McTeer constructed a gestic archetype of men and masculinity.

McTeer's performance of masculinity was supremely recognisable; the audience saw a facsimile of what might be considered Platonic, 'true' masculinity. Because McTeer's undisguised (and untransitioned) body and voice also bore archetypal signs of femininity, the spectators were encouraged to view masculine and feminine traits as signifiers that can be held simultaneously in one body. However, the dramaturgy here was incomplete. This is not to say that there is nothing subversive about a tall, thin, cis, conventionally attractive, white woman playing Petruchio, but, in Lloyd's 2003 production, none of these properties were really subverted, except for McTeer's size relative to Hunter. If anything, the dramaturgical approach seemed to ignore the actors' genders altogether. When Petruchio lifted Katherine up and playfully thrust his pelvis against hers, he referenced the presumed anatomy of a cis man – but this moment was played quite straightforwardly, hinging again on the height difference between the actors. It's challenging to discuss McTeer and Hunter's bodies in this production – first, because of the general quality of footage recorded in 2003 – but also because it would be unfair, even cruel, to dissect the ways in which McTeer's body was more easily read

as masculine than Hunter's. Every somatic approach comes down to height and body shape, two of the most common gendered differences used against trans femmes. This is not to say that Lloyd's dramaturgy or casting was transphobic, but it did rely heavily on McTeer's 'innate' ability to embody masculinity, simply because of her body. There was, however, something queer about the onstage relationship that extends beyond the paratextual knowledge that both actors were women. In the text itself, Petruchio is also described as shrewish (*Shr.* 4.1.30); neither he nor Katherine perform their genders within societal boundaries. In the 'all-female' cast of 2003, this queerness was foregrounded by the casting alone. The queering of the couple was only partial. Trans masculinity, or even Katherine's cis female masculinity, did not seem to exist. In contrast with Lloyd's later productions, her 2003 production only dipped a toe into the waters of genderqueerness, opting instead for an arrangement of feminine bodies that approximated as closely as possible the conditions of heteronormativity.

With the Globe's historical dress and set, the 2003 production stands out among the other productions studied in this thesis. The production is also notable in its limited dramaturgical scope, resulting in a revisionist, even regressive, portrait of gendered violence and abuse. Physical violence was treated particularly flippantly in this iteration; while violence is sometimes comedic in Lloyd's later work, the productions that came after her 2003 *Shrew* figure the comedy of physical violence as part of the cultural sign system under scrutiny. In particular, the 2003 production ended with a revisionist reading that somewhat absolved Petruchio, as well as the men in the play more broadly, of the title of abuser.

2.3.1 Original Practices and Magical Transvestism

Klett points to paratexts from 2003 that invoke the Globe's commitment to original practices, constructing a paradigm of Shakespearean performance that is subject to some agreed-upon form of authenticity. She writes that, while these single-gender productions subverted gender norms through their casting and execution, 'They also used the concepts of originality and Shakespearean authenticity to mitigate or erase the potentially troubling presence of female bodies in male roles' (142). Thinking back to the prologue, we can find evidence of the incomplete dramaturgy pervading the production:

...but in this piece,
The girls will get the chance to wear the codpiece.
Our new production crowned with female talents
May help in some way to redress the balance (Lloyd 2003).

The notion that the 'chance to wear the codpiece' – that is, to play male characters – may 'redress the balance' between the opportunities given to men and women on early modern stages reduces equality and repair to representation. The play's social project, it seems, comes to rest at what Klett derisively calls 'affirmative action' (139).

What Kemp calls the 'magical transvestism of The Pants' (2019a 123) is heavily in play. Kemp is referring here to the phenomenon by which a Shakespearean ingenue dons a pair of trousers and instantly passes as a boy. Klett recounts interviews with cast members of the 'all-female' productions at the Globe in 2003 and 2004, in which the 'authentic' costumes of original practice are held up as an essential tool for getting into character as a man (145). I want push this challenge a little further by focusing on the notion of the audience 'reading' the actors' bodies as texts. During a genderqueer

production, the audience is asked to hold competing sign systems; they must, while aware of the semiotic conventions of the 'real world', also become fluent in the condensed, abstract, or subversive lexicon of the onstage world. This condition is not unique to genderqueer productions – rather, it is a mapping of this normal theatrical process onto the normative processes of gender recognition. Klett questions the link between the 'Globe, Shakespeare, and Englishness' (146) that undergirds these productions from the early 2000s. In my discussion of the Donmar Trilogy and Lloyd's 2016 *Shrew*, this critical fallacy will return from a more directly racialised perspective, showing cultural anxieties about Shakespeare and Englishness to be inextricable from anxieties about preserving and uplifting whiteness.

Drawing from Klett's identification of the actor's body as a text, we can see the ways in which Elam's discussion of theatre semiotics figures the body as an animated, living author of signs. Looking at Hunter/Katherine's body as the site on which authorship of signs was claimed and contested, I come to understand the violence against Katherine as the destruction of her ability to author signs for herself.

2.3.2 *Wooing, Domination, and Humiliation*

As the play progressed, Lloyd's direction presented a consistent, exaggerated portrait of masculinity. The actors retained their long hair and high voices, but their masculinity was secured in the way they interacted with each other. Petruchio/McTeer routinely acted violently toward the other characters, banging Grumio's head on the door to Hortensio's house and using physical force to control Katherine. McTeer performed

masculinity with exaggerated bravado. When Grumio questioned Petruchio's resolution to marry Katherine, Petruchio said:

Why came I hither but to that intent?
Think you a little din can daunt mine ears?
Have I not in my time heard lions roar?
Have I not heard the sea, puffed up with winds,
Rage like an angry boar chafed with sweat? (*Shr* 1.2.195-9)

Petruchio ridiculed Grumio and the other men for their fear of Katherine, arguing that any woman cannot be as loud as the sounds of war and violence. Petruchio evaluated the danger of women in relation to their voices, rather than to their physicality. He extended this metaphor throughout his list, pitting the sounds of nature and war against the pastoral scene of a chestnut in a fire. In this speech, Petruchio asserted to the other men that Katherine's capacity for violence was small in comparison to his life experiences. This concept was reinforced onstage, with Petruchio towering over Katherine/Hunter. This depiction of gender essentialism surfaces in Walter's discussion of masculinity in the Donmar Trilogy and, while Lloyd's dramaturgy points to it as a problem, it is a necessary precursor to explore the ways in which the 2003 *Shrew* stopped short of unsettling or subverting it.

Before Petruchio appeared, Katherine used both her voice and body to abuse her suitors; she often simply yelled wordlessly to frighten them off and even kneed a few of them in the imaginary testes, eliciting laughter from the audience. Hunter's voice was low, nasal, and deadpan, contributing to her image as the 'irksome brawling scold' (*Shr*. 1.8.159). However, met by Petruchio's ridicule, Katherine's behaviour suddenly ceased to strike fear in the hearts of her suitors, and they laughed at her. Crucially, the other male characters were emboldened by Petruchio's domination of Katherine; Petruchio's

power over Katherine constituted a reinstatement of men's power over women. As the relationship between Petruchio and Katherine developed onstage, Petruchio's attitude toward her – and toward women in general – was reflected in the behaviour of the other male characters. As the male characters gained confidence amidst Petruchio's developing framework of gendered violence, 'masculine' behaviours and attitudes that may have been taken as innate when acted by cis men were posited as learned by the non-male actors.

In the examination of the dynamic between Petruchio and Katherine, I will provide a more detailed analysis of Lloyd's depiction of the famous 'wooing scene' (2.1), in which Petruchio and Katherine first meet. While speaking to Baptista (Anna Healy), Petruchio ironically cited Katherine's 'beauty and her wit, / her affability and bashful modesty, / her wondrous qualities and mild behaviour' (*Shr.* 2.1.48-50), his voice dripping with sarcasm. By implying that these are the qualities that Katherine lacked, Petruchio suggested that these are the qualities that make a woman attractive—softness, beauty, and submissiveness. Petruchio assured Baptista that he was the man to take Katherine off his hands, and the two men spoke in detail about the financial gains to be had from the match.

Petruchio promised to make quick work of winning Katherine's love, boasting that he is as strong as she is shrewish. He said, 'I am as peremptory as she proud-minded' (*Shr.* 2.1.124), suggesting that, where Katherine lacked femininity, Petruchio was possessed of masculine virtue. McTeer delivered these lines with confidence and bravado, echoing the 'locker room talk' of our contemporary lexicon. In this scene of all

male characters, masculinity was an in-joke aimed at the continued domination of women. Petruchio said, 'And so she yields to me, / for I am rough and woo not like a babe' (*Shr.* 2.1.129-130). Petruchio suggested that Katherine's affection – her consent to marry – could be won by force, equating her 'love' to her submission.

Onstage, Petruchio's first attempt to subdue Katherine was calm and confident. McTeer displayed comedic nonchalance, which Hunter met with equal indifference. At the outset, Petruchio dismissed Katherine's identity: 'You lie, in faith; for you are called plain Kate' (*Shr.* 1031). The descriptors that followed – 'bonny,' 'curst,' 'prettiest,' 'super-dainty' (*Shr.* 1032-1034) – were whimsical and disorienting, but at every turn Petruchio repeated 'Kate.' Nor is the pun in 'plain Kate' lost. Thinking back to Korda, the word 'cate' signified a household object, which rose in popularity along with the rise of the middle class (109). 'Kate' as a nickname for Katherine is straightforward and juvenile, even ugly, much like the implication of the word 'plain' in relation to a woman's appearance. This persistent and deliberate erasure of Katherine's preferred name marks her as a non-human – an object, rather than a subject.

As the scene progressed, the locus of power was divided. Petruchio used physical strength to hold Katherine, forcing her to sit on him and preventing her from escaping multiple times. However, Katherine seemed to retain control over the pace and topic of conversation. Katherine went on the offensive, calling Petruchio a slew of names – 'jade', 'swain', 'buzzard' – and Petruchio was sent on the defensive. Onstage, Katherine used this barrage of insults to retain control of the conversation, steering Petruchio with intellect, rather than physical force. Lloyd used the staging to highlight

the ambiguity in the text. When Petruchio said, 'Thou has hit it: come, sit on me' (*Shr.* 2.1.198), Katherine retorted with a witty insult: 'Asses are made to bear and so are you' (*Shr.* 2.1.199). At this point, Katherine was struggling to get away from Petruchio. As a result, there was constant movement, even on a small scale. The dialogue was secondary to the events onstage. However, with Petruchio's swift rearrangement of Katherine's words, the two stopped and looked at each other (Lloyd 2003). Petruchio said, 'Women are made to bear and so are you' (*Shr.* 2.1. 200), which carries clearly sexual undertones as well as reference to the bearing of children. There was a tense pause, and it was unclear what was happening in Katherine's mind. From a distance, it seemed that she was seeing Petruchio in a different light. It's not impossible that Katherine should be – pardon my phrasing – 'turned on' by Petruchio's statement, but it is unclear how this point of view functions in the production's dramaturgy. Perhaps it's the characterisation of Katherine's gender in sexual relation to men that catches her attention. McTeer's low-voiced delivery suggested real attraction, at least on Petruchio's part, and perhaps Hunter's Katherine was taken aback by him, in a way, calling her sexy (Lloyd 2003). The struggle for power between Katherine and Petruchio bounced between the physical and verbal but, as the scene progressed, physical force began to win out. Petruchio grabbed Katherine, and when he said, 'Will you, nill you, I will marry you' (*Shr.* 2.1.268), she stopped struggling to look at him again. Katherine's confusion produced a moment of distinctly sexual tension. These moments are part of a series of instances throughout the play that made strange depictions of consent and coercion (Lloyd 2003). The suggestion that Katherine's shrewish disposition was temporarily waylaid by sexual excitement complicates a liberatory reading of the play – is the

audience to infer that all Katherine needs is a worthy sexual partner, and her anti-man fury will be mitigated? The burgeoning sexual relationship between Katherine and Petruchio revised and obfuscated the patriarchal mechanism by which Katherine's sexual consent was rendered irrelevant.

The quick pace of the scene was matched with physical comedy (and violence). Katherine kneed Petruchio between the legs, eliciting laughter from the audience. While this type of slapstick violence is often humorous on its own, the effect was compounded by the audience's implicit knowledge of McTeer's anatomy and her assumed lack of testes. This assumption is where the 'all-women' cast is problematic – the audience must assume knowledge of the actor's body based on how they present. There must be dissonance between this knowledge and the actor's performance, highlighted, for example, through these nods to anatomy. Lloyd exaggerated this tension through her staging. As Katherine struck Petruchio repeatedly, he gripped her and said, 'I find you passing gentle' (*Shr.* 2.1.239). These moments of physical struggle were played as comedy, and when Katherine injured her ankle, the audience laughed as she hobbled around the stage (Lloyd 2003).

As Katherine went on to plead with her father and even with the audience – her cries for help were met, again, with laughter – her non-consent was portrayed as something not to be taken too seriously. As Petruchio literally carried Katherine away from the dinner table at their wedding, he groped her aggressively. He said:

She is my goods, my chattels; she is my house,
My household stuff, my field, my barn,
My horse, my ox, my ass, my anything,
And here she stands, touch her whoever dare. (*Shr.* 3.2.223-26)

In these lines, Petruchio simultaneously claimed possession of Katherine and offered her body up to others. These lines encapsulated Petruchio's attitude toward Katherine – that her body and, therefore, her self, were not her own.

The Taming of the Shrew, typically billed as a comedy, depicts a particular side of domestic violence. Where, under a different tone, the events of the play could be construed as deeply disturbing, they were instead played for laughs. In the 2003 production, the tone was set by the apologetic and light-hearted prologue. From the jump, the genderqueer cast was coloured as an experiment that required some amount of forgiveness from the audience. While the text does not openly suggest that Petruchio rapes Katherine, it is difficult to think about the events of the play without considering it. After refusing Katherine dinner, Petruchio said:

Be patient, tomorrow't shall be mended,
And for this night we'll fast for company.
Come, I will bring thee to thy bridal chamber. (*Shr.* 4.1.158-160)

To 'fast for company' is a pivotal phrase in the interpretation of these lines. It can be read multiple ways. On one hand, it could suggest that they will spend the night apart. However, the *Norton Shakespeare* notes that to 'fast for company' also means to 'fast together' (Greenblatt 394). This reading makes the following line – 'I'll bring thee to thy bridal chamber' (*Shr.* 4.1.160) – less ambiguous. In Lloyd's staging, Petruchio clicked at Katherine as if she were a dog and escorted her offstage (Lloyd 2003).

In *Undoing Gender*, Butler says: 'Violence is surely a touch of the worst order, a way in which the human vulnerability to other humans is exposed in its most terrifying way' (2004, 22). Butler's concept of violence as the exposure of vulnerability can be

applied to Lloyd's staging. As Petruchio continued to abuse Katherine, denying her food and clothing, she began to break down. In the second half of the play, Katherine's wit was thinner, worn down. Onstage, Katherine was haggard and exhausted, physically steered about by Petruchio, who took nearly sadistic delight in her frustration.

Petruchio's personal brand of abuse was hardly physical, though the threat of physical violence was always imminent. Instead, Petruchio used manipulation to expose Katherine to harm. Petruchio's servant Curtis even said, 'By this reckoning, he is more shrew than she' (*Shr.* 4.1.30). In this line, Curtis compared Petruchio to a term used to disparage witty and harsh women. This irony was hardly lost on Lloyd – in her staging, Petruchio often greeted the other male characters with exaggerated shows of bravado. Petruchio was working constantly to display his masculinity, walking with what can only be described as a swagger and greeting other men loudly (Lloyd 2003).

After he escorted Katherine offstage, Petruchio returned and said, 'Thus have I politicly begun my reign' (*Shr.* 4.1.124). The image of the politician contrasts sharply with the image of the masculine soldier; the politician uses wit and deception to gain and retain power. Petruchio's 'method' with Katherine was to undercut the shows of masculine force she had previously rejected, approaching her instead with emotional abuse she could not escape. Peter, another one of Petruchio's servants, said, 'He kills her in her own humour' (*Shr.* 4.1.116). The servants compared Petruchio to Katherine, playing into the suggestion that Petruchio was an appropriate 'match' for Katherine. What Peter and Curtis seemed to be referencing in these comparisons was Petruchio's 'feminine' skill in emotional manipulation. Onstage, McTeer underwent a double-gendering. The text links emotional manipulation with both intellect and gender; just

enough manipulation makes Petruchio a successful wife-tamer, but too much manipulation is feminising. Onstage, McTeer's masculine gender presentation was already swimming upstream against the audience's paratextual knowledge. Petruchio's emasculation situated him outside of the category of men, partially separating his violence against Katherine from systems of patriarchal violence.

2.3.3 Katherine's Voice

Katherine's final speech in Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* is not only her longest, but the longest in the entire play. In performance, the delivery of the speech affects the overall tone of the play, which depicts scenes of recognisable abuse. Katherine's speech is a pivotal moment in which we get to see if Petruchio's taming scheme has 'worked'. The verbosity of Katherine's speech contrasts sharply with her short one-liners earlier in the play. Devoid of wit or irony, her words instead reiterate the point again and again that a wife is inferior to her husband. On the page, this robotic enthusiasm evokes Detmer-Goebel's discussion of Stockholm Syndrome. Katherine's speech comes across as nearly brainwashed, so thoroughly does she make her case. However, in her onstage delivery, Hunter was unmistakably sarcastic, overenunciating operative words and mocking the speech's effusiveness (Lloyd 2003). In the text, Petruchio tells Katherine to direct her shrewishness at the other wives, deputising her to police the behaviour of less obedient women. She orders the women to 'unknit that threat'ning unkind brow' (*Shr.* 5.2.145) – an echo of Petruchio's request that she 'not look so sour' (*Shr.* 2.1.221). In both of these quotes, we see an emphasis on the appearance of women as an obligation to the men in their lives. According to

Katherine, it is a woman's responsibility to put men at ease with her affectation. In Lloyd's 2003 staging, Hunter used the speech to make a mockery of her own instructions. Through Hunter's delivery, Katherine made clear sport of the ridiculous and exaggerated shows of devotion she promoted, leaving Petruchio humiliated. After the two exited, they re-emerged on the balcony for a moment, arguing animatedly in Italian. Katherine repeatedly jeered at Petruchio – 'allora' ('come on') – as he stormed off in a huff. The men left onstage acknowledged Petruchio's humiliation. Lucentio said mockingly, "Tis a wonder...she will be "tamed so" (*Shr.* 5.2.199, quotations added). It is the last line of the play, and, in the end, the other men seemed to dismiss Petruchio's seriousness in subduing Katherine. This revision raises a question about the dramaturgy of the play: is the fact that Katherine remains untamed verbally enough to offset her continued relationship with Petruchio? Looking at this delivery with the brief Italian epilogue, are we to understand that Katherine is subjugated as a wife, bound to her role within Petruchio's house, but also that she retains her Bad Girl persona by taking it all with a wink and a nudge? This ending calls into question who this revision is meant to satisfy and how.

Karen Newman writes that, uniquely, 'Kate has continued to speak... [S]he has adopted another strategy, a strategy which the French psychoanalyst Luce Irigaray calls mimeticism' (98). Nancy Miller (qtd. in Newman) defines mimeticism as 'an italicized version of what passes for the neutral...a way of marking what has already been said, of making a common text one's own' (98). Katherine's transition from strong dissent to mimeticism can be read as Katherine's adoption of a new lexicon – a vocabulary of compliance and survival. Notably, Katherine's shrewish words are now directed at her

fellow women. Katherine is granted leave to exercise her voice, but only at the command of her husband. The female characters – primarily Katherine and Bianca – are pitted against each other in competition for the unified affection of men. The ways in which women who adhere to patriarchal norms are deputised to enforce patriarchal standards amongst other women are even more salient in Lloyd's 2016 adaptation. In my own reading of Shakespeare's text, Katherine's speech is a complex window into her relationship with gender hierarchy, with other women, and with femininity.

In the text, this transformation of Katherine's language is the ultimate sign of Petruchio's success. He has taken the edge from her and disarmed her of her only weapon – her voice. Detmer-Goebel cites Robert Heilman's 1966 essay as a prime example of a reading that fails to see Petruchio's behaviour as problematic. Instead, Heilman insists on a 'traditional' reading: boys will be boys, no one gets hurt, and everything is alright in the end (Detmer-Goebel 290). On the contrary, everything is not alright; the suggestion that the audience may find it 'fun' to watch Katherine's taming implicates the audience in the play's own cycle of abuse. To enjoy *The Taming of the Shrew*, the reader must push to the back of their mind the fact that this is an abuse narrative told through the eyes of the abuser. This point of view allows the reader to experience the pleasure of establishing dominance over another person without the guilt of abuse – the play has a happy ending for Petruchio, who gains an obedient wife and considerable wealth and status as reward.

In Lloyd's 2003 production, the abusive nature of Katherine and Petruchio's marriage was subverted by Hunter's delivery of Katherine's final monologue. As the two

reappeared after the end of Shakespeare's text, bickering in Italian, the cast and audience laughed along (2003). The production addressed Katherine's situation by reiterating her strength; the marriage was no less abusive than it is in the text, but the pain of watching it unfold was somewhat mitigated by this ending, in which Katherine and Petruchio entered an offstage phase of domesticity. The story was bracketed by language. When the characters switched to Italian, the words were understood as extra-textual; Katherine and Petruchio's passing argument signified a final switch into the space beyond Shakespeare's text. In this liminal theatrical moment, the 'all-female' cast of the production depicted a double consciousness. Katherine and Petruchio's extended exit bookends the production; where there is no 'outro' to match the prologue, there is a transitional period between Shakespeare's text and the real world. For a moment, the production's 'all-female' cast looks on from the side of the audience. In this production, the casting created distance between the 'real' world and the world of the play. The revised coda mitigated the violence of Katherine's subjugation and pointed the audience toward an imagined relationship after the end of the play, in which the love match began a humorously rocky 'post (attempted) taming' marriage.

In her final speech, Katherine's textual thesis is that women are fated to serve and obey by their physical weakness in comparison to men. In a rhyme, she asks: 'Why are our bodies soft and weak and smooth, .../ But that our soft conditions and our hearts / Should well agree with our external parts?' (*Shr.* 5.2.165-168). Katherine implies that it is not only the wife's duty to behave a certain way, but also feel a certain way. She reiterates that obedience is not only in the performance but also in the mind, in the agreement of the emotions with one's 'external parts'. Performed amongst a cast of 'all-

women', this line about 'feminine' bodies was particularly ironic; the audience had just seen the ways in which women's bodies can inhabit modes that are far, far away from softness and weakness. This notion was highlighted first by Katherine's violent behaviour toward the men in the play and subsequently by McTeer-as-Petruchio's physical domination of Hunter/Katherine.

Katherine mentions her shrewish history only once, saying that her 'mind hath been as big as one of yours, my heart as great...' (*Shr.* 5.2.170-1). Greenblatt glosses 'heart' as 'spirit' (413), suggesting that Katherine's spirit has been broken into submission. The phrasing of a mind being 'big' suggests that Katherine's thoughts were once both aggressive and numerous. In parallel with a 'great heart,' these qualities are portrayed as heroic and masculine. Katherine discourages the women from battling 'word for word and frown for frown' (*Shr.* 5.2.172), reiterating the connection of words and expressions with physical weapons. This line could also refer to Katherine and Petruchio's initial meeting, in which Katherine engages Petruchio in a fast-paced battle of wits. Here, Katherine implies that wit and thought are in the realm of men, and it is the office of women to be merely agreeable. Katherine urges the women to swallow their pride – or aptitude for independent thought – and to 'place your hands below your husband's foot' (*Shr.* 5.2.177). This subjection to physical discomfort may be sexually coded, and it is again referential to serfdom and servitude. Katherine's sexual innuendo is reinforced in her last line: 'My hand is ready, may it do him ease' (*Shr.* 5.2.179). Thinking again of McTeer's ostensibly feminine body, there was a second, queerer layer to this. Any suggestion of intimacy between the two bodies carried a shadow of recognition that their intimacy was, at least in the metatext, queer. Where the

paratextual queerness of the relationship provided potential for Lloyd's adaptation to challenge the sexual expectations placed on the match, the production relied on the audience's ability to fill in the dramaturgical gaps, defaulting to an interpretation that held rebellion as marginal to Shakespeare's text.

Katherine's speech raises many questions, but one stands out: what qualifies a woman as tame(d)? Katherine suggests that a tamed wife does more than perform obedience – she desires it, cherishes it, and embraces it. Throughout the play, Petruchio refers to Katherine as 'Kate': a diminutive, even insulting truncation of her name. In Newman's article, and indeed throughout each of the articles I have cited, Katherine is referred to as 'Kate' – her tamed name. When the two are first married, the other characters joke:

LUCENTIO Mistress, what's your opinion of your sister?
 BIANCA That being mad herself, she's madly mated.
 GREMIO I warrant him Petruccio is Kated. (*Shr.* 3.2.236-8)

This rhyming couplet foreshadows Petruchio's developing relationship with Katherine. By being 'Kated' – or 'cated' – as Korda points out, Petruchio transitions from the realm of the wild to the domestic. In forcing Katherine to assume the role of wife, he simultaneously assumes the role of husband. Bianca points out that, since both are 'mad' (*Shr.* 3.2.235), the two are a suitable match. The two are equally abrasive, temperamental, and violent. Again, there is space here to read the couple as queer. If, despite the dynamic between the characters, we read the power dynamic between the actors' 'feminine' bodies as equal, then we can identify an element of subversion against heteronormative expectations. When I ask myself how the casting changes the play in this particular production, I find that the functional lynchpin of the 'all-female' cast

becomes the presumption of equality amongst the players. The supposition that cis men are inherently threatening to cis women is a source of dramaturgical conflict in all of the productions studied in this thesis. This is not necessarily due to some specific shortcoming on Lloyd's part, but more likely stems from centuries of social scripts that teach cis women to assume that every cis man is capable of harming them in a way completely unique to that gendered power dynamic.

2.3.3.1 *Ritual Action*

In the text of *The Taming of the Shrew*, Katherine's public shaming of the shrewish wives mirrors the 'ritual action' (Newman 87) of early modern communities against scolds. Newman recounts a case from 1604, in which a couple were ultimately driven out of town after the community ruthlessly humiliated the husband and his shrewish wife, who was accused of calling him 'unseemly names' (qtd. in Newman 86) and of beating him out of their bedroom. Newman points out that nowhere in the account does the man's wife have a voice at all. The events of her shrewish behaviour and subsequent events are told solely through her husband's eyes (89). With this narrative as a backdrop, Shakespeare's *Shrew* seems more subversive than it may appear in a contemporary context. Newman touches on the Induction, in which a lord tricks Christopher Sly, a common man, into believing he himself is a landed lord. Sly is introduced to his 'wife', who is (both in the story and, presumably, in reality) a boy actor in women's clothing, and he presently invites her to bed. The boy actor tactfully refuses but dramatically submits to him in words: 'My husband and my lord, my lord and husband: / I am your wife in all obedience' (*Shr.* Induction 2.103-104). Newman writes

that the depiction of this farcical narrative 'Suggests ironically how in this androcentric culture men depended on women to authorize their sexual and social masculine identities' (88). Katherine's long speech resists the portrait of the voiceless wife, even if her words are directed at other women. Katherine is almost a mirror image for the boy actor of the Induction: he is a boy playing an obedient wife, and Katherine is a disobedient, 'masculine' woman also playing another obedient wife. The exaggerated boy-wife of the Induction and Katherine's transformed voice depict the relationship between husband and wife, previously 'figured as natural and divinely ordained', within a theatrical frame, revealing these hierarchies as 'culturally constructed' (Newman 88). However, the Induction was cut from Lloyd's adaptation – replaced by an original prologue, the genderqueer content of the Induction was supplanted by a tongue-in-cheek plea for clemency. Where Shakespeare's Induction functionally unsettles the gender norms at work so strongly in the play, Lloyd's prologue erases, even undermines, the exposure of gender as performative from the outset.

Depending on the actor's delivery, the speech can 'do' vastly different things. Delivered sarcastically, like in Lloyd's 2003 version, the speech is the ultimate emasculator, humiliating Petruchio in front of his friends. However, taken at face value, the words of the speech are harrowingly clear. Katherine says:

My mind hath been as big as one of yours,
My heart as great, my reason haply more
To bandy word for word and frown for frown.
But now I see our lances are but straws,
Our strength as weak, our weakness past compare,
That seeming to be most which we indeed least are. (*Shr.* 5.2.170-75)

Katherine expresses remorse at her past behaviour, arguing that women are fundamentally inferior to men. Though Katherine's pride and spirit once compelled her to use her words as weapons against men, she has learned that, because of her physical weakness, she must obey her husband and subjugate her own voice. This speech encapsulates the running comparison between voice and physical violence. While words are a woman's weapon, they are a man's right. The ultimate taming success is the taming of Katherine's voice as an expression of her innermost thoughts. Not only has she been broken down into submission, but she seems to take pride in her new role. This affective devotion to one's station will arise again and again in my discussion of Lloyd's work; throughout her adaptation of this play and the Donmar Trilogy, characters are hierarchised according to their satisfactory performance of affect. Hunter's sardonic delivery in 2003 complicated the expectation of submission. By directing her voice at Petruchio, rather than at the other wives as instructed, Katherine complied maliciously with her husband's command. This act of rebellion, defiant as it may have been, steered away from an overt challenge to the patriarchal structure that casts her in the role of wayward bride.

Perhaps it is due to the play's 'comedic' leanings that Katherine's starvation and neglect did not have more serious consequences in 2003. Petruchio's denial of food and clothing were acts of emotional, rather than physical, torture. Katherine's haggard appearance and desperate pleas for food were met with laughter in the recorded 2003 production. The recorded audience of the production seemed untroubled by the displays of abuse onstage – watching through Petruchio's eyes, they laughed with him at Katherine. Maybe the discomfort of watching the abuse in the play was dampened by

the casting; the physical power dynamic between Hunter and McTeer, though impacted by their height difference, was materially different to the physical power dynamic between a cis man and a cis woman. Thinking back to the bioessentialist concept of phallic penetration as the ultimate threat against the body of a cis woman, we can identify the emergence of a paradigm in which this threat was paratextually mitigated by the casting. And if the dramaturgical project of a production is simply to make the audience more comfortable with the most unpleasant bits, then perhaps both the play text and the dramaturgy have problems.

Ultimately, Lloyd's 2003 *Shrew* lacks a clear point of view – the audience is asked to excuse the all-female cast and encouraged to laugh at Katherine's distress. At the very end, the couple appears one more time, arguing animatedly in Italian (Lloyd 2003). The tone is comedic – it calls to mind the marital dynamics of the classic sitcom couple. She emasculates him with her sharp wit; he throws a tantrum. Perhaps appropriately, then, the Donmar Trilogy is all about consequences. The Donmar Trilogy frames incarceration as a consequence of each individual's actions. It is this framing that sometimes stalls the trilogy's liberatory project, depicting the results of mass incarceration without directly acknowledging its roots in racism and capitalism.

Chapter 3: Marginal Collisions in The Donmar Trilogy

This four-part section contains discussions of gendered and sexual violence, domestic violence, sexism, addiction, slavery, racism, transphobia, homophobia, self-harm, and incarceration.

3.1 Introduction

In the years since Lloyd's adaptation of *Julius Caesar* kicked off the Donmar Trilogy, the BBC recordings have been recommended to me so many times that they have more or less become synonymous with my topic of interest. The process and product are both so studiously documented by so many parties and from so many different angles that there almost exists an overabundance of information regarding the series. In addition to the recorded plays themselves, this chapter makes use of press interviews and content made by the Donmar Warehouse and the BBC. It feels as though the relationship of gender to Shakespeare, Shakespeare to gender has been plumbed from top to bottom in relation to the Donmar Trilogy. I have struggled to find in the same volume an approach to these productions that examines their dramaturgical relationship to incarceration, although Matthew Reason's 2019 paper, 'A prison audience: women prisoners, Shakespeare, and spectatorship' comes the closest to acknowledging the power dynamic between the creative subject and incarcerated object in *The Tempest*.

The Donmar Trilogy constructs a fictional women's prison and proposes *Julius Caesar*, *Henry IV*, and *The Tempest* as texts with direct relevance to the experiences of incarcerated women. By mapping these plays onto the prison frame, the dramaturgy of

the Donmar Trilogy at least gestures toward a commentary on carceral systems and systemic violence towards women, especially queer women. These commentaries are introduced in the prologues to each play, in which one of the incarcerated characters addresses the audience before the start of Shakespeare's text. Instead of directly asking the audience to pardon any impending gender transgressions, these prologues explicitly connect each play to an experience of incarceration. While this technique does not solve every problem with Lloyd's 2003 adaptation, it firmly connects the Donmar Trilogy to a specific social project. The anti-carceral commentary made by the Donmar Trilogy always seems to stop at pointing out the problems with incarceration. With each instalment, the trilogy becomes less and less focused on the systemic cruelty of the carceral justice system, defaulting instead to individualist narratives that circumvent the need for such a commentary. In the years since I began this project, my focus has turned more and more to this snag. Where the Donmar Trilogy is, for its time, creative and impactful in its depiction of masculinity, so too is it incomplete, even regressive, in its portrayal of the marginalities with which gender intersects, especially in a carceral setting.

This tension between the feminist and carceral impacts of the work necessitates a dual approach. Examining these productions is a balancing act between focusing on the semiotic particularities of each production and examining the social phenomena of the project more broadly. However, through the lens of several anti-racist scholars in the field – including Ambereen Dadabhoy, Nedda Mehdizadeh, and Kim F. Hall – these sections will demonstrate the ways in which these approaches must be one in the same. For anti-racist pedagogy to take effect, it must be applied with the same technical

rigor as Elam's semiotic framework, for example. In the end, the Donmar Trilogy seems to simultaneously question and maintain the status quo. This happens, I argue, due to a rehearsed effacement of the positionality of the artists. In casting with visibly subversive and inclusive intentions – choosing a cast of not only all women (as it was billed at the time) but also a cast that included formerly incarcerated actors, Lloyd incidentally obscures her own relationship to privilege. By inviting these voices to her project, Lloyd retains primary agency while revelling in the illusion of equity.

3.1.1 *Carceral Injustice*

The relationship between Shakespeare and incarceration is already a deep field of study, and prison abolition specifically has a well-established position in academic work. Jenna Dreier writes that Prison Shakespeare as a formal field 'First emerged in the 1980s' (1), referring specifically to programmes in which incarcerated people learn and perform Shakespeare with the aid of unincarcerated facilitators. At the outset of her dissertation, Dreier questions the positionality of these outside instructors:

I was plagued by suspicions about the ethics of these exchanges. What did it mean to take something as canonical as Shakespeare into such an overwhelmingly marginalized space? Were these life-changing journeys a process by which those undergoing the dehumanizing experience of incarceration discovered a new tool for articulating their humanity and challenging their oppression, or were they the latest chapter in the history of Shakespeare's plays being used as tools for cultural assimilation? (5)

Dreier and I seem to share scepticism toward the material impact of Prison Shakespeare and its potential reinforcement of hegemony. Crucially, Dreier also uses an all-female production of Shakespeare's *Henry IV, Part I* (Ten Thousand Things, 2015) as a case study. Dreier points to a reversal of the power dynamic between

Shakespeare and the cast, in which Shakespeare was framed as 'dead', opposed to the living cast (71). One major difference between Ten Thousand Things' production – which toured the United States one year after the Donmar Trilogy's first run of *Henry IV* – and the Donmar Trilogy is that the Donmar Trilogy is itself about doing Shakespeare in prison. In dialogue with Ten Thousand Things' production, the Donmar Trilogy emerges as a metatext about Prison Shakespeare.

Dreier's work follows on from the work of Rob Pensalfini, who examines the particular conditions under which Prison Shakespeare functions. 'In asking what it means for prisoners to perform Shakespeare, there is an underlying assumption that it must mean something other than, or beyond, that which it means for non-incarcerated people' (107). This claim leans again into the notion that Shakespeare holds unique and universal cultural significance. In his mention of Foucault, Pensalfini synthesises that 'It has never been the role of prisons to foster empathy, compassion and belonging, but to create disciplined bodies and well-behaved citizens' (109). This notion is critical to my work in this chapter. It highlights the reality that prisons do not rehabilitate by design; instead, the carceral system creates and enforces a cycle of extrinsic motivation (Pensalfini 110). Criminalisation and incarceration emerge as an ecosystem in which members of society are under constant threat of being disenfranchised. Under that threat, the division between the incarcerated and the unincarcerated is constantly reinforced.

Angela Davis has guided the conversation surrounding incarceration for decades; from her work springs the highly illuminating collection edited by Stephen

John Hartnett, *Challenging the Prison-Industrial Complex: Activism, Arts, and Educational Alternatives* (2010). In the introduction, Hartnett acknowledges the most common challenges to abolitionist frameworks, namely questions of what will become of all the bad people that prisons keep away from civilised folk. Hartnett's key response is that prison abolition does not mean simply knocking the prisons down – abolition as it is imagined in Hartnett's collection is an organised, gradual approach to redefining the parameters of crime and restoration. 'The difficulty in arguing for abolition, then, is that shutting down the prison-industrial complex will require nothing less than a revolution,' Hartnett writes. 'The question is not only how to abolish prisons but *how to reimagine a democracy* that does not need such institutions' (4). In an essay in the 2013 collection *The End of Prisons: Reflections from the Decarceration Movement*, Tiyo Attallah Salah-EI highlights the statistical evidence suggesting that carceral justice does not deter or reduce crime:

Over the years, we see that a bloated correctional system does little to reduce crime. In fact, there are increasing signs that the prison industrial complex may be contributing to crime. People cycling in and out of prisons and jails destabilize families and communities, makes legal regular work almost impossible to get for someone with a criminal record. It pushes people further to the margins and for some communities prison becomes the norm rather than the exception (174).

The naturalization of incarceration as an unavoidable facet of social order is essential to the upholding of the prison-industrial complex. The realities of incarceration are kept far away from public discourse – it is only through the construction of a 'groundwork for future generations to build a world that is safe and just' that we may 'strive toward a new possibility' (Salah-EI, qtd in Hartnett 5). Hartnett posits that hope is the best and only

way forward; imagination is essential in the building of a non-punitive democracy (3). As Salah-El suggests, 'Let us strive toward a new possibility' (qtd in Hartnett 5).

Salah-El specifies that, for abolition to become a reality, organisers must achieve mass-solidarity on a comparable scale to those of historical social justice movements (for example, labour and racial justice movements in the United Kingdom and United States):

Let us keep in mind that the needs of those on the bottom – the poorest, economically, the least powerful socially and politically – should be first, in an explicit way that builds and sustains unity. We must work toward accelerating the process of building long-term autonomous and decentralized livelihoods based on collective relations of productive exchange and consumption that are forged in meaningful work (Salah-El 170).

As someone trained to read through an intersectional lens, I initially hesitate when discussing hierarchies of oppression, but I read Salah-El's suggestion not as a claim that experiences of oppression should be hierarchised, but as an observation of the material impacts of oppression as a means of identifying and directing solidarity. The distinguishing factor in this revolutionary mode is the call for mobilization and acceleration. Salah-El admonishes readers against 'Assum[ing] that these movements arose spontaneously, or perhaps, that charismatic leaders suddenly called them into existence' (170). The neoliberal project of raising awareness for its own sake – of, so to speak, pointing to the inequities of carceral justice yet making no comment on their relationship to systemic racism, classism, etc – is at odds with abolitionist initiatives. Specifically, Salah-El dismisses reform as a red herring; calls for 'reform over abolition' must lean on existing carceral systems, which in turn invalidate their liberatory goal. This discussion often turns to rehabilitation – an idea that comes up frequently in

paratext about the Donmar Trilogy as well. Salah-El invokes a 1971 report, which 'charged that the rehabilitative model perpetuated race and class discrimination by giving criminal justice professionals, the majority of whom were white and middle class, enormous power to decide who has and who has not been deserving of early release' (170). The neoliberal fantasy of a framework of rehabilitation definitionally excludes the possibility of any long-term or systemic change. It shifts the onus of peacekeeping onto the incarcerated individual's capacity to be labelled as reformed, not on the state's failure to serve its most marginalised populations.

We see this ethos echoed in the Donmar Trilogy, which imagines a dramatised prison environment populated by 'good guys' (Hannah/Walter) and 'bad guys' (Andrea/Stanton). To an extent, this dramatisation is a natural result of theatrical representation. Thinking back to Elam, we can identify a mode of narrative mimesis that uses icons of reality to construct a fiction. However, reading the bits of text spoken as part of the prison frame as themselves a play text, the narrative of the prison frame emerges as a somewhat socially regressive iteration of the rehabilitative model. The impact of this frame will come up again and again in the coming sections. In shielding the Donmar Trilogy's subversive casting behind the veil of incarceration – an experience shared by a small, highly marginalised population – Lloyd simultaneously prioritises the safety of white femininity and reproduces the conditions of a white heteropatriarchy that figures everyone else people as subhuman. That the notion of whiteness as default is obscured behind a paternalistic project of goodwill does not mitigate the failure of the Donmar Trilogy to make a meaningful or original comment about the lives of incarcerated women. In her explanation of Lloyd's idea for the prison frame (159),

Walter suggests that the entire project was contingent on the believability of the genderqueer cast in their chosen context. Anti-carceral critique of the Donmar Trilogy will be essential to my argument in this chapter.

This is not to say that the Donmar Trilogy does nothing to comment on systems of carceral justice; rather, in the following sections, I point out the ways in which this commentary is incomplete – it comes most often in the form of dialogue within the prison frame, in which the incarcerated characters break from Shakespeare’s text to tell us in plain terms what they want the spectator to feel. The prison frame is used in each production in the trilogy as a tool by which dramaturgical snags are neatly smoothed over; it injects the text with a semiotic shorthand that both distils and abridges the message of the plays. I am not able to pass a value judgement on this technique, but I can highlight the ways in which the frame reveals the carceral logic of the trilogy. This discussion will lean heavily on Williams’ ‘incomplete dramaturgy’, which, as a reminder:

denotes a failure to adapt and intervene in these plays at a structural level, and represents instead taking a shortcut, hitting on a marketing strategy, picking up on a “trend”, or (with all the good intentions in the world) trying to cast marginalized performers in star-making roles – but perhaps failing to think through to the end of the decisions being made and to consider how they will affect the play at a holistic level (5).

This paragraph will resurface in the following sections, because it relates so specifically to the now historical phenomenon of ‘all-female’ casting in which the Donmar Trilogy

participates.¹⁴ Williams' work is of particular value here because she weaves critical theory into an applied discussion of dramaturgical techniques. These theoretical decisions made in (or even before reaching) the rehearsal room have material implications – the choice asks, in the case of genderqueer casting, 'Gender and setting to do the work of interpretation and innovation' (Williams 9). The distinction I find myself reaching for is that having incomplete dramaturgy is not itself a moral or intellectual failing. Rather, the reason I feel so critically toward these productions is because they were marketed at the time as feminist masterpieces, as juggernauts that would forever change the landscape of feminist theatre. Media coverage of the 2016 reprise of the Donmar Trilogy is pervaded by the phrase 'all-female triumph' (Gardner). Looking back through the privileged lens of hindsight, if these productions did anything, it was to further entrench the stalwart pillars of white feminism, which continues to lean on the violence experienced by other marginalised groups to accrue capital in left-leaning spaces.

3.1.2 *Making Gender Strange*

Diamond relates *Verfremdungseffekt* – or the process of estrangement brought on by theatrical semiosis – back to Elam's discussion of theatrical sign systems:

'*Verfremdungseffekt* also challenges the mimetic property of acting that semioticians

¹⁴ The Guardian published a photo essay in 2018 called 'All the women players: cross-gender Shakespeare – in pictures'. The collection includes images from seventeen productions featuring women in male roles, dating back to Margaret Leighton as Ariel in *The Tempest* at Shakespeare Memorial Theatre in 1952. The vast majority of the productions listed were done after 2010, and Lloyd's work is heavily featured.

call iconicity, the fact that the performer's body conventionally resembles the object (or character) to which it refers' (84). By substituting verisimilitude with estrangement, *Verfremdungseffekt* codifies semiotic texture as a dramaturgical framework – such literary effects need not be incidental, nor must they be secondary to a larger, more cohesive narrative strategy. In her discussion of the Donmar Trilogy – specifically, of the prison frame – Williams critiques Walter's notion that the frame is a necessity for the success of the work (16). Walter writes that she and Lloyd worked to 'justify' the all-female cast of *Julius Caesar*, citing several 'advantages', including the 'de-sex[ing]' uniforms and the presumed lack of men in a women's prison (159). These advantages serve to excuse the production from scepticism and critique – notably, Williams writes that 'Incomplete dramaturgy uses, among other tactics, mixed-gender and all-female casting as a shield that protects the creative team from questions about the intersectional politics of the play' (15). Without apparently even considering that the project might come under scrutiny for its address (or lack thereof) of intersectionality, Walter goes on to say that the 'Violence and aggression would be more convincing in a prison context, and it is no stretch to imagine prisoners playing Shakespeare as it is now a fairly common practice for actors to do workshops in prisons' (159). Walter points to the material condition of incarceration that both demands and is caused by violence. What Walter seems to identify here are the presumed 'stakes' in prison: freedom/incarceration and life/death, which map handily onto Shakespeare's plays. These presuppositions are concerning (even frustrating) for multiple reasons. Firstly, Walter's suggestion that 'aggression' makes more sense amongst incarcerated women betrays the regressive conviction that women are inherently less prone to aggression in

normative, un-incarcerated society. It suggests, in fact, that rage expressed through violence belongs primarily to men, and that it must be justified when approached by women. At best, Walter flattens the experience of incarceration as one led to violence by unbearable circumstances. At worst, Walter's assertions here paint incarcerated people as 'noble savages': impulsive, violent women waiting to be domesticated, (re-)connected to their innate femininity by the benevolent Shakespearean. This relates to Diamond's work because of Walter and Lloyd's foundational assumption that mimesis is compulsory in some form or another – that, if *Verfremdungseffekt* plays a role in the enactment of the primary text, there had best be a dramaturgical buffer zone around it that can make the discomfort of estrangement go away.

As a framework, *Verfremdungseffekt* works its way into the Donmar Trilogy in manifold ways. Walter highlights the intentional estrangement enacted by masculine verisimilitude – she invokes the 'female cultural habits' (188) that surreptitiously govern the impulses of the performers. Masculine embodiment, Walter writes, came not from copying icon-for-icon the signs most commonly used by men, but from working to occupy a headspace in which the subject is not required to twist or divert themselves to claim agency as an author of signs. Walter expresses this phenomenon as a 'mindset of entitlement: entitlement to be seen and heard, to take up space and dominate a room. This confidence led us to a simpler, more direct body language' (188). Walter refers here to some of the interpretable signs of gender performance, primarily in reference to physical space and posture. Walter's discussion of acting method highlights the voice and body as the actor's primary tools for the creation of meaning onstage – while set, props, sound, and costume all aid the actor in this, signs that originate from the actor's

own body are foregrounded because of their temporality. A body exists in time, and it is this movement that catches our eye. Gesture can be seen as a compiled function of connected poses, which, taken over time, create temporal movement. The expression of signifiers is a necessarily ongoing pursuit, governed by the dimensions of time and space. To disrupt the fluid process of signification is to pause the flow of time – to ask the audience to stop and consider the sign as such, rather than as an infinitely minute point in an ever-changing function of meaning. I'm reaching for a rudimentary concept of signification as stratified in the same way as a mathematical function, in which a derivation reveals the traits of a single, infinitesimal point and integration zooms out to show how these points relate to each other over time. In relation to Walter's process, gender performance is a synthesis of these minute points – choices, conscious or otherwise, that create affect. The choice to sit with one's legs spread apart for comfort; to start speaking without checking to see if it is a good time; to hold one's body without the feminine self-consciousness to which Walter refers is a single point in her function of gender.

Aston and Savona invoke Kowzan's classification of sign systems, namely the division of signs authored by the actor and those originating from outside the actor. In Kowzan's framework, the auditive and visual signs generated by the actor take the form of spoken text, movement and expression, and appearance, while signs external to the actor encompass props, set, lights, and sound (105). This arrangement of signs 'hierarchise[s] the messages sent' (Aston and Savona 101), foregrounding the text and delivery of dialogue. Extrapolating from Kowzan's framework, this hierarchy of theatrical signs emerges as one of the primary sites of subversion in genderqueer theatre.

Especially in playing Shakespeare, a playwright whose text Walter holds in such high cultural esteem (157), the audience is expected to derive enormous amounts of both enjoyment and meaning from words and tone alone. The hierarchisation of signifiers is essential to theatre – it aids the audience in processing all the data onstage; it allows information to be arranged into meaning. Aston and Savona's discussion of this hierarchy of signs highlights the power of the theatre-makers to create and subvert the expected arrangement of signifiers. For example, costume in the Donmar Trilogy is simultaneously authored by and imposed on the incarcerated performers. While the "incarcerated" performers choose to use signifying items iconic of prison-specific items, their basic outfits – their hair, their makeup, their bodies – are subject to external, carceral forces. Lloyd emphasises this disparity through mixed classes of signs. In using prison items that are mimetic in the prison frame and indexical or even symbolic in the frame of *Julius Caesar*, the bodies of the incarcerated performers become the living site in which these signs jostle for superiority. Clothed in red rubber gloves, Brutus/Hannah is simultaneously a Roman patrician bathed in the blood of his leader and an incarcerated woman wearing red rubber gloves. These competing signs create a dual hierarchy – instead of onstage signifiers falling neatly into disparate categories, these two sign systems compete and coalesce into a more nuanced, unstable narrative.

Coupled with Diamond's work, these dual sign systems make each other strange. While the separation of the Shakespearean characters from the 'incarcerated' performers may have initially functioned as a buffer (Walter 159), the genderqueerness of the Shakespearean cast is still foregrounded as one of the project's most daring semiotic choices. Coupled with abstraction, mimesis itself is alienated from reality.

Aston and Savona write that 'it is through the deictic exchange that the dramatic world achieves its three-dimensionality; that the bare bones are fleshed out. The speaker-listeners "point" not only to the "actual" or "mimetic"...world, but to unseen characters, events or spaces, making them part of the fictional universe through reference' (52).

Aston and Savona point to context as an essential tool in the creation of meaning through theatre. Where a prison jumpsuit, mimetically speaking, is just a jumpsuit, the audience's foreknowledge of prison aesthetics – albeit heavily dependent, for the most part, on media and entertainment – is a key component in the process by which a jumpsuit comes to signify a prison uniform. Genderqueer casting challenges external knowledge by showing it to be less fact than construct. If gendered mimesis can be deconstructed before our eyes, then the conditions under which gender performance is judged to be mimetic may also be challenged. In theatre performance, mimesis most often takes the form of an object signifying another object: a glove signifies a glove; a prison jumpsuit signifies an incarcerated body. But, in performing gendered mimesis, an expression, trait, or action signifies not a concrete concept, but a socially constructed category. Following Derrida and Lacan, Aston and Savona cite the 'logocentric or phallogocentric sign-system,' which 'places the female subject in a marginalised relation to its patriarchal order' (70). This relates back to Halberstam's evaluation of white, cis masculinity as considered innate, default – in positioning itself as natural, masculinity effaces its own participation in the system of gendered signs. I also want to push back against the uncritical inclusion of phallogocentrism in the discussion of gender or patriarchy. It should be considered key to any argument that takes into account the realities of non-normative gender expression that genitalia – that is, the phallus – do not

themselves signify gender. It's critical to me that we continue to update these foundational critical texts by asserting that 'penis' and 'vagina' are reductive, unhelpful ways to describe gendered hierarchy, even in theory.

Genderqueer casting estranges masculinity from itself. Aston and Savona write: 'Patterns of speech and movement which define the "female" in male terms give way, once refused, to the possibility of an anarchic, liberating and self-defining process for the female performer' (120). Aston and Savona unpack femininity's proximity to masculinity as a subordinate category of signs, but I argue that this line of reasoning can be taken a step further. To suggest that feminine signifiers may, through the same process by which masculinity is considered self-sufficient, achieve greater semiotic agency halts the process of deconstruction at the polarisation of masculinity and femininity. Femininity is, by definition, alienated from masculinity – but, beyond that, genderqueer casting has the potential to estrange signs from gender itself. One of the oppressive functions of gender categories is the collapse of semiotic distance between gendered signifiers and meaning. The perceived immediacy and completeness with which gendered signifiers have fixed meanings simultaneously entrenches hierarchies and precludes interrogation. By appropriating signifiers of masculinity, the genderqueer performer exposes the capacity of those signs to be estranged and subsequently invites the spectator to apply that same scrutiny to their own performance and interpretation of gendered signs.

Aston and Savona highlight the importance of deixis to the active involvement (and implication) of the viewer: 'Just as Barthes identified the "non-innocent" reader, so

theatre is attended by the “non-innocent” spectator whose world view, cultural understanding or placement, class and gender condition and shape her/his response’ (120). The spectator has an inherently deictic relationship to the action onstage – that is, the filling in of contextual details by the audience is an inescapable component of theatrical storytelling. It’s part of the allure, perhaps, of live theatre; the audience participates in the co-creation of the live act of theatre and produces as many meanings as there are spectators. While there are myriad variations in the possible interpretations of signifiers, ‘In the theatres characterised by conventionalism, ...the spectator is invited to participate in the construction and operation of imaginative space, and to learn such conventions as will facilitate effective participation’ (Aston and Savona 160). Aston and Savona refer to the set of conventions that govern audience behaviour in the global North – these expectations outline not just the behaviour and affect expected of the spectator, but they also presume a certain amount of fluency in the language of theatrical performance. Most notably, these conventions encourage the maintenance of the fourth wall, which, in turn, facilitates the suspension of disbelief. That the audience understands that the action onstage is not ‘real’ is essential to their enjoyment, because it creates necessary estrangement between signifier and interpreter. The Donmar Trilogy employs several tools to demonstrate and change this distance between actor and audience: the immersive quality of the prison set, coupled with the minimal nature of the diegetic set for *Julius Caesar*, makes some signs more mimetic and others more indexical than expected. The diegetic set – the set supposedly constructed by the incarcerated characters – is mostly functional. The stage is mostly empty; if furniture is needed, they use the kinds of chairs and tables one might expect to find in a prison

recreation room. The sparseness of the set within the set highlights the lack of resources available to the incarcerated characters, as well as the creativity required to produce the play in such a space. The audience is asked to apply their contextual knowledge to the prison frame, temporarily inhabiting that fictional space as though it were reality. This is where the prison frame quashes the radical potential of the work – it relies, however incidentally, on the audience's presumptions and frames them as fact. In contrast, the Donmar Trilogy's genderqueer cast unseats the audience's conventional expectations by stretching and morphing the semiotic process. Set against the prison frame, these techniques manage to foreground only a partial view of hegemony, estranging only certain modes of semiotic authority.

My dive into these plays has returned three salient topics: gender, racism, and incarceration. These three avenues cannot be mapped onto the three instalments of the Donmar Trilogy one-for-one, but they emerge differently in each production. Beginning with *Julius Caesar*, I will look at the ways gender is animated by violence, and the ways in which violence contribute to the reinforcement of the fourth and fifth walls. In my discussion of *Henry IV*, I will delve more deeply into the mechanisms by which masculinity is constructed using design and performance. And, finally, I take an anti-racist approach to *The Tempest*, which is perhaps our densest text in that the boundaries between frames are the least clear. The echoes of this intersectional lens can (hopefully) be found throughout the other chapters of this dissertation – however, the construction and elision of race in *The Tempest* is worth noting.

My emotional bias throughout these chapters has surfaced in the form of a deep aversion to carceral justice in general. I am aware that this lens cannot be taken for granted and therefore has less empirical power as a tool for examining the Donmar Trilogy. We cannot guess at what the artists behind the Donmar Trilogy hoped the impact of the work would be, though the paratext surrounding the project, preserved in interviews, memoirs, and papers, gives the impression of a project geared toward improving the lives and prospects of women, incarcerated and otherwise. The platform Digital Theatre+ currently hosts dozens of video interviews and written resources about the 2016 project. One essential video is titled 'The Prison Context: Prison Character Introductions'. In the 47-minute film, a handful of cast members deliver monologues about their thoughts and lives in prison. But these characters aren't fictional; these monologues are 'reflections of the inmates with whom they worked' (Digital Theatre+). Each monologue is delivered straight to camera in a highly naturalistic style. This film provides extensive background information not just on each incarcerated character, but on the relationships between them. In her monologue, Rosie (Clare Dunne) says of Hannah (Harriet Walter): 'I was an idiot for the first while. I'll be honest. But then Hannah could see that I had a bit of smarts, and she wanted me to go and get my stuff together, get my life together. Because she believes that, like, she can help people sort themselves out outside after' (Digital Theatre+ 02:48). That the incarcerated characters appear to be based on real people is highly significant; it makes every depiction of them and their relationships a commentary on their lives. This piece of verbatim theatre could be seen either to platform or appropriate the lives of these incarcerated women. In either case, the dramaturgical throughline is clearly visible between this film and the

Donmar Trilogy itself. It serves as an optional extra that tells us more about the world of the prison and the people held in it.

Through my examination of Walter's memoir and other paratexts, I will highlight several examples of ways that the Donmar Trilogy both approximates and evades an anti-carceral point of view. These moments of commentary on incarceration take the form of highly individuated narratives – for example, Walter's use of Judith Clark as real-life inspiration – to relocate the injustice of incarceration from systems of economic and racial disparity to stories of individual penance and redemption. It is this neoliberal project that has caught my attention most strongly, and that discovery is reflected differently throughout the following chapters.

3.2 *Julius Caesar: Making Masculinity*

Between 2012 and 2016, Phyllida Lloyd directed her trilogy of genderqueer (billed as all-female) Shakespeare plays at the Donmar Warehouse in London. In 2016, all three of these productions were staged in repertoire for a special filming by the BBC Studio, directed by Rhodri Huw. All three productions (and both runs) were fronted by Harriet Walter, who writes about her experience in her book, *Brutus and Other Heroines: Playing Shakespeare's Roles for Women* (2016). Walter recounts the early stages of the project, in which she and Lloyd considered their reasons and methods for depicting Shakespeare with a genderqueer cast. 'But what right have I...?' Walter asks (158).

Lloyd introduced the prison frame, within which all the productions would be portrayed.

Walter writes:

So Phyllida's idea seemed not only to be totally grounded in possibility, but also provided a perfect metaphor for the way women's voices are largely excluded from the centre of our cultural history (159).

The discontinuities in signs of masculinity and femininity posed by the genderqueer cast could be explained away, even glossed over by the provision that these plays were happening inside another masquerade in which all of the performers were necessarily women. However, as Walter writes, the prison frame took on a life of its own, allowing the artists to highlight the voices of those who are regularly and systematically disenfranchised by the structures that are already prevalent in Shakespeare's canon (159).

Walter recounts the unorthodox ways in which the trilogy came together. In partnership with Clean Break, a charity that brings theatre workshops to prisons, Lloyd

and a few of her creative partners brought their work directly to the women they were depicting. For Walter, the themes of *Julius Caesar*, the first play of the trilogy, found roots in the lives of the incarcerated women, who in turn provided Walter and her colleagues footholds in the characters. Walter writes on the emotional dynamics amongst the incarcerated women she met: 'The themes of violence, loyalty, competition, suicide, and the marginalised quality of the domestic scenes all resonated with them' (Walter 161). Going forward, I will explore the function of the prison frame in each of Lloyd's genderqueer productions at the Donmar and the ways in which the frame creates semiotic distance between the bodies of the women performers and their male counterparts, as well as the ways in which the Donmar Trilogy both exceeds and reinforces the hegemonic constraints on marginalised bodies.

Julius Caesar (2012) was the first production in Lloyd's trilogy – though, at the time, it was reviewed as a standalone production (Billington). In the initial run, the role of Julius Caesar was played by Frances Barber, who connects the content of the play with the environment of a prison in an interview with *Aesthetica*: '*Julius Caesar* is a comment on what happens when a despot is deposed and how anarchy can result. Our production is set in a women's prison in which there is a power structure, subterfuge, treachery and danger – all of which are in the play' (Henderson).¹⁵ In retrospect, Walter writes of the Donmar Trilogy: 'If Brutus was about getting power, and Henry was about holding on to power, Prospero would be about letting go of power' (201) – however, this

¹⁵ There is slippage already happening between the 2012 production, which, as far as I can find, does not have a readily available recording, and the 2016 reprisal with a few different cast members. Beyond the inclusion of this quotation, my discussion is solely about the 2016 production and its BBC recording.

throughline is not suggested by paratext from the 2012 production. The logic underpinning the choice of play and setting seems to be that the events of *Julius Caesar* could happen in a women's prison. This anxiety about attaining a concrete form of justification pervades Walter's discussion of the prison frame as well. Walter writes that, in the early stages, her greatest obstacle was permission – a genderqueer cast felt like it needed justification. But ultimately, Walter concluded that the genderqueer cast is its own justification: 'Could we not play the male leaders in our national playwright's canon? And if it looked or felt wrong, wouldn't we have to ask ourselves useful questions as to why?' (157). Before delving into the impact of the project, this chapter will first establish a framework for thinking about these productions and their characterisation of gendered violence.

In the BBC's recording, the camera adds yet another layer of complexity to audience reception. The film begins with a special introduction in the form of a high shot showing the incarcerated actors being marched, single file, into the performance space from the pavement outside. This introduction represents the prison frame as 'real' to the audience at home. Instead of gesturing toward the incarcerated actors as fictional characters, the actors are icons of real incarcerated women. The filmed introduction mirrors the experience of the live audience, who were seated in the round on risers inside a large prison court, surrounded on all sides by bars and chain-link. Because the set is an immersive prison recreation court, the visual signs of material, lighting, and costumes (Aston and Savona 105) become environmental, inviting the audience to invest in the frame as though it were reality. This strict iconicity, both on film and in

person, invites the audience to position themselves within the prison frame itself – inside the fourth wall. As Keir Elam writes:

The theatre is perhaps the only art form able to exploit what might be termed iconic identity: the sign-vehicle denoting a rich silk costume may well be a rich silk costume, rather than the illusion thereof (20).

The theatrical realism of the setting and introduction uniquely positions the performance of the play by the incarcerated women – and therefore of the play itself – closer to the audience. Before the play itself even begins, the prison frame is set up clearly and definitively. Jade Anouka, portraying Marc Antony, takes the stage and reads a statement. She introduces herself and gives some of the incarcerated women's reasons for choosing *Julius Caesar*:

Good morning everyone. Thanks for coming. My name is Sade. We've chosen the plays for our trilogy because they're the ones that connected to our stories. Each play speaks to us in a different way. Only fifteen percent of women in prison are there because of violent crimes. Over half have been victims of domestic abuse, and that's partly my story. I retaliated, finally. I know that doesn't excuse it. I made a very bad mistake, and now I've got a very long sentence to serve for manslaughter. As Brutus says, 'Good words are better than bad strokes.' I've always found it hard to speak up. I used to be very shy, but working on these Shakespeare plays has really helped me to find my voice, and I know that's the same for some of the other girls here (Huw JC 00:01:06).

Anouka's speech seems to look back on the now years-past premier of the production, as well as on the process of bringing the whole trilogy to life. During the introduction, the camera cuts between a close-up of Anouka, close-ups of the other incarcerated women waiting in the corners, and wide shots of the audience and space, lit by fluorescent indoor lighting. In particular, the lighting signifies that the play has not yet 'begun', because the audience space and the stage are still bathed equally in harsh, fluorescent light. Anouka's speech winds through the incarcerated women's personal connections

to *Julius Caesar*, the disenfranchisement of incarcerated women, and her own trials and triumphs living in prison and performing this play. In a few short sentences, Anouka sets up a unique sign system, wherein the actors are icons for incarcerated women themselves, and all the actions, people, items, and effects local to the prison frame are 'real' and exist in the same world as the audience.

As the production actually 'starts', the lights go down and the title fades in over the screen. This effect, seen only by the viewers at home, signifies more specifically that the 'actual play' is beginning. The camera cuts to a close-up of a video monitor in the space, which shows footage from four security cameras. One angle shows aerial shots of Jackie Clune (Caesar) being marched in from the outside of the space by two prison guards. Clune stands in the centre of the stage, arms crossed and stance wide, as Anouka begins a live song to her. There is a flurry of activity as the lights come up to full and the camera pans out. The camera cuts in from a wide shot to a close-up of Clune kissing Anouka's incarcerated character, Sade, before standing on a chair and shouting, 'Did you miss me?' (Huw *JC* 00:03:39) to the sounds of raucous affirmation. Leah Harvey (Soothsayer) enters in scrubs and speaks the first line of the show drawn from Shakespeare's text: 'Beware the Ides of March' (Huw *JC* 00:04:03). While this is nowhere near the first line of Shakespeare's text, it bears the power cultural recognition for the audience. It signals to the spectator that this is Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*. The Soothsayer shows Clune a magazine, from which Clune reads aloud: 'Libra, you have an opportunity to show leadership skills, but tone down your feisty attitude and be sensitive to other people's feelings' (Huw *JC* 00:04:10). Clune and the other incarcerated actors mock Harvey, groaning and booing at their seriousness. This

display of group masculinity references prevalent attitudes toward astrology and horoscopes, which are commonly marketed toward women and dismissed by men as weak, irrational, and hyper-emotional. In a *Vice* article titled 'Why Straight Men Hate Astrology So Much', Hannah Ewens quotes a 36-year-old man from Kent. He remarks that astrology has always felt gendered – that, when he was a child, it came up most often in women's spaces, and that astrology-related content appears more frequently in 'women's' publications. However, he still calls it a 'Waste of time. Waste of energy. Waste of chip paper. It's like the lottery for lonely people' (Ewens). This isn't to say that all straight men who distrust astrology are misogynist, but it points to a prevalent cycle of astrology being marketed as a 'feminine' hobby and, as such, being rejected by cis, straight men.

As the crowd exits, the camera zooms in from an aerial wide shot to a close-up of Cassius, who descends back into the space to address Brutus. This cinematic style of recording pervades the play (and the trilogy), framing the speaker and precluding the audience's ability to view the stage as a whole. This style, despite its infringement on the audience's visual autonomy, allows the audience to see more closely the facial expressions and nuances of the subjects in frame. The sacrifice of breadth for depth serves both a pragmatic and artistic function. Practically, the use of directed close-ups more effectively recreates the intimacy of live, in-person performance, in which the spectator can (usually) see the stage and performers in greater detail. However, use of directed cinematography also erases one of the key impacts of in-person performance. In person, the audience is free to foreground for themselves the semiotic elements put forward onstage. The set dressing, costumes, and performances coalesce together into

a semiotic field unique to each viewer, and no sign is necessarily foregrounded above any other. In-person, the spectator is free to consider the signs generated by the environment as closely as those generated by the performers; on camera, these design elements can be observed primarily in the background of shots of the performers. For those watching virtually, the innovative semiotic field of the production is collapsed into a more cinematic, commercially recognisable format, in which the living author of signs – primarily signs involving voice, body, and face – is projected as more significant than the signs in the background. The digital viewer is constantly reminded that their witness is filtered through the inflexible lens of a camera. Dedicated (and experienced) spectators may, wherever possible, imagine what it might be like to see the show live; but the digital spectator is perpetually aware of yet another barrier between themselves and the immediacy of live semiosis.

Onstage, many of the sign systems at play are focused on erasing the seams between the world of the audience and the world of the incarcerated actors. The soundscape is primarily created live onstage, but a smattering of pre-recorded sounds also interjects at a more subliminal level to enhance the atmosphere and build tension. Most of these recorded sounds are produced in such a way that the technical work of their existence is either hidden from the audience or produced by an incarcerated actor. From the view of the audience at home, there is no visible technical booth, or any evidence of ‘traditional’ theatrical conventions, like a curtain or proscenium stage. Various technical effects reinforce the prison frame – the conspirators light themselves with handheld torches, creating an underlit effect that might be otherwise irreplicable inside a prison. These unorthodox techniques signify to the audience that the

incarcerated women have perhaps created the play themselves (or under Hannah's direction), and they close the semiotic distance between the world of the stage and the 'real world'. Elam elaborates on the function of various theatrical signs as a unified system:

The spectator will interpret this complex of messages – speech, gesture, the scenic continuum, etc. – as an integrated text, according to the theatrical, dramatic and cultural codes at his disposal, and will in turn assume the role of transmitter of signals to the performers (34).

Lloyd directs the attention of the audience by creating intentional seams in the incarcerated actors' production. Visual signs, like props, costumes, and the bodies of the actors are discontiguous with the setting of *Julius Caesar*, but they are all items which could be found in a women's prison. For example, the bloody hands of the conspirators are signified by red rubber gloves. These gloves act as an index, which Elam calls 'causally connected with their objects, often physically or through contiguity' (19). These indices coincide with the absence of 'real-world' conventions, like a traditional stage, to immerse the audience in the world of the incarcerated actors. Lloyd layers icons within the prison frame under indices and symbols in the play itself to create multiple semiotic dimensions.

In addition to their bodies and costumes, the actors' voices play a large role in the creation of this unique lexicon of signs. The voice work of nearly every actor, even those portraying female characters, falls into what voice theorist Nadine George calls deep male, which 'goes directly into the depth and [connects] the energy...to the stomach' (37). While it isn't mentioned in Walter's writing, George's work is useful for understanding the cast's vocal choices because of its performance-oriented bent – she

provides a set of material, measurable parameters by which vocal performance may be described. George specifies that the maleness or femaleness of the voice register does not correspond directly with the gender of the character – rather, by George’s example, ‘When the men went from the deep male sound into the *Macbeth* text with full voice and energy, they went directly to the body for the voice... as their whole concentration was in the body, the energy, and the breath’ (38). Because of its pitch, volume, and embodiment, the deep male register particularly connects the actor to physicality at her muscular core. George also points out a unique side effect of the deep male register - she writes that, when connected to their deep male energy, actors spoke not only from the literal, but from the emotional, gut. This physical and vocal connection of the masculine to action and the feminine (by extrapolation) to thought echoes the picture of masculinity painted by Caesar’s dismissal of the Soothsayer. Aston and Savona elaborate on ‘female entry into the symbolic order of language’ (70) and the systematic exclusion of women from vocal expression: ‘Language places the female subject in a marginalised relation to its patriarchal order’ (70). George’s work implicitly reinforces the prejudices that segregate and reinforce the linguistic subjugation of women – George implies that masculinity possesses a unique, raw, and primal talent for vocal expression, and Lloyd’s cast exploits this concept in their performances of male voice. When Lloyd’s actors assume male linguistic and vocal posturing, they blur the divide between masculinity and marginalised femininity in theatrical narrative.

For the most part, the actors retain their regional accents throughout the trilogy, referring to the prison frame, in which the women supposedly originate from all over the country. More broadly, character dialects in the Donmar Trilogy remain consistent

between incarcerated character and Shakespearean character. In Walter's discussion of her dialect in *Henry IV* she says: 'In the event I did roughen up my accent,' she writes. 'Henry became more mob leader than noble king' (185). This dialect bleeds into Hannah's voice, which includes slightly more cockney elements than Walter's own (Huw *Tmp* 00:01:09). This does not mean that Walter's performance of Hannah's dialect was unsuccessful; rather, it speaks to a broader notion that the 'incarcerated' performers view Hannah herself as a refined, educated, perhaps slightly stuffy person. It is this richly coloured dynamic amongst the incarcerated characters that surfaces in Falstaff and Hal's impersonations. Walter's mirroring of the 'less refined' dialects of many of her castmates reinforces the prison frame and pairs with the deep male vocal register, which, Steen writes, gives rise to necessary emotional openness: 'The root of the voice is inseparable from the complete expression of the human being' (Steen 11).

Throughout the trilogy, Walter's deep, even hoarse, vocal posturing grounds the text in emotion and physicality and parallels the reactive emotions mentioned in Sade's introduction. Throughout her account of the development process, Walter's commentary is underwritten with the belief that education/enlightenment and incarceration are somehow at odds – that Walter's own, refined accent was not sufficiently iconic of the 'kind of person' she expects to find in prison. Looking again at Walter's thoughts about how she herself might end up in prison – 'Why might someone like me end up in prison? Driving offences? Sure. Some kind of tax fraud? Quite possible. Manslaughter? Not impossible. But none of these matched Brutus' (163) – there emerges a kind of hierarchy of punishable crimes that reflects the justice system itself. While Walter's view of crime does reinforce this system, her words here also point out the inherent inequality of the

criminal justice system, in which circumstances out of one's control can have a permanent impact on one's liberty. This discussion exposes a pervasive anxiety surrounding mimesis; because of the risk inherent in genderqueer casting, Walter feels the need to pick up the proverbial slack, making up for a lack of iconicity in the realm of gender expression by paying extra attention to mimetic details in other areas. This is one of the hallmarks of the Donmar Trilogy's relationship with semiotics – the project is in many ways a response to the demand for gendered mimesis. It simultaneously exposes and placates societal anxieties about inadequate gender performance. In line with Walter's reasoning, genderqueer casting certainly exposes the extent to which gender constraints are arbitrary, as well as the unique ways in which carceral punishment affects women. However, Walter's concern for the mimetic properties of her dialect reinforces hegemonic ideas about incarcerated women – her anxiety to be 'believed' as an incarcerated person supersedes her stated project of highlighting and undermining stereotypes about marginalised genders more broadly.

3.2.1 Cassius and the Doughnut

Gendered signs are generated by the individual, but they are played out most expressively in exchange with other bodies. The behaviours that fall into the category of the masculine are not developed and reinforced in a vacuum – rather, they escalate in an echo chamber like the prison in which the trilogy is set. Walter recounts workshops with incarcerated women, writing that 'so many women aped male behaviour and played out relationships with one another that mirrored the male/female relationships they experienced on the outside' (162). These behaviours are interpreted and

represented by the incarcerated actors in *Julius Caesar*. In her discussion of Brutus, Walter compares Brutus' internal conflict to Cassius' dispassionate pragmatism. 'Cassius is the most purely revolutionary character in the play,' she writes. 'He is not hampered by love of Caesar as Brutus is. He is clear-eyed about the situation' (Walter 165). This claim situates pragmatism not only as an opposite of emotion, but as a necessary component of 'pure' revolution. In Walter's reading of the dynamic between the two men, Brutus must shed his womanish emotions to commit fully to Cassius' insurrection. The performances that grow out of this seed are commensurately more complex than this simple dichotomy. Brutus/Hannah/Walter's gender-based anxieties are foregrounded, backed into a corner by Cassius/Noma/Laird's wives. It is worth noting here that Cassius is depicted in the text as unsatisfactorily masculine in his austerity: Caesar mocks him, saying,

He is a great observer, and he looks
Quite through the deeds of men...
Seldom he smiles, and smiles in such a sort
As if he mocked himself and scorned his spirit
That could be moved to smile at anything (JC 1.2.201-7).

Here, Caesar publicly ridicules Cassius for his dour demeanour. In being said to 'look through' the actions of other men, Cassius inhabits a shrewish role. Caesar relegates Cassius not to a category of men, but a category of women who act like men. This suggestion paints Cassius' masculinity as perpetually inadequate, working and overworking to assert itself among a group of men to whom masculinity comes naturally. These men, Caesar says, are able to enjoy the arts (JC 1.2.204), expressing their pleasure without reflexive anxiety. Through both Walter's and Caesar's assessments, Cassius comes off as someone who insists on performing masculinity to

his own specifications. Caesar's description of Cassius as having a 'lean and hungry look' (*JC* 1.2.194) clashes with Laird's larger body, transforming what is written as a physical property into something communicated through Cassius' use of signifiers. Cassius is made thin through external signifiers – in calling Cassius 'spare' (*JC* 1.2.201), Caesar depicts him not only as physically thin, but thin as a result of lack of excess.

This anxiety is confirmed by Lloyd's cut for the Donmar Trilogy, in which Cassius' line from the excised Act 1 Scene 3 is transplanted into the exchange just before Caesar's re-entrance and subsequent ridicule of Cassius. Cassius says, 'But, woe the while, our fathers' minds are dead, / And we are governed with our mothers' spirits. / Our yoke and sufferance show us womanish' (*JC* 1.3.82-84). The transplantation of this line highlights its importance to Lloyd's point of view; Cassius' gender anxiety is exacerbated by his subjugated status. Cassius' use of 'with', rather than 'by', suggests that mother-ness both oppresses the men and is the accompanying feature of their oppression. They are governed both by and alongside it. Cassius/Noma/Laird paints subjugation as a woman's role – Caesar astutely echoes this, saying, 'Such men as he be never at heart's ease / Whiles they behold a greater than themselves, / And therefore are they very dangerous' (*JC* 1.2.208-210). Caesar mitigates (and solidifies) the heft of this accusation by shoving a doughnut into Cassius' mouth, thereby physically silencing and humiliating him (Huw *JC* 00:14:20). The doughnut incident balances on the border between bullying and outright violence (in the end, is there a difference?) – because the crowd of Romans/incarcerated women is jeering along with Caesar, Cassius has little recourse. This forced entry, even by doughnut, is sufficient

fuel for Cassius's feelings of indignance at being emasculated by Caesar. By forcing Cassius to 'receive' the doughnut, Caesar subjugates him, placing him in the position of sexual object – of woman. One could argue that this forced entry makes reference to Laird's AFAB¹⁶ body and its capacity for the receipt of sexual penetration. It echoes Cassius' own meticulous efforts to distance himself from all feminine signifiers and, most notably, his failures in doing so. Cassius' heightened performance of masculinity is met with scrutiny and ridicule; through a trans lens, Cassius does not pass as male insofar as his performance is exposed as just that – a performance.

To read Cassius through a trans lens is not to claim that Cassius himself is trans masculine in this version of *Julius Caesar*; rather, the lexicon of transness is a useful aid in conceptualising how Cassius interacts with and is acted upon by other bodies. Cassius' trans resonances – and the genderqueer casting overall – take the form of his rejection of feminising traits, but the crux of this reading, I argue, lies in Cassius' collisions with other men. Walter writes that Cassius works 'on Brutus rather as Lady Macbeth works on her husband' (165), reinforcing Cassius' feminine shrewdness. Despite his best efforts, it seems, Cassius cannot help relying on his shrewish capacity for persuasion – he is a shrew, shrewed, shrewd. In many ways, the events of *Julius Caesar* warn of what can happen when this shrewdness goes unchecked. I want to be cautious here not to reduce shrewdness to a signifier solely of femininity; two of Cassius' defining traits are his shrewishness and his ambition, two qualities which, from our discussion of *The Taming of the Shrew*, are punished more severely in women than

¹⁶ Assigned Female At Birth

in men. Rather than equating Cassius' femininity with his shrewdness (and implicitly classing him as incorrectly, inadequately feminine), we can deconstruct the ways in which Cassius is not merely emasculated, but actively feminised by Caesar's treatment of him in Lloyd's adaptation. Acting as ringleader, Caesar points out Cassius' qualities of gendered difference – how he fails in his scepticism to perform even masculine emotions, and how this departure from the norm makes him untrustworthy. These differences span categories beyond gender; this exchange can (and should) be read for its relationship to disability, fatness, race, and class.

As Cassius, Laird's body and accent are markedly different to Clune's white, clean-cut image. In the world of the prison frame, Laird's incarcerated character is also marginalised as a fat, non-white immigrant. Halberstam writes that 'Masculinity...becomes legible as masculinity where and when it leaves the white male middle-class body' (2). Halberstam foregrounds the intersection of gender performance with race and class; in the semiotic field of Lloyd's *Julius Caesar*, signifiers of marginality determine where the incarcerated performer falls in what Walter refers to as the 'prison hierarchy' (162). According to Walter (filtered through her formerly incarcerated colleagues), this hierarchy – dictated primarily by the nature of the crime for which the women are imprisoned – spills over into the action of *Julius Caesar* at critical moments. I argue that the doughnut incident is one such example. While the audience is not aware of what sort of crimes Laird and Clune's incarcerated characters have committed, the doughnut incident clarifies in mimetic detail the institutional power that Clune's character already holds over Laird's. Caesar's violence toward Cassius serves as a multivalent (in that it extends through both the prison frame and the text of

Julius Caesar) reminder that Cassius/Laird's body is an object that can at any moment be subjected to violation by hegemonic power.

Royce Best raises the term 'crip estrangement',¹⁷ a 'phenomenon that occurs in Shakespearean drama when representations of disability are featured within metatheatrical structures' (*Making Obesity Fat*). According to Best's framework, the presentation not just of Cassius, but also of Laird's incarcerated character as fat and Other adds a metaphysical layer to the production's semiosis. The doughnut-shoving incident blurs the boundary between fat femininities and fat masculinities – it renders fatness both queer and vulnerable, depicting Cassius' fat body as an object open to violence because of its estrangement from the thin, white norm. Best writes, 'Crip estrangement exposes an understanding of crip embodiment, or more specifically queer fat embodiment, that is overwritten by a generally received quotidian sense of reality' (*Making Obesity Fat*). I argue that the doughnut incident is crip estrangement in reverse – it collapses Laird's incarcerated character's queer fatness into the obese archetype that demands a doughnut be shoved into her mouth. Caesar puts Cassius in his place, reinforcing the fat body's social role as a symbol of sloppy excess and a receptacle for comedic violence.

¹⁷ For further reading, see Elena Levy-Navarro's 'The Culture of Obesity in Early and Late Modernity' (2008).

3.2.1.1 *Domesticity, Intimacy, and Gendered Power*

The reinforcement of status between the Caesar and Cassius mirrors what Walter refers to amongst the incarcerated women; according to Walter, the incarcerated actors rearranged themselves to mimic the conventions of heteronormative life. These displays of gendered aggression recur when Caesar grabs Calpurnia (Zainab Hasan) by the face and throws her to the ground after deciding to ignore her vision (Huw *JC* 00:39:07).

Thinking back to Sade's prologue, there is a striking parallel between her brief account of domestic violence and this enactment of it as part of Shakespeare's play. Against a textually female character, Caesar's assertion of dominance manifests without irony – no one, incarcerated characters included, is laughing. Clune's Caesar is a man who regularly dismisses women and enacts violence against them if they get in his way, harkening back to Anouka's remarks about the prevalence of domestic violence in incarcerated actors' histories. In comparison with the doughnut incident, Caesar's abuse of his wife is unfiltered; where gendered violence between men is told through abstractions, violence against women is starkly mimetic. The romantic dynamics at work in Shakespeare's play and in the world of the prison collide and mesh with each other. Brutus and Portia's loving intimacy is coded queerly. When they kiss, for a moment the tenderness between them can be read both as between Brutus and Portia and Hannah and Rosie (the actors' incarcerated character names) (Huw *JC* 01:31:06). As Portia, Dunne says:

Am I your self
But as it were in sort or limitation,
To keep with you at meals, comfort your bed,
And talk to you sometimes? (Huw *JC* 00:30:40)

Here, Portia asks if their marriage is not between equals, but one in which she is relegated to the status of ornament and object. At this accusation, Walter's Brutus shakes his head regretfully. Portia continues, 'If it be no more, / Portia is Brutus' harlot, not his wife' (Huw *JC* 00:30:56). This line highlights a categorical distinction between sex workers and wives – the implication, of course, is that Portia is more worthy than a sex worker of Brutus' confidence. This line also illuminates the ways in which women who hold power are also accountable for reinforcing that power through the marginalisation of other groups of women (sex workers, women of colour, trans women, and so on). 'Think you that I am no stronger than my sex,' she continues, 'being so fathered and so husbanded?' (Huw *JC* 00:31:25). When Brutus again refuses to share his thoughts, Portia uses a split CD to give herself a wound on her thigh. Only then does Brutus agree to tell her, and the two embrace tenderly (Huw *JC* 00:31:40). The impact of the genderqueer casting is on full display in these moments. The simple presence of two comparably gendered bodies in an act of intimacy peels back the layers of heteronormativity in the relationship between Brutus and Portia, displaying instead something queer and trusting in the relationship between Hannah and Rosie.

3.2.1.2 *Power and Mimesis*

The doughnut incident is mimetic within the prison frame – as far as the audience can tell, that's a real doughnut going into Laird's mouth. But the incident is also non-mimetic; it gestures toward violent penetration indexically, simultaneously highlighting Cassius' difference and mitigating the severity of the act. Walter writes that the 'sight of women doing this set the violence in greater relief than in most "normal" male productions

where the fighting is taken for granted' (197). Walter's presupposition that onstage violence is considered natural amongst men is part of the equation, but I argue that a trans lens complicates this notion. Mimetic violence is judged by the perceived differences in power between the bodies engaging in it. Furthermore, differences are created and emphasised through violence – primarily, Cassius' inadequate performance of masculinity is made tangible through violence. Between men, violence stratifies and reinforces power – by enacting (and getting away with) violence against Cassius, Caesar further cements his supremacy over him in the eyes of other men. Caesar implicitly highlights the capability of Cassius' body to be violated; by performing this allegorical act of violation, Caesar brings that violence into the realm of the theatrical. It is a stark reminder of early modern expectations that women ought, with the help of their male guardian(s), to recount their assaults through strictly delineated public theatre (Solga 36). Caesar's treatment of Cassius constitutes an evolution of this principle – he rehearses gendered and sexual violence for the purpose of establishing Cassius' body as something that can be made property. He objectifies Cassius – he turns his body into an object, the site of potential further violations. This is not to say that to treat a masculine body as one might a woman's is to make that body trans;¹⁸ rather, it highlights Cassius/Noma/Laird's own embodied gender, especially the ways in which his body is incongruous with the signifiers expected of cis, white men. In contrast,

¹⁸ This snag is best illustrated, I think, by Cara Delevingne's infamous Met Gala outfit from 2021. The outfit featured the phrase, 'Peg the patriarchy,' which illustrates a certain neoliberal, bioessentialist fantasy of reclaiming power by treating cis men the way they treat cis women. This phrase also perpetuates the homophobic notion that to be pegged (or anally penetrated more broadly) is somehow humiliating or invalidating.

Caesar/Clune's body is established as a locus of gendered power, capable of enforcing its superiority through violence.

With the added layer of genderqueer casting, I am reminded of Walter's claim that the queer and incarcerated women she worked with 'aped' the heteronormative behaviours most often attributed to straight, cis men (162). This observation (and racially loaded word choice) simultaneously disenfranchises queer, incarcerated women and validates the violence experienced by straight women at the hands of their male partners. This regressive view of queerness imagines queer relationships in parallel with straight ones, measuring their components against heteronormativity. While queer femininity has important overlap with masculinity, this does not necessarily allow us to map queer relationships between women onto straight relationships. Performances of masculinity by queer women are as infinitely nuanced and individual as those by cis men; however, queer women have the added dimension of lived experience. The equation of queer women, especially butch lesbians, to straight men insidiously erases the subversive potential of queer femininities, and it collapses sexuality and gender in a way that is both trans- and queerphobic. The suggestion that, through his abuse, Caesar/Clune's incarcerated character acts 'masculinely' in his relationship with the more traditionally femme Calpurnia oversimplifies queer dynamics and impedes the subversive potential of the project. Halberstam writes: 'By making female masculinity equivalent to lesbianism, ...or by reading it as proto-lesbianism awaiting a coming community, we continue to hold female masculinity apart from the making of modern masculinity itself' (46). Halberstam warns against the collapse and interchange of gender performance and sexuality; crucially, he argues that this elision perpetuates the

hegemonic difference between origins of masculinity. It continues, in effect, the attribution of masculinity to cis men as an inherent trait – a phenomenon that Walter claims to reject. In Walter's discussion of queer, incarcerated women, she effectively conflates their queerness with their masculinity, because, in the cisnormative imagination, queer women have sex with other women as part of a masculine gender performance. Under critical scrutiny, this perspective is homophobic and regressive – it allows women who are both queer and masculine to be continuously pushed to the side-lines of legibility, considered constantly in flux between more legitimate modes of being.

On non-romantic/intimate side, the violent intrusion of the doughnut, accompanied by the laughter of the other men, replicates the expectation that the male/masculine body should be capable of receiving acts of violence. In comparison with Caesar's abuse of Calpurnia, the doughnut incident highlights the minute differences between a power play amongst men and the enactment of entrenched power between a straight, romantic couple. Where Caesar's power over his wife is considered innate (due to each of their gendered differences), his political power over Cassius must be exerted both physically and intellectually. In Lloyd's adaptation, violence between romantic partners takes more recognisable forms. Calpurnia is marginalised, both physically and intellectually, by her husband, and moments of violence enacted on her are dictated primarily by Shakespeare's text. In contrast, violence between men in the production happens in a distinctly more abstract space. After Caesar's murder, the killers don red rubber gloves to signify their bloodied hands (Huw *JC* 00:50:55). The semiotic tethers to blood, signified by colour, location, and

action alone, abstract the murder from the mimetic prison frame and pull the entire scene farther away from the province of verisimilitude. The gore of the scene is semiotically avoided, looked away from – man-on-man violence is relegated to the realm of the imaginary. The use of abstraction partially validates the genderqueer casting. In these scenes, there are no female characters present. At its most basic level, this abstracted style allows this stage full of women to be read as men, even in the absence of female characters against which to frame their masculinity. In abstracting the violence between male characters, Lloyd allows mimesis to foreground violence against women in the play. By Walter's reasoning, mimetic masculine violence is 'taken for granted' (197), insofar as capacity for physical violence is itself a gendered trait.

In this presupposition, Walter drifts into dangerous territory; to uncritically associate violence with masculinity is, in many ways, to reinforce binary modes of being. It suggests that cis women are inherently under threat from cis men – not because of hegemonic power structures, but because of imagined masculine ontology. Moreover, this notion reinforces femininity as a satellite of masculinity, as a vestige that must claim and reclaim its own properties. This tactic points to the existence of gendered signs, but it does nothing to interrogate the process by which those signs come to be gendered. However, moments like the doughnut-shoving incident do point to violence inherent in the construction of masculinity, even amongst men. The genderqueer cast – or more accurately, the simple absence of ostensibly male/masculine bodies onstage – is in these moments saddled with the task of creating necessary distance between viewer and violence. If, for example, Caesar were played by a cis man and Cassius a cis woman, the implication and violence of the doughnut

would have a different cadence. Played between the bodies of two women, the physical threat from Caesar is somewhat mitigated, but the vulnerability of Cassius' body is highlighted. As a moment in which mimetic and symbolic violence bleed together, the doughnut incident is perhaps a reductive demonstration of the dynamics between the two incarcerated characters. One person, Caesar, acts as penetrator of another, Cassius; the doughnut becomes indexical of a sexual prosthesis, a foreign and unwelcome object in Cassius' mouth. But, under the collaborative influence of live theatre, this moment transcends a mere replication of masculine violence – it highlights, however incidentally, the extent to which gender performance depends on its collisions with others. Cassius authors gendered signs, but these signs are publicly rejected by Caesar; in doing so, Caesar incites a communal rejection of Cassius. Harkening back to Butler's early work, Cassius' inadequate gender performance renders him illegible and therefore threatening to the strict hierarchy of masculinity. In the text, Cassius' threat to Caesar's power is located in his affect. Told by the genderqueer cast, this moment of hegemonic reinforcement bleeds into the queer dynamics of the incarcerated women. Their performances of masculinity are filtered through their gendered anxieties as queer women – the doughnut incident highlights not just how they themselves struggle for power, but also how this hierarchy is still infected with the hallmarks of patriarchal hegemony.

3.2.2 *The Fifth Wall*

The physicality in *Julius Caesar* both grounds the action in the frame and trespasses into the realm of the theatrical. In Act 3 Scene 2, the famous speeches given by Brutus

and Antony are both characterised by unnatural sound, lighting, and movement. The crowd performs as a unified flock, lifting and moving the speaker around the stage, and the use of amplified, reverberated sound removes the scene from the prison frame and more closely resembles Elam's description of a 'typical' semiotic system, in which theatre magic plays a significant role in translating the action to the audience (Elam 27). The scene is tightly lit, scored, and choreographed, increasing the semiotic distance between *Julius Caesar* and the strict realism of the prison frame. Throughout the play, violence is the vehicle through which the cast crosses the boundaries between reality, the prison frame, and the world of *Julius Caesar*. Through violence that bleeds between the two frames, the incarcerated actors play out references to their daily life in prison. Walter writes that self-harm was common among the incarcerated women with whom she did workshops, and its echoes can be found throughout the play (37). Portia's display of her self-harm bleeds out of the frame of *Julius Caesar* and into the prison frame; it is momentarily difficult to tell whether Brutus' reaction is limited to the world of *Julius Caesar*. The signs that contribute most to this phenomenon are the icons – a believable gash, a real CD, a real doughnut, etc. In mixing iconic and indexical signs of violence, Lloyd highlights the disparities between these semiotic classes. Signs that lean more toward iconicity ground the exchange in possibility within the prison frame, while indices highlight the 'playing pretend' aspect of the prison performance. While these signs are indexical in the world of the play, they are iconic in the world of the prison frame. A children's chair is just a children's chair; a rubber glove is a rubber glove. It is only through the added layer of performance that these items become what they mean in the world of *Julius Caesar*.

These signs that creep out into the realm of the real are accompanied by what Walter refers to as “breakout” moment[s]’ (174). These moments are sudden and noticeable departures from Shakespeare’s text into the world of the incarcerated actors. For example, at the beginning of Act 3 Scene 3, Cinna the Poet (Karen Dunbar) is suddenly pulled off by guards ‘for meds’ (Huw JC 01:10:04) and replaced by a new actor (Shiloh Coke) reading from a script. Lloyd is playing with nested signs again, opening the scene up to even more interpretation by audience members who are already familiar with the play – those who know the play know that violence is imminent. The tension gradually mounts as the incarcerated actors laugh and cheer, enjoying the violence – perhaps too much. One ensemble member holds a smartphone and films the scene – this footage is interspersed throughout the scene, lending the recorded scene a hectic, personal bent for the audience at home. The staged violence spills into ‘real’ violence. The sign of this violence appears in the form of ‘real’ blood on Coke’s face, though these signs are still limited to the secondary plane – the world of the incarcerated actors. There is a sudden shift in tone as the incarcerated actors realise they have gone too far, and a guard enters to lead the bleeding Coke offstage. This complex moment evokes Elam’s discussion of mixed signifiers. The ‘fake’ violence and ‘real’ blood interact across planes and classes of signifiers – the staged violence of *Julius Caesar* maps onto the world of the incarcerated actors as iconic of the violence they eventually actually enact against Coke. However, this violence, though ‘real’ for the incarcerated actors, is still iconic for the audience. The staged, pre-breakout violence then becomes more indexical, now that we know that ‘real’ blood signifies ‘real’ violence. Violence that the audience accepts as fake - the pre-breakout beating of

Cinna the Poet - becomes indexical as it is replaced by violence that is even more 'real' – the beating of Coke's incarcerated character.

This network of signs complicates the boundary between audience and stage. Aston and Savona explore the fourth wall, which 'demarcates a fixed boundary between performance space and audience space....The spectator position thus constructed is both voyeuristic and identificatory' (92). The prison frame creates a cushion – a fifth wall – between the world of *Julius Caesar* and the world of the audience. This distancing of the sign system of the play from the real world takes the pressure off of the genderqueer cast to justify itself and to perform masculinity free from scrutiny. Instead of relying on 'successive regimens of actor-training designed to blur distinctions between the actor and the role' (Aston and Savona 92), the actors become symbols of masculinity, linked only by context, rather than by similitude (Elam 20). These breakout moments either build the tension, in the case of *Cinna the Poet*, or they de-escalate it. In Act 4 Scene 3, Walter breaks character to explode at two incarcerated actors giggling on the side-lines: 'What the fuck are you doing back there? Just either get off the stage or do something useful on it. Go on, little shits' (Huw JC). This harsh reaction elicits laughter from the live audience, and the camera work reinforces its comedic effect. Walter's initial outburst is framed in a close-up before the camera cuts to a wide shot of the incarcerated actors scurrying away. Walter writes of this moment: '[I]t shifted the ground and upped the stakes and reminded people that a theatre can be an unsafe and unpredictable place. Was that Brutus? A prisoner? Or Harriet Walter losing the plot?' (174). Walter's conjecture raises the question of why moments like these elicit laughter from the audience. In addition to the image of revered actor Harriet Walter suddenly

breaking character and cursing as humorous in its own right, this moment is also unexpected – it destabilises the predictability of the fourth wall, reminding the audience of the nested frames. These breakout moments reiterate the multitude of sign systems at work. Beyond that, the breakout moments show us how thin the veil is between theatre and reality, play and harm. More specifically, it highlights how play for some can be harm for others. In relation to the genderqueer cast, breakout moments heighten audience awareness of the performativity – maybe even artificiality – of the stage spectacle. In the blink of an eye, Brutus reverts to Hannah, and our gendered perceptions are made even more fragile.

The play ends on another breakout moment when, with only a few lines left, the lights come on and the camera cuts to a high, wide shot of the stage. A guard enters and shouts, 'Five minutes to lock-up. Lie down, ladies' (Huw *JC* 01:52:00). The particular use of 'ladies', a gendered word, reiterates the frame of the genderqueer cast and highlights the stripping of identity that incarcerated people often face. The camera cuts to a close-up of Walter, standing at the top of the stairs, who whispers, 'You can't be serious' (Huw *JC* 01:52:16). The guard approaches the bottom of the stairs and says, 'Down you come, Hannah' (Huw *JC* 01:52:37) – that the guard is on a first-name basis with Hannah, Walter's incarcerated character, references Hannah's life sentence and her prominence in the incarcerated community. As she's led offstage, Hannah pleads tearfully, 'It's not even finished. You can't stop it yet. We won't get another chance, you know that' (Huw *JC* 01:52:39). Walter turns her attention to the live audience. She says, 'It never fucking finishes. The world's gone to hell. We can't do anything in here. You've got to do something!' (Huw *JC* 01:52:50) before the lights go

black. Midway through Walter's final lines, the camera cuts from a close up to another wide, high shot of Walter being ushered offstage. This aerial view reunites the viewer at home with the live audience, framing Walter as a piece of a much larger puzzle of changing signs. Walter's outburst raises the question – was this *Julius Caesar*? Or was it a play about doing *Julius Caesar*?

3.2.3 Yes, More Brecht

One of the key elements of semiotic texture is what Diamond introduces as 'alienation' (83), from Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt*: the 'technique of defamiliarizing a word, an idea, a gesture so as to enable to spectator to see or hear it afresh' (84). This alienation provides a skeletal framework for the disruption of societal norms through gestic theatre. Echoes of Brechtian alienation appear in contemporary theory in the form of Best's 'crip estrangement' (2019) and Williams' 'incomplete dramaturgy' (1). Williams writes, 'Feminist dramaturgical strategies can be used...to disrupt the problematic familiarity of Shakespeare' (8). This disruption is central to the project of the genderqueer cast – the deconstruction of Shakespeare as a pillar of cultural hegemony can be pursued through the emphasis of both distance and difference. Incomplete dramaturgy, then, is the neglect of this pursuit, the failure to cross the threshold that separates mimesis from *Verfremdungseffekt*. This is not to position the two as polar phenomena, nor is it to judge one against the other – rather, it is to examine the liminal site between them. Specifically, *Verfremdungseffekt* and *Gestus* distinguish, however incidentally, the alienation of gender norms through queer(ed) casting from the rehearsal and replication of those norms through the same method. 'Casting should be

a first step among many for those who wish to intervene in the problematic dramaturgies of plays like Shakespeare's,' Williams writes. 'Instead, casting is often the first *and* last step taken' (4). What Williams points to here is the incomplete execution of the project of alienation. The presentation of discontiguous signs onstage sets up but does not put into action the more Brechtian elements of the play. However, Diamond clarifies that Brecht himself does not necessarily connect gender subversion to *Verfremdungseffekt* – in fact, she writes, 'Brecht exhibits a typical Marxian blindness toward gender relations, and except for some interesting excursions into male erotic violence, he created conventionally gendered plays and too many saintly mothers (one is too many)' (83). Diamond's caveat exposes a risk in the development and implementation of gestic feminist criticism: that Brecht's impulse to alienate, strip back, and disentangle social conditions may also elide and collapse the infinite possibilities of life outside the norm, flatten intersectional identities as untouchably distant from material reality. In theatre, objectivity is a myth – it is a fantasy that it is possible to reach an interpretation of lived experience that is universal. Instead, Diamond proposes a use for gestic criticism that scatters the notion of a universally accepted objectivity. Feminist gestic criticism has the potential to provide the spectator not with a pat moral axiom, but with the tools to interpret their own positionality in relation to the differences expressed onstage. Diamond also reminds us that, as artists, the implementation of our own theoretical frameworks will necessarily be imperfect, because in those imperfections lies the possibility for updated modes of thought.

One of Brecht's key concerns, Diamond writes, is the "literarization" of the theatre space to produce a spectator/reader who is not interpolated into ideology but is

passionately and pleurably engaged in observation and analysis' (83). Literarization (not to be confused with literalization) facilitates the creation of a work of theatre that acknowledges and invites dramaturgical participation from the audience. A work that successfully literarizes itself simultaneously unmoors and re-tethers the audience's positionality in relation to the production. It asks the spectator to inhabit the role of subject, rather than that of removed looker-on – it reinvigorates the subject as an active participant in the co-creation of meaning. One of the aims of this chapter is to distil and clarify the conscious effort of literarizing a piece of theatre, and to interrogate the extent to which Shakespeare as a cultural phenomenon is considered to be already literarized, and therefore resistant to more disruptive forms of literary subversion. 'This is not to deny Brecht's wish for an instructive, analytical theatre,' Diamond writes; 'On the contrary, it invites the participatory play of the spectator, ... that significance (the production of meaning) continue beyond play's end, congealing into choice and action after the spectator leaves the theatre' (86). This thought encapsulates what the Donmar Trilogy claims to do: 'The work does not wave a Pollyanna wand,' Walter writes of the choice to position the work in a logic of incarceration. 'But it does leave people changed in their view of themselves as individuals and it welcomes them in as participants in a shared story of humanity' (159). The equation, implicit or explicit, of Shakespeare's stories with a 'shared story of humanity' is all too familiar – Williams' terminology of 'eternal resonance' (16) comes to mind. In suggesting that Shakespeare's text is uniquely positioned to inspire participation in this 'shared story', Walter uncritically centres the white literary canon. She paints Shakespeare's stories as emblematic of this fictional unity – a notion that itself enacts violence against marginalised bodies and

consciousness. In this fiction, whiteness and Britishness are the default; the language of 'inviting in' betrays a sense of ownership, or, at least, of fluency. If a project literarizes itself in relation to an existing framework of Eurocentrism, then that framework will colour the commentary made by that work. Lloyd and Walter seem to pat themselves on the back for having done the bare minimum of bringing an atypical form of literarization to an otherwise highly literarized field. The creators of the Donmar Trilogy rely on the audience to do the close reading for them; where their lived experience falls short, they leave a nebulous gap in signification, hoping that the audience will understand what they themselves cannot seem to articulate.

However, significance does not automatically beget action beyond the walls of the theatre. If galvanisation is the evolution of awareness into praxis, it is (or ought to be, perhaps) an essential goal of work that self-identifies as revolutionary or otherwise disruptive. Walter calls the prison frame a 'metaphor', though it is unclear what is metaphorical about the lived experiences of incarcerated women. In thinking of the prison frame as metaphorical, Walter inadvertently abstracts the realities of incarceration, choosing instead to equate the oppression of incarcerated women with the broader struggle of women – particularly white women – whose voices, Walter writes, are routinely excluded from culture. In collapsing the struggle of incarcerated women with all women, Walter elides the intersectional and material impacts of carceral oppression. For Walter, oppression takes the form of not feeling 'heard', of having one's voice excluded. However, the violence enacted on marginalised and incarcerated women goes beyond silencing; it takes the form of pervasive disenfranchisement, of the systematic objectification and destruction of the marginalised body and consciousness

alike. Looking through Lloyd and Walter's lens, the encroachment of the prison frame on the text of the plays can be related back to this limited framework: each breakout moment results in an act of silencing, in which the prison guards or fellow incarcerated performers interrupt or entirely halt the expression of Shakespeare's text. Through a Brechtian lens, this work can be said to be incompletely literarized – in its attempt to make visible the modes of oppression levied against incarcerated women, the Donmar Trilogy paints an incomplete picture of the form and extent of violence experienced by people who are not white, cis, and non-disabled. It self-literarizes as a text for privileged eyes.

So how do we make theatre that is instructive without being overly didactic? I propose that, beyond the implementation of a feminist Brechtian lens, joy itself stands to make the difference. Notably, Diamond emphasises Brecht's own provision that even the most instructive theatre should still be entertaining, even pleasurable (83). Enjoyment (or, simply, joy) must not be a convenient side-effect of socially engaged theatre – rather, disruptive theatre must make a project of rendering joy visible amidst oppression and suffering. It is in this area that the Donmar Trilogy is most successful. While I will not claim that the Donmar Trilogy effectively disrupts the capitalist machine through which it was produced, the joy involved in the development and performance of these works is palpable. In the first scene of *Julius Caesar*, the audience gets a glimpse of the 'real' bonds between the incarcerated women: they celebrate Caesar's return doubly, both in the text of the play and in the fictional world of the prison, overflowing with excited exclamations and laughter (Huw *JC* 00:03:30). This scene reintroduces play itself into the text – in mapping the textual mood onto the prison frame, Lloyd

imbues the performers with a sense of materiality. Their joy subverts stereotypes of incarcerated communities and humanises the cast. This humanisation goes beyond emphasis without commentary; it suggests that joy can, in fact, stand alone as a reason for an artistic endeavour. In this scene, joy itself is galvanising, in that it can be found even in the most oppressive environments. As the audience, we are introduced to the performers not as familiar archetypes, but as people whose real-world proclivities have a tangible impact on their relationship to the text.

Diamond introduces the useful concept of ‘historicity’: ‘If feminist theory sees the body as culturally mapped and gendered, Brechtian historicization insists that this body is not a fixed essence but a site of struggle and change’ (89). Historicity encompasses ‘the multiple and complex signs of a woman’s life: her color, her age, her desires, her politics’ (89). While Diamond’s explication of the term falls back on white, hegemonic concepts of race as limited to the colour of one’s skin, the familiar language of liminality can aid us in demystifying the distance between theatre that placates and theatre that galvanises. Historicity is the literarization, so to speak, of lived experience. ‘In its conventional iconicity,’ Diamond writes, ‘Theatre laminates body to character, but the body in historicization stands visibly and palpably separate from the “role” of the actor as well as the role of the character; it is always insufficient and open’ (89). The anti-mimetic disentanglement of character and actor is, primarily, a question of bodies. Diamond’s quote is well-illustrated by the tri-partite character structure in the Donmar Trilogy, in which character, incarcerated character, and actor are layered and fused. The success of genderqueer casting depends on the spectator’s capacity for assuming (and presuming) the historicity of the bodies onstage. And herein lies the snag in the

fabric of the process of genderqueer performance – where gender itself is deeply personal, often invisible and ever-changing, genderqueer casting in Shakespeare relies in part on embodied expression. In projects like the Donmar Trilogy, paratext also plays a significant role. Beyond interviews, programmes, and other ephemera, Harriet Walter lends the productions her celebrity. Genderqueer performance attempts the impossible task of rendering the infinite and invisible just the opposite; it commodifies queer gender expression through necessarily limited demonstration. ‘Brechtian theatre depends on a structure of representation, on exposing and making visible, but what appears even in the Gestus can only be provisional, indeterminate, nonauthoritative’ (Diamond 90). To translate gender performance into Brechtian gesture is to simultaneously reduce and proliferate the complexities of non-normativity – the genderqueer cast member invites the audience to use their body as a stand-in for the uninhabitable site between Gestus and icon.

Diamond depicts historicization as a tool through which ‘spectators observe the potential movement in class relations, discover the limitations and strengths of their own perceptions, and begin to change their lives’ (87). Historicization foregrounds the undepicted context in which a person becomes embodied; it relates lived experience to societal frameworks. The exposure of this relationality is essential for a call to action. However, as Williams suggests, theatre with a social project must go a step beyond merely pointing out the relationship between interiority and collective reality (15) – for the work to effect Brecht’s version of change in the audience, historicization must do more than give context. ‘The gestic moment in a sense explains the play, but it also exceeds the play, opening it to the social and discursive ideologies that inform its

production' (Diamond 90). This is where Diamond intersects most strongly with Williams: if, as Williams says, a production's dramaturgy starts and ends with casting, then so too does the play's so-called ideology. A work can only open its audience as far as it has opened itself – to implicate the audience in structures of hegemony, the work must visibly and thoroughly subject itself to the same scrutiny.

The temporal nature of theatre – the fact that it is not a discrete event, but a period during which the play and audience continuously share a space – endows it with a unique potential for co-creation. 'When Brecht says that spectators should become historians,' Diamond writes, 'He refers both to the spectator's detachment, her "critical" position, *and* to the fact that she is writing her own history even as she absorbs messages from the stage' (87). Within this framework, history tangles with memory and takes the form not of an objective chronology, but a collection of lived experiences. There is significant radical potential in the concept of historicity – its subjectivity, its persistent non-normativity, and its transience allow historicity to resist flattening. It transforms the artistic output into something that cannot be bought or sold, for it is alive. It cannot be made a product – even the language of theatre, in calling a show a 'production', which implies an ongoing process of producing, resists this commodification. I want to draw a clear distinction between elision or flattening and Brecht's *Gestus*. Where *Gestus* distils archetypes, the Donmar Trilogy reinforces them; where *Verfremdungseffekt* alienates, the Donmar Trilogy simply rejects, or even ameliorates (Diamond 84). In the Donmar Trilogy, mimesis clashes with *Verfremdungseffekt* only insofar as the realism of the prison frame allows (and demands) semiotic abstraction. The prison setting conveniently absolves the creative

team from making justifiable artistic decisions – rather, every signifier is uncritically considered to be part of the set of signs belonging to carceral environments. In using the prison frame to reject mimesis, the Donmar Trilogy finds itself bound by it ever more tightly. ‘Realism disgusted Brecht,’ Diamond writes, ‘Not only because it dissimulates its conventions but because it is hegemonic: by copying the surface details of the world it offers the illusion of lived experience, even as it marks off only one version of that experience’ (87). It is this illusion that evokes, at least for me, that same scepticism. The Donmar Trilogy depicts one experience of incarceration (an experience, notably, that its lead creators lack); it ‘dissimulates its conventions,’ immersing the audience in a space that uses mimesis to depict a recreational court, but not so well that audiences feel alienated from the theatre space. The environmental reminders that this space is a theatre (least among them, the risers on which the audience sits) partially shield the audience from the realities of prisons themselves. The hegemony of uncritical realism incidentally limits the potential for audience co-creation. By putting forward a mimetic interpretation of incarceration, especially against the indexical/symbolic field of signs within the Shakespeare plays, the creators of the Donmar Trilogy mask their own discomfort with the genderqueer cast. Harkening back to Williams’ characterisation of incomplete dramaturgy as ‘a shield that protects the creative team from questions about the intersectional politics of the play’ (15), we can extrapolate that the all-female cast protects the creative team not only from external scrutiny, but also from their own anxieties surrounding divergence.

At the heart of Walter’s account of the development process is a subtly capitalist project: the project of making the genderqueer cast marketable. In recounting the final

imposition of the prison frame on the end of *Julius Caesar*, Walter writes that she 'hoped that we had left the audience with a sense of the talent we waste when we sideline swathes of society or lock them out of sight' (180). This wasted talent is, in effect, wasted labour (and wasted capital, and wasted profit). For Walter, marginalised people are measured by their unrealised contributions – their value manifests in what they can give to society. The project of the Donmar Trilogy then becomes pointing to these actors embodying incarcerated characters and saying, 'Look at how talented they can be. Look how much entertainment you could glean from them, how much value they can bring to your theatre experience.' It transforms the figurative stage into a pedestal, a display case. It advocates for the agency of incarcerated bodies not as authors of meaning, but as vessels of value.

3.3 *Henry IV: Dichotomous Bodies*

Henry IV, the second production of Lloyd's trilogy, was originally staged in 2014 before its encore performance at King's Cross in 2016 (BBC). This series of plays is unique because, for the most part, the plays are performed not just by the same cast of actors, but by the same cast of incarcerated performers. Walter writes that her work on the role of King Henry began with a search for 'thematic links' (182) between Henry and Brutus. The script for the play was comprised of segments from both parts of *Henry IV*, focusing on the triangular relationship – and struggle for authority – between Falstaff, Prince Hal, and King Henry (Walter 186). The result is a production that highlights intimacy, growth, and loss, setting aside the sweeping historical epic for which the Henriad is known.

The film begins with the sequence showing the cast of incarcerated performers marching into the space from the street, also shown at the beginning of *Julius Caesar* and *The Tempest* (Huw *H4* 00:00:09). However, it is Clare Dunne (Rosie/Hal) who takes the stage to deliver the introduction: 'How are you? My name is Rosie Malone. I'm twenty-seven and I am a crack and heroin addict' (Huw 00:01:11). Rosie expounds upon the trials of recovery and the pitfalls of relapse, establishing the emotional core of the play swiftly and explicitly. Rosie's speech primes the audience to connect her to Hal, who is also depicted as a habitual drug user (Huw *H4*). Rosie says, 'This play is about change. It's about reformation. It's about people with troubled pasts and uncertain futures. Who wouldn't want a second chance?' (Huw *H4* 00:01:49). In a direct reach through the fourth wall, Lloyd asks the audience to consider a question that parallels Walter's call to action at the end of *Julius Caesar*. In both cases, the incarcerated

women reach out from the prison frame into the 'real world'. However, in *Julius Caesar*, Walter breaks the wall between the incarcerated performers and the audience only after the fifth wall between the incarcerated performers and *Julius Caesar* is forcibly shattered. Walter's call-out becomes a sort of 'post-text' (Abbott and Read 165), inviting the audience to participate in the formulation of post-performance reactions and documentation. In *Henry IV*, Rosie's question serves as a preface – a 'pre-text' (Abbott and Read 165) – for the play before the fifth wall is even established. Abbott and Read define 'paradocumentation' as 'non-core documents of the play that include audience reaction to the "primary text"...advancing and extending the life of a single performance' (Abbott and Read 166). By including a pre-text with a direct question to the audience, Lloyd jump-starts the process of audience paradocumentation, inviting them to react and process the core text on terms pre-set by the prologue. By including this prologue, Lloyd is able to guide and manipulate the audience's reception of events that occur inside the fifth wall.

The format of *Henry IV* as a filmic sequel to *Julius Caesar* constitutes a departure from the original format of the trilogy, which initially saw each production at least one year apart. At the time when Lloyd's *Henry IV* first ran, *The Tempest* had not yet been announced as the third instalment (Gardner, *The Guardian*). The condensed structure of the revivals, and the even more condensed structure of the films, sets these productions more directly in dialogue with one another and highlights the continuities across the prison frame. In her review of the 2016 trilogy, Lyn Gardner writes: 'Now, as a pared-down version of *The Tempest* completes the trilogy – in which each filleted production is remarkable, but when seen consecutively are utterly extraordinary – there

is a growing critical mass of gender-blind casting' (*The Guardian*). Gardner refers here to the already appreciably different landscape in feminist theatre in 2016. By Gardner's assessment, cross-casting and feminist theatre had already seen a significant rise between the premiere of *Julius Caesar* in 2012 and its reprise for the BBC (*The Guardian*). 2016 and the years surrounding it did see an influx of genderqueer casting, specifically of established (mostly white and English) actresses stepping into Shakespeare's renowned male roles. Maxine Peake played Hamlet at the Royal Exchange in 2014; Adjoa Andoh co-directed and portrayed Richard II at Shakespeare's Globe in 2018; Andoh also played Ulysses in the RSC's *Troilus and Cressida* in 2018; Glenda Jackson played King Lear in Deborah Warner's 2016 production at the Old Vic; and Golda Rosheuvel played Othello in Gemma Bodinetz's 2018 production at the Liverpool Everyman (*The Guardian* 2018). These examples constitute only a fraction of the high-profile productions that involved genderqueer casting between 2014 and the release of the filmed Donmar Trilogy in 2018, and Gardner's review of *Henry IV* reflects the rapidly expanding landscape of genderqueer, feminist Shakespeare at the time. In many ways, the return of *Julius Caesar* and *Henry IV* as preludes to *The Tempest* re-asserts those productions as early harbingers of this trend in casting. Josie Rourke, who was artistic director of the Donmar Warehouse at the time, said of *Julius Caesar*: 'Quite a senior male director...went around calling it Julius Beaver....' (Higgins). This memory serves as a stark reminder of the scepticism – and the misogyny, and the transphobic bio-essentialism – tugging at the margins of the project. In *Henry IV*, the incarcerated actors cite this misogyny in their abuse of the Hostess, and parodies of this mode of derisive masculinity pervade the production.

The wealth of par documentation surrounding the release of the filmed Donmar Trilogy in 2018 only intensifies the need to examine these productions as a united trilogy of films. On Digital Theatre+, where the Donmar Trilogy can be viewed virtually, each production is accompanied by a handful of interviews with cast and creative team members, as well as teaching materials. In 2016, the trilogy received wide press coverage, including *The Guardian*, *The Arts Desk*, and *The New York Times*. Whereas the original three productions seem to have been marketed on an individual basis (as suggested by Gardner's note on the order in which the plays were announced), the BBC's marketing of the Donmar Trilogy as a unified project, re-staged and adapted specifically for film, makes the trilogy difficult to classify. Particularly for *Henry IV*, which is comprised of cuts from two plays, Lloyd's adaptive efforts render the script anew. Using the prison frame and Dunne's spoken pre-text, Lloyd's adaptation cites a version of reality filtered, crucially, through the cis gaze. This chapter will focus on semiotisation of queer genders and masculinity as told through vice and heroism. Each character in the play engages in a complex expression of gender; for Falstaff, this takes the form of double drag, and for Lady Percy, this takes the form of behaviours that cite concepts of masculinity. This chapter will also compare the stylised and mimetic violence of *Henry IV* to the violence depicted in *Julius Caesar*, as a follow-on from the first production in the trilogy, *Henry IV* displays a more developed (and somewhat more obscured) model of the breakout from indexical to mimetic violence. In *Henry IV*, varied masculinities are expressed physically through violence and strength; in particular, inter-generational masculinities (between Hal and Falstaff, Hotspur and Northumberland, and beyond) reference and parody each other. The nature of violence enacted on the masculine

body in *Henry IV* further entrenches the gendered body as a site of struggle for power over oneself and over others. In particular, the genderqueer casts gives space for the female actors to display feats of athleticism that dislocate strength and courage from maleness.

3.3.1 Liveness and Lloyd's Cut Script

Lloyd's script for *Henry IV* is a two-hour hybrid of the first and second parts of *Henry IV*, performed without an intermission. Having cut huge amounts of content, Lloyd is able to distil the aspects of the plays that tell a salient and coherent story. In their discussion of documentation of live performance, Abbott and Read distinguish between 'mode' and 'content', between 'a traditional, theatrical "live" as well as "live" digital display' (168). The content of Lloyd's *Henry IV* remains the same across modes, between the stage at King's Cross and the screen on which it is viewed after the fact. Huw's cinematography enhances the digital 'liveness' of the performance, providing a unique experience for the audience at home. Huw's camera work evokes a sense that the shots cannot be adjusted or repeated – one of the key differences between traditional film and live theatre. Abbott and Read write that recording creates a 'represented version of performance' (169), questioning the difference between 'live' and 'alive'. The Harriet Walter onscreen exists 'alive' somewhere outside the realm of this recording, and yet we are able to view her 'live' performance from the comfort of our own homes. These live recordings are simultaneously 'performance and performance document' (Abbott and Read 170). Abbott and Read also address the phenomenon of the edited script. In their analysis of *Hamlet* at the National Theatre (widely known as *CumberHamlet*

because of its titular star, Benedict Cumberbatch), Abbott and Read write: 'The text of Shakespeare, adapted anew by director Turner, alters the writing from a document to a working script: a performance in its own right' (174). This is a critical point in the interpretation of Lloyd's *Henry IV*. Even an audience member well-acquainted with the original text would not be able to predict Lloyd's production line for line. In her extensive cutting and rearranging of the text, Lloyd transforms Shakespeare's text into an entirely new beast, allowing her to reimagine and reform the ideas of the play. Abbott and Read write:

Enabling representations of the same performance through the Encore screenings, the "text" or document of the performance becomes performance anew; the live reference point for that audience, in that location, in that time (174).

Lloyd's *Henry IV*, re-staged specifically for recording, is a standalone document in its own right. Huw employs artistic camera angles to interpret and represent the action onstage, lending the document a filmic element absent from the original, in-person performance. Because of their primary focus on the live (synchronous) streams of *Hamlet*, Abbott and Read only touch on a critical aspect of the Donmar Trilogy recordings – their rewatchability. For the Donmar Trilogy, a viewer can access the same recording of the same performance over and over again – liveness frozen in time. This paradox impacts the audience more than the core document itself – it changes the nature of possible paradorumentation, giving the audience the ability to stop, rewind, and review any element of the once-live recording. This situation disrupts the temporal properties of signification; especially concerning gender performance, so much of which is concerned with the audience's ability to scrutinise, the pause-and-rewind function

adds a method of evaluating – and, cynically, policing – the once living signs made by the actors.

3.3.2 Semiotic Distance

The set shares many characteristics with the set of *Julius Caesar*. It is bare and minimal, furnished by items one could find in a women's prison. However, there is a greater prevalence of children's furniture and accessories, which, Walter writes, could be found in a prison nursery (189). This choice provides multiple layers of significance – the smaller chairs and tables add an atmosphere of discomfort and ridiculousness to the pub scenes, emphasising Hal's juvenile attitude and lack of maturity. The furniture is discontiguous with the signs one might expect in *Henry IV*, but it fits the sign system of the prison frame. The children's objects – including furniture, a kitchen set, and plastic mugs and cutlery – are simultaneously iconic, indexical, and symbolic. While a chair is still iconic of a chair, its properties – its size, material, and colour – distance it from the world of *Henry IV*. These icons of children's furniture, removed from their nursery, are recognised as indices of regular furniture while also evoking immaturity, precarity, and even insincerity. The prison frame acts as a 'unifying factor' (Walter 184) that creates additional context for the audience.

Once again, the actors use their regional accents. However, this time, the accents travel a bit between the prison frame and the frame of *Henry IV*. As Walter writes:

Most productions strive for a uniformity of style, and are cast with a view to creating a coherent family or societal picture which can occasionally

lead to a rather bland neutrality. The prison was our coherent stage world and could accommodate our variety (184).

Here, Walter references Elam's definition of iconicity as 'governed by similitude' (19) – the family unit onstage has previously been iconic of the class of 'family', or what we supposedly imagine when we think of the Platonic ideal of a nuclear family (Elam 27). Instead, the incarcerated women gesture toward their characters indexically – the diversity of accent, race, ethnicity, and body lends itself to the genderqueer cast because it further destabilises the audience's dependence on their expectations that signs like body and voice will be directly iconic of the characters. Walter's terminology of the prison frame as a 'coherent stage' is useful here – while the characters in *Henry IV* are indexical, the figures in the prison frame by itself are iconic. They are a vehicle through which the audience comes to expect destabilisation rather than mimetic representation, because the viewer can default to the prison frame to reconcile any discomfort or confusion. The casts' accents transcend the fifth wall when Falstaff performs an imitation of Hal by doing an 'Irish' dance and putting on an Irish accent (Huw *H4* 00:50:34). This caricature of Hal's Irishness is comprehensible only in the prison frame – the audience sees, perhaps, a glimpse of the relationship between Rosie (Hal/Dunne) and Andrea (Falstaff/Sophie Stanton). When Andrea brings Rosie's Irishness into play, the events of the core text briefly transcend the fifth wall and invade the prison frame. In the frame of *Henry IV*, Rosie's accent falls into the small category of signs that are dutifully ignored by the audience. The audience implicitly understands that these signs – Hal's Irish accent, differences in race and ethnicity among the cast – are not meant for interpretation. Rosie's Irish accent does not signify that Hal is somehow Irish – the diversity of accents lends itself to a kind of systematic de-

signification of various traits which, in a more 'traditional' performance setting, might be erased entirely.

Under this framework, it is Andrea, not Falstaff, who brings up Rosie's – not Hal's – Irishness. In this brief moment, Stanton transforms a deliberate non-sign into a readable sign, temporarily straddling both frames using the text of *Henry IV* and the reality of the prison frame. The audience receives this transformation as humour, and they can be heard laughing on the BBC recording (Huw *H4* 00:50:34). Andrea performs a garish Irish accent and jig as ironic icons of Rosie's accent and ethnicity. We get a glimpse of the relationship between Andrea and Rosie through the lens of Falstaff and Hal, mapping what we know of *Henry IV* onto the prison frame to make inferences about the lives of the incarcerated women. While the audience may not be aware of the fictional relationships of the incarcerated women, they are connected to the prison frame by Dunne's introduction – Stanton's breakout into the prison frame invites the audience to draw connections between the material of *Henry IV* and the 'real life' world of the incarcerated women. This semiotic texture disrupts the borders between audience, incarcerated cast, and characters of *Henry IV*, simultaneously highlighting and blurring the semiotic distance between the three planes.

In what was originally Act 2, Scene 4 of *Henry IV: Part 1*, Lloyd introduces audience participation to the motion of the play. Hal says: 'Go hide thee behind the arras' (*1H4* 2.4.455). Falstaff conceals himself by removing an audience member from his chair and placing him at one of the tables onstage, handing him a magazine before scurrying up the aisle to take his seat (Huw *H4* 00:53:56). Here, the 'arras' to which Hal

refers is the cover of darkness concealing the audience. The fourth wall is momentarily a literal barrier behind which Falstaff may hide himself. The sheriff eyes the audience member suspiciously as the camera cuts to a close-up. The audience behind him laughs at his inscrutable expression, resting somewhere between embarrassment and irony (Huw *H4* 00:54:44). This breakout moment raises further questions about the nature of the fourth and fifth walls. At the moment of his hiding, Falstaff is able to see and interact with the audience. However, the sheriff sees only the fourth wall, and cannot identify Falstaff in the darkness of the audience. These rapid changes in the nature of the fourth wall destabilise the structure established by the nested frames and bestow a sense of comedy on the scene. The tone shifts suddenly when Hal says, 'We must all to the wars' (*1H4* 2.4.494). Lloyd creates a greater drop in tone by heightening the comedy of the preceding lines, with Falstaff snoring through the rest of the scene. However, when Hal begins detailing the work to be done, there is silence. He kisses the Hostess goodbye, marking a turning point in the overall tone of the play (Huw *H4* 00:56:43).

3.3.3 Multiple Masculinities

The performance of masculinity in *Henry IV* is multifaceted. Lloyd uses the generational emphasis prevalent throughout the play to highlight masculinities at varying stages of life. These stages are signified by affects and items – Hotspur practices on a punching bag and pull-up bar while King Henry moves with slow gravitas in a dark-toned bathrobe (Huw *H4*). Masculinity is also shown to be something that can belong to someone of any gender. Lady Percy (Sheila Atim) uses physical strength and dexterity in her debate

with Hotspur, subverting the sign system typically used to signify 'woman' as physically smaller, weaker, and less assertive than 'man'. Atim herself is among the more classically androgynous cast members – she is taller than almost the entire cast, and she wears her hair cropped close to her head. Lady Percy's physical strength is a recurring symbol of her masculinity. In one of the scenes lifted from *Henry IV: Part 2*, Lady Percy carries Hotspur onstage and delivers her speech over his dead body (Huw *H4* 01:49:17). This display of sheer physical strength effectively reverses the gender roles between Lady Percy and Hotspur. Atim's status as a Black, androgynous cast member – including the ways in which her performance is racialized – will reappear in future sections.

Atim's lines in this scene begin with an excerpt from Morton's speech in the beginning of *Henry IV: Part 2* (Humphreys, ed. 1.1.105-135). The reassignment of these lines gives Lady Percy knowledge of and eyewitness presence at the violence against her husband. The appropriation of these lines by a woman rebalances the power of Lady Percy against Northumberland, framing her as a character with agency equal in many ways to the other male characters. The scene then cuts to lines from *Henry IV: Part 2*, Act 2, Scene 3. At this point in the original text, Hotspur is long dead. The presence of his physical body in Lloyd's production transforms Lady Percy's words into actions. Instead of relating the circumstances of a death from a different play, Lady Percy's monologue describes an immediate reality. It makes the storyline more accessible for the audience, and it chronologically, spatially, and emotionally condenses the key events of the play. When Lady Percy references her 'heart's dear Harry' (*2H4* 2.3.12), he is there in body, rather than in memory. His body is a physical icon, leaving

less to the audience's imagination. Once again, Lloyd influences the audience's reception by making changes to the sign system of the play. Lady Percy utilises a mix of masculine and feminine imagery. Her speech is full of open vowels, painting an emotional – and thereby 'feminine' – picture of Hotspur's physical beauty and nobility. However, she also invokes masculinity – she says, 'There were two honours lost: yours and your son's' (2H4 2.3.16). Lady Percy plays the role of feminine griever and masculine chastiser, bemoaning both her personal loss and the loss of Northumberland's claim to manhood. In other words, Lady Percy momentarily polices the boundaries of masculinity. In another detailed effort to improve accessibility, Lloyd has replaced the words 'Monmouth's grave' (Humphreys, ed. 2.3.45) with 'a prince's grave' (Huw), mitigating the audience's need for exposition or prior knowledge. In his edition, Greenblatt includes only the parts of the speech present in the commonly accepted Quarto, excising lines 23 to 45 (Cottegnies 1256). However, the Arden edition, edited by A.R. Humphreys, includes the longer version, which appears only in the Folio. These lines are commonly cut because, as the introduction states, the speech 'holds the action up' (Humphreys, ed. lxx). However, Lloyd includes them in full, giving priority to the emotional action of the speech.

Lloyd's emphasis on Lady Percy's physical strength and emotional fluency paint her not as a victim, but as a driving force in the plot of the play. Lloyd's inclusion of Lady Percy's (nearly) full speech contradicts authoritative edits by Greenblatt and Arden by claiming that it is, so to speak, worth the airtime. In Lloyd's interpretation, Lady Percy's speech does not stall the action – it is the action. Humphreys' assertion that the action of the play is impeded by Lady Percy's emotional plea undermines the validity of

femininity throughout the text – it suggests, however subtly, that Lady Percy is not important. Lloyd's edit reverses this assertion – she affords Lady Percy more gravitas than she is given in the original text, both by supporting her with more lines and by showcasing Atim's physical strength and presence. Lady Percy sings a lullaby to her infant (Huw *H4* 01:04:20), momentarily re-centring the events of the play on the people Hotspur leaves behind. By condensing Parts 1 and 2 and bringing her into more of the second half, Lloyd transforms Lady Percy into a recurring, central character, whose femininity and masculinity are intimately intertwined.

Walter expands on the process of inhabiting a male character: 'Playing men was not so much about putting on deep voices or blokeish walks; it was more about stripping away feminine gestures' (188). Here, Walter is identifying a key argument from the works of Geraldine Harris and Judith Butler: that femininity is seen as built up from masculinity, rather than as a free-standing set of signs. Harris examines concepts of gender construction: "Femininity" is always "drag", the poor copy, even when performed by a woman, because masculinity is the norm and the original' (59). As actors, the cast of *Henry IV* were required to parse concrete behaviours and characteristics as belonging to one gender category or the other. Walter writes: 'We found so many of our female cultural habits...were about accommodating other people and making ourselves less threatening. We tried to get into a mindset of entitlement: entitlement to be seen and heard, to take up space and dominate a room' (188). Walter refers here to the nuances of gender performance – the lack, rather than addition, of signifiers to behaviour, voice, and appearance that lead a person to be categorised as male. Walter mentions that the actors portraying Hotspur (Anouka) and The Douglas (Leah Harvey)

were uncommonly athletic, centring their scenes on hyper-masculine workouts (188). Through Walter's line of reasoning, the physicality of these actors compounds with their enthusiasm for physical fitness to convincingly portray masculinity. Beyond his simple physical strength, it is Hotspur's lack of self-doubt that makes him masculine. When he is preparing to leave for the war, Hotspur darts around the stage, ignoring his wife's protestations as he packs his things. It isn't until he needs help zipping his vest – in a moment of comic relief – that he turns to Lady Percy for her assistance (Huw *H4* 00:35:20). The gym scenes point to audience expectations of the female body – that it is weak, unsure – and actively subvert them by exploiting the audience's awareness of the fifth wall. The audience is not fooled into believing that Anouka herself is a man, but they are compelled to consider the ways in which masculine traits do not belong solely to men.

3.3.4 *Falstaff: Fatness and Addiction*

As a character with a larger body, Falstaff/Andrea/Stanton's physical presence is pitted against the displays of athleticism by the younger generation of characters like Hal, Hotspur, and The Douglas. When Hal rejects Falstaff at the end of the play – and when Rosie rejects Andrea – he 'creates a new bodily style to secure his newly achieved authority' (Levy-Navarro 67). Levy-Navarro writes, 'The same fat body is a sign of Falstaff's essential lowliness, excessive appetite, and innate selfishness' (67). Falstaff/Andrea/Stanton's larger body is physically isolated from Walter's lean physique. In a production with spare costumes, in which the thin performers often wear sports bras and tank tops, Stanton is outfitted with a baggy polo shirt and zip-up sweatshirt.

While she isn't the only one in this style of costume, the wardrobe design constructs two modes of dressing for the incarcerated performers: one to reveal, and one to conceal. Falstaff/Andrea/Stanton's baggy clothes subtly gesture away from his/her body; at the very least, the dichotomy of tight and loose clothing evokes a dual aesthetic in the world of the incarcerated actors. These polarised aesthetics define each other: 'Because Falstaff's fat body can come to represent the excess of society that threatens to destroy it from within, Hal's own body can be seen as innately virtuous' (Levy-Navarro 67-8). According to Levy-Navarro, Falstaff/Andrea's immoral body is sufficient definition for Hal/Rosie's virtuous body. Through their dichotomous bodies, the characters of Hal/Rosie and Falstaff/Andrea construct another dichotomy of masculinity through which virtue is somaticized. Falstaff/Andrea's gender plays a pivotal role in the reception of his/her fat body. Susan Bordo offers vital interventions in the characterisations of female bodies – or, more accurately, female weights:

In this economy, the control of female appetite for food is merely the most concrete expression of the general rule governing the construction of femininity: that female hunger—for public power, for independence, for sexual gratification—be contained, and the public space that women be allowed to take up be circumscribed, limited. (171)

Bordo's description of female hunger resonates with the depiction of Falstaff's shortcomings. If female hunger is positioned as inferior or defective, then it is possible to see the ascription of certain types of hunger to men as feminising in a derogatory way. Stanton's fat, feminine body must inhabit both Falstaff and Andrea, and in doing so necessarily accesses multiple modes of gendered fatness.

Falstaff's fatness is also bound up in his presentation of masculinity. 'Falstaff with his fat body is frequently taken essentially, whether that be the Lord of Misrule, the

medieval Vice figure, the body of the Lacanian mother, or the body of woman generally' (Levy-Navarro 68). The validation of Hal's authority is bound up in his thinness, and his ascension necessitates the rejection of traits seen to be less than virtuous or masculine. This construction by rejection renders fatness undefinable – in the Donmar Trilogy, Falstaff/Andrea represents what must be left behind. In the Donmar Trilogy, fatness, addiction, and incarceration are often uncritically located in Andrea/Stanton's body as both Falstaff and Caliban. Falstaff becomes 'an entity which blocks progress' (Levy-Navarro 74) – thinness comes to mean discipline and, by extension, credibility. Taken together, the connection of Falstaff and Caliban via Andrea/Stanton makes a dramaturgical commentary that positions fatness as an embodied representation of malevolence and ineptitude. That Falstaff can be said to represent the 'body of woman' (Levy-Navarro 68) demonstrates the multiplicity of his body – he is simultaneously more and less than a man. Especially regarding his role as parental figure for Hal, Falstaff represents the harmful or unmanly behaviours Hal must leave behind. In the Donmar Trilogy's version, nursery furniture and props reinforce the characterisation of these behaviours as both boyish and womanish (Huw *H4*).

The conflation of Andrea's fatness and presumed abuse of drugs goes broadly unaddressed by the Donmar Trilogy, and it undergirds many of the more harmful suggestions made by *Henry IV*. 'This is precisely what the fat body has become in late modernity,' Levy-Navarro writes: 'The scapegoat that is made to embody our collective overconsumption' (76). In her last attempt to prevent Rosie from leaving prison, Andrea exclaims, 'You won't make it on the outside' (Huw *H4* 02:06:29). This positions Andrea as a Falstaff-like force that seeks to keep Hal/Rosie in the prison of youth and folly. The

Donmar Trilogy constructs a dramaturgical equivalence between addiction, fatness, and incarceration – it is an equation that both references and affirms cultural conceptions of those experiences as character flaws and obstacles to personal growth. In *Henry IV*, this trio of moral failings is also depicted as an impediment to masculinity – or, rather, as a less-valid version of it.

Lemon calls Falstaff a 'transformative figure, demonstrating not a fixity of character but a dizzying dispersal of roles' (80). Referencing the multiplicity of Falstaff's characterisation, Lemon cites early modern concepts of addiction, in which the addict 'gives himself to something...alienat[ing] from himself to another' (80). One of Falstaff's greatest crimes – beyond the problems of fatness, addiction, and waywardness – is his lack of shame regarding his shortcomings or, in fact, his refusal to see them as such (Lemon 87). In insisting that Rosie 'won't make it on the outside' (Huw *H4* 02:06:29), Andrea begs her to stay in the certainty of incarceration and, by extension, of addiction – a choice that, the viewer is given to conclude, Andrea has already made. The framing of addiction (and fatness, and incarceration) as a personal, moral choice pervades the Donmar Trilogy and is only weakly challenged by the empathy displayed toward Hal and Rosie in the opening monologue. Crucially, Lemon highlights the emerging early modern connection between heavy alcohol use and 'poverty, isolation, and social disruption' (80). These three things ring familiar bells pertaining to contemporary discussions of incarceration – in the Donmar Trilogy's version, heavy drug use and fatness intersect in prison, where dominant cultural narratives would have them lead.

One of the accompanying videos on Digital Theatre+ is a three-minute interview titled *Henry IV: Addiction*. In it, Lloyd, Stanton, and Prison Partnership Director Rachel Conlon discuss the workshops with incarcerated women that led to the expression of 'themes of addiction' (*Henry IV: Addiction*). Lloyd says:

Going into prison really does make you understand where addiction leads, because so many people there are addicts, and of course what's devastating is how hard it is to get clean while you're in prison (*Henry IV: Addiction* 1:28-1:45).

Lloyd also buys into the logic that, because so many people in prison are addicted, addiction must be the reason for their incarceration. This mindset figures addiction and incarceration as personal failings, rather than as a result of structural insufficiencies. If addiction is one of the nasty habits Hal must kick before he can become king, then Falstaff is implicated in that vice. Set against the Donmar Trilogy's addiction narrative, Falstaff/Andrea/Stanton comes to embody the play's dramaturgical fears: lack of self-control (addiction) and laziness (fatness). That addiction should mean a lack of self-control and fatness should mean laziness exposes deeply hegemonic anxieties in the play's dramaturgy. In this case, the dramaturgy is not just incomplete, but harmful. Not only does it ignore the presence of regressive cultural concepts, but it also reinforces them, relying on the audience's own prejudices to make its metaphor. This short interview raises questions about the influence of fallacious logics like this one on these workshops – it causes me to question the extent to which the Donmar Trilogy is capable of interrogating carceral frameworks that still find footing in the dramaturgy of the productions.

3.3.5 *The Stripping of Femininity*

The icons (or lack of icons) of gender discussed by Walter are meant to be perceived at a distance – they comprise a quick-and-easy key to gender categorisation for the audience. Butler expands upon what gender categories are and why we are dependent on them: ‘Gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a *stylized repetition of acts*’ (2004, 191). According to Butler, gender is constructed and expressed by action and repetition in conjunction with static signifiers. When represented by a genderqueer cast, gender becomes more complex than the two-dimensional signs that the audience expects – we can no longer rely on voice and body to assume that a character is male. By ‘incorporating norms critically’ (Butler 2004, 35), the genderqueer cast questions the conditions of legibility that rule male- or female-ness. Here, female-ness is distinct from femininity. Where femininity can belong to a person of any gender – subject to their own performance and expression of gendered traits – female-ness is something that is claimed, or more often assigned, based on the expression of an arbitrary ‘critical mass’ of gender signifiers. One salient effect of Lloyd’s casting is the deconstruction of this critical mass. While Dunne still has a higher voice, breasts, and long hair, she seamlessly occupies a male character. Dunne adopts stereotypically masculine signifiers – a wide stance, a masculine slouch, a certain breadth of movement that unmistakably evokes images of young men – building up enough signs of masculinity to meet this arbitrary threshold of male-ness. Genderqueer casting legitimises the feminine body as a sign system of its own and deconstructs the norms of legibility that constrict it; it resists the conditions of legibility imposed on gender expression. Where, traditionally, breasts mean ‘woman’, breasts now inherently signify

nothing – all the iconicity of the breast is assigned by the actor, the costume, and the circumstance. Dunne and Anouka do not conceal their bodies, and Hasan's costume does not particularly exhibit hers. Rather, it is the signs surrounding Hasan's body – her teased hair, her leopard print jacket, her heels – that mark her as belonging to the category of women. Butler writes: 'The social action of bodies within the cultural field can withdraw the very power of reality that they themselves invested in the category' (1990, 168, emphasis in original). What Butler terms 'social action' is comprised in *Henry IV* – and in the rest of Lloyd's trilogy – by the unmitigated existence of feminine bodies in the space of male characters.

The masculinities of the incarcerated women bleed into the masculinities of the characters in their derision of the Hostess (Zainab Hasan). Within the text of the play, the male characters often hurl insults at the Hostess. The characters question her womanhood (Greenblatt, ed. 3.3.110-116), possibly in a nod to the fact that the Hostess would originally have been played by a boy actor, and they dismiss her – Falstaff interrupts her with, 'Prithee, let her alone, and list to me' (Greenblatt, ed. 3.3.86). The tension comes to a head in Act 3, Scene 3, when the incarcerated actors go off-script and begin improvising. Stanton says to Hasan, 'Sex with you is like throwing a sausage up a street' (Huw *H4* 01:19:09). The other actors laugh and stand, each improvising a new insult about the width of the Hostess's vagina – or, maybe, the vagina of Hasan's incarcerated character – until Atim says, 'You've got a twat like the TARDIS' (Huw *H4* 01:19:24). Hasan, in tears, bursts out with, 'Do you think that's funny? Do you think that is funny? We discussed this! We agreed we weren't gonna do this bit' (Huw *H4* 01:19:27), before running offstage. During Hasan's outburst, the camera cuts between

close-up shots of Hasan and each of the other players as they realise that they have crossed the line. Hannah (Walter) runs off after Hasan. There is a heated (but un-amplified) conversation just offstage before the two return and Walter tells the room to 'stick to the Shakespeare' (Huw *H4* 01:20:04).

This breakout moment reveals the ways in which masculinity has harmed the personal relationships of the incarcerated actors. Harris writes: 'As long as masculinity is annexed in our society to power and violence and oppression, we will find some masculine women whose gender expression becomes partially wedded to the worst aspects of a culturally mandated masculinity' (109). In this moment, the incarcerated actors have taken on the role of male oppressor against Hasan's incarcerated character, abusing her in parallel with the men in *Henry IV*. The play resumes with gendered tension not only between Hasan and the other incarcerated women, but between Hannah (Walter) and Andrea (Stanton), who have a brief disagreement over which form the scene should take when Walter and Hasan come back in. Before the play restarts, Hannah answers Stanton with, 'I know exactly what you're trying to do, Andrea' (Huw *H4* 01:20:05), implying to the audience that there is pre-existing tension between the two women. However, it is unclear to the audience exactly what Andrea is 'trying to do'. What is her motive in attempting to unite the other incarcerated women against Hasan's character? The women's behaviour towards Hasan/Hostess raises the question: in what frame(s) is she being marginalised? Has the misogyny expressed by the men in *Henry IV* bled into the lives of the incarcerated women, or was it already there? Walter claims that the incarcerated women with whom she conducted workshops adopted masculine and feminine gender roles amongst themselves (162) – though this

claim is largely unsubstantiated, we see a glimpse of the actors' interpretation of life in prison through their treatment of Hasan's Hostess. The scene parallels the beating of Cinna the Poet in *Julius Caesar* – violence, physical or emotional, spills out into the prison frame, causing true harm to a victim the incarcerated characters knowingly torment.

3.3.6 Gender Presentation and Trans Embodiment

Kemp points to two moments of double drag in two productions of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*¹⁹ from the 2010s (2019b 275). In each of these productions, Falstaff was played by a woman, and in the scene in which he dresses in drag, the comedy of the scene was derived first from the semiotic distance between Falstaff's outfit and his gender, and subsequently from the violence enacted upon him by the other characters. In this instance, semiotic distance was achieved through the layering of costume pieces (Kemp 2019a 276) over Falstaff's unconcealed 'masculine' (visual) traits. In this case, gender performance is once again collapsed into an inanimate dimension, in which moustaches, skirts, and hats provide a temporal cross-section of the process of living in a gendered way. The joke, it seems, is that Falstaff does and does not pass – a phenomenon highlighted by Kemp as 'backpassing' (2019a 276). The female actor backpasses as Falstaff in drag, despite the semiotic dissonance between his gendered signs. As punishment for his shoddy gender performance, Falstaff receives all kinds of abuse from the other characters. 'Perhaps casting a woman in the role of Falstaff

¹⁹ African-American Shakespeare Company (2013) and Oregon Shakespeare Festival (2017)

lessens the impact of what would otherwise seem to be a scene that signals transphobic violence,' Kemp writes, 'But the accumulation of clothing signifiers suggests not just a gender anomaly but also a performative awareness of that transphobic violence' (2019a 276).

Backpassing makes a comedic appearance at multiple points in Lloyd's *Henry IV*. The first takes place in a non-Shakespearean side scene depicting the robbery in Act 2, Scene 2 (*1H4*), in which Walter wears female drag, and the second and longest instance occurs when Falstaff dons the same long wig and coat ensemble to perform a karaoke track. Walter garners laughs as the nameless, fretting American – she wrings her hands and adopts a physical posture that makes her seem smaller, lighter; as her moustachioed husband, Clune reassures Walter (over-)confidently (Huw *H4* 00:26:26). Crucially, these moments of semiotic layering happen well into the show; audience members have had ample time to adjust to the gendered casting of the show. In briefly showcasing Stanton and Walter's femininity – however performative – Lloyd highlights the fish-out-of-water effect that comes with passing inadequately, all for a few laughs. What these examples highlight is not just an incomplete dramaturgy, to borrow Williams' term; they expose the cis (and white, and non-disabled, and thin) lens through which these productions were perhaps created. Layered costume pieces become layered signs, and in a production already obscured between (behind?) a frame, Lloyd's choices here dissolve into a semiotic scramble. It's not that too much information is always a bad thing – rather, the deliberate obfuscation of gender identity and performance merely points to its existence. As Williams says, 'Demonstration is not the same as commentary. To merely show violent systems...in action is not to undermine them' (15).

One of the strengths of Lloyd's trilogy is its depiction of gender as a temporal resource. The trilogy depicts, intentionally or not, the continuous process of 'being gendered' not as something that can be encompassed by a tiny snapshot in time, but as something that evolves and has a life of its own. The process of owning one's (trans) gender is, most often, famously arduous – and though the Donmar Trilogy reflects it at points, that nuanced perspective is undermined, even eclipsed, by the continuous association of inadequate passing with comedy.

Walter and Clune's performance as the beset Americans is met with laughter from the recorded audience. Before the two appear onstage, a spotlight highlights a remote-control luxury car running into a stuffed bear and stopping. This instance is only anti-mimetic in the frame of *Henry IV*. Within the prison frame, the remote control car and bear, as well as the exaggerated sound effects accompanying the 'crash', iconically signify the initiation of play between the incarcerated performers. Walter and Clune scurry out onstage, both in some sort of drag. Portions of Shakespeare's text are replaced with the following exchange:

Walter (Americanly): Oh my god!
Falstaff: Oh no, having some sort of trouble, are you?
Clune (Americanly): We hit a bear.
Falstaff: You're American!
Clune: Yes, siree!
Falstaff: Strike! Down with them! ... (Huw *H4_00:26:26*).

In the rapid exchange that follows, the robbers knock the husband to his knees and rob the screaming wife of her coat and jewels. In failing to prevent the robbery, Clune parodies emasculation with her hoarse wails. By making Walter and Clune such an exaggerated caricature of stereotypes of affluent American tourists, Lloyd cites the

audience's white, Eurocentric (self-) awareness. The American couple are equal parts ignorant and hysterical – their heightened depiction follows the anti-mimetic frame preceding their entrance. This constitutes a planned breakout moment (in that it was prepared by the incarcerated actors); it is a deliberate departure on the part of the incarcerated performers from the text, which simultaneously directs the storytelling and exhibits their own sense of comedy, play, and collaboration.

In moments like these, the performers seem to be laughing along with the audience – if not literally, then in the tongue-in-cheek style of the jokes. The scene constitutes a (re-)enactment of the types of crimes for which some of the incarcerated performers may be responsible; it is a distinctly light-hearted, comedic, even fun depiction of wrongdoing by the incarcerated women. After chasing the Americans offstage, Atim returns holding Walter's curly wig aloft, mimicking her high-pitched shriek. Clune's emasculation contributes to the affirmation of the robbers' own masculinities – and, subsequently, it leads on to Hal's masked humiliation of Falstaff directly afterwards. After the robbers chase the Americans away, Stanton resumes with the text before she is interrupted by Dunne and Harvey, wearing masks reminiscent of those used in the *Scream* films. The murderous iconography leads into another (presumably) planned breakout moment, in which Stanton says, 'Aw mate, don't do nothing stupid' (Huw *H4* 00:27:48). Stanton (as Falstaff) is quickly scared away by the popping of a balloon, and Dunne and Harvey laugh along with the audience as Stanton's frightened scream continues under their dialogue.

While these departures from Shakespeare's text do not automatically turn into breakout moments, they exhibit the pervasiveness of the prison environment throughout the play. These contemporary citations remind the viewer of the prison frame while simultaneously obscuring the nature of the frame as fictional. Stanton's interjections in particular carry an improvisational quality; their discontinuity with what the viewer expects of Shakespeare's language adds to their comedy, but it also positions Stanton's incarcerated character, Andrea, as less sophisticated than Walter's Hannah. The collapsing of Andrea with Falstaff contributes to the heavy-handed parallels between *Henry IV* and the story being told alongside it. From instances like the robbery scene and the performers' abuse of Hasan/the Hostess, the audience sees Andrea emerge as an antagonist, not only to the welfare of the other incarcerated women, but to the integrity of Shakespeare's text. This is not to place a value judgement on the text itself, nor on Andrea's departure from it – rather, I hope to raise the ways in which Stanton's larger body and its performance of a certain type of masculinity are uncritically associated with vice in the prison frame.

When Falstaff dons what were previously Walter's wig and fur coat, he performs a song in female drag (Huw *H4* 00:44:00). While Falstaff's depiction of a woman may not have 'realness', or a convincing approximation of feminine displays in mind, Stanton puts on some of the same feminine gestures mentioned by Walter (188), closing up her body to occupy less space, moving fleetingly, and gesticulating languidly. With the aid of the other actors, Stanton performs an a capella rendition of 'Money (That's What I Want)', assuming a low female vocal posture (George 37), mimicking sultry tones into a handheld microphone (Huw). In this self-referential nest of signs, we see a female actor,

portraying an incarcerated woman, playing a male character, impersonating a woman. Stanton has stripped away her own femininities and re-appropriated them as caricatures, exposing them as performative. This interrogation of gender performativity is supported by Halberstam's claim that 'masculinity tends to manifest as non-performative' (238). Where Halberstam refers to 'camp' with drag queens, he coins the term 'kinging' to refer to drag kings. According to Halberstam, camp is associated with theatricality, caricature, and parody (238) – all of which we see in Stanton's drag on drag persona. Stanton's double drag turns the eye of the audience toward the performance of masculinity happening underneath. Halberstam writes that the 'kinging effect...depends on several different strategies to render masculinity visible and theatrical' (238). While one may argue that the bulk of performances in *Henry IV* are unironic – therefore existing separately from kinging – Stanton walks the line between 'believable' masculinity and exaggerated bravado. The audience's reception of genderqueer cast relies on their tacit acceptance of masculinity as natural and non-performative (Halberstam 234) that is to say, not kinging. Stanton's double drag performance both undermines and relies on this assumption. Butler writes: 'Gender reality is performative which means, quite simply, that it is real only to the extent that it is performed' (1988, 527). Butler frames theatrical space as a semiotic bubble, wherein performativity itself can be interrogated 'safely'. In this space, the male characters are free to express signifiers of femininity as long as it is received as a joke.

3.3.7 *Violent Delights*

At moments of emotional tension like the abuse of the Hostess, the camera work becomes restricted to close-up and angled shots of the action. During the final battle, which takes place towards the end of Part 1, the shots are handheld, close, and frenetic to match the pace of the movement (Huw *H4* 01:40:23. At the outset of the battle, the camera follows The Douglas (Leah Harvey) boxing a circle of people at a distance. The stylisation of violence abstracts the realities of physical contact. Opponents each stand too far to hit each other and instead punch at the air, accompanied by loud and cartoonish sound effects. The style of sound and movement make these encounters more indexical than iconic. Within the prison frame, the audience knows that the incarcerated actors are in no danger of accidental injury (like the one that occurs in a breakout moment in *Julius Caesar*). Within the frame of *Henry IV*, the audience knows what is happening only by the combination of what they recognise as a punch (and recoil) and the non-mimetic sound of a punch making contact.

The battle in *Henry IV* can be divided into two phases – in the first phase, indexical violence tells the story of a battle between groups of men. The second phase tells the story of the brutal confrontation between Hal and Hotspur. The signs onstage create this effect by citing cultural norms surrounding different styles of fighting. The first phase is characterised by heightened depictions of boxing – the exaggerated sound effects and movement evoke *Looney Tunes* and other 20th century comedies in which characters bash each other over the head with enormous mallets and drop pianos and anvils on each other. And yet, somehow, these characters always emerge from their

confrontations largely un-damaged. The soundscape during the first portion of the battle also evokes the famous sound effects used in video games from the 20th century. This design choice cites media with nostalgic underpinnings – while the media it cites is from the previous century, the sights and sounds of these films and television shows constitute an essential chapter in cultural concepts of light-hearted. In comparison, the lexical field of the second act of the battle, in which Hal and Hotspur face off, is significantly more mimetic.

3.3.8 Gender and Nostalgic Aesthetics

As *The Douglas*, Harvey's displays of acrobatics and kickboxing are punctuated by the digital ding of classic video games, in which the protagonist crushes evil mushrooms and the like in exchange for coins. This format is best known as part of Nintendo's *Donkey Kong* (1981) and *Mario Bros.* (1983), but also appears in Sega's *Sonic the Hedgehog* (1991) and other games. From the centre of the stage, Harvey rapidly kicks, punches, and flips outward, knocking over enemy after enemy. The multitude of nostalgic associations that come with the digital sound choices impart a low-risk simplicity to the violence. The video game-esque nature of this portion of the battle is reinforced by the use of masks. Instead of 'marching in his coats' (*1H4* 5.4.25), Henry's supporters wear cardboard masks printed with his face, harkening back to a similar instance in *Julius Caesar* (Huw). In fact, Henry calls these masked soldiers his 'shadows' (*1H4* 5.4.29). Through this choice, Henry's face becomes a flattened sign, marking each soldier as an extension of himself. This uniformity of signification matches the categorical style of enemies in early video games – their abundance and replicability

mitigates the brutality of the violence enacted against them by the protagonist. The quick pace of The Douglas' fight refers back to the structure of many video games, in which the player must first defeat many subordinate enemies before facing the 'final boss', or the final and most challenging opponent.

The association of bodies onstage with imagery of video game enemies renders the violence against them entertaining through abstraction – the masks, sound effects, and choreography contribute to the process of semiotic reduction that, quite literally, softens the blows. In referencing video game culture, this scene cites modes of youth, pointing to a highly specific and recognisable turning point in global entertainment history. In France Costrel's docuseries, *High Score*, video game makers recall the marketing discussions that led to a shift in video game aesthetics in the 1980s and 90s: 'No games were available for women....We thought about what kind of games women might want to play. So we thought, "Eating doesn't involve killing each other, and maybe women can enjoy it as a game, too' ("Boom & Bust"). According to the docuseries, *Pac-Man* did, in fact, become wildly popular with female players ("Boom & Bust") – the logic that led Iwatani to this design references violent content as a deterrent for women. Though this thought is a bit generalised (or even regressive), it did beget a game with broad appeal to players who were not adult men. In *Pac-Man*, the titular character faces threat, but in highly abstracted form. The sound design for the games that initially followed adhered to this principle: they evoke a sense of familiarity, universality. Hirokazu Tanaka, who was a sound designer for Nintendo from 1980 to 2000, says, 'Sound is needed for games because games are modelled after real life. It's a simple mimicry of life, so you need these confirmation cues – in order to feel immersed, you

need sound' ("Comeback Kid"). Using the recognisable language of semiotics, Tanaka cements the relationship between sound and immersion. The game itself is conscious of its own lack of verisimilitude, so it creates its own non-mimetic – but no less comprehensive – soundscape. Tanaka's term, 'confirmation cues', is useful in describing what audiences come to expect from media: spectators seek, passively and actively, confirmation cues that allow them to flesh out the semiotic framework onstage. The whacks and dings of the Donmar Trilogy's *Henry IV* evoke a highly specific mode of nostalgia, one linked to gender expression and play. Most relevantly, *High Score* corroborates the existence of a broad cultural understanding of video game sound and visual design, which we see cited in *Henry IV*. The invocation of nostalgic video game signifiers links the battle scene to these cultural conceptions of uncomplicated youth – they evoke nostalgia for an abstracted, broadly appealing aesthetic.

The video game soundscape of *Henry IV* may evoke varied impressions in viewers from different demographics. Primarily, the soundscape also foregrounds concerns about increasing rates of violence, especially among young men, and violent video games. Gilbert, Giaccardi, and Ward reference the well-trodden field of gender and gaming in their examination of links between masculinity, video games, and high-risk behaviour in young men. They report that, while there is little evidence of a correlation between video game play and aggression, masculinity may act as a mediating influence between gaming and risky behaviour, including aggression (Gilbert 443). Through their literature review, Gilbert et al define masculinity as 'comprised of several components, such as restrictive emotionality, self-reliance, dominance/power, toughness, rejection of sexual minorities, and antifemininity' (440). While the discussion

of masculinity and gender in this chapter will hopefully reach beyond this definition, it is nevertheless a useful framework for considering existing studies of masculine ideology. Gilbert et al even briefly highlight a link between masculine ideals and incarceration, writing that 'delinquent behavior is another avenue through which adolescents can display their masculinity' (440).

Gilbert et al highlight the necessity of considering the relationship between depictions of masculinity in video games and trends in behaviour among adolescent men (440). The citation of video game history by the battle scene in *Henry IV* evokes a highly specific subset of masculine culture. Though the portion of self-reported video game players that are not men is growing, data shows that the culture surrounding video games is still dominated by men and masculinity (Gilbert 437). The stylisation of violence as reminiscent of video game culture contributes significantly to the construction of masculinity and, perhaps more importantly, to the shattering of that particular mode of masculinity through the shift in style that follows during the confrontation between Hal and Hotspur. In the quotation above, Gilbert et al touch on a useful notion – the concession that nostalgia for early video games like the ones referenced in *Henry IV* goes hand-in-hand with nostalgia for a less threatening, more euphoric masculine ideal. Following on from Gilbert et al, the nostalgic soundscape of the first phase of the battle positions The Douglas as a Mario-esque protagonist, whose masculinity is bound by whimsy, courage, and optimism.

3.3.9 *Mimesis in Relief*

The verbal exchange between The Douglas, Henry, and Hal constructs a different performance of masculinity through the fight. The confrontation occurs during an abrupt break in the cluttered soundscape. The text evokes a more ‘traditionally’ masculine stereotype, more similar to Gilbert et al’s description of the musclebound, aggressive male archetype (441). The incongruity between the light, even whimsical design and Shakespeare’s text further distances the prison frame from the universe of *Henry IV*. This distance creates two states within the scene – the first is created by video game sound effects and shadow boxing, and the second uses mimesis to advance the content of the text. This semiotic gap also foregrounds the meaning of the text. The vast semiotic difference between these two states, as well as the competing visions of masculinity they evoke, highlights the seriousness of the threat in the moments when mimesis is most prevalent. Told through anti-mimetic shadow boxing, the brief bout between Hal and The Douglas seems insignificant compared to the threat against the king’s life, especially for the moment in which Hal steps up to defend his father. Before Hal intervenes, The Douglas says to Henry:

I fear thou art another counterfeit,
And yet, in faith, thou bearest thee like a king.
But mine I am sure thou art, whoe’er thou be,
And thus I win thee (*1H4* 5.4.34-37).

Wary of Henry’s ‘shadows’, The Douglas can rely only on his perception of kingly affect to determine Henry’s authenticity. However, as he says, it does not matter to The Douglas whether Henry is truly the king. The Douglas calls Henry ‘mine’ and asserts his ability to ‘win’ him; these turns of phrase carry the subtext of romantic courtship, thereby

positioning Henry as the object of pursuit. By comparing battle to courtship, The Douglas reinforces his heteronormative role as conqueror, both on the battlefield and in the emasculation of his opponents.

By including this text, Lloyd highlights the way violence aids in the construction and affirmation of masculinity – in battle, The Douglas robs his opponents of their claim to masculinity by ‘winning’ them as what Greenblatt glosses as ‘prize[s] of war’ (1241). The homoerotics of this dynamic are initially referenced here before they are enacted more clearly during the fight between Hal and Hotspur. Bell writes: ‘The play fantasizes and then evades the trouble of uncanny masculine doubling’ (112), suggesting that the play introduces queerness into Hal and Hotspur’s relationship through their nominal likeness. The play is pervaded with promises to ‘win’ one another and one’s homeland alike. Bell points to the final line of the play (in Shakespeare’s text, that is), in which the king says, ‘Let us not leave till all our own be won’ (*1H4* 5.5.44). This pun, Bell writes, suggests that to win is ‘to make one, to remedy rebellion in a colonial act of totalization’ (110). To be won/one is frequently applied to romantic and sexual unions. In winning another man, The Douglas (and Hal, later on) purposely mimics the framework of heteronormative subjugation, thereby raising himself as a paragon of masculinity.

When Hal leaps between The Douglas and Henry, he says: ‘It is the Prince of Wales that threatens thee / Who never promiseth but he means to pay’ (*1H4* 5.4.41-42). It is a rare invocation of Hal’s title, marking a turning point in his relationship to father, king, and country. Hal’s adoption of the third person voice distances himself from his role and formalises the encounter. It is not Hal who challenges The Douglas; rather, it is

the Prince who fulfils his obligation to defend the throne. Hal and The Douglas engage in the same style of distanced, video game boxing match, until Hal 'lands' a jump kick and sends The Douglas scurrying away, defeated. Hal's intervention is the vehicle through which he comes to inhabit his duties as prince – in defeating The Douglas, the king says that he has 'redeemed thy lost opinion / And showed thou mak'st some tender of my life' (*1H4* 5.4.47-48). Henry receives Hal's defence as a personal act of care; he refers to the confrontation as a 'fair rescue' (*1H4* 5.4.49), echoing the language of courtly love. However, the larger impact of this change in Hal comes into effect immediately after, when Hotspur arrives.

The sound and movement design of the first phase of the scene evoke this light-hearted sense of adventure with an eye turned toward a sharp reversal as soon as Hal and Hotspur make physical contact. When Hal and Hotspur fight, the movement style and design choices change abruptly. The two meet physically and begin grappling as the incarcerated performers (and the camera) circle around them. The camera frames a close-up of someone handing Hal a rubber prop knife, which he uses to kill Hotspur. The exchange happens quickly, but viewers at home are privy to it through the lens of the camera (*Huw H4* 01:43:02). In contrast with the previous fights, this encounter is much more referential toward both Hal's world and Rosie's. The indexical nature of the early fights sets up Hotspur's death to transcend the fifth wall into something more real and visceral. The camera cuts back and forth, zooming in and out rapidly to echo the frenetic environment. As the distanced fight continues, the blows become more and more serious – Dunne snaps her head back as Anouka punches from the other side of the de facto ring. For a moment, it seems as though this fight might end the same way

as the preceding fight between Hal and The Douglas, in which the loser scurries off into the darkness, nursing his wounds. However, with another kick from Hal, which sends Hotspur spinning, the two meet in the middle and quickly begin grappling on the floor. At this moment, synthetic sound stops signifying violent contact, and the music instead underscores the startlingly mimetic struggle. The pace of the violence drifts away from the meticulously timed choreography of punches and kicks as the two characters attempt to choke each other to death. The camera briefly cuts to Walter, who is squatting down and yelling in support of the violence. When another performer, the identity of which is unknown to the viewers at home, places a rubber prop knife in Hal's hand from out of frame, Hotspur notices it immediately and the two begin fighting for control of the blade.

This choice by fight director Kate Waters mimics the brutality of 'real' fights as they are often represented in media, especially media depicting violence in prisons. Notably, the appearance of the knife evokes cultural depictions of the prison shiv, or a makeshift weapon whittled out of a legal prison item. It cites instances like season one, episode thirteen ('Can't Fix Crazy') of *Orange is the New Black*, among many others, in which the appearance of a blade immediately escalates the tension. The episode aired in 2013, just three years before the Donmar Trilogy was restaged for filming. In this episode of *Orange is the New Black*, the character derisively nicknamed Pennsatucky pulls a shiv on the protagonist, Piper, while the two are unsupervised. The appearance of the shiv signifies heightened risk for Piper and, because of the shiv's status as a symbol of deviation from prison laws, cements Pennsatucky's role as the more dangerous character. In *Henry IV*, it is not the antagonist (if there can be said to be

one), but the protagonist, Hal, who uses a knife to kill. The introduction of mimesis to the fight between Hal and Hotspur is cemented by the knife as an icon which both references the prison frame and cites audience knowledge of violence in media about prisons. By using a sharpened tool to kill Hotspur – especially a tool handed to him by an ally during the fight – Hal deviates from the social script established by the first segment of the fight.

The juxtaposition of semiotic lexicons displays multiple modes of violence. The first phase of the battle establishes a unique semiotic vocabulary to signify violent contact – as a departure from verisimilitude, the abstracted violence expands the distance between the sign system of the prison and of *Henry IV*. The prison frame is strictly governed by mimetic constraints – the introduction of the cast as mimetic icons of incarcerated women initiates the construction of the prison frame's stark verisimilitude. This verisimilitude, in turn, governs the signs in *Henry IV*. Every physical property refers iconically to something the audience might expect to find in a women's prison – including Hal's knife. Following Walter and Lloyd's concept of the prison frame as justification for the casting, the prison frame also incidentally justifies any departure from mimesis throughout the production. The non-mimetic violence in the first half of the battle cites the notion that physical touch is discouraged or even banned in prisons – this harkens back to Judith Clark's own account of her visits with her daughter, in which the two were forbidden from touching (Robbins). As a result, the prison frame incidentally explains the lack of contact between the incarcerated actors. However, when Dunne and Anouka face off and the rest of the battle falls away, they quickly resort to more mimetic modes of violence. This transition, with the introduction of a 'live'

blade, raises the perceived threat considerably. This mode of violence is equally dangerous in both theatrical frames. Stripped of semiotic layering, the violence in Hal and Hotspur's confrontation feels more emotional than in the first phase of the battle – that is, the audience's interpretation is redirected. In the first phase of the battle, the audience is asked to fill in the blanks between index and meaning; in the second, mimesis does that work, allowing the audience to experience the immediacy of the scene's emotional import.

In contrast with earlier stages of the fight, in which the choreographed nature of the movement is not only visible, but foregrounded, the fight between Hal and Hotspur collapses the semiotic distance between the fourth and fifth walls. The competing semiotic states within the scene facilitate the division of signifiers even more completely between the two frames – however, where mimesis initially stood almost uniformly for the prison frame, mimetic violence now begins to align more closely with Shakespeare's text. The dual modes of violence depict dual masculinities – more specifically, they stratify Hal's narrative development from the youthful nostalgia of the boxing matches. In stepping into his role as defender of the crown, Hal distances himself from the nursery chairs decorating the pub and from the comedy of the video game soundscape – signifiers which, when taken together, evoke a particular version of lost boyhood. Through mimetic violence and murder, Hal transitions from one mode of masculinity to another. It is not just his participation in the fight, but also the verisimilitude of the violence that facilitates Hal's step into adulthood.

When Hal inherits the throne, he dons Henry IV's royal bathrobe (Huw *H4* 02:04:35). A reverberation effect on Dunne's microphone evokes a public address, she stands at the top of the stairs while the camera films from below. Hal's final speech in Act 5 Scene 5 of *Henry IV: Part 2* is a rejection of Falstaff and all he represents (Howard 1253). From Walter's account, the scene carries subtext that remains largely invisible to the audience. However, we know from Rosie's introduction that she is an addict in recovery. When Hal says, 'Presume not that I am the thing I was' (*2H4* 5.5.54) and rejects 'those that kept me company' (*2H4* 5.5.57), the audience may note the parallel between Hal's story and Rosie's. This parallel is reinforced when, near the end of Hal's speech, Andrea (Falstaff/Stanton) breaks out of character and begs Rosie not to go. She says, 'Rosie, don't go, don't do it. Rosie, babe, you won't make it on the outside' (Huw 02:06:28), before she is tackled and dragged offstage by prison guards over the noise of the alarm. The camera frames a wide shot of Rosie bursting into tears as Hannah comforts her (Huw *H4* 02:06:45).

A perceptive viewer may infer, as Walter confirms, that Rosie is up for parole, and Hannah and Andrea are, more or less, fighting for her soul, much like Henry IV and Falstaff (Walter 187). However, this analogy is perhaps over-simplified. As I argue above, the Donmar Trilogy's Falstaff embodies the play's dramaturgical anxieties surrounding fatness and addiction. As a moral alternative to Falstaff, Henry IV represents leanness and self-control – and, as Hal/Rosie confronts the possibility of release (of a 'second chance' (Huw *H4* 00:01:59), as Rosie says in her introductory monologue), leanness and self-control come to be associated with freedom and with active participation in society. The problematic association of embodied modes of being,

like fatness and addiction, with incarceration – specifically with a person's capacity to be incarcerated – is further crystallised in *The Tempest*. Once again, the production is ended by some unexpected interference, reacquainting the audience with the prison frame before that story, too, comes to a close.

3.4 *The Tempest: Hegemonic Intersections*

After the now customary walk-in, the BBC's recording of *The Tempest*, the final instalment of the Donmar Trilogy, begins with a wide, aerial shot of the incarcerated performers being marched into the space carrying garbage bags, which they empty (of what seems like actual garbage at this distance) into a ring around the stage. Many of the costumes and props are made from garbage or other disposable items, like life vests made from orange grocery bags and bouquets made of tampons. Matthew Reason notes that several of these props were made by incarcerated women through York St John University's Prison Partnership Project (88). This reach toward perceived authenticity will factor into much of our discussion of the production, both in terms of its function in the paratext and in the performance itself.

Before *The Tempest* itself begins, Harriet Walter (Prospero) takes the stage and delivers the introduction herself. She introduces herself as Hannah and gives some details about her life sentence for a politically motivated bank robbery that resulted in three deaths (Huw *Tmp* 00:01:09). In her book, Walter writes that she based Hannah primarily on the story of Judith Clark, who was the getaway driver in a similar crime in 1981 (164). Clark was originally sentenced to seventy-five years to life without the possibility of parole, but she was granted a new hearing in April of 2018, two years after the Donmar Trilogy was recorded (McKinley). McKinley cites Clark's 'long record of good works in prison' (*New York Times*) as one reason for the reconsideration of her case. Walter mentions that Clark is a grandmother and has had to see her daughter and grandchildren live their entire lives without her (164). Walter writes: 'Hannah/Judith

could be me. Hannah would become a mentor figure to the other women, a teacher with a missionary zeal to equip them with an education and skills with which to improve their lives' (164). Hannah's life sentence maps onto Prospero's narrative arc – Walter's Prospero is at the end of his tenure as a powerful ruler. Following on from previous chapters, incarceration functions in *The Tempest* as a mediating lens between the two frames and the spectator. After Walter's introduction – the supposed paratext for the incarcerated performers' production of *The Tempest* – incarceration and, specifically, the image of incarceration as a form of remediation or rehabilitation, mediates the spectator's reception and synthesis of theatrical signs. I have already discussed the extent to which the rehabilitated radical is a carceral (and conservative) fantasy, but it is worth reiterating that the use of a carceral lens simultaneously highlights the disparities enforced by mass incarceration and elides the particularities of how those disparities are enacted.

This chapter concerns itself primarily with the relationship of incarceration to the text of *The Tempest*, as well as the successes and shortcomings of Lloyd's adaptation in regard to its depiction (or lack thereof) of racial dynamics. The way is well-paved by decades of anti-racist and anti-imperialist scholarship. Most notably, my discussion of racialisation hinges on seminal texts by Kim F Hall, Ambereen Dadabhoy, and Nedda Mehdizadeh.²⁰ These critics take an anti-racist, intersectional, and pedagogical approach to Shakespeare, exploring the potential for Shakespeare as an anti-racist

²⁰ For further reading, see Brandi K Adams, Matthieu Chapman, Ruben Espinosa, Margo Hendricks, Farah Karim-Cooper, Ayanna Thompson, and Kathryn Vomero Santos.

classroom tool. Pushing back against claims that Shakespeare is a universal voice, Hall, Dadabhoy, and Mehdizadeh work to divest Shakespeare from conceptions of white, English universality, turning instead to the identification of saliences within his texts as a liberatory practice for students and artists alike.

3.4.1 Paratext and Media Influence

Of the three plays in the Donmar Trilogy, *The Tempest* may be the vaguest when it comes to the separation between the real world, the prison frame, and the world of the text. The narrative created by the performers is itself set in a prison, and the relationships played out in the frame of *The Tempest* parallel the relationships expected to arise in a prison setting. This expectation is constructed by other media; notably, Netflix's prison dramedy, *Orange Is the New Black*, which rose to fame just a year before *The Tempest* premiered at the Donmar Warehouse in 2014. The series follows varied relationships between the incarcerated characters – many of them queer, and each of them governed by socioeconomic and racialised dynamics (Meltzer). *Orange Is the New Black* itself cites decades of media depictions of incarcerated women, including Australian soap opera *Prisoner: Cell Block H*, which aired in 1979. Described by Ebony McKenna as 'one of the most bizarre, violent, lesbian-fetishy-heart-warming dramas ever created,' the series featured a lesbian character in the form of a homophobic trope in which gay, incarcerated women mimic the stereotypically sexually predatory and violent behaviour so often ascribed to incarcerated. While queerness takes many more forms in *Orange Is the New Black*, the series is nevertheless undergirded by latent conceptions of queer women, specifically butch women like the Lea DeLaria's 'Big Boo'

and Uzo Aduba's Suzanne 'Crazy Eyes' Warren, as threatening for the same reasons cis men are seen as dangerous to cis women – that is, their capacity to commit sexual assault. In this problematic sense, masculinity is largely defined by its violent capacities; lesbian masculinities in *Orange Is the New Black* are exerted through a bioessentialist stand-in for the great phallic threat: rape via penetration. I am attempting here to approach sexual violence in a way that resists transphobia and bioessentialism – I hope to divest masculinity from the threat of penetration and, by extension, the possession of a penis. In *Orange Is the New Black*, this connection is simultaneously reinforced and shown to be arbitrary. Big Boo and Crazy Eyes find other, non-penis-related ways to rehearse and exert their masculinity. However, their rehearsal of masculinity is nonetheless rooted in reductionist concepts of masculine aggression and possessiveness, which are exerted in their pursuit of queer romantic and sexual connections ('Tit Punch').

In accordance with Jack Halberstam's prescient writing on the policing of gender, especially of trans femmes/trans women in public restrooms, violence can arise when cis women perceive a sexual threat simply because of a person's presumed anatomy. Laying aside for a moment the complete impossibility of knowing – and the impracticality of caring about – a person's sexual anatomy from merely sharing a space, the anxiety of people who protest the existence of trans women in public bathrooms seems to centre on the presence of a penis in the room. The penis as a bioessentialist symbol of masculinity is, in this case, metonymic for the possibility of sexual violence. The transferral of this threat onto the body of a fictional cis lesbian is, then, somewhat counterintuitive. *Orange Is the New Black*, which features Laverne Cox as Sophia

Burset, an incarcerated trans woman, occasionally manages to resist this archetype. However, Big Boo is still depicted as the hardened prison lesbian jockeying for sex and power and Crazy Eyes essentially stalks and harasses the protagonist, calling Piper her 'wife' ("Tit Punch"). I am not positing a value judgement on the effectiveness with which the series pits these tropes against more nuanced depictions of gendered power dynamics. However, modes of gender expression as seen in *Orange is the New Black* – and the process by which gender and sexuality are mediated by incarceration – shed a useful light on gender and the origin of threat in the Donmar Trilogy's version of *The Tempest*.

3.4.2 Racialised Masculinities

In *The Tempest*, parent-child dynamics pervade both (human) families. Prospero (Harriet Walter) and Miranda (Leah Harvey) have an intensely physical relationship, with the two often touching and cuddling each other. At one point, Prospero compels Caliban (Sophie Stanton) to give him a carton of strawberries, all of which he passes over to Miranda (Huw). Coupled with this demonstration of selflessness toward his daughter, Prospero's violent treatment of Caliban provides the audience with visual signification of the nature of their relationship. Prospero's – and, by extension, Hannah's – anxiety at losing or wronging his child speaks to Clark's own story of family separation.

After washing up on shore in an arrangement that looks pointedly similar to media images of migrants, the Italian court characters are thrown in prison, with a fellow incarcerated actor portraying a prison guard. When Alonso laments that '[m]y son is lost'

(*Tmp* 2.1.104), the line transcends the many layers of sign systems to touch the heart of what Hannah says in her introduction:

For most of us here, prison is a time of reckoning. It's a time of coming to terms with our crimes and the damage we've done, with our anger at those walking free, who are often a large part of the reason we're in here, and dealing with the separation from our families and our fear for our children's future. For myself, the last thirty-five years have been defined by that reckoning (Huw *Tmp* 00:01:47).

At the beginning of *The Tempest*, Prospero not only laments his isolation from his world, but he blames Antonio for his exile (*Tmp* 1.2.66-78). The speech is backed by a low, supernatural humming (Huw), which creates a seamless theatrical illusion. In fact, throughout *The Tempest*, several theatrical effects (including the use of projections) break out of the prison frame and satisfy a more conventional system of theatrical signs. Another synthetic sound effect accompanies Prospero's use of magic (Huw *Tmp* 00:11:10). This unframed sign, iconic on only one level, breaks the audience out of the double frame and erases the fifth wall.

While the fifth wall is weakened by some synthetic effects, it is reinforced by the cast's threefold performance of masculinity. The male characters of *The Tempest* offer clear outlines for the categorisation of masculinities into the sage, the youth, and the clown. Prospero (Walter) and Alonso (Laird) are two patriarchs preparing to 'give away' the last of their children to marriage and sexual maturity. Prospero holds power through magic, which, in Walter's interpretation, is hardly physical. Spells are usually signified by a motion of the hand or even just a look – when Prospero threatens Ferdinand with 'this stick' (*Tmp* 1.2.471), Walter holds up her pinkie finger (rather than the magician's wand suggested by Greenblatt's footnotes) to signify that Prospero has more power in the

movement of a pinkie finger than in Ferdinand's entire youthful body (Huw *Tmp* 00:28:11). Walter writes on some of the influences on her performance of masculinity:

I was not striving to be a lookalike, but somehow, by keeping them in my mind's eye, I could borrow some useful quality of theirs: the stillness that accompanies physical power, the prowling pace of a man keeping his violence in check, the spread-limbed arrogance of those men on the tube who occupy two seats and leave you squished up in the corner (195).

Both Walter and Laird utilise this stillness, these smaller gestures to signify maturity and power (Huw). Walter's physical restraint – her 'prowling pace' – highlights Prospero's gravitas as well as his power to emotionally manipulate Miranda and the others around him. Prospero's magic controls either a physical or emotional state – while he threatens Caliban with 'cramps' (*Tmp* 1.2.325), he reminds him that 'I endowed by purposes / With words that made them known' (*Tmp* 1.2.356-357). This line originally belongs to Miranda, but Lloyd has transferred it to Prospero (Huw *Tmp* 00:19:02). When Miranda delivers this invective, the audience positions her as an agent and bestower of knowledge – she herself has taken kindly to Caliban and had that effort rewarded poorly. By consolidating both physical and intellectual power to Prospero, Lloyd gives him total control of physical space and knowledge within the play while simultaneously divesting Miranda of that ability. In this line, Prospero equates knowledge with humanity and civility – in contrast, because Caliban has allegedly attempted to rape Miranda (*Tmp* 1.2.347-348), he is compared to an animal. In Lloyd's iteration, Caliban's obsession with Miranda is played mostly for laughs. In the final scene, Caliban makes one more lunge at Miranda (Huw). In the BBC recording, the audience laughs as Caliban – innocent but evil, benign but malevolent – is dragged away from her. This moment, though darkly humorous, also echoes the racialisation of Caliban. Caliban

cannot control himself; he is unable to distinguish right from wrong. Prospero's masculinity, on the other hand, is civilised, restrained, and measured.

We see a glimpse of how this restrained masculinity is developed in Shiloh Coke's performance as Sebastian. Coke, a Black woman, begins to posture herself differently when Sebastian learns that he could become king. Her chest puffs out and her stance widens in an attempt to ape the masculine displays of older, more powerful men. Sebastian's performance of these discrete signs suggest a caricature of masculinity that cannot measure up to Prospero's natural embodiment. The two men evoke Harris's argument that masculinity is seen as the norm – however, those outside the norm (because of their race, class, gender, etc.) must constantly strive to achieve the unattainable poise of those who are categorically masculine. While we can identify individual signs of masculinity in Sebastian, Prospero performs a unified and effortless physicality. When Prospero's composure is tested, the seams start to show. In Act 5 Scene 1, Prospero delivers a soliloquy in which he forgives his various wrongdoers. While Antonio (Carolina Valdes) is frozen onstage, Prospero approaches him and shouts, 'Flesh and blood, / You, brother mine,.../...I do forgive thee' (*Tmp* 5.1.74-78). Here, the camera shows a close-up of Walter as she bears down, squatting to eye level with the seated Antonio (Huw *Tmp* 01:27:35). Walter uses a deep male vocal energy, lending a raw, guttural sense to her rage. However, when Prospero later forgives Antonio in person (*Tmp* 5.1.130-134), Walter uses her stillness, humility, and tranquillity to express Prospero's complete control – and his relinquishment of it (Huw *Tmp* 01:30:37).

Prospero and Alonso are juxtaposed most closely against Ariel (Anouka) and Ferdinand (Atim), who are depicted as young, Black men in their physical prime (Huw). Anouka's Ariel is reminiscent of an enthusiastic but occasionally petulant child, signified through her higher-pitched vocal quality, her use of wide and quick movements, and her high energy, marred only by Prospero's initial denial of Ariel's freedom. Ariel is characterised particularly through the use of live music and dance (Huw *Tmp* 00:20:25). His songs are a combination of Shakespeare's text and original lyrics – he is a high-energy master of ceremonies.

As Black women, Coke, Anouka, and Atim perform men of colour in ways that subtly subvert what Harris points out as the white, male standard of nonperformance: 'If the nonperformance is part of what defines male masculinity, then all performed masculinities stand out as suspect and open to interrogation' (235). Ferdinand's exaggerated attempt to impress Miranda and his self-awareness while doing so highlight the suspicion under which Black people are received and interpreted. Halberstam writes: 'Masculinities of color and gay masculinities...have already been rendered visible and theatrical in their various relations to dominant white masculinities' (235). In comparison with Prospero's white masculinity, Ferdinand falls short and opens himself up to ridicule. Because they themselves are outside the norm, Coke, Anouka, and Atim perform masculinities that are also referential toward straight, white masculinities – in other words, toward Prospero. One example of this performance occurs in Act 1 Scene 2, when Prospero and Ferdinand first meet and Prospero uses magic to physically subdue the much younger Ferdinand (Huw *Tmp* 00:27:46). In her performance, Atim's gestures were wide, even clumsy. As he/she pulls her fist back to

throw a cartoonishly large punch, Ferdinand/Atim proclaims, 'I will resist such entertainment till / Mine enemy has more power' (Huw *Tmp* 00:27:42). Atim's vocal delivery is dripping with overconfidence. When his fist freezes in mid-air, Ferdinand's physical strength is met with a supernatural barrier that subdues and emasculates him. The seams of Ferdinand's performance are visible and subject to humour, while Prospero's masculinity is imperturbable.

3.4.3 Clowns, Class, and Masculinity

The Tempest harbours an additional category of masculinity performance – the clowns, Stefano (Jackie Clune) and Trinculo (Karen Dunbar). Clune and Dunbar swagger around the stage with exaggerated bravado and intensely regional accents. Because of their lower-class status, Stefano and Trinculo are similarly subject to scrutiny in their performances of masculinity. The two characters seem to completely lack self-awareness. Notably, Dunbar wears stuffed shorts (Huw *Tmp* 01:20:13), adding a bioessentialist signifier of masculinity – and a site of male anxiety – notably absent from the other costumes. In a mirror image of Atim and Anouka, Clune and Dunbar depict a parody of white male machismo. Halberstam writes that 'masculinity...becomes legible as masculinity where and when it leaves the white male middle-class body' (2). Here, Halberstam points to race and class as distinguishing factors between 'innate masculinity' and 'performed masculinity'. Clune's and Dunbar's regional accents in these service-job characters present another level at which masculinity is interrogated and performed unnaturally – striven for, rather than possessed. At one point, Clune and Dunbar emerge in shorts with their national flags on them, evoking a contemporary

sense of nationalism and regional loyalty commonly associated with sports fans from the middle and lower classes. Anthony King examines hooliganism and postmodern football culture, connecting nationalism to masculinity: 'For male fans, football is a central ritual arena in the constitution of their manhood. Through the support of a football team, the male fan affirms his status as man...and also articulates the nature of that manhood' (585). Lloyd's evocation of contemporary football culture through Clune and Dunbar's hooligan behaviour paints Stefano and Trinculo as strongly set apart from Prospero, an educated, upper-class, white man. The varied depictions of masculinity, visible and invisible, in *The Tempest* paint it as something open to interpretation and critique.

3.4.4 Caliban and Blackness

Kim F Hall connects early modern concepts of racialisation to England's rise in status as a global economic, imperialist power in the sixteenth century. 'Frequently, "black" in Renaissance discourses is opposed not to "white" but to "beauty" or "fairness"' (Hall 9). According to Hall, the emergence of this dichotomy happened later than one might think – by the time Shakespeare was writing *The Tempest*, the concept of 'fairness' as a trope of beauty was only a few decades old. Hall writes, 'This opposition between fair and dark, typical in discussions of beauty, happens in the 1550s. This semantic shift appears just at the moment of intensified English interest in colonial travel and African trade' (3). Hall's discussion of race and its socioeconomic impacts hinges in part on discussions of beauty – early modern constructs of beauty, she continues, were often described as in opposition to darkness or Blackness. The equation of Blackness with

ugliness surfaces in many of Shakespeare's plays and sonnets, and it is especially relevant to our examination of Caliban's relationship to Miranda. Hall writes:

The trope of Blackness had a broad arsenal of effects in the early modern period, meaning that it is applied not only to dark-skinned Africans but to Native Americans, Indians, Spanish, and even Irish and Welsh as groups that needed to be marked as "other" (6-7).

This provision supports the reading of Caliban as not necessarily belonging to any one race, but instead as a character who is, instead, raced: that is, he is treated by his captors according to the tropes of Blackness that entrenched early modern racial difference. In Hall's analysis, tropes of Blackness are often hurled at non-Black characters in Shakespeare as a means of disparaging beauty: 'Thus the Irish may be called "black" and an English woman may be called "Ethiopian," but these moments always depend on a visual schema that itself relies on an idea of African difference' (7). This is not to excuse readings of *The Tempest* that studiously ignore allusions to Caliban's Blackness, nor to hastily include Blackness in a super-category of marginalised identities. Rather, it is to point to the ways in which racism, specifically anti-Black racism, undergirds every type of otherness that grows out of *The Tempest* and other early modern texts.

Hall has much to offer our discussion of the tension between feminist advocacy for Miranda and anti-carceral defence of Caliban. Crucially, Hall provides evidence that white, upper-class femininity and Black servitude, especially by Black men and boys, were inextricably linked in early modern imagery depicting wealth and status. She writes, 'Concern over the whiteness of English women and the Blackness of African men (and the mixture of both) projects onto the bodies of white women the anxieties of

an evolving monarchical nation-state in which women are the repository of the symbolic boundaries of the nation' (9). This dichotomy is especially evident in discussions of inter-marriage and, more specifically, miscegenation. For an example, Hall turns to a piece of writing by George Best from 1578, in which Best chronicles a marriage between a white, English woman and a Black, Ethiopian man.

Best's anecdotal evidence that the Blackness of this Ethiopian man is due not to exposure to the sun but to an "infection" is less important for its evidence that there was racial inter-marriage in England than for its articulation of the cultural anxieties – about complexion, miscegenation, control of women, and, above all, "Englishness" – brought out by the presence of blacks (Hall 11).

George Best's anxiety for an imagined white Englishness comes to reside in scrutiny of mixed-race children. He balks at the notion that this English woman's Black child might be considered to be an Englishman. 'To include him in the nation would be to break the desired homology between land, skin, and group identity, thereby overturning the associations of England with whiteness and fairness' (Hall 12). The added layer of consciousness surrounding the birth of mixed children as a result, specifically, of unions between white women and Black men creates a dual anxiety in constant dialogue with aforementioned fears that Black men sought to rape white women. For Prospero, the continuance of his (white) line hinges solely on Miranda. The thought of the isle being peopled with Calibans implies, however hyperbolically, the emergence of a population of mixed children who are simultaneously of the island and of continental Europe. Thus, the notion of a biracial progeny is itself a threat – it is a threat to destroy Prospero's already endangered (white) legacy. These anxieties are located in what Hall terms the 'stability of whiteness' (13), or lack thereof. The perpetual instability of whiteness as a racialised category contributes to the feeling of being under threat by the possibility of

mixed children; therefore, it is the province of white men to protect the category of whiteness by intervening against inter-marriage and miscegenation.

When Prospero makes his allegation, he says that Caliban 'didst seek to violate / The honor of my child' (*Tmp* 1.2.347-8). The concept of 'violating one's honour' is both euphemistic and specific. While it obscures the grisly reality of the act of rape, it also points to the most prevalent impact of such an act. To Prospero, the crime of rape is located not in violence against the victim (his own daughter), but in the crossing of the boundary that demarcates her status. Though the bulk of Hall's analysis in *Things of Darkness* concerns accounts of enslaved Black people who were transplanted from the continent of Africa to other locations, her analysis of the connection between beauty, wealth, and white supremacy through portraiture from the era is highly useful here.

The association of woman and slave through object speaks to the problematic status of transplanted Africans. European women and African slaves are both objectified, but the slave becomes a sign of profitable difference and the promise of continually multiplying wealth and novelty that will fill her desires and complement her beauty (244).

Prospero and Miranda are effectively in an inverted situation to the subjects of these portraits. They are stripped of their wealth, their home, and their status, only to regain a semblance of each through the subjugation of the island and its inhabitants. Their status is held up through this subjugation without being mediated by objects of wealth or power. Instead, Prospero must enforce this cultural boundary on the relationship between Miranda and Caliban. Hall conceives of portraiture as a highly individual art form – an overtly manipulated snapshot of time that chronicles and ensconces the wealth and power of the subject. Conversely, theatre can be seen as an integrated series of portraits that coalesce to depict not an individual, but an archetype. Part of

Prospero's project, it seems, is imposing what little European order he can on the island. Through the education of his daughter and the subjugation of the island's non-European inhabitants, Prospero asserts hegemony by demanding behaviour from Ariel and Caliban that mirrors imagery of enslaved people in portraits from the time. Hall writes on the inferred experiences of the young Black boys who were taken into European households to act as footmen to white women; a young Black boy likely would have sat for a 'double portrait that would demonstrate his European master's wealth or status, a status largely derived from his own subjugation' (211). Hall identifies the same 'loving recognition' (230) in many of these painted figures of Black servants. It is this reverence for whiteness, in addition to the evident cost of acquiring and keeping an enslaved servant, that cements the white subject's status.

3.4.5 *Double Incarceration*

To begin an earnest look at Stanton's characterisation of Caliban and his treatment by the dramaturgy of the Donmar Trilogy production, we must return to Prospero's line: 'I endow'd thy purposes with words / that made them known' (*Tmp* 1.2.356-7) which belongs to Miranda in the Norton Anthology's version of Shakespeare's text. From the notes, editors reassigned Miranda's line to Prospero for centuries, having found it 'inappropriate for Miranda' (Greenblatt 3226). By doing the same, Lloyd obliquely references the gendered expectations of Miranda imposed by readers, editors, and dramaturgs. In Prospero's mouth, the words serve a clear purpose – they echo the insidious line of reasoning that Caliban should be grateful, actually, for all that Prospero has given him. Prospero does not merely articulate that he taught Caliban how to

speak. Prospero asserts that words 'make known' the meaning of a thought. The imperialist undertones of this invective surface in the form of Prospero's belief that Caliban's thoughts (his 'purposes') were unknown until they were discovered through verbal communication. As the author, owner, and giver of this language, Prospero cements his imperial power by erasing the possibility of meaning without his own version of expression.

However, Lloyd cuts the rest of the following text:

But thy vile race,
 Though thou didst learn, had that in't which good natures
 Could not abide to be with; therefore wast thou
 Deservedly confined into this rock,
 Who hadst deserved more than a prison (*Tmp* 1.2.357-361).

These four and a half lines highlight a connection between white supremacy and incarceration. The use of the word 'race' does not necessarily suggest solely a difference in skin colour or geographic origin. Greenblatt glosses the word as 'hereditary nature' (3226) – a generously vague admission of the eugenic pseudoscience that governs racial (and other) differences in the play. Dadabhoj and Mehdizadeh write:

Early modern English racial thinking emphasized difference and Otherness, often locating those qualities in human biological or somatic variation – such as skin color – and in culture, religion, and custom, in order to stake claims of knowledge, power, and authority....Within this political and social context, Shakespeare's texts perform ideological work by authorizing knowledge about race through the construction and representation of who is and is not human via forms of somatic difference (3).

Dadabhoj and Mehdizadeh identify skin colour as one of several early modern modes of otherness. In Lloyd's production, Caliban's otherness does not reside in his race.

Sophie Stanton, who plays Caliban (and, notably, Falstaff in *Henry IV*), is white (as is

Harriet Walter). Somatically, they are differentiated in body type (fat versus thin), and the rest is manifested in Caliban's characterisation. Stanton uses the same cockney dialect for Caliban as she does for Falstaff and, indeed, for Andrea; in contrast with Walter's impeccable diction, Caliban comes across as a member of an uneducated serving class. Dadabhoy and Mehdizadeh characterise racialisation as a product of the imperial authorization of knowledge – ultimately, racialisation as a tool for making a person Other (Otherification?) contributes to perceptions of authority as innate within privileged demographics. Imperialism connects the Other's actions to their ontological traits. This relates back to our discussion of the social construction of gender through parallel uses of false ontology. That is, the construction of race and gender both rely in part on the fallacy that performance makes identity real – that one's actions and affectations function as irrefutable evidence of some innate, unchangeable quality. In Caliban's case, he is most strongly othered when Prospero claims that his 'nature' itself rejected the notion of 'good' education – Prospero suggests that this, as much as his proposed assault on Miranda, is the reason for his incarceration. In short, Prospero simultaneously holds Caliban accountable for his crime through carceral punishment while saying that it is in Caliban's fundamental nature to deserve imprisonment. If it seems confusing, it is – the slippage between these concepts is an essential aspect of their function. Prospero and Caliban are pitted against each other in parallel with incarcerated characters Hannah and Andrea. This is where the dramaturgy of Lloyd's adaptation seems to fall short. Caliban comes across as an impulsive, immature brute. His lunges at Miranda are brushed off by Prospero and the other characters (Huw *Tmp*

01:36:11). He is very much the butt of the joke. Neither he nor Miranda seem to get any justice or closure for their difficult dynamic.

This is not to say that this interpretation is a misreading of Shakespeare's text. Rather, it is an illustration of the ways in which Shakespeare's text is not – cannot ever be – dramaturgically complete, because, as Dadabhoy and Mehdizadeh go on to say, it was produced under conditions of (and benefacted by) white supremacy. 'The non-white racialized Others in Shakespeare's plays are purposefully made strange: they become the object of study for Shakespeare's white, European characters who are afforded the authority to classify their theatrical counterparts according not only to their physical features but also to their behavioral patterns' (Dadabhoy and Mehdizadeh 9). On the page, Caliban's character carries strong saliences (Dadabhoy and Mehdizadeh 12) with racialised minorities in the global North. Addressed uncritically, Caliban's perceived racial difference transmutes into an insidious caricature. Caliban's narrative within this play sees him end in the same spot in which he began – the lesson learned, it seems, is to trust and obey hegemonic authority: 'I'll be wise hereafter / And seek for grace' (*Tmp* 5.1.296-297). In his description of Caliban to his peers, Prospero says, 'He is as disproportioned in his manners / As in his shape' (*Tmp* 5.1.293-294). This line, however, is also cut from Lloyd's script. These omissions take the shape of an attempt to cull the overtly ableist and racist bent of the original text. Harkening back to Williams' work on incomplete dramaturgy, this effort serves more potently to obscure the still-present imperialist workings of the play. In cutting these overtly prejudiced lines, Lloyd makes an attempt to neutralise the harm the text can do to an Othered spectator. But instead, these cuts construct the illusion of neutrality. Dadabhoy and Mehdizadeh write:

'The problem with such transcendent and universal framing, however, is that it elides the local particularity of Shakespeare, and it allows both him and his work to escape the processes of racialization in which his work is deeply imbricated and implicated' (21). We cannot actually speculate with any sincerity about Lloyd's intentions in making these cuts. However, the consistency with which somaticized dialogue is omitted from the production script suggests both streamlining for time and pruning for content. This then begs the question: why can't Prospero be overtly racist? Are we, like Prospero and Miranda (and, it seems, every other character), to believe that Caliban simply deserves enslavement and incarceration?

To proceed, I'd like to incorporate scholarly work on Prospero's accusation that Caliban has attempted to sexually assault Miranda. While I don't necessarily believe it to be possible (or helpful) to work to 'exonerate' Caliban from this allegation by plumbing a playtext that is not, and will never be, able to replace a real legal case, arguments in this vein acknowledge the crucial relationship between racism and retributive punishment under Prospero's rule. Explicating the cultural circumstances under which *The Tempest* was written, Benjamin Hilb writes, 'One of the play's most relevant motifs in light of American history is that of the myth of the Black rapist, one of a series of strategic prejudicial narratives intended to provide false justifications for European colonialism and transatlantic slavery' (145). Hilb argues that the text of *The Tempest* does not explicitly support the undisputable truth of Prospero's allegation against Caliban – in fact, Hilb continues, the textual excerpts most often used to confirm Caliban's guilt are just as capable of suggesting his innocence (156). Primarily, Hilb points to Caliban's initial response: 'Oh ho, oh ho! Would't had been done! / Thou didst

prevent me; I had peopled else / This isle with Calibans' (*Tmp*.1.2.357-359). In Lloyd's adaptation and in every production of *The Tempest* I have ever seen, at least, this line is played as a devious, malevolent threat. Caliban seems almost to be rubbing it in Prospero and Miranda's faces. Hilb argues that this line could just as easily be read as sarcasm, pointing to the early modern double meaning of the word 'prevent' as meaning both 'stopped me from doing it' and 'did it before I could'. Hilb also points to Prospero's authoritarian control of Miranda's body when he uses magic to put her to sleep as further evidence of incestual assault (163). While this game of 'You', 'No you,' could go on forever, the value of this assertion for me is not in who did it, but in the fact that the text is more ambivalent than we might think.

On a cultural level, Hilb highlights the white hysteria that has historically led to the deaths of countless Black men and boys in particular.²¹ Hilb cites a 1688 statute, which establishes racially separated trial courts in Barbados. The statute cites the 'Baseness of their Condition' as the logic by which Black defendants were denied trial (154). This phrasing is strikingly similar to Prospero's line about Caliban's 'natures' (*Tmp* 1.2.358), which are the underlying reason for his imprisonment. This structure is fundamental to the perpetuation of racist hegemony – while the crime itself is legally addressed, the immutable somatic attributes of the accused are considered both a cause and proof of the crime. In summation, the 1688 statute and Prospero's claim posit racialised difference as a sort of pre-crime; Blackness is depicted as an inescapable

²¹ In 1955, a Black 14-year-old named Emmett Till was abducted, tortured, and murdered by Roy Bryant and J.W. Milam for allegedly whistling at Bryant's wife, Carolyn Bryant (Hassan).

pre-disposition. If the sort of language that suggests racial difference as an indicator for future criminal behaviour rings contemporary alarm bells, it should – Hilb cites a study from the United States that found that 59% of people falsely convicted for sexual assault between 1989 and 2017 were Black. This fraction is over four times the percentage of the United States' population that is Black (Hilb 154), highlighting the devastating, material consequences of racist legal structures. This resonance – or salience, to borrow Dadabhoy and Mehdizadeh's term – is mostly lost in the semiotic scuffle of the Donmar Trilogy. It's an unfortunate loss to a production that so meticulously depicts the cruel inequities of incarceration; perhaps insidiously, the casting studiously erases the links between incarceration and racism, especially as they relate to the imperial power of England. In this area, Lloyd's *Tempest* falls short of making an original or incisive comment about incarceration, instead falling back on uncritical archetypes that have long governed white conceptions of who does and doesn't deserve imprisonment.

While these text-based interpretations of *The Tempest* remain subject to scrutiny, the mere possibility of Hilb's line of reasoning is a critical road in the journey toward an anti-colonial reading of the play. The possibility that Prospero's accusation could be false significantly alters his position in relation to Caliban. This possibility takes into account the construction of the 'Black rapist'²² as a culturally mediated tool of white supremacy. In the frame of reference in which *The Tempest* is in dialogue with the colonisation of North America, Prospero's allegation echoes the racism that permeated

²² There is a temptation here to elide discussions of Caliban as specifically Black with Stanton's white version. Any reference here to Caliban as Black is based on readings of his character in the text – this dichotomy (and perhaps opposition) will no doubt come up in the following pages.

(and still permeates) legal structures. Hilb writes that, in the seventeenth century, accounts (by white people) of rebellions by enslaved people were often characterised as malevolent attempts by Black men to rape white women en masse (160-161). This perceived (and projected) threat to white women surfaces in *The Tempest* when Prospero, not Miranda, makes the accusation. This format harkens back to *The Lawes Resolutions of Womens Rights* (1632), wherein an assaulted woman's closest male relative was solely able to bring an accusation against her assailant (Solga 37). Prospero uses (partially, at least), Caliban's supposed crime as justification for his enslavement. In this way, *The Tempest* codifies modern modes of enslavement and oppression – it holds up the handbook for imprisoning and persecuting a group on grounds of Otherness.

But, in Lloyd's adaptation of *The Tempest*, Caliban is white. His somatic difference is in his relative fatness, emphasised by Stanton's exaggerated hobble. This depiction harkens back to Best's description of a 'differential between *obesity* as something constructed from above and *fat* as something different and more elusive, a queer embodiment' (2019). By this logic, Stanton's fat caricature approaches something more akin to Best's concept of obesity. Her flattened, indexical shorthand implicitly positions fatness along hegemonic lines of understanding. This performance forms a psychic fat suit, a semiotic prosthesis by which the audience, in the role of subject, comes to understand the fat object. 'When a subject labels and understands a body as obese it is a prosthetic action because it compensates the subject's unwillingness or inability to comprehend that body as complex and fully human' (Best). This is not to place blame on Stanton for her depiction or to make a value judgement about her

performance; on the contrary, I bring this up in the hopes of demonstrating that Caliban is irreversibly Othered by the dramaturgy of the Donmar Trilogy *Tempest*. By characterising Caliban through a series of obese archetypes, Lloyd limits Stanton's access as a performer to Caliban's humanity (in the philosophical, rather than biological, sense). This dramaturgy of Caliban echoes Prospero's logic of his incarceration. Caliban is, in effect, condemned before the play begins.

Caliban's difference in status is also cemented by his lower-class dialect and, in the end, his janitorial duties within the prison frame. The transference of the locus of power dynamic between Prospero and Caliban from one of racial difference to one socioeconomic and somatic difference is treacherous ground for analysis. To start, the substitution of one for the other implicitly suggests that the two are equally harmful – it reinforces, however unintentionally, the supposition that being white and poor is as 'bad' as being Black (forgetting, for a moment, how much larger the percentage of impoverished Black people is in the United States (Creamer 5) and United Kingdom (Francis-Devine 46)). The incomplete dramaturgical justification for the casting is mitigated once again by the prison frame. Here, the prison frame acts as a sort of shield for scrutiny. What's important to the casting is not adherence to the text, but cohesion with the prison narrative. From *Henry IV*, the spectator is aware of the enmity between incarcerated performers Hannah (Walter) and Andrea (Stanton). The struggle between the two incarcerated women, then, holds more sway over the relationship between

Prospero and Caliban than any ‘faithfulness’²³ to the text. Unfortunately, this arrangement then says more about the fictional universe of the prison than it does about our own world. In Lloyd’s short adaptation, Caliban is flattened even more, echoing Andrea’s persistently destructive agenda in the margins of *Henry IV*. As a result, the spectator views *The Tempest* through a double lens: our vision is funnelled through Hannah’s eyes: ‘Readers’ and audiences’ knowledge is partial, plural, and sometimes contradictory’ (Hilb 165). Hilb writes,

More troubling still, denying the dimensionality of racialized characters as personae with their own stories and perspectives...mirrors the past denial of personhood to Black slaves....As Black persons were eclipsed, through the emergence and operation of the slave trade, by the projection of imaginary types akin to fictional characters, they came to function in colonial networks as commodified supernumeraries without the richness granted to other “types” of persons – white types (147).

The function of the racially defined archetype sheds light on the function of the incarcerated characters in the Donmar Trilogy as their own forms of microcosmic archetypes. Specifically, Hannah and Andrea are foils for each other, but Andrea is flattened into a stereotype that references dominant narratives of classism and fatphobia. In the language of incomplete dramaturgies, the casting of double types in the prison frame and *The Tempest* asks an important question but provides nothing in the form of an answer – why must Caliban be marginalised? What does his marginalisation mean for the play? The disappointing answer at the end of Lloyd’s adaptation is more or less ‘nothing’; Andrea remains an immutable archetype as the lights go down on her and Hannah.

²³ That is, if anyone can judge what is or is not faithful to a text, a notion which too often hinges on some fallaciously authoritative canonisation.

In Lloyd's interpretation, Caliban falls in most naturally with the clowns, Stefano and Trinculo. He and the other clowns lack agency – part of what makes the clowns funny is their false belief in their own authority. For example, Stefano says: 'For my part, the sea cannot drown me. I swam, ere I could recover the shore, five and thirty leagues, off and on. By this light, thou shalt be my lieutenant, monster, or my standard' (*Tmp* 3.2.11-14). This clear exaggeration also establishes Stefano's belief in himself as a kind of general or military leader – not that he believes these things literally, but that he believes himself worthy of their rank and authority. For the world to be righted, Stefano, Trinculo, and Caliban must be reminded of their place in the social hierarchy. 'What a thrice double ass / Was I,' Caliban later laments, 'To take this drunkard for a god' (*Tmp* 5.1.297-8). Caliban's folly, he says, is in seeking a false master. Caliban's constant thirst for rebellion takes a different shape than Ariel's wish for freedom; where Ariel represents the 'good slave', Caliban is depicted as simultaneously brutish and scheming. In the Donmar Trilogy, Ariel and Caliban hardly interact, though Prospero's vitriol is turned on each of them at different points. The difference in the outcomes of their individual stories is then figured as a result of their differing levels of obedience toward Prospero. Caliban never really wishes for freedom; instead, he hopes to supplant one enslaver and install another. As an archetype, Caliban is based on the racist fantasy of a brute whose immutable nature demands incarceration. When Caliban is played by a white actor, this frame of reference is distanced from the play. This choice absolves the text of its outdated racial coding, instead framing Caliban uncritically as a natural-born villain. In the Donmar Trilogy, this distance is further complicated by the prison frame. With every actor-character incarcerated, Caliban and

Ariel's double incarceration is abstract in comparison with the mimetic prison frame. How do you distinguish a prisoner from prisoners? The end of the Donmar Trilogy's *Tempest* offers one answer – in the final shot of the play, we see Hannah, pensively reading a book, while prison janitor Andrea wordlessly shines the floors (Huw *Tmp* 01:40:45). This dynamic simultaneously references and perpetuates cultural conceptions of the prison hierarchy: in this fictional prison, some tasks are better than others, and so are the people who do them.

The stratification of status surfaces again and again in every play in the Donmar Trilogy, and in *The Tempest*, it takes its most nebulous form. The end of the play is not characterised by a noisy, chaotic breakout moment, but rather by a longer denouement in which the prison ecosystem returns to equilibrium. It's one of the only moments of the play in which life in prison is depicted without any additional layering. The unimpeded mimesis further collapses the distance between spectator and incarcerated performer. In his discussion of distance, Reason invokes Edward Bullough's 1912 paper "Psychical Distance" as a Factor in Art and as an Aesthetic Principle'. Reason writes that when we lose our sense of distance as spectators, 'We cease to engage with art as art and instead focus solely on our own condition' (93). He goes on to say that 'Bullough constructs distance as a kind of scale, with two equally problematic extremes' (93). Through Bullough's framework, Reason uses qualitative methodology to record the reactions of incarcerated women who viewed an earlier version of the Donmar Trilogy's *Tempest* in 2016. The balance between identification and disassociation experienced by spectators in response to different elements of the performance gave rise to nuanced and, at times, heart-breaking accounts of the process. 'Such identification was not

absolute,' Reason writes, 'However, there was a critical distance and detachment, an awareness of the limits of authenticity, awareness of the fabric and workings of the production' (93). The most salient concepts to emerge from Reason's work are those of critical distance and the limits of authenticity, in that it is critical distance that, in part, mediates those limits. These concepts map onto my exploration of gender, especially as they challenge authenticity's relationship to authority. To be seen as giving an authentic gender performance is, essentially, to 'pass'. Passing, then, becomes a question of authority and culturally mediated definitions, rather than an individual pursuit. In order to arbitrate for oneself what qualifies as authentic, the spectator must be able to judge their own affect with critical distance – they must be able to examine the extent to which their own affect is performed and, in so doing, judge the extent to which what they're watching is both performed and performative. The spectator is also aware to varying degrees of the nebulous cultural boundaries of authenticity. As a concept, authenticity is broadly constructed by social definitions of the real. When we consume a product (I'm thinking of food, but you can think of art), the simplest route to gauging its authenticity is distance itself – psychical, geographical, etc. – making these boundaries subject to the whims of social structures, down to elements as small as unit of measure. For the incarcerated audience, that critical distance was greatly reduced, but not erased. This approximation of authenticity is further supported by Lloyd's decision to cast performers who had previously been incarcerated (Reason 89). In doing so, Lloyd collapses the critical distance between performer and incarcerated spectator, blurring the bounds of authenticity.

In order for these supposed bounds of authenticity to mean something for my argument, I must first clarify what I mean by authenticity (despite its definitional resistance to codification). Leaping, for the sake of concision, over centuries of theoretical debate over what authenticity is, how it originates, and who governs it, I turn to the work of Verhaal and Dobrev, who apply the concept of authenticity to market research. I find this particular lens useful because of its focus on authenticity as a marketing tool – one that is simultaneously constructed and appraised by the audience. Beyond the convenient nominal similarities between our discussions, Verhaal and Dobrev identify what they call the ‘authenticity paradox’, which arises as ‘popularity and iconicity²⁴ come to dominate an audience’s positive impressions about a firm,’ causing a drop in the ‘appeal of authenticity’ (253). In short, Verhaal and Dobrev hypothesise that authenticity simultaneously improves a product’s market appeal, while also limiting its success and longevity. While it may seem cynical to conceive of *The Tempest* itself as a marketable product, the mechanisms by which a theatre ticket is advertised and sold are reflected in Verhaal and Dobrev’s study. ‘Attributions of authenticity,’ they write, ‘Are partly driven by the coherence of agreement among members of an audience in response to broader social dynamics’ (254). This notion of cohesion among an audience small enough to be considered in agreement about what is authentic can be seen in Reason’s account of the incarcerated audience of *The Tempest*.

The collective agreement that emerges among like-minded members of an audience who share values and beliefs about what is genuine, sincere, and truthful is the mechanism by which authenticity attributions are socially constructed (Verhaal and Dobrev 255).

²⁴ I take ‘iconicity’ here to be an application of our strictly semiotic definition more broadly applied to market consumption.

The above quotation applies to Reason's study insofar as incarcerated women are considered a monolith in dominant cultural narratives – in order for a group to have the power to attribute authenticity, as Verhaal and Dobrev write, they must internally agree upon an ethos and, simultaneously, must be ascribed a certain amount of unified authority by consumers outside of the group. Reason's varied findings simultaneously illustrate the futility of pursuing a 'pure' version of authenticity, while also demonstrating the value of salience as a vehicle by which an imperfect form of authenticity can be approximated.

In terms of what this means for Caliban, it should come as no surprise that the incarcerated spectators found resonances between his story and theirs (Reason 94). However, Reason's findings state that spectators were more drawn to the story of Prospero, especially as told through the filter of Hannah (91). This result further supports my reservations about Lloyd's depiction of Caliban – despite the technically equal standing of the incarcerated actors, the uncritical equation of Andrea's incarcerated persona with Caliban's only highlights the disparity in which Hannah still holds power over Andrea, and, in so doing, replicates and perpetuates the structures by which Caliban is oppressed. Lloyd's *Tempest* is, more or less, told from Hannah's point of view. Through that lens, it's possible to understand both Andrea and Caliban as archetypes in Hannah's mind – however, this hardly comes across in the recorded version, and we see no such answer to or resolution for their fraught relationship. On its most basic level, this adaptation replicates the conditions under which Hannah is entitled to more personhood than Andrea. From what we know of her from *Henry IV*, we come to see Andrea as a person given over to addiction; she is, in the end, just another

stereotype of someone who couldn't kick their habit. Laid bare, it's a frightening allegory – as an addicted archetype, Andrea is maladaptive, lazy, and selfish. She, unlike Hannah, has yet to be reformed. If her behaviour at the end of *Henry IV* is anything to go by, she doesn't want to be. What could have been an impactful and creative indictment of the dehumanising cruelty of incarceration turns instead into another moral about how we should only pity the women incarcerated for things that aren't their fault, as well as the incarcerated women who have sufficiently repented for their sins, a group that notably excludes Andrea. This characterisation of Andrea (and, by extension, Caliban and Falstaff) harkens back to Chakravarty's discussion of the Vagrancy Act, which characterises idleness and refusal to work as grounds for enslavement (7). Against a carceral backdrop, Caliban's forced servitude echoes Andrea's, and the production lacks meaningful commentary on either condition, instead reinforcing the draconian ideals put forward by the Vagrancy Act.

Incarcerated audiences are in a unique position in relation to the Donmar Trilogy. As spectators, they are implicitly asked to judge the authenticity of the experiences represented onstage, and they are psychologically closer to the subject matter than the general population. 'By its nature, the prison environment is one that exists alongside but separate to the general population. It is at once known – with prison a recurring feature of popular representations from *Porridge* to *Cool Hand Luke*; *Prisoner Cell Block H* and *Orange is the New Black* – and yet an environment of which only a tiny minority have any first-hand experience' (Reason 88). The Donmar Trilogy's adherence to mimesis in the prison frame imparts a representative understanding of the fictional prison where the incarcerated actors are kept; the audience knows, at least, what their

daily clothes and recreational space look like, and the assortment of props and set dressings flesh out the spare material universe. Perhaps most significantly, the mimetic prison frame imparts a lack of men, not to be confused with a lack of masculinity. As quoted by Reason, Lloyd says that the prison frame, 'In the beginning was a strategy and a device' to explain and excuse the lack of men in the cast (87). This is in keeping with Walter's account of the process. It wasn't until the decision had already been made that any kind of commentary on incarceration took shape. Lloyd ascribes the general success of the prison setting in the telling of the play to Shakespeare's universality: 'Lloyd echoes with a recurring articulation in discussions of theatre in prisons of Shakespeare's ability not only *to* speak to the prison context, but indeed speak *of* and *for* the lived experience of prisoners' (Reason 87). Looking back on the preceding chapters in this work, the notion that Shakespeare could speak for incarcerated women seems increasingly implausible. It speaks to a worldview that considers the vestiges of white supremacy, Eurocentrism, and imperialism to be neutral, universal, unavoidable – rather than commenting on the connection of Shakespeare's texts to these elements, claims that Shakespeare speaks for everyone obscure and perpetuate the engines of marginalisation at work in his plays. Even the Donmar Trilogy, which is, ostensibly, about how unfair incarceration is, unquestioningly depicts Caliban as the eternal prisoner, captive by nature.

In *Anti-Racist Shakespeare*, Dadabhoy and Mehdizadeh dedicate significant energy to debunking the supposed universality of Shakespeare: 'Obscuring the identities of canonical writers or making them subservient or irrelevant to their aesthetic genius, reproduces the universality of white maleness at the same time that it erases its

racial and gendered positions' (22). Aesthetic is at the crux of their argument – aesthetic, they write, cannot be exempt from discussions of social mechanics. As high-profile, non-incarcerated artists visiting a real prison, Lloyd and Walter assumed, regardless of intent, a position of power and authority. Especially in performing *The Tempest*, which both depicts and excuses overt racial hegemony, Lloyd and Walter's positionality in relation to incarcerated populations and to the character of Caliban himself should be made visible. Instead, Lloyd claims that white, male, English Shakespeare can be as benevolent a presence in everyone's life as it is in theirs.

By ignoring the powerful systems that contribute to the marginalization of non-white racialized people, white people can adopt a position of racial innocence because they are not personally involved in upholding those systems, even as they benefit from them. The key ideas here are the ways that racial ignorance promotes racial innocence and how both affective locations are also epistemological locations (Dadabhoy and Mehdizadeh 25).

This is not to say that Lloyd 'ignores' the carceral system. Rather, her direction ignores her own position in relation to it – specifically, the position of whiteness. In obscuring the role of white supremacy in the perpetuation of carceral punishment, Lloyd's commentary turns, as white commentary so often does, to the case of the individual.

By the end of *The Tempest*, Hannah's plea to the audience to 'do something!' (Huw) at the end of *Julius Caesar* has lost its bite, if it ever had any. This invective feels empty because it is not rooted in an acknowledgement of the interdependence of incarceration and racist structures (Hilb 154). In concrete terms, Shakespeare's own position means that any racialised depiction in his plays is told through a white lens (Dadabhoy and Mehdizadeh 27). Crucially, Dadabhoy and Mehdizadeh continue, 'Shakespeare's whiteness bolsters his elite cultural capital because his racial invisibility

animates his position of universality' (64). The accrument and retention of 'cultural capital' is always at play in the performance of Shakespeare precisely because of his status as a canonical English voice. Dadabhoy and Mehdizadeh astutely note that cultural capital is animated – that is, given a life of its own – by the obfuscation of Shakespeare's racial positionality. It's one thing to point out that racism exists and that Shakespeare is white, but it is an entirely different thing to conceive of Shakespeare's works as themselves propped up by and in service of ideals of whiteness. Not only is Shakespeare's work implicated by some external hegemonic force, but his plays are themselves active participants in the marginalisation of the Other. This doesn't mean that Shakespeare is bad and we should stop performing his plays; instead, I suggest that, for an adaptation of *The Tempest* (for example) to have a liberatory or progressive impact, the dramaturgy of the play must take into account the relationship of both Shakespeare and the theatre makers themselves to white supremacy. To perform an 'unraced' version of Shakespeare is, as Dadabhoy and Mehdizadeh write, to 'tacitly endors[e] the project of white supremacy, which is invested in the obscure and elusive material construction of white racial power' (10). Throughout their book, Dadabhoy and Mehdizadeh work to convey the materiality of racialisation – not through any kind of somatic catalogue of race, but through the assertion that 'societal structures are governed by racial regimes and race operates through a visual register (66). Quoting Fanon (1988), they raise the concept of the 'epidermalization of race' (66) – the focus on race as a visually-affirmed category echoes the limitations of genderqueer casting's dependence on the audience's reception of the cast's gender expression. The framing of race and gender as categories dominated by visual (and auditory) information

exposes the impossibility of perfect gender expression. How can the external ever summarise the internal? And how do systems of power control the vocabulary – and, thus, the reception – of what is considered an acceptable expression of interiority?

This brings us back to Caliban and his otherness. Shakespeare's text racialises Caliban through this process of epidermalization – in the lines cut by Lloyd, which broadly concern Caliban's shape and nature, Prospero highlights his othering traits (e.g. 'He is as disproportioned in his manners / As in his shape' (*Tmp* 5.1.293-4)). I am reaching toward a distinction here; I want to highlight the circularity through which race is constructed. Caliban is raced by Prospero, while, simultaneously, Prospero is calling upon prejudicial archetypes to identify Caliban's racialisable traits. Caliban is Black (in Hall's more broadly inclusive, early modern sense, at least), and so he tried to commit a rape; he tried to commit a rape, and so he is Black. This circular reasoning is derived from systemic hegemony, not from individual, lived experiences – this is where the dramaturgy of *The Tempest* falls short. Where Prospero's response to Caliban's behaviour is depicted as a single case, in which Caliban strikes, so Prospero strikes back, Caliban as an archetype has the potential to illustrate...something, at least. But can such a point be made with Shakespeare? Dadabhoy and Mehdizadeh turn to the work of Ian Smith, who

adroitly points out that forms of Blackness that we encounter in Shakespeare are 'produced by white culture.' What Smith signals here is not only that the representation of Black identity and the ideas freighted onto that identity are white-made and manufactured, but also that these texts do not offer any kind of truth about Blackness. (27)

To extrapolate this line of reasoning, it seems fair and necessary to question whether it is the business of contemporary adaptations of Shakespeare to comment on Blackness

at all; wherever Blackness is depicted, it is done so through a white lens. Such an extrapolation also raises the question of how this framework can be applied to Shakespeare's female characters. Can Shakespeare's work be rendered actively anti-Black or anti-misogynist through performance? In order to have even a slim chance of escaping from the deep rut of invisible whiteness, the dramaturgy of the production, especially when helmed by a majority-white team, must actively, persistently, and boldly critique its own position. In the past, I have had reservations about codifying any kind of expectations of this type of dramaturgy, for fear that white creatives will take it as free reign to do whatever they want (or ignore whatever they want) as long as they meet these ultimately arbitrary specifications. However, it is worth opening the door to avenues through which artists of colour can gain agency in relation to Shakespeare, and Dadabhoy and Mehdizadeh (among others) have already begun working towards such a framework.

Most importantly, Dadabhoy and Mehdizadeh centre Blackness and the lived experiences of their students in their discussion of anti-racist pedagogy (65). The aforementioned saliences return the power of identification to the hands of the reader or spectator, who has the opportunity, through the gift of their attention and care, to find a resonant frequency within the work. I cannot speak for the Black spectator, nor for the incarcerated one. In Reason's qualitative study, incarcerated audience members resonated more with the characterisation of Prospero than with Caliban (91). To me, at least, this is somewhat damning – for Prospero to retain his status as the focus of the audience's empathy through to the end of the play, the audience must look away from or else excuse his subjugation of the island and its inhabitants. A little slavery has to be

okay, as a treat. This dramaturgical choice (or non-choice, really, an abdication of choice) goes deeper, even, than salience – it reinforces what Dadabhoy and Mehdizadeh call the ‘white racial frame’ through its ‘refusal to see and acknowledge that frame while simultaneously centering that frame as the only one through which legitimate (white) knowledge is produced’ (24-5). White ignorance, they write, perpetuates the white racial frame by ignoring its existence in favour of a race-neutral fantasy in which white artists and audiences may temporarily abdicate their place in the racial hierarchy to enjoy some theatre. As Dadabhoy and Mehdizadeh observe:

The maneuver to make non-whiteness hypervisible and whiteness invisible is the disturbing paradox of race-neutral pedagogy. In this formulation, race is an important category for analysis only when non-white characters are present, and when those characters are present, the only important thing about them is their racialized status’ (Dadabhoy and Mehdizadeh 26).

In layman’s terms, this means that the Donmar Trilogy *Tempest’s* Ferdinand, for example, is depicted not just as a man, but as a Black man, whereas Prospero is just some magician. Regarding white ignorance and race neutrality, we are able to use Dadabhoy and Mehdizadeh’s framework to construct a white lens, which simultaneously camouflages white racialisations and highlights non-white ones.

Significantly for my argument, Miranda in the Donmar Trilogy’s *Tempest* is not a white woman. Harvey, who appears in *Julius Caesar* as the Soothsayer and *Henry IV* as Poins and The Douglas, is not a picture of cis, straight, white femininity. Because it pains me to catalogue or describe the physical attributes of a person who has no say in the matter, especially a trans or non-binary person, I will leave that observation where it is. Taken together, Harvey’s performances across the Donmar Trilogy span a range of

gender expressions, many of them seated in more traditionally masculine or boyish inclinations. Harvey's physical affect as Miranda is highly energetic, even juvenile. They make repetitive, excited gestures, and at one point they hide under the bed (Huw *Tmp* 00:18:52). This version of Miranda is innocent in a way that is divorced from white femininity. Together with Atim's Ferdinand, Harvey's Miranda injects the production with ecstatic androgyny, especially in comparison with the anxious masculinities of the older generation (Huw). Where Walter's movements as Prospero are characterised by stillness, Harvey's are all over the stage. They hardly ever simply walk from point to point. Harvey's portrait is one of ungendered innocence – in relation to Miranda's white father, they are petulant in the manner of a beloved child. Harvey's depiction of Miranda leans into the notion that gender performance is learned. It brings gender (or gender ambiguity, more specifically) under the umbrella of innocence – a carefreeness that sparks a feeling of nostalgia for anyone who has ever been called a tomboy. Harvey's unmasked gender performance feels profoundly natural, even liberatory.

3.4.6 Loving Recognition: Language, Affect, and Servitude

One of the turns of phrase I find myself returning to is Hall's identification of the sentiment expressed by Black subjects depicted in early modern double portraits as 'loving recognition' (230) for their white counterparts. It appears, through Hall's art historical review, that this servile affect was complementary with depictions of wealth and status. The archetype of the devoted slave is animated by Shakespeare's text. Prospero draws and redraws the boundaries around his expectations. He says to Caliban: 'Shrug'st thou, malice? / If thou neglect'st or does unwillingly / What I

command, I'll rack thee with old cramps' (*Tmp* 1.2.366-8). In demanding that Caliban perform his orders not only completely, but willingly, Prospero enforces a code of deferential behaviour. This mandatory affect returns throughout the production for both Caliban and Ariel. The two characters act as foils for each other in this regard – where Caliban is unable to provide 'service with a smile', Ariel works with an affective enthusiasm that sustains his relationship with Prospero.

In his first conversation with Ariel, Prospero famously denies Ariel's request for freedom, accusing him of forgetting the grisly circumstances in which Prospero found and rescued him (*Tmp* 1.2). In the Donmar Trilogy's *Tempest*, the staging of this conversation posits an early reversal of the physical dynamic between the two. Ariel (Jade Anouka) sits tensely, unmoving, on the bed, while Prospero paces, lecturing him (Huw). The conversation begins when Ariel impulsively responds to Prospero's commands by blurting out, 'Is there more toil?' (*Tmp* 1.2.242). This interjection is followed by a tense, weighty pause. Initially, Prospero tries to dismiss Ariel's petition: 'Before the time be out? No more' (*Tmp* 1.2.246). It is when Ariel continues, despite this dismissal, that Prospero chides him. Ariel owes Prospero a debt of service, he says, because he removed Ariel from worse circumstances. Whether Ariel entered into this contract willingly, and whether the two actually agreed upon a set time frame for his service is unclear. When Prospero threatens to 'rend an oak / And peg thee in his knotty entrails till / Thou hast howled away twelve winters' (*Tmp* 1.2.294-6), he makes clear that his power is absolute. Prospero alludes to the fact that, if he chose, he could keep Ariel captive for eternity – but he won't, because he is a gracious and benevolent master. The impression that Prospero has done a kindness for Ariel and holds affection

for him is strikingly different from the logic he applies to his treatment of Caliban. Nevertheless, Greenblatt includes a performance comment on Prospero's invective: 'Thou liest, malignant thing!' (*Tmp* 1.2.257). These lines, he writes, can 'disturb audiences by making the play's protagonist seem bullying and tyrannical' (3223). Greenblatt goes on to note how casting and direction can impact the audience's interpretation of Prospero's characterisation. What Greenblatt misses, I think, is the understanding that, for the dramaturgy of the play to appear both complete and liberating, the play's protagonist *must* be seen in this light. To focus on the potentially disturbing effect of this aspect of the text presumes a white audience, because it assumes the formation of an immediate and psychically close connection between Prospero and the spectator. That an audience member may be more disturbed by the fact that Prospero enslaves people than by the portrayal of Prospero as even remotely as 'bad' as his actions does not seem to factor into Greenblatt's note. The white ignorance, to follow on from Dadabhoy and Mehdizadeh, behind this anxiety betrays a perpetually incomplete dramaturgy of *The Tempest*.

The tension between Prospero as protagonist and Prospero as white saviour is released, if only for Prospero, when Ariel returns to his chipper mode of servitude. 'Pardon, master,' he says, 'I will be correspondent to command / And do my spriting gently' (*Tmp* 1.2.296-8). This promise to work both obediently and enthusiastically ('graciously', as glossed by Greenblatt (3224)), corresponds to the affective love expressed by Hall's example portraits. Immediately following this exchange, the audience sees the first interaction between Prospero and Caliban. In close juxtaposition, the text constructs a paradigm of enslavement as both an economic

exchange and a mode of carceral punishment. For Ariel, labour is a finite and measurable resource. His relationship with Prospero gives the impression that his servitude is temporary – how temporary, however, we do not know. Conversely, Caliban’s service feels secondary to his imprisonment. Prospero (Miranda in the text) claims to have taught Caliban language, but we have no evidence that his primitive ‘gabble’ (*Tmp* 1.2.255) was not merely a different spoken language. Caliban’s subordinate position, then, is governed by his difference, on which Prospero places a false value gradient. For Prospero, there is no amount of labour, nor any sufficient change in affect, that could make Caliban worthy of liberty. He cruelly calls Caliban someone ‘whom stripes may move, not kindness’ (*Tmp* 1.2.345). This refusal of dignity echoes Reason’s note of a ‘populist ethos, that prisoners do not deserve anything but the minimum, and certainly do not deserve objects, experiences or environments of quality’ (99). Prospero’s logic painfully reflects dominant cultural narratives about penance and punishment – a logic that figures subjectivity as a privilege, not a right. In this narrative, subjectivity (that is, the right to occupy the role of Subject) belongs to those who define it, and they can strip it away at the drop of a hat.

3.4.7 *Queer Black Youth*

Masculinity onstage is played out most clearly in relation to other characters. Between Ferdinand and Miranda, gender performance is stripped down. Atim and Harvey seem to perform youth even more intensely than gender (Huw), highlighting the flexibility of gender expression and the ways in which learned behaviours, rather than innate inclinations, come to govern it. Harvey grins at Atim without the trademark shyness so

often attributed to teenaged crushes, and they move quickly and energetically. Their costume, hair, and affect are not more categorically feminine than those of any other actor, even though Miranda is the only female character in the play. Harvey wears sweatpants and an un-tailored tee shirt, and their hair is pulled up into a pseudo-mohawk (Huw *Tmp*). We see Harvey (or their incarcerated alter-ego) as themselves, and Miranda is moulded to fit them, rather than the other way around. Harvey's presentation outside of the frame of *The Tempest* may deny 'sexual definition' (Halberstam 94). They lack those crucial signifiers outlined by Walter to categorise them as unmistakably feminine: 'softening our voices, folding ourselves into neat shapes, "explaining" things with hand movements' (188). In fact, Harvey's physicality and vocal posture are most similar to Atim's. The two mirror and complement each other, bringing equal amounts of movement and energy to the courtship between Ferdinand and Miranda.

In his first encounter with Miranda, Ferdinand tries particularly hard to perform masculinity. The visible effort of his performance elicits laughter from the audience (Huw *Tmp* 00:25:25). Atim increases the volume of her voice and size of her gestures, using her vocal inflection and posture to evoke and even mock masculine attempts at poetry and wooing. She performs the lines 'O you wonder! / If you be maid or no?' (Huw *Tmp* 1.2.425-426) with exaggerated vowels and slower speech as Ferdinand attempts to impress Miranda with language. On the word 'maid', Ferdinand holds up his ring finger and gestures to it, overenunciating both his gestures and his words (Huw *Tmp* 00:25:29). The joke at Ferdinand's own expense – that none of this is necessary, because Miranda speaks his language – softens the reality that his first question for her

is, essentially, 'What man is in charge of you, and what if it were me?' However, Miranda is anything but shy in giving her reply: 'No wonder, sir, / But certainly a maid' (*Tmp* 1.2.427-8). This witty reply, comprised of two half-lines, falls in easily with the rhythm of the scene. Their lines frequently cut each other off, urging on the pace of the dialogue. The two actors move around each other and the space – there is not a clear 'lead' and 'follow' or 'pursuer' and 'pursuee'. Miranda's expression of desire is as vectoral, as uninhibited as Ferdinand's (Huw *Tmp*). Atim and Harvey's gender expressions lean toward the same gawky, childlike androgyny.

Lloyd leans into this ambiguity in the extended wedding scene, during which both Harvey and Atim appear in matching tutus and top hats. Both carry bouquets made of tampons. Given the style of the previous productions in the trilogy, the scene seems like a gentle but elongated breakout moment, in which two loving incarcerated people feast on a wedding banquet of Starbucks, Kentucky Fried Chicken, fruit, and candy bars (Huw *Tmp* 01:13:09). For a moment, the narrative is suspended as the audience recognises signs from their world, which, because the lines between frames have already been blurred, are still weakly iconic of items in the world of the prison frame. When Prospero uses his magic to project images from the outside world into several floating balloons, the incarcerated women cheer at familiar images of cars and MacDonald's. It is unclear to the audience if we are still in the world of *The Tempest* or temporarily in just the world of the prison – in a moment of stylistic departure, we seem to be ambiguously suspended in both.

Midway through the celebration, Prospero – or Hannah – shouts, ‘Oh, stop this crap, come on!’ (Huw *Tmp* 01:16:26) and angrily pops all of the balloons. This breakout moment functions in both the world of *The Tempest* and the prison. It is unclear where Prospero begins and Hannah ends. Both Prospero and Hannah have reason to abruptly halt the celebration, as Prospero signs away his only child to the care of another man and Hannah must watch her friends and chosen family leave prison while she serves a life sentence. *The Tempest*, in contrast with both *Julius Caesar* and *Henry IV*, deals more in semiotic ambiguity. The breakout moments that characterised the rest of the trilogy are replaced with fluidity between the fourth and fifth walls. When Ferdinand and Miranda kiss, the camera cuts briefly to a close-up of Prospero, whose face is inscrutable – he does not purely express elation for the happy couple. *The Tempest* does not fit into the dominant categories of comedy or tragedy (Greenblatt 3205), not to mention revenge play or history. It might best be described as a romance, but Lloyd frames it with a deeply melancholy and tragic story. After the play concludes, Walter/Hannah sits onstage, alone, while the other incarcerated women say goodbye to her as they are released. The final shot is a wide and high angle of the entire stage, where Hannah reads alone and Andrea polishes the floor in silence (Huw *Tmp* 01:40:45). This final image solidifies the ‘echo-chamber’ (Greenblatt 3205) of the play by creating a semiotic vacuum devoid of sound, language, and action. In contrast to the hectic calls for action at the ends of the previous plays in the trilogy, we see the end of *The Tempest* past the end of the literal text. We see its aftereffects, or lack thereof. Instead of a call to action, the audience witnesses a call to inaction – a pensive, melancholy rest.

Chapter 4: Justifying *The Taming of the Shrew* (2016)

This chapter discusses gendered violence, sexual assault, transphobia, slavery, and racism.

In the summer of 2016, Phyllida Lloyd directed a genderqueer adaptation of *The Taming of the Shrew* for Shakespeare in the Park at New York's Public Theatre. At a run-time of two hours without an interval (Gluck), Lloyd's more recent adaptation made significant departures from the dramaturgy of her 2003 production for the Globe Theatre. Set against a heavy-handed contextual backdrop, the production imagined a world in which Donald Trump was in charge (at the time, he wasn't) and in which femininity was a literal circus (Lloyd *Shr*, 2016). In this adaptation, racism, misogyny, and abuse emerged as salient themes. In this chapter, I will unpack the relationship between Katherine and Bianca in the text and in Lloyd's adaptation and introduce critical distance to my discussion. I will also address the racialisation of Katherine (Cush Jumbo) in Lloyd's 2016 production. Expressed inside another elaborate framing device, the dynamics of marginalisation were simultaneously highlighted and commodified.

My discussion of this particular production is limited by a pervasive lack of performance record, leaving me with little beyond my memory of seeing it live. Nevertheless, the theoretical structure responsible for the production remains evident in interviews like Lloyd's in *Variety*. My aim here is not to disparage Lloyd as an artist based on the politics of her work as I interpret them; rather, I hope that my examination of the ethos surrounding her 2016 adaptation of *The Taming of the Shrew* functions as

a retrospective lens on the four productions that came before and as a starting point for future dramaturgical frameworks.

In this genderqueer cast, Janet McTeer reprised her role as Petruchio. However, where the 2003 production was part of a broader season of single-gendered productions, the 2016 production was framed as a freestanding response to the political landscape in the United States at the time. As a result, the production at Shakespeare in the Park took a much firmer position against sexist hegemony, using bolder textual edits and more concrete dramaturgy to tell the story of *The Taming of the Shrew* as a story that could – and does – happen in our contemporary society. The dramaturgy of the production seemed more focused on highlighting the abuse in the play as abuse, but it still ran into the obstacle of Petruchio's status as a protagonist in the play. In an interview with *Variety*, Lloyd said, 'There's something about doing Shakespeare with a single gender...You are able to throw the behavior of the men into a particular relief, and be playful within a slightly larger than life way with it' (Van-Syckle). I will return to this quote, but it is also useful for introducing a fundamental tenet of the production – that the genderqueer (or 'single gender', as Lloyd says) casting allows a kind of freedom within the play that is otherwise impossible.

4.1 Sibling Rivalry

In the text, Katherine and Bianca are introduced with Baptista and Bianca's several suitors. Baptista refuses to allow Bianca to marry until Katherine is married first. In response to Katherine's witty objections, Bianca says, 'Sister, content you in my discontent' (*Shr.* 1.1.80). At the outset, the sisters' interests conflict directly. Newman

points out that, in the next dialogue between the sisters in Act 2 Scene 1, Katherine's behaviour can be interpreted multiple ways. Katherine's questions about Bianca's affections may betray her desire for similar attention – Bianca accuses her of being jealous ('Is it for him you do envy me so?' (*Shr.* 2.1.18)). However, Katherine's needling of Bianca and harsh words toward her suitors throughout the play suggest a more complex attitude.

The sisters enter the scene in the midst of an argument – it is the only conversation we see between the sisters alone. In Lloyd's 2016 version, Katherine wheeled Bianca onstage in a wheelbarrow, threatening to tip her over the edge of the stage and into the audience. From the outset, Katherine's 'shrewishness' was depicted as both physical and emotional; short of actual abuse, Katherine's capacity for violence arose as a trait that genders – or un-genders – her. In both text and performance, the slice we see of sisters' relationship is fraught and antagonistic, leaving the viewer to speculate as to the nature of their daily interactions. Upon their entrance, Bianca says:

Good sister, wrong me not, nor wrong yourself
To make a bondmaid and a slave of me –
That I disdain (*Shr.* 2.1.1-3).

The first words of the scene depict Bianca's contempt for the serving classes, and it is possible to interpret a degree of frivolity in her words. In contrast, Katherine has bound Bianca's hands, and she later strikes her. Katherine views Bianca as part of the system that oppresses her – because she has the affection of the men around her, she is complicit in the disenfranchisement of her elder sister. During their altercation, Katherine insists that Bianca is lying. Bianca's answers are unfailingly diplomatic: when she says, 'I never yet beheld that special face / Which I could fancy more than any

other' (*Shr.* 2.1. 11-12), Katherine calls her 'minion' (*Shr.* 2.1.13), which Greenblatt glosses as 'hussy' (374). This gendered slur implies that, by denying that she has any preference, Bianca is keeping her options open or even leading her suitors on. Katherine seems to be implicitly accusing Bianca of enabling her father to persecute both of them by treating them as objects to be traded and bartered for. Katherine ignores Bianca's offers to plead Katherine's case with each of her suitors. Perhaps knowing that Katherine is not interested in marrying, Bianca answers cleverly and, by Katherine's reaction, biting. By reminding Katherine that no one wants to marry her, Bianca antagonises Katherine further. Even in this early scene, the only two female characters at this point are pitted against each other as two opposing archetypes: the obedient, sexually available woman and the aggressive, even hysterical, shrew.

Newman provides some insight into the possible motivation of Katherine's attitude toward Bianca. When her father inevitably takes her younger sister's side against her, Katherine says, 'Her silence flouts me, and I'll be revenged' (*Shr.* 2.1.29). For Katherine, Bianca's compliance is as serious an offence as their father's mistreatment. Bianca's silence in the face of objectification undermines Katherine's efforts to remain independent: 'For it is that silence which has insured Bianca's place in the male economy of desire and exchange' (Newman 93). Katherine disdains, even resents, Bianca's status as her father's most valuable possession – his 'treasure' (*Shr.* 2.1.32), as Katherine calls her. Bianca trades her voice for value, othering Katherine and increasing the pressure for her to conform to Bianca's mode of behaviour. Depending on the delivery of these lines, Katherine may display genuine hurt at her father's harsh words. He calls her a 'hilding of a devilish spirit' (*Shr.* 2.1.26), villainising

and isolating her. In Lloyd's adaptation, the epithet also racialises Katherine (Jumbo) as Black or dark in opposition to Bianca's whiteness and purity, particularly given contemporary awareness of the extent to which Black women are already characterised as aggressive (Jones 2022). Jumbo's Katherine reflected the way her white family feared she would behave. Katherine is completely alone, and she lashes out both as a result of and in maintenance of her otherness. Where Lloyd's 2003 adaptation figured Katherine (Hunter) as irrationally angry at the world, Lloyd's 2016 Katherine (Jumbo) has more apparent reasons to be furious. Dramaturgically, many choices from the opening scenes – her infantilising costume, her physically subservient entrance via tricycle, and the chauvinistic voiceover, to name a few – point to Katherine's active marginalisation and to the violence done against her. Lloyd constructs a sign system that points, wherever possible, at Katherine's differences.

In the text, Katherine's behaviour is somewhat contradictory – she refuses to entertain the prospect of any true suitor (as in her initial confrontation with Petruchio), but she also displays some alarm at the thought of remaining unmarried. She says to her father:

She is your treasure: she must have a husband,
And I must dance barefoot on her wedding day
And, for your love to her, lead apes in hell. (*Shr.* 2.1.32-34)

While Katherine seems to actively reject marriage, she nonetheless feels anxiety about her status in the marriage economy. According to Newman, Katherine is aware that 'marriage is a sexual exchange in which women are exploited for their use-value as producers' (94). By buying into the marriage economy, Bianca flouts Katherine's sexual and emotional anxiety. Newman says:

What seems at issue here is not so much Kate's lack of a husband, or indeed her desire for a marriage partner, but rather her distaste at those folk customs which make her otherness, her place outside that patriarchal system, a public fact, a spectacle for all to see and mock.
(94)

Katherine is acutely aware of the public nature of her life – what Newman calls the 'community fantasy' (87) of early modern societies. In Lloyd's 2016 version, this community takes the form of the beauty pageant – its participants, backers, adjudicators, and audience. The subjugation of early modern women was a community effort, and domestic disputes often found their way into the public eye. Civilians often took punishment for domestic crimes into their own hands, representing the affair with dramatisations and even parading the offending couple through the streets (Newman 86-7). The public nature of domestic disputes is reflected throughout the play, particularly in Katherine's final speech. Rather than displaying her submission directly to Petruchio, she instead announces it publicly, shaming the other women.

4.2 *Psychical Distance Revisited*

In a 2016 interview in advance of her adaptation with Shakespeare in the Park, Lloyd told *Variety*:

Petruchio behaves appallingly, and really abuses Kate by torturing her in order to force her into submission. I suppose we are able to push those themes slightly harder, and take them slightly further than maybe we would were this a man and a woman playing it. It would be maybe hard to embrace the horror of his behavior without losing complete sympathy for Petruchio. There is a curious equation by which we are able to commit quite boldly to it (Van-Syckle).

Lloyd seems to agree with Detmer's identification of abuse in the play. Furthermore, she echoes the same paradox – that, for the play to be dramaturgically successful, some

acknowledgement of the abuse must be made; Petruchio is a protagonist (if not the protagonist), and to completely lose sympathy for him would be to lose an essential connection to the text. Lloyd's assertion that genderqueer casting highlights the conditions of abuse is in keeping with my semiotic approach. However, Lloyd's claim that the violence occurring between two female actors makes it easier to sympathise with the abuser goes unexamined. Lloyd's outlook – as depicted in this piece of journalism, at least – is undergirded by culturally relevant optimism that largely vanished by the end of that year. She contextualises the piece in a United States that was still 'on the cusp of electing a woman to the White House, who only has to put one foot wrong and is described as shrewish and hysterical' (Van-Syckle). As we now know, the United States was not, in fact, about to elect its first woman president. From experience, I can say that (for cis white women in New York City, at least) the summer of 2016 did feel full of a heady combination of optimism and outrage – both of which are depicted in Lloyd's 2016 *The Taming of the Shrew* in ample measure.

It feels somewhat unfair to criticise Lloyd's 2016 production for failing to foresee the United States' (and United Kingdom's) all-too-predictable turn to fascism, but, in her interview with *Variety*, Lloyd echoes Walter's Eurocentric outlook: 'We are still battling for equal pay, equal rights everywhere,' she says, 'And that's in the Western world, leave alone in some other societies' (Van-Syckle). This casual mention by omission of the global South, especially as a monolithic place where women nebulously and universally 'have it worse', comes up in Walter's discussion, too. She says, 'Women, in the West at least, have access to perform in any and every field of public endeavor, in theory at least' (157). Taken together, these quotations illustrate a double-

consciousness within white feminism; feeling for themselves the burden of marginalisation, Lloyd and Walter validate their resistance to hegemony through the implicit subjugation of other marginalities. This is not to say that Lloyd's work is meaningless within this framework; on the contrary, Lloyd's adaptations of *The Taming of the Shrew* are instructive in the ways dramaturgy can render seemingly fixed signs malleable.

Hyper-realism is juxtaposed with the genderqueer casting of Lloyd's 2016 *Shrew*.

Lloyd says:

This is a very tricky and controversial play, and I think conventional casting struggles to make sense of the play in the 21st century. Often people end up having to do a commentary on the play. But there's something about doing Shakespeare with a single gender, whether it is all-male or all-female that opens up certain possibilities. You are able to throw the behavior of the men into a particular relief, and be playful within a slightly larger than life way with it (Van-Syckle).

What Lloyd gestures toward here is that psychical distance – in this case, through non-mimetic casting – liberates the dramaturgy from the boundaries of conventional expectations. Ignoring, for a moment, the exclusionary wording of 'all-male or all-female', we can come to see gender as something that can be deconstructed through heightened performance in *The Taming of the Shrew*. However, Lloyd also implies that genderqueer casting mitigates the (in her mind) obligation to make a commentary on or through the play. This is where my interpretation of psychical distance seems to diverge from Lloyd's. For Lloyd, psychical distance somewhat absolves the artist of social obligation; the performance of a 'problematic' work by a genderqueer cast somehow cancels out the aspects of the play that are not acceptable to contemporary audiences. We see this framework echoed in the prison frame of the Donmar Trilogy, which unifies

each of the three productions within the same fictional metaverse. These bits of interstitial tissue between the world of Shakespeare's text and the world of the audience constitute the psychological distance – and the fifth wall between spectator and character – which, in Lloyd's dramaturgy, justifies the incongruities of the text within our contemporary ethos.

4.3 Racialised Femininities

An anti-racist lens further contextualises Lloyd's 2016 *Shrew*. Lloyd's 2016 production was in more-or-less contemporary dress and setting, and it also began with a frame. However, instead of a meta-prologue like in 2003, the production began with a voiceover from a Trump-like emcee announcing the start of the Miss Padua pageant. Compared to the textual Induction, the beauty pageant echoes a more similar mode of heightened gender performance. The beauty pageant frame positioned the production in a tense period in American history, referring directly not to gender inequity on Shakespeare's stage, but to the widespread objectification of women in the present day. After the voiceover, several contestants presented talents like tap dancing, singing, and baton twirling. Within this Trumpian scheme of womanhood, McTeer's Petruchio behaved even more masculinely. Behaviours that might, in another context, have come off as overly dramatic – Halberstam's 'kinging' comes to mind – instead reinforced the polarisation between men and women in the world of the play. This framework seems a short step away from the revisionist readings of *The Taming of the Shrew* that are more and more often rejected by contemporary critics (Detmer-Goebel 274). Namely, both modes of thought hinge on the notion that the harm done by the text can be addressed

by being ignored. While it is true that psychological distance can make the depiction of trauma less traumatising for the spectator, psychological distance is not a magical cure-all for the violence perpetuated by the text, regardless of context.

4.3.1 Feminist Framing

In *Staging Femininities*, Geraldine Harris elaborates on what the feminine body presents and receives onstage. Harris echoes Butler's argument that, in order to address gender, the socially constructed gender binary must be acknowledged in some way, '[s]ince [it is] concerned with the oppression of women as a group, class or identity category' (12). Harris goes on to argue that women who fail or refuse to perform within the boundaries of their categorical gender are caught between the threat of punishment and the role of punisher. She writes: 'While the masculine position is taken up under the threat of symbolic castration, since the fem already symbolises the castration, the threat for the woman who fails to play her allotted role in this masquerade is of appearing as "castrator"' (60). Harris repeatedly returns to the term 'masquerade' to denote 'a woman who in some way usurps masculine prerogatives' (59). In *The Taming of the Shrew*, Katherine is the quintessential transgressor, rejecting and tormenting her suitors. In applying Harris's framework to Lloyd's 2016 production, we see a startlingly clear distillation of these gendered boundaries. Katherine was literally punished by Petruchio – starved and gaslighted – for her transgressions. Therefore, there was a key association between Katherine's gender presentation and its reception by the men around her. While Katherine acted out against only a few men, she was punished as though she had committed a crime against the category of men.

Katherine (Cush Jumbo), a Black woman, participated unwillingly in not-quite-Trump's beauty pageant (Lloyd 2016). Katherine rolled onstage, working hard to peddle a tricycle with her white sister standing on the back – from her first appearance, Katherine was in a subjugated role compared to Bianca. The appearance of this highly racialised character against the Trumpian backdrop collapsed the distance between reality and fiction. The violence suggested by the frame played out in this staging much more clearly than in the 2003 production. In Act 2, Scene 1, in which Petruchio (Janet McTeer, reprising her 2003 role) first met Jumbo's Katherine, much of the physical comedy of the scene in 2003 was replaced with violence on the edge of frightening. Instead of seeming sexually charged, the struggle between the two elicited ostensible pain and fear from Katherine. During their initial confrontation, Petruchio grabbed Katherine's arm and twisted it, holding onto her as she yelped in pain. In subsequent scenes, the mannerisms that amounted to frustration in 2003 became more frantic, even terrified. Katherine tried desperately to escape but was dragged away brusquely by Petruchio.

In the final scene, Katherine delivered her iconic monologue without irony. In fact, Jumbo's portrayal seemed almost brainwashed, so devoid of spirit and character was her delivery. At her final remark – 'My hand is ready, may it do him ease' (*Shr.* 5.2.179) – Katherine laid face-down on the ground with her hand outstretched. Petruchio stood on it, and, after some hesitation, turned to the other men in triumph. As he helped Katherine up, the Trumpian voice came over the loudspeakers to announce her as the winner of the Miss Padua pageant. She seemed overjoyed as she was handed a tiara and flowers, but as she was being ushered away, she seemed to come suddenly to her

senses. As she was carried through a trap door, she screamed protestations – ‘This isn’t me!’ (Lloyd 2016) – leaving the audience with her final exclamation of horror as the men rejoiced at their victory. Where Lloyd’s 2003 production depicted the intricacies of gender in personal relationships, her 2016 staging made much more aggressive jabs at social structures as they are now, highlighting and interrogating the male gaze.

It is in this leap from the personal to the political that Lloyd began to deconstruct gender. Lloyd threw subtlety to the wind in her concept – the set was a circus tent, and the daughters were costumed in infantilising baby-doll dresses and pigtails. At one point in the play, one of the suitors broke character to deliver a sexist monologue directly to the audience. There was evidence everywhere of Lloyd’s consideration of the play in a contemporary context. Katherine was a woman of colour, as opposed to her family and Petruchio, who were all white. Subsequently, the relationship between Katherine and Petruchio took on an additional power dynamic related especially to the subjugation of women of colour. The audience then saw two hegemonic binaries at work – white and non-white, male and non-male.

While gender can be subverted through casting, it is often more difficult to draw indirect attention to race. In *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*, bell hooks expounds on the ways in which ‘modern feminism’ is exclusionary or even harmful to women of colour. Primarily, hooks explores the ways in which white women enable the oppression of Black women. In *The Taming of the Shrew*, Bianca played a nearly adversarial role in pressuring Katherine to submit to their father’s patriarchal constraints. Presented as the darling of the ‘Miss Padua’ pageant, Bianca (whose name literally

translates to 'white' from Italian) represented an unattainable ideal for Katherine – beautiful, feminine, submissive, and white. hooks writes that white women have been historically conditioned to 'ignore the extent to which black women are likely to be victimized in this society, and the role white women may play in the maintenance and perpetuation of that victimization' (15). Jumbo's Katherine navigated Padua society with diminished social currency, not only as a woman, but as a woman of colour. Her predicament was particularly resonant in today's context, in which the bodies of women of colour are often objectified and hyper-sexualised. Paired with a baby-doll dress and pigtails, Katherine's image as a racialised woman came across clearly and viscerally. In line with Elam's theory, none of these signs are coincidental – the audience will synthesise everything they witness.

hooks urges other feminist scholars to think about feminism as intersectional with race, class, and the whole 'diversity of experience' (5) that individual women possess. Butler supports this argument. They write that the false unity propagated by some strands of feminism 'constitutes an appropriative act that risks a repetition of the self-aggrandizing gesture of phallogocentrism,²⁵ colonizing under the sign of the same those differences that might otherwise call that totalizing concept into question' (1990, 18). Butler's statement extrapolates hooks' claim. By excluding and oppressing women of colour, not only do white women perpetuate the racist power structures from which they

²⁵ I want to continue to distance this theoretical framework from phallogocentrism and the phallus as a metonymic signifier for masculinity and patriarchal hegemony. In their later work, Butler also begins to move away from this notion. Divorcing conditions of hegemony from bodily anatomy is essential to the project of resisting transphobia.

benefit, but they also reinforce the patriarchal mode of thinking that enables their own oppression. hooks defines feminism simply as the 'struggle to end sexist oppression' (26). In order to dismantle one power structure, she claims, all existing power structures, including those pertaining to race and class, must also be interrogated. hooks writes, 'A commitment to feminism so defined would demand that each individual participant acquire a critical political consciousness' (26). By this standard, Lloyd's diverse casting tells an important story; Katherine's domination by both men and white women further relegates her to the margins of society.

4.3.2 Who Owns Consent?

In the introduction to *Fictions of Consent*, Urvashi Chakravarty invokes the conception of early modern England as socially oriented toward service at every level:

It is now...commonplace to remark that early modern England was a service society, that every man and woman understood his or her position in a social and political economy that was organized by the strictures, possibilities, and discourses of service. Yet an equally powerful early modern rhetoric insisted that this widespread – and effectively compulsory – service be understood not as coerced but rather as willing, volitional, consensual; as, paradoxically, 'free.' (4)

The double consciousness of white, English women who were bound in service to God, to their monarch, and to their husbands and whose economic livelihoods were simultaneously inextricable from mechanisms of compulsory service – slavery – lends a note of racial anxiety to my reading of *The Taming of the Shrew*. Chakravarty points out that, through the mechanisms discussed by scholars like Korda, Detmer, and Boose, the servitude of England's white citizens was also compulsory. Enforced by violence (or threat of violence), the subjugation of white, English women intersects and is informed

by the enslavement of Black people and people of colour in early modern England. Chakravarty identifies one of the discursive pre-conditions of enslavement as 'masterlessness' (4), a key construction that we also see enacted on Caliban in *The Tempest*. Thinking back to Miranda's (or sometimes Prospero's) assertion that she endowed Caliban with language, we see the ways in which masterlessness is invoked in coded language, through allusions to illiteracy and primitiveness.

In this vein, racialisation falls in with gender and class as a mechanism by which populations are subjugated and exploited for labour: 'To state that race is a fiction is not to suggest that its effects are illusory. Rather, it is to underscore that the operations of race are as strategic and deliberate as its consequences are deeply felt' (Chakravarty 7). Early modern English conceptions of servitude and bondage played an active role in the construction of race as a category, defining modes of Blackness according to modes of labour. Chakravarty refers to the Vagrancy Act, which legalised the process by which 'idle' people, or people who withheld their labour, could be forced into servitude (6). Chakravarty resists the conflation of Blackness with slavery, instead locating the simultaneous construction of a legal framework for producing slave labour and the historical construction of Blackness as a somatic trait (7). In *The Taming of the Shrew*, Katherine is racialised as dark or black in comparison with Bianca. This is not to say that Katherine herself is Black – but as an Other, Katherine is subjected to the same frameworks of racialisation that ratify the enslavement of those seen to transgress the social obligation of willing servitude.

4.3.3 Policing and Producing Black Femininity

This brings me back, of course, to Cush Jumbo as Katherine. Jumbo's Katherine was racialised as a Black woman in a white family governed, however invisibly, by the racist conflation of Blackness with wildness, vagrancy, and primitiveness. Jumbo's Katherine was starkly divested from servitude. Through Korda's argument, Katherine was not punished for her unwillingness to work, but for her unwillingness to fall in line with the strict socioeconomic hierarchy that demands her consumption of certain types of labour and products. The harshness with which Katherine's refusal to participate was punished speaks to the fragility of the entire system – for a hierarchy that relies on the violent subjugation of a social category to retain power, it must be validated by those seen to benefit from it. When Katherine refused to engage in this system, she herself became a threat, not just to systems of patriarchy, but to intersecting systems of racialisation, colonialism, and forced labour.

Drawing from the work of Kimberlé Crenshaw, Jones writes that 'Black women's experiences are not merely additive (Black men's experience + White women's experience = Black women's experience). Rather, Crenshaw's insight is that race and gender are always interconnected and never exist as separately distinct, disaggregated identities' (2025). The racialised treatment of Katherine in Lloyd's 2016 production of *Shrew* points to the ways in which intersectionality is a constant action and mode of being, rather than a finite point in time or space. Katherine's marginalities are intermingled and co-dependent; her experiences cannot be sifted through to separate her Blackness from her woman-ness. However, the identification of the Black woman's

experience as marked by individuating intersections also risks feeding into the racist de-gendering of Black women. Because the experience of Black femininity is not additive (not comprised of disparate parts), it cannot be taken for granted that Black women have the same gendered experiences as white women.

When McTeer's Petruchio sarcastically cited Katherine's 'Beauty and her wit, / her affability and bashful modesty, / her wondrous qualities and mild behaviour' (*Shr.* 2.1.48-50), he implicitly pointed to those qualities as traits from which Black women are often excluded. A cultural touchpoint for this claim can be found in the recently popularised (and subsequently rejected) 'clean girl aesthetic', which idolizes (on white bodies) the minimal makeup and slicked back hair that Black and Brown women have worn for decades. In an article in *The Blackprint* titled 'Tiktok and Cultural Appropriation: The Clean Girl Aesthetic and its Roots in Black and Brown Communities', Oni Chaytor writes:

For generations, Black and Brown women have been criticized and called 'ghetto' and 'dirty' for the same aesthetic white women are praised for. The term 'hot cheeto girl' has even been coined to demonize and look down upon Black and Brown women who embrace the slick-backed puff look, the gold hoop earrings, and the \$1 clear lip gloss from the local beauty supply store. (The Blackprint)

Chaytor published these comments on the racist appropriation of the 'clean girl aesthetic' six years after Lloyd's *Shrew* at Shakespeare in the Park. Appropriation escalates to exclusion when Black and Brown women are punished for something that grew out of their own cultures, something that had at the time of writing garnered the 'clean girl' hashtag over 670 million views on Tiktok (Chaytor). Beyond beauty, this decade has also seen Black athlete Serena Williams caricatured as angry and juvenile.

Relating to an altercation she had with the chair umpire during a tennis match in 2018, an Australian cartoon depicts Williams – drawn with highly racialised features – leaping into the air with both feet to stomp on her already destroyed tennis racket, a pacifier lying on the ground beside it (McKirdy). McKirdy reports that the National Association of Black Journalists called the image 'repugnant on many levels'. Ultimately, the Australian Press Council ruled that the image did not breach press standards (CNN). The depiction of Williams' anger as uncivilised and unacceptable – and, crucially, worthy of violence and cruelty – can be found in echoes in the way the white characters in *The Taming of the Shrew* (2016) treat Katherine.

As an archetype, Jumbo's Katherine was denied access to womanhood, whiteness, and white womanhood. The dual reality of Black femininity is most clearly characterised by rates of violence against Black trans women, who comprise 63 percent of trans murder victims recorded by the Human Rights Campaign since 2013 (Schoenbaum). The Human Rights Campaign's report characterises the victims of anti-trans violence as 'overwhelmingly Black' and points toward the highly disproportionate rate at which Black trans women are victims of violence (Schoenbaum). Relating to Jumbo's (cis) Katherine, we can see the ways in which Katherine's reception as a Black woman is culturally mediated by the scrutiny with which contemporary Black femininity is policed and threatened. Reading Jumbo's Katherine through a trans lens highlights the extent to which her gender performance was both produced and impeded by her racialisation. Katherine's hyper-feminine costume was pitted against Bianca's. Especially in comparison with the men's costumes, almost all of which featured long sleeves and trousers, the sisters' revealing costumes put their bodies on display,

highlighting and somaticizing difference. Down to Katherine's simple pigtails and Bianca's carefully arranged curls, the styling of the two sisters told a detailed story of inequity, in which Katherine's unwillingness was expressed through her appearance and affect.

Overall, Lloyd's 2016 production showed an attention to contemporary context that was largely absent from her production in 2003. Between the contemporary frame and the overt violence, the audience's reactions to the performance were more mixed. Some moments were met with laughter, but in the end, as Katherine was being hauled off to bed by her husband, the amphitheatre was silent. This is not to say that contemporary context is a dramaturgical necessity – in fact, Lloyd's contemporary frame crystallised a neoliberal mode of feminism echoed strongly in the Donmar Trilogy. Most saliently, both adaptations of *The Taming of the Shrew* uncritically reinforced the arbitrary categorisation of gendered signs, particularly acts of violence. Where semiotic dissonance – for example, through the physical comedy of McTeer being kneed in the non-existent testicles – stood a chance of unsettling gender norms, the lack of follow-through on how these signs were constructed left them highlighted but unchallenged.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

In my thinking about this thesis as a whole, I keep returning to Judith Clark. Clark is in her fourth year of parole, and I hope, at least, that she is enjoying the extent to which her story is once again private and hers. I think often of the impact of Clark's status as a mother on the narratives surrounding her release – the gendered expectations of Clark's child-bearing body and parental capacity feel like both evidence of her humanity and conditions of her liberty. Pointing to Clark's daughter as the strongest reason for her release reinforces the hegemonic conditions of legibility that she once revolted violently against – it is as if to say, 'She is only as human as she is a mother. To deny her motherhood is to deny her humanity.' That Clark – or any incarcerated person with a womb – could be a sovereign body without the capacity for motherhood does not seem to factor into Walter's narrative, nor the narratives published in *The New York Times* (McKinley, Robbins). Clark's claim to liberty is not defined against the racist and capitalist project of carceral punishment, but by her potential to contribute to the production of labour and whiteness through reproduction. Critically, the gender essentialism underpinning rhetoric about Clark also haunts Lloyd's work on the Donmar Trilogy and *The Taming of the Shrew* – after all of this unpicking, I am not sure I can confidently call any of these productions 'trans theatre' (not that any of them claim to be). Where it enacts a theatre of transness, the dramaturgy of these productions also effaces the reality of living in a trans body. While the actors don masculine clothes and

signifiers, the bodies of their incarcerated characters are broadly cis-passing.²⁶ In short, non-normative gender presentations in Lloyd's *Shrews* and the Donmar Trilogy are still classed as temporary, removable – in technical terms, gender transgression is figured as non-ontological. Trans-masculinity in particular is treated as a costume, an affect.

Kemp warns against conflating visible (changeable) signs with gender presentation as a whole. They point to scholarship on 'transness' in Shakespeare as often falling into the trap of studying instead 'transvestism, which is to say that it was primarily concerned with clothing, not identity' (Kemp 2019a 122). In these problematic dramaturgies, costuming is shorthand for gender, and Shakespeare's writing of cross-dressed characters supports the all-encompassing power of clothing as signifier. Kemp cites the scene in *Twelfth Night* in which Sebastian, faced with his sister in the unfamiliar garb of a man, would sooner believe his sister to be his cis male doppelganger: 'In Shakespeare, the magical transvestism of The Pants is instant and absolute' (2019a 123). In the Public Theatre's 2018 production, Viola sings, 'Is it as simple as putting on a pair of pants?' (Taub). The answer, it seems, is a resounding 'no'. So then why is gender laid flat onstage, coerced into a two-dimensional shape so far abstracted from our material reality that arbitrary signs gain the authority to denote ontology? This association of instant meaning with socially constructed signs is a symptom of a larger gender issue. It effectively elides social (subjective) meaning and

²⁶ Again, this is not to say that being cis-passing makes a trans person less trans. However, in a medium governed by aesthetics of voice and body, the lack of bodies in visible transition speaks to a pervasive fear of transgressive embodiment in the meta-narrative of the productions.

identity – it suggests that to pass in Shakespeare's world, all one needs is an appropriately gendered garment.

The lived experience of trans people is anything but uniform, and transition is not – cannot be – constituted by the instantaneous process of cross-dressing. To suggest that transness and transition can be encompassed by a change of clothes is to reinforce the notion that trans people are in costume, in drag. 'If we as scholars are going to engage in a practice that believes trans people are integral to Shakespeare, it seems important to create a scholarship that is rooted in experience, not abstraction' (Kemp 2019a 125). This is not to say that cis people cannot depict transness – rather, it is an invitation for cis theatre makers to examine their own relationship to gender signification. Kemp advocates for the rights of trans artists to 'participate in the meaning-making systems of gender, identity, and performance that the theater facilitates' (2019a 278). They draw on the distinction between participation and objectification. If performing theatre is, in a sense, the act of subjecting oneself to observation, how can the embodied performer delineate observation from objectification?

I argue that, to secure the best possible hopes of retaining the agency of the trans performer, we ought to revisit how we think about consent and the creative process. A play is only a cross section of the passage of time – scenes are plucked from the chronology of the play, and though we understand them according to linear time, their relationship to time in the world of the play is abstracted, warped. In treating any of Shakespeare's characters (not Viola, though) as trans, the creative team selects

a cross-section of time in which to depict the body of the character. When we do the same thing with a cis character, we often divide our work into design and dramaturgy. The depiction of transness comes with more questions – do we depict this character in transition? And, if so, at what point? And, more importantly, what function does the actor's transitioning body serve?

This brings us to the heart, I think, of my problem with Lloyd's gender-bending adaptations, among so many other trans-adjacent productions. Drag is elided with gender, stuffed into the same bite-sized semiotic morsel. The Donmar Trilogy even takes this a step further, reassuring the audience that, because it's all happening in a women's prison, everything is fine. The disruption to gender norms wrought by cross-casting is neatly and perfunctorily concluded – at the end of the play, the performers return to their roles as incarcerated women. That Lloyd takes so much time to painstakingly correct the gender subversion of the performers at the beginning and end of each production suggests an uninterrogated discomfort with open-ended questions about gender presentation. The axiom that 'Women can do it, too,' pervades Walter's book and much of the paratext on the Donmar Trilogy. 'Women, in the West at least, have access to perform in any and every field of public endeavor, in theory at least. Could we not play the male leaders in our national playwright's canon?' (157) Walter writes. For Walter, stepping into Brutus' shoes was a mere question of 'Permission: permission from the public and permission from myself' (157). From the jump, Walter's conception of 'the West' as the progressive, egalitarian half of the planet is not only deeply off-base, but the invocation that follows conveniently glosses over Walter's own positionality as a cis, white woman (a Dame, no less). Walter's mention of Shakespeare

as the United Kingdom's 'national playwright' reinforces the uncritical acceptance of Shakespeare's texts and the problems within them (and the harm they can cause). Williams warns against rooting the study of Shakespeare in the assumption of his status among the literary canon: 'Insisting on the familiarity (and/or universality) of a play... permits the past to dictate, to a certain extent, the horizons of normality and acceptability in the present' (8). It is a significantly lower-risk venture to merely foreground gender (using casting, most commonly) than it is to propose any kind of intervention to the inequalities highlighted by the production. Even at the end of *Henry IV*, when Walter's incarcerated character, Hannah, is being led offstage, and she screams, 'You've got to do something!' the 'something' is left intentionally vague. The 'something' invoked by Hannah could range from taking part in grassroots, community action to abolish prisons to merely paying for a seat in the theatre. The Donmar Trilogy points to the fact that queer, incarcerated women exist, and the final word on what we should do about it is: 'something'. This vagueness speaks again to Lloyd and Walter's limited lens – I am reminded of Kemp's rejection of abstraction. It is impossible to speculate about the genders of the cast of the Donmar Trilogy. We may feel the need to class them as all-AFAB (Assigned Female At Birth), but on what basis? The criteria through which a person is gendered onstage often come down to appearance and voice, but transition and transness, though linked, don't always go hand in hand. Transition is not necessary for a person to be trans, and cis people present in a variety of gender-complicated ways for a variety of gender-complicated reasons. Thus, without detailed and conscientious documentation, we are left wondering how large a role trans

and gender nonconforming people played in the creation of the Donmar Trilogy. We may never know.

5.1 Journey to Euphoria

In contrast with the Donmar Trilogy, I offer Emma Frankland and Subira Joy's 2022 production of John Lyly's *Galatea*. The project, which started with a workshop in 2019, has been well-documented throughout the process. In the play, the young and beautiful Galatea must dress as a boy and flee to the forest to escape ritual sacrifice. In the woods, she meets Phillida, who is also fleeing sacrifice in boy's clothing. The two fall in love, and, at the end of the play, Venus says that she will change one of the lovers into a man so that the pair may stay together. Frankland's initial workshop produced a [Guidance Document](#), which serves as both evidence of and call to action. The document begins: 'When you hire people to be themselves, bring their own lived experiences, and represent their communities, additional care is required' (Frankland et al). From the beginning, *Galatea* has been about connecting the text to the lived experiences of trans people and, more significantly, improving the lives of contemporary trans people through the project. The result interprets the multiplicity of trans realities into a theatrical, semiotic framework. Frankland relates an exercise in which workshop participants were asked to tear pages out of a copy of *The Complete Works of Shakespeare* and turn them into something else. Traces of this exercise made their way into the play, in which Cupid's wings, made of pages from the same volume, were torn asunder by Diana's nymphs (Frankland). 'As Samson stood, screaming, while ripped pages littered the ground around his feet, it was impossible not to feel that something

was shifting in our relationship to this existing canon,' Frankland writes. Where the Donmar Trilogy stops with casting, *Galatea* and its paratext give evidence of 'adaptation, interpretation, representation, and resistance' (Williams 4). My aim here is not to pose Frankland and Joy's *Galatea* as a solution to the Donmar Trilogy – rather, Frankland and Joy lay bare the difference between demonstration and commentary. One of the reasons that this line is so rarely crossed in 'large' theatres like the Donmar Warehouse, I suspect, is that intervention starts from the very beginning. It starts with the director, producer, dramaturg, and so on. We see evidence of that reflected in the Guidance Document from Frankland's *Galatea* workshop: 'We propose that a move towards a trans canon and towards decolonizing theatre must also move away from these damaging hierarchies' (2019). Instead of merely pointing out that a space and community exist, *Galatea* shows how those spaces and communities can effect change through solidarity, beget joy through action. It invites audiences in, rather than showing them where to look.

I cannot speak to the success of Frankland and Joy's live *Galatea*, which ran at the Brighton Festival in May of 2023, in deconstructing these structural barriers to liberatory theatre, but I can speak to the process of putting together an adaptation of Lyly's script. Frankland and Joy's *Galatea* spearheaded a brief influx of adaptations of the play, including one by The Show Must Go Online (TSMGO), which I directed in April of 2021. In TSMGO's *Gallathea*, our majority-queer cast spent two weeks rehearsing an online reading of the play. The scale was microscopic compared to Frankland and Joy's adaptation, but we nevertheless turned our attention to the script's power to tell stories of liberated queerness. In the question-and-answer portion after the show, I pointed to

the 'shared comedic language that a lot of queer people have, [which] really seems written into the text' (Chung 02:28:19). Together with embedded critic Frey Kwa Hawking, I focused on building this lexicon among our cast as a community that has the power to author its own signs. Regarding the play's promise of a gender swap for the titular character, I said, 'I do think there's a lot of power in making the shape of that be ambiguous. We don't really get to know what it actually, literally means to "become a boy" in this [universe]' (Chung 02:29:40). Quintessentially, Gallathea's medical transition is implied by the text, but the play concludes before it happens. This occlusion of physical change empowers the playmakers to approach transness as a liberating, constructive mode of imagination.

Rehearsing and performing over video call brought layers of complexity to the text. I said that the play

Does a really special thing in the way it figures queer people as people with interiority, and it figures queer intimacy as something that can be done either verbally or proxemically... So it made perfect sense to me to do it over Zoom, because so much of that intimacy is emotional (Chung 02:44:46).

In *Gallathea*, queerness and transness are not merely resonant, they are present, depicted, and addressed. Of the rehearsal process for TSMGO's *Gallathea*, cast member Ahd Tamimi (Tityrus) pointed to the presence of joy and laughter in the digital rehearsal room as a distinguishing factor (Chung 02:37:57). Tamimi said:

As a queer person, you always feel like you're the odd one out, or the token queer person. And it was really nice to just be in a cast of everyone understanding what your background is, all of your experiences, all of those things that we could all relate to – just feeling that on a normal basis was such a joy, because I'm not used to it.... It gave me a sense of what it's like to be "normal" (Chung 02:38:14).

This is not to say that the liberation of queerness from hegemony means the 'normalisation' of queerness within hegemonic frameworks, but the notion of queerness as a baseline seemed deeply freeing for the performers. What cast member and intimacy coordinator Leo Mock (Telusa) called the 'journey to euphoria' (Chung 02:47:05) formed the central pillar for the production's dramaturgy – it does not mean that every queer experience depicted in the play has to be positive, but that queerness is not defined in this play by destruction and erasure.

5.2 *Liberatory Projects*

In relation to the Donmar Trilogy, it would not be accurate to claim that no trans or incarcerated people were consulted in the process of creating the productions. Walter mentions the development process with Clean Break, a theatre company run by formerly incarcerated women. The trilogy was developed in collaboration with the company, and the plays were performed by a mix of 'professional' and first-time actors (Walter 161). However, Walter's thoughts on the carceral origins of the trilogy only entrench her position as the holder of power: 'If a white, middle-class, educated Shakespeare pro like me felt a lack of entitlement, how must a young black woman from South London who had never spoken a word of Shakespeare feel?' (160). This notion exposes Walter's own assumptions about the fallacious connection between experience and ability. She continues:

I came from a privileged, enlightened background and what I most feared was having to 'pretend' too much. I already needed to suspend people's disbelief by playing a Roman general, but on top of that I needed people to believe in a prisoner who could act fluently in Shakespeare's language (162).

Walter simultaneously wields Shakespeare as a universal literary tool and as a secret language shared by only the elites of society. That Walter foresaw as much difficulty in portraying a woman who is both eloquent and incarcerated as in playing Roman General Julius Caesar speaks volumes to the strength with which neoliberal, white feminism instinctively defends its own position. 'Walter and Lloyd's approach reproduces the logics of carceral and colonial feminisms, positioning women of color in the social roles that those frameworks insist upon' (Williams 16). The 'social roles' mentioned here span Walter's fantasy of the young, Black woman from South London and the incarcerated woman who miraculously speaks in fluid verse. Both archetypes are symptomatic of the cis, white imaginary: a fantasy that simultaneously erases and commodifies the experiences of our most vulnerable populations. The dramaturgical approach taken in the Donmar Trilogy doesn't always amount to an intervention; without leadership – not just input – from the marginalised communities they claim to include, the creative team act as tourists in the lives of those on whose labour they stand to profit. The address of gender inequality, homophobia, and transphobia in the trilogy begins to look more like replication than liberation. Walter's incomplete dramaturgy has provided me with a vital point of entry into these productions – I would add that the incompleteness of their dramaturgies is bound up in the positionality of the theatre-makers. The presupposition that Shakespeare speaks to us all engenders a hierarchy among creatives, stratifying those with little verse-speaking knowledge from those with more experience, like Walter. These dramaturgies are not just incomplete – they themselves are, to an extent, oppressive.

According to Walter, one member of the original cast had been incarcerated (187). She writes that Stanton (Falstaff in *Henry IV*, Caliban in *The Tempest*) and Dunne (Portia in *Julius Caesar*, Hal in *Henry IV*) visited a few prisons to do workshops with the women incarcerated there. This distancing of the finished product from the embodied presence of incarceration diminishes the credibility of the Donmar Trilogy as a work that advocates for the rights of incarcerated women. Instead of identifying carceral punishment as a tool of sexist, capitalist, and racist oppression, the Donmar Trilogy inadvertently draws an arbitrary line between what kind of women do and don't deserve to be incarcerated. Walter highlights the prevalence of 'custodial sentences' for 'low-grade, drug-related crimes or prostitution' levied against mothers in particular (187). That Walter considers pregnancy and child-rearing to be such a significant – if not the most significant – mitigating factor speaks to an underlying conviction that motherhood is a woman's most important role. For Walter, the confiscation of motherhood from incarcerated mothers – as opposed to the incarceration of anyone else – is the real problem with carceral punishment. This sentiment feeds into the much broader (and stealthily transphobic) notion that women (particularly white women, like Judith Clark) are at odds with normative society, not because of systemic hegemony and oppression, but because of their anatomy and, specifically, their capacity for motherhood. In her description of Clark, who was incarcerated for 37 years before being granted parole in 2019, Walter writes:

She is a mother and a grandmother and has had to face her own terrible feelings of guilt for the life she has led her family into. When I read about this woman it was in a fairly recent article describing her complete turnaround over her years in jail. Suffice to say, I could latch on to her as a real person to feed into my speculative creation, Hannah (164).

This 'complete turnaround' ostensibly relates to Clark's original crime, in which she acted as the getaway driver in a politically-motivated bank robbery (163). Tom Robbins' 2012 profile in the *New York Times Magazine* frames Clark's journey as a righteous escape from a 'wild tribe of radicals' with (apparently alarming) ties to Communism and Black liberation movements. Robbins ends the profile with an allegory – proposed by the reformed Clark herself – comparing Clark's journey to the biblical story of Jonah and the whale. This coda cements the conservative, moralistic tone of the piece: a redemption story detailing the success of the prison system in snatching back a doomed soul from the clutches of a rabid, monolithic far left. Saliently, Robbins also finds a way to work addiction into his analysis: 'She had used her radicalism, she realized, much the way prisoners around her used drugs, as a means to avoid confronting her own doubts.' In this piece, as well as in Walter's book, the carceral system that strips mothers of their children is framed as the inescapable site of well-deserved consequences – and, for added effect, addiction is wielded as a condemnation of character. As told by both Walter and Robbins, Clark only began to approach redemption when she began to frame her incarceration as the consequence of her own choices.

According to Robbins, Clark's uncaring, radical façade was finally broken down when a sociologist said to her, 'I understand how you did this to yourself.... What I don't understand is how you did this to your daughter' (Robbins). The unmatched cruelty of this accusation pales in comparison to the myopic notion that incarcerated people have unilateral control over their fates. And, despite protestations to the contrary, this framework firmly positions motherhood as diametrically opposed to political and social activism. At one point, Robbins recounts Clark's experiences during family visits, during

which she was expressly forbidden to touch her own daughter. 'To Clark,' Robbins writes, 'The cruelty only reinforced her ideas about the oppressive system. "I avoided thinking about how I had put my daughter in this horrible situation."' This piece in the *New York Times Magazine* predates Clark's parole by seven years (and the commutation of her sentence by only four), leading me to wonder how influential such a high-profile article could have been amidst turbulent debate over the possible commutation of Clark's sentence. Clark's turnaround – from skipping her own trial out of protest against carceral hegemony (the act which, Robbins writes, led to the harshness of her sentence) to blaming no one but herself – points to the ways in which these systems reward efforts that obscure their own complicity. If Clark has no one but herself to blame for her inhumane sentence, then those of us who remain unincarcerated can rest free from guilt. In short, Robbins incidentally exposes a culture that demands that Clark absolve us through her own absolution. This is not to evaluate the legitimacy of Clark's work with the far left or the growing support for her reversal; rather, I hope that, by lending context to the story cited by Walter as inspiration for her own character, I may shed some light on where the reportedly progressive, feminist project of the *Donmar Trilogy* falls short.

Perhaps relevantly to the time in which this thesis is being finished, Clark told the court that 'revolutionary violence is necessary, and it is a liberating force' (Robbins). This is not to summarily call Clark's crime revolutionary or liberatory, but it does ring true to the writings of revolutionary thinkers like Frantz Fanon and Edward Said. In his seminal 1961 book *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon writes that violence is inevitably bound up in the liberation of colonised peoples. 'The colonized...have been prepared for

violence from time immemorial. As soon as they are born it is obvious to them that their cramped world, riddled with taboos, can only be challenged by out and out violence' (Fanon 27). The notion of necessary, liberatory violence has gone largely unexamined in this thesis – in almost every instance, from the wooing scene in *The Taming of the Shrew* to the doughnut incident in *Julius Caesar* – violence is a subordinating force. In my arguments, I have operated on the understanding that violence has directionality; violence is necessarily an enactment of power. But violence can also be a challenge to power – when thinking about structural violences like mass incarceration, and the individual violences experienced by the incarcerated women featured in the Donmar Trilogy, there is a Fanon-shaped hole in the dramaturgy of the productions. Particularly in *The Taming of the Shrew*, Katherine's arc is characterised by a move away from physical violence. The notion that Katherine's violent treatment of men could be not only justified, but also necessary and inevitable, is broadly ignored in both of Lloyd's adaptations. In his 2018 profile, McKinley calls Clark a 'model prisoner' for her engagement particularly with education – proof, the piece suggests, that incarceration can be a rehabilitating force. Robbins presents Clark's former support of liberatory violence without commentary, seemingly assuming that the reader will balk at such a statement. Robbins crystallises a mode of thought that also seems to underpin the Donmar Trilogy's depiction of violence – that it is always a net negative. The colonised awareness of violence as a necessity for liberation does not seem to have a role in Robbins' piece or in the Donmar Trilogy.

In contrast with Robbins' perspective, though, the Donmar Trilogy attempts to showcase some of the ways in which the prison system is 'unfair'; performers are

yanked from the middle of scenes to take their meds (Huw *JC* 01:10:04), and the plays are often 'shut down' early or otherwise interrupted by prison guards. However, Walter's account of her direct work with incarcerated women falls victim once again to hegemonic preconceptions: 'We were also encouraged,' she writes, 'By how speedily they had grasped the meaning of the text and, in one case at least, we saw a budding natural talent for verse speaking' (161). This attitude seems to undergird Walter's writing about incarceration – she routinely falls back on Shakespeare's unexamined position as both a foundational and broadly inaccessible literary phenomenon. In reproducing Shakespeare's position as a moral and artistic pillar of Eurocentric culture, Walter inadvertently squashes the feminist, liberatory potential of her own project. Walter singles out one cast member's 'natural talent for verse speaking,' elevating it above the contributions of the other participants as something rare, unique, and, most significantly, unexpected. Walter's continuous surprise at the performance abilities of those less fortunate than herself points to a more insidious, deeply entrenched belief in the legitimacy of hegemony disguised as meritocracy.

The lens through which a creative team views its project has a material impact on the work – asking (and, crucially, answering) questions about who stands to benefit from the work's success and who has final say on creative decisions often makes the difference between replicating hegemony and subverting it. More specifically, the lack of visibly trans performers in the Donmar Trilogy cements the work as a cis fantasy of gender subversion. The concept of the 'visibly trans' person is deeply fraught. A body in transition, a body that doesn't 'pass' is coded to the audience as genderqueer, whereas a body that passes for cis, no matter how trans, is accepted as it is. This points to the

insidious notion that trans people transition solely with the goal of passing. Instead, transition can and should be liberatory, including from societal constraints that depict being cis passing as the most desirable mode of gender performance. Passing is just one of an infinite set of possible vectors. Furthermore, cis conceptions of passing figure transition as a process with an endpoint; often, the cis imagination depicts transition as a miserable, ugly process that terminates in euphoric affirmation, which, of course, can only be achieved by passing. Together, these misconceptions further limit the trans experience to two modes: misery if you don't pass, and deception if you do. Kemp writes:

Dependence on the cis body for these readings then produces a fictional “trans” body continually defined by the same cisgender norms – a performative fiction of androgyny and genderqueerness that is uninterested in the varied branches of androgyny that medical and social transition have actualized (2019a 121).

The spectrum of gender presentation in the Donmar Trilogy is heavily dominated by cis women, which simultaneously reduces and abstracts the infinite possibilities of androgyny to a few (frequently racialised) archetypes. The androgyny of the Donmar Trilogy amounts to cis women being tall and acting like men – the alleged ‘androgyny’ in these performances arises from the dissonance between gendered signs.

Lloyd figures gender subversion as the departure from cis, straight femininity, told through a combination of discrete, gendered traits, some of which belong to the performer ‘innately’ – like a treble voice, breasts, et cetera – and some which are ‘put on’, such as Sheila Atim’s wide, masculine gestures in *The Tempest*. Kemp writes that cis-led productions figure the trans body as ‘overloaded with signifiers’ (2019b 274), leading ultimately to the flattening of gendered signs. This, they argue, ‘Reinforces the

idea that the cisgender body is a normative and blank canvas upon which we can project gender diversity' (2019b 274). We see this in effect across many performances in the Donmar Trilogy – Walter writes about the process of stepping into the male characters. She says that inhabiting masculinity turned out to be less about 'putting on deep voices or blokeish walks' (188) and more about taking up space, moving with gravitas. This point raises several more: each of Walter's examples of masculine behaviour corresponds to the retention of power. Walter suggests that abstract actions like 'taking up space' points to gendered expectations of masculine bodies as authors of meaning. Walter's description of gendered behaviours seems to imagine two disparate categories of gendered actions, which, when juxtaposed, are expected to highlight something profound and radical about gender. This inescapably cis lens is all too familiar – it positions cis men and cis women as the blank slate on which gendered expectations are written, and anyone caught in between those two realms is, quite literally, a body in transition. Walter's emphasis on hyper-masculinity as a method of critique has semiotic power, but it also reinforces the division between masculine and feminine traits. Instead of generating yet more ways to label and relegate our behaviour, a truly trans-inclusive project must make the transition away from the portrait of genderqueerness as 'cis women acting masculinely' or vice versa to the interrogation of the framework that necessitates that relegation. This pick-n-mix of gendered signifiers suggests a false ontology; because cis actors must guess and imagine at what it might be like to inhabit a genderqueer body, they (unintentionally or otherwise) reproduce the concept that trans people are pretending, acting, deceiving.

Kemp points to a 'schism in the logic of theater, perhaps facilitated by the uncritical assumption that because it hosts a canonical representation of queerness and gender nonconformity, it is necessarily a progressive and inclusive space' (2019b 270). One of the most pervasive effects of this ongoing assumption is the atrophy of the dramaturgical muscle that interprets and comments. In a presupposed progressive space, it seems natural to merely point to the problem and allow your enlightened, open-minded audience to come to a conclusion for themselves. In depicting a small variety of queered interactions between queered bodies, Lloyd and Walter invite – and expect – the audience to do the dramaturgical labour of making the work mean something. However, the source of this meaning is still the cis-coded body. The implication of the cis actor generating these genderqueer signs is that, if something can be distilled, then so too can it be appropriated, owned.

The assimilation of trans signifiers into the lexical field of gender has multiple consequences. On one hand, normalisation can be beneficial – some trans people work to be what is often called 'stealth'. Whether this means passing or something else, being stealth can lead to a public life free (or mostly free) from scrutiny and violence related to one's gender expression. However, as with every act of normalisation, there is also elision. Fitting into the 'normal' necessitates the constant collapse of subversive ways of being – we diverge, then we are normalised, then we diverge again. Perhaps it feels fruitless to normalise transness because to be trans is to be outside the norm – but this is not necessarily a useful thought for a trans person whose material reality would be vastly improved by being able to use a public restroom. It is this disparity, this enforced distance between the trans body and the norm, that makes the trans

experience so uniformly elusive for cis artists. Marginalised people live in a double, triple, quadruple reality – it is possible for a trans person to simultaneously want to pass and want to remain outside the norm. It is this site of possibility that is so coveted (and so routinely missed) by cis-led productions, and which has the potential to instruct us in other, more liberatory ways of constructing meaning. The difference, it seems, between a regressive and progressive depiction of genderqueerness, lies in the authorship of meaning. In the rehearsal room, ownership of the process of creating the semiotic language of the play is filtered through the director, dramaturg, and other creative team members. Onstage, it is the actor's body that displays the lexical field – in front of the audience, the actor's body is the only source of its own meaning. However, the signs that comprise the body (including costume, voice, posture, et cetera) are not necessarily all constructed under the actor's auspices. This points back to Frankland's workshop and subsequent guidance document, in which the authors emphasise that liberatory, trans theatre cannot thrive in a traditional theatre hierarchy. This is, in part, because the trans actor offers up their body to the audience; they expose their non-normative traits, and they step into the role of semiotic object. Therefore, it is essential that the trans actor retain consent-based agency over their own body. In practice, this can mean a deconstruction of the traditional director-actor hierarchy. In theory, transness and the trans body must be the locus of agency, rather than the beneficiary or recipient. The power of the semioticisation of transness lies not in its abstraction or its objectification; it is in the lifting up of the trans body as the author of its own meaning, the generator of its own signs.

Kemp connects the audience-facing portion of a production to the process of creating it. They write: 'Until critics and scholars make a shift from using trans and gender-nonconforming people as abstract tools of literary inquiry to prioritizing meaningfully giving voice to this diverse set of experiences, the ways in which we perform epistemology will continue to be fundamentally transphobic' (272). Kemp's work exposes the harsh reality that, regardless of intent, it is impossible for a cis performer to productively embody not just transition, but transness itself. This is not to say that the Donmar Trilogy claims to be a trans production. 'With or without the theatre's implicit encouragement,' Kemp writes, 'The representation of gender-nonconforming behaviors and characters that is intrinsic to so many of Shakespeare's plays means that patrons *do* read the "transgender" onto and into Shakespeare when they bring their knowledge of contemporary gender discourse to the theater' (2019b 268). This is a crucial consideration, because it clarifies that a production need not proclaim itself to be telling a trans story for a trans story to be found in it. And, as Kemp argues, contemporary discourses around gender are present in the theatrical space, whether the theatre makers invite it or not.

In praise of Desdemona Chiang's 2017 production of *As You Like It* with Cal Shakes, Kemp highlights the show's use of the 'entire extended theater space to make meaningful and actionable connections among the text, the audience, and the community of trans people who are not just invoked as part of the play's concept, but are clearly contributors and co-creators in the performance event' (2019b 280). This methodology invites us to think of a play as the product of multiple factors, beyond what's happening onstage: a play is also created by paratextual elements, which can

signify to the audience what is expected of them in terms of their mutual participation. The co-construction that happens in the theater between players and audience is part of what makes live performance unique from other media. To an extent, the live audience is always juggling text and paratext, because no audience member is a blank slate. In her book, Walter (perhaps inadvertently) highlights the hefty volume of paratextual knowledge often expected of contemporary Shakespeare audiences. Walter acknowledges that exposure to Shakespearean text and paratext is a privilege – however, she neglects to examine why Shakespeare is considered privileged information, and why fluency in Shakespeare continues to be a hallmark of propriety among the ruling class. In ‘gaining’ the ability to act Shakespeare, Walter’s less experienced castmates did not gain something of inherent value, but rather they gained the ability to navigate a lexical field that has consistently and ardently excluded them.

5.3 *You've Got to Do Something*

One of the governing concepts in this project is that of psychological distance. I have not attempted to increase my own distance to this project, and I do not feel that emotional immediacy devalues the work. Where I lack psychological distance, my strongest emotional reactions help me uncover what a moment of theatre is actually ‘doing’ (or, at least what it’s doing to me). The emotional reactivity that comes with psychological closeness is too often weaponised against non-cis male thinkers to invalidate reactions to material harm. When I was working most recently as a tutor for an introductory English literature course, I introduced my students to theoretical lenses. I helped them use, for example, the theoretical works of foundational feminist scholars to read the assigned text through

a feminist lens. This is how I was taught to write academically, and it has always helped me to distil the import of what I'm writing. One of my students asked whether these lenses were actually changeable at all – after making oneself aware of the material injustices that face a marginalised group, how can we ever read (especially canonical English texts) without looking through that lens? This is the crux of psychical distance – it is involuntary. We cannot control our positionality in relation to works of art; to claim that one can simply choose to distance oneself is to presume a certain degree of privilege. Therefore, demands to force psychical distance into our interaction with a text implicitly exclude marginalised writers from critiquing texts that are about them. The privilege of self-effacement amidst an especially mimetic depiction of injustice – in our case, primarily of gendered violence and incarceration – is linked in my mind to the illusion of white neutrality. 'The white racial frame is both commonplace and insidious: it does not draw attention to itself. Therefore, it is an epistemology that obfuscates how it makes knowledge and meaning' (Dadabhoy and Mehdizadeh 24). The obfuscation of the mechanisms by which knowledge is created contributes to hegemonic oppression because it posits those mechanisms as innate. That is, in its resistance to identification, the white racial frame resists the meaningful subversion of racist structures. However, once intersectional and anti-capitalist readings of a text add lenses, so to speak, they are impossible to remove – they irreversibly highlight the tenuousness of white neutrality. Therefore, to create a play that ignores this white racial frame is, at best, to continue to be unaware of the impacts of hegemony on everyone other than oneself or, at worst, to knowingly obscure those facts in the pursuit of social and financial reward.

Psychical distance is both necessary and threatening to the infrastructure of storytelling in the four productions featured in this thesis. To facilitate empathy between spectator and performer is to reach out and close some of that distance – to demonstrate, however circuitously, that solidarity is an action, not a state of being. Psychological distance is not directly tied to mimesis. On the contrary, anti-mimetic, Brechtian performance circumvents the need for individual identification. Elin Diamond writes that ‘Brechtian theory formulates (and reformulates) a spectatorial state that breaks the suturing of imaginary identifications and keeps the spectator independent’ (88). To derive meaning from the play, the Brechtian spectator need not address the psychological distance between themselves and the text. Instead, ‘Theatre semiotics posits a spectator whose reception constantly revises the spectacle’s meanings’ (Diamond 88). The meaning of live theatre is co-created in the moment – this is one of the things about it that keeps me coming back. This aspect is lost, to a certain degree, when watching the Donmar Trilogy on a screen. To watch a film of a live play is to absorb only a fraction of what that play means, because, as an isolated spectator, my ‘capacity to regress’ is not ‘suppressed’ (Diamond 88). Watching at home, I can neither receive nor revise the meaning of the spectacle. As an audience member removed by space and time, I am relegated to the role of observer of something that is already complete. This isolation is, in part, accountable for the way it feels to watch these productions in retrospect, which is not unlike the way I feel watching a television programme with a laugh track. All of my agency is gone, and all of the reacting is done for me. All of the affective choices that seep into the air of a brick-and-mortar theatre and imbue the performance with a sense of singularity are already made.

This is not to make any kind of argument against the digitisation of theatre. Rather, it is an acknowledgement of the limitations of this particular research project. If we can imagine a world without prisons, without barriers to wellbeing like privatised healthcare and education, then surely we can imagine the ways in which theatre can help to make that future a reality. To participate in the radical reorganisation of hierarchies is to engage with the mass-solidarity invoked by Salah-El, who served a life sentence and died in prison in 2018. That the peak of the Donmar Trilogy's acclaim intersected so closely with the end of Salah-El's life is a microcosmic example of how long these movements take to find a foothold in public consciousness. Early modern drama still has something to offer us. Of TSMGO's *Gallathea*, Tamimi said:

As I got to know this play, I felt very recognised and represented in a place and a time that I thought I would never be seen or represented before... To find [representation] in this period and in this place was such an unexpected joy. I was so appreciative to know that we have an actual recorded history (Chung 02:50:33).

Finding representation and resonance in early modern texts can never be a panacea for oppression, but Tamimi found a foothold in the text through the unexpected closure of psychical distance. What emerges alongside joy as a driving force in queer theatre is representation on our own terms; what Tamimi pointed to in the text materialised in the rehearsal room not as mere identification, but as a claim to authorship. If queer/genderqueer people can author signs within a community of artists, then the queernesses present in the art become queernesses of resistance. And if we centre the hope and joy of marginalised people in our art, then that art stands a chance of speaking something inarticulable – it stands to make meaning of something.

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Appendix

This appendix includes publicly available information about the casts and creative teams of the productions mentioned in this thesis.

***The Taming of the Shrew* (Shakespeare's Globe Theatre 2003)**

From the British Universities Film & Video Council's database of Shakespeare on film, television, and radio.

Cast

Linda Bassett	Grumio
Penelope Beaumont	Vincentio
Louise Bush	Tailor
Penelope Dimond	Gremio
Amanda Harris	Tranio
Liza Hayden	Biondello
Anna Healy	Baptista Minola
Katherine Hunter	Katherina
Liz Kettle	Pedant
Meredith MacNeill	Lucentio
Janet McTeer	Petruchio
Jules Melvin	Curtis
Ann Ogbomo	Joseph
Laura Rogers	Bianca
Rachel Sanders	Widow
Yolanda Vazquez	Hortensio

Creative Team

Director	Phyllida Lloyd
Music	William Lyons
Production Design	Jenny Tiramani
Costume Designers	Imogen Ross & Jenny Tiramani

***Julius Caesar* (Donmar Trilogy, BBC 2016)**

From Digital Theatre+'s homepage for the Donmar Trilogy's *Julius Caesar*. Incarcerated character names are from Walter's *Brutus and Other Heroines*, the video recording, and video interviews.

Cast

Jade Anouka	Mark Antony (Sade)
Sheila Atim	Lucius
Jackie Clune	Julius Caesar (Den)
Shiloh Coke	Cinna the Poet
Karen Dunbar	Casca (Sally)
Clare Dunne	Portia, Octavius Caesar (Rosie)
Leah Harvey	Soothsayer (Aisha)
Zainab Hasan	Calpurnia, Metellus Cimber
Jennifer Joseph	Trebonius (Wendy)
Martina Laird	Cassius (Noma)
Carolina Valdes	Dog, Cinna (Sofia)
Harriet Walter	Brutus (Hannah)
Sarah Jane Dent	Guard
Rhiannon Harper-Rafferty	Guard
Liv Spencer	Guard

Creative Team

Director	Phyllida Lloyd
Studio Director	Rhodri Huw
Designer	Bunny Christie
Lighting Designer	James Farncombe

Sound Designer	Tom Gibbons
Movement Director	Ann Yee
Fight Director	Kate Waters
Video Designer	Duncan McLean
Assistant Director	Ola Ince
Casting Director	Vicky Richardson
Casting Director	Alastair Coomer CDG
Original lighting designer at the Donmar Warehouse	Neil Austin
Composer	Gary Yershon
Musical Director	Shiloh Coke
Creative Associate	Harriet Walter

Henry IV (Donmar Trilogy, BBC 2016)

From Digital Theatre+'s homepage for the Donmar Trilogy's *Henry IV*. Incarcerated character names are from Walter's *Brutus and Other Heroines*, the video recording, and video interviews.

Cast

Jade Anouka	Hotspur (Sade)
Sheila Atim	Lady Percy, Peto
Jackie Clune	Westmorland, Glendower (Den)
Shiloh Coke	Mortimer
Karen Dunbar	Bardolph, Vernon (Sally)
Clare Dunne	Prince Hal (Rosie)
Leah Harvey	Poins, The Douglas (Aisha)
Zainab Hasan	Hostess, Messenger
Jennifer Joseph	Sir Walter Blunt, Sheriff (Wendy)
Martina Laird	Worcester, Gadshill (Noma)
Sophie Stanton	Falstaff (Andrea)
Carolina Valdes	Northumberland (Sofia)
Harriet Walter	Henry IV (Hannah)
Sarah Jane Dent	Guard
Rhiannon Harper-Rafferty	Guard
Liv Spencer	Guard

Creative Team

Director	Phyllida Lloyd
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Studio Director	Rhodri Huw
Designer	Bunny Christie
Designer	Ellen Nabarro
Costume Designer	Deborah Andrews
Lighting Designer	James Farncombe
Sound Designer	Tom Gibbons
Movement Director	Ann Yee
Fight Director	Kate Waters

***The Tempest* (Donmar Trilogy, BBC 2016)**

From Digital Theatre+'s homepage for the Donmar Trilogy's *The Tempest*. Incarcerated character names are from Walter's *Brutus and Other Heroines*, the video recording, and video interviews.

Cast

Jade Anouka	Ariel (Sade)
Sheila Atim	Ferdinand
Jackie Clune	Stefano (Den)
Shiloh Coke	Sebastian
Karen Dunbar	Trinculo (Sally)
Leah Harvey	Miranda (Aisha)
Zainab Hasan	Gonzalo
Jennifer Joseph	Officer (Wendy)
Martina Laird	Alonso (Noma)
Sophie Stanton	Caliban (Andrea)
Carolina Valdes	Antonio (Sofia)
Harriet Walter	Prospero (Hannah)
Sarah Jane Dent	Guard
Rhiannon Harper-Rafferty	Guard
Liv Spencer	Guard

Creative Team

Director	Phyllida Lloyd
Studio Director	Rhodri Huw
Designer	Chloe Lamford

Theatre Environment Designer	Bunny Christie
Lighting Designer	James Farncombe
Sound Designer	Pete Malkin
Composer	Joan Armatrading
Movement Director	Ann Yee
Assistant Director	Ola Ince
Casting Director	Vicky Richardson
Casting Director	Alastair Coomer CDG
Musical Director	Shiloh Coke
Creative Associate	Harriet Walter

The Taming of the Shrew* (Public Theatre, Shakespeare in the Park 2016)*Cast**

From an article by Tom Millward for *New York Theatre Guide*.

Candy Buckley	Vincentio
Donna Lynne Champlin	Hortensio
Rosa Gilmore	Lucentio
Judy Gold	Gremio
LaTanya Richardson Jackson	Baptista
Cush Jumbo	Katherine
Teresa Avia Lim	Biondello
Janet McTeer	Petruchio
Adrienne C. Moore	Tranio
Anne L. Nathan	Pedant
Gayle Rankin	Bianca
Pearl Rhein	Ensemble
Leenya Rideout	Ensemble
Jackie Sanders	Ensemble
Stacey Sargeant	Grumio

Creative Team

From a review by Marilyn Stasio in *Variety*.

Director	Phyllida Lloyd
Sets and Costumes	Mark Thompson
Lighting Designer	Robert Wierzel
Sound Designer	Mark Menard

Hair and Wigs	Leah J Loukas
Music Supervisor and Composer	Sam Davis
Movement Director	Ann Yee
Fight Director	Lisa Kopitsky
Production Stage Manager	Cole Bonenberger

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