“We know what we are, but know not what we may be”:

Victorian Adaptations of the Shakespearean Gaze

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Abstract

In considering Victorian adaptations of William Shakespeare, critics have long studied literary references to him as a sign of his popularity as a cultural figurehead. This thesis argues that Shakespeare played a larger role in Victorian writing as a symbol for social change. Through historical research and close readings of the texts, it becomes apparent that in adapting Shakespeare, Victorian authors purposefully wove him into writings that were intended to bring attention to social problems. Shakespeare originally brought focus to certain types of characters, such as women, servants, Jews, and other victims in his work by directing the gaze and attention of the audience to them. The Victorians then adapted these figures and put them in the forefront of their work. The analysis reveals that Shakespeare was not a stagnant reference, but rather, adaptations of him were specifically tied to advancement in society.

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Introduction

In describing *King Lear,* Queen Victoria said, "A strange, horrible business, but I suppose good enough for Shakespeare's day" (Londre 228). Queen Victoria may have expressed a less-than-enthusiastic opinion of Shakespeare, but the literary period that is her namesake is rife with references to his work and praises of his words. Becoming popular at the end of the eighteenth century and gaining momentum in the nineteenth century, Shakespeare was admired by the general public and revered by the academic community. Simultaneously, schools began incorporating Shakespeare's writing as an integral part of the curriculum. Writers across genres modernized the Bard's work on the stage and in texts, as Shakespeare became a foundation for a national British culture.

While Victorian plays drew inspiration from Shakespearean plays, the novelists give a unique perspective on the overall social attitudes of the time because they had the opportunity to explore further the depths of Shakespeare's characters. Rather than being restricted to four or five acts, novelists were able to create detailed histories and modernized versions of his characters. Modernization here refers to the way in which some Victorians showed their proto-feminist views and brought light to social issues. It is not a new idea that Victorian novels routinely dealt with social problems, but I am adding to the conversation by showing the way in which they drew inspiration from Shakespeare's work in support of their political and social goals. Shakespeare was popular with certain novelists because he was originally a symbol of educational censorship that they could re-appropriate to represent change. Their adaptation of Shakespeare then shows that they did not see him as a stagnant cultural figurehead, but rather, he was a method through which they could change society. They were able to explore Shakespeare as an advocate by turning the gaze deliberately to focus upon certain problems. To demonstrate

my argument, I will look at a number of tragedies and comedies by Shakespeare, as well as novels by Charlotte Brontë, Emily Brontë, William Thackeray, Charles Dickens, and George Eliot. The primary Victorian works from which I draw specific examples are *Jane Eyre* (1847), *Wuthering Heights* (1847), *Vanity Fair* (1848), *Great Expectations* (1861), and *Daniel Deronda* (1876). The Shakespearean tragedies I reference are *Macbeth*, *Hamlet*, and *Romeo and Juliet*, and the comedies are *As You Like It*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Twelfth Night*, and *The Winter's Tale*.

In Chapter 1: "Of Censorship and Rebellion: Reviving Shakespeare's Heroines," I begin by describing the historical atmosphere and the general Victorian attitude toward Shakespeare. After setting the stage, I argue that despite revering and holding up Shakespeare as a paradigm, the culture typically did not experience him in his full form. In particular, women and young girls encountered a censored Shakespeare. At the time, women's education was growing increasingly important, so the pedagogical Shakespeare reveals how their education was still unequal. Despite the censorship of certain aspects of Shakespeare, novelists created distinctly feminist adaptations. In doing so, they remained true to his original characters, while modernizing their experiences. The exploration of his work as a means for women to work against cultural expectations is a display of the empowerment the Victorians saw coming from his work, as they created a performance by the oppressed.

In Chapter 2: "Of Governesses and Gypsies: Negotiating Gender and the Gaze," I analyze a specific method by which novelists adapted the theatricality in Shakespeare to reflect their feminist views. I argue that the modernization of the Bard resulted in an alteration of the audience's gaze as well as a reversal of the male character's gaze upon the female character. I build upon Laura Mulvey's theory of scopophilia, in which the gaze victimizes the object

sexually. I then define the gaze as a signal to the reader by the author. It can therefore be used to show inequality as well as correct it. In changing the gaze and creating a gaze from the female perspective, novelists empowered Shakespearean heroines through their Victorian incarnations. In addition, the male character could become the object of the gaze through cross-dressing. In Shakespeare's theater, boys played women, but in Victorian novels, a man could dress as a woman. By turning the gaze away from the woman, the Victorians were able to save characters such as Ophelia, so she became the focus of the story, instead of Hamlet.

In the final chapter, "Of Maids and Marginalization: The Reinvention of the Servant, Jew, and Victim," I argue the redirected gaze is meant to assist immediate change when combined with social issues, such as class, race, and domestic violence. I consider three distinct stock-like figures featured in Shakespeare and compare them to their Victorian counterparts, which are the servant and fool, Jewish villain and daughter, and female victim. Shakespeare featured all of these characters as integral parts of his plays. When the Victorians adapted the characters, they accentuated them even more, so they were impossible to ignore. Through adaptation, the Victorians made them more sympathetic and relatable to the audience. Shakespeare already brought focus to these certain characters, but the Victorians took his ideas and pushed them further. Shakespeare was one method through which the Victorians granted power to previously overlooked characters. In doing so, they took an indirect approach toward arguing for social change.

Writers in the Victorian era have long been distinguished for their desire to bring about social change. They have also long been remembered for a reverence of Shakespeare. I will argue they were referencing Shakespeare because they saw him as a vehicle of social change. He was not merely a popular culture icon for them, but rather he was a method of innovation. It is an

important distinction to make because it gives a depth to the Victorian fandom surrounding Shakespeare and shows that he was not merely the figurehead of English literary culture.

Chapter 1

Of Censorship and Rebellion:

Reviving Shakespeare's Heroines

During the nineteenth century, Shakespeare became a well-established member of the English literary canon. Because his popularity soared in all aspects of the culture, Victorian society experienced a tension in how to both modernize and regulate his appearance, which is particularly clear in the censorship of young girls' exposure as compared to stage adaptations. Generally, the Victorians distilled Shakespeare's work lest he offend the public. It was not until female novelists and male novelists with strong female characters began adapting him that his modernized work began to parallel societal rebellion and a proto-feminist movement. Gail Marshall argues that the Victorians saw two forms of Shakespeare's women. They were valued as universal symbols of femininity, or they were valued because they were symbols of femininity from the past (43-44). I would argue, however, that there is a third reading of the Victorian Shakespeare heroine: modernizing them with respect to a proto-feminist outlook. The novelists I will discuss found a way to recover Shakespeare and his heroines and enlist them in an explicitly proto-feminist project. Contradicting their society's goal to keep the angel in the home, the novelists recast Shakespearean heroines as a symbol of rebellion as opposed to a model for perfect behavior, so he came to symbolize modernity as well as tradition. In this chapter, I argue that accompanying the rise in Shakespeare's popularity was a censorship of his work for young girls. Despite this censorship, novelists emphasized rebellious incarnations of his heroines, specifically in William Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*. The rebellious heroines prove the policing efforts ineffective and display a push for a society with independent women.

Art and Culture

In the nineteenth century, Shakespeare had his own renaissance, as Victorians began to rediscover him. His popularity is evident in their art, culture, and education. In *Reinventing Shakespeare*, Gary Taylor writes that Shakespeare's reputation was entering the Victorian home-life. He writes, "From the Restoration to the Romantics, the movement of Shakesperotics had been essentially vertical; assessments of the value of his work rose and rose. In the late eighteenth century his supremacy was consolidated; potential challenges were defeated or defused" (167). By the nineteenth century, he would have been well established as an official British literary figure that also entered their personal lives.

The renewed fascination with Shakespeare found its way into Victorian artwork in particular. Between 1750 and 1900, 135 paintings were inspired by *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, specifically the fairies in the production (Richards 23). In "Shakespeare at the Great Exhibition of 1851," Clare Pettitt discusses the display of an unfinished full-length statue of Shakespeare created from his Stratford bust, one of many representations of the Bard at the exhibit. She writes, "Shakespeare may have been on show at the Exhibition to represent a glorious national heritage which both underpinned and transcended the new, but his image in the nineteenth century was as much a reminder of how that very past was necessarily 'made and moulded' over and again by the ever ongoing present" (79). Pettitt's analysis of Shakespeare's bust proves that as he gained popularity, Shakespeare was being modernized and updated for the British, so he became part of the present as well as an important part of their history and culture. Most importantly, the idea of him as a representation of English heritage is one that I will build upon in the preceding chapters, as I argue that as a cultural figurehead, Shakespeare was an ideal inspiration for their focus on societal issues.

Shakespeare's popularity was especially poignant for young girls and grown women. Gail Marshall explains that the nineteenth century saw a simultaneous increase in the popularity of Shakespeare and increase in the education of women, as girls were introduced to Shakespeare in both the home and through formal education. In addition, there was a constant presence of Shakespeare's women in the visual arts. Except in the cases of theatrical families, young girls rarely discovered him first through the theater. Instead, they were introduced to his written texts in the midst of the family circle, as the father read him aloud (15). Marshall's analysis supports my idea that while women were being exposed to the bard at a younger age, they were being monitored in their access to him, as their parents served as gatekeepers to his access. The censorship for young girls was also seen in the limiting of their perspectives on his heroines. Marshall writes,

> The reasons, and the means, behind the progression of Shakespeare from source of girlhood trauma to guarantor of sanctioned intellectual activity and moral guidance are multiple, and of course partly dependent upon that parallel narrative of broad cultural esteem, but they also rely heavily on two material factors: developments in formal education for girls, and the increased availability of forms of Shakespeare made appropriate to the young female reader. (18)

As Marshall explains, increased education gave girls more opportunities to encounter the bard. However, Marshall does not take into account that while his works were made familiar to young girls, the basic plotlines were the focus, as opposed to the more troubling, adult themes. I would argue that young girls had a superficial education that they had to expand upon later in life, as they discovered the broader aspects of his stories.

Education and Censorship

The rise in Shakespeare's popularity in the nineteenth century was also accompanied by his emergence in education and the solidifying of his position in the British literary canon. In this century, the novel was also earning a place in education where it had previously been ignored. Overall, popular culture was immigrating into education and scholarly culture. Shakespeare formally became part of compulsory education with the Education Act of 1870 (Prince 37). While the Act was later than the publication of any of the novels that I discuss, he was still a part of children's lives before he was a part of the educational canon.

Unlike the open prominence of Shakespeare in common culture, the education of young girls involved a distinct censorship of his work. At the time, their educational curriculum evolved from purely domestic to more of an official curriculum. As girls were now being educated in the same material as their brothers, it could be expected that they would be educated in the same way, but this was not the case. For instance, Charles and Mary Lamb's *Tales from Shakespear* was published in 1807. Marshall explains that this work set Shakespeare within common reading practices and first introduced children to his work, but it was primarily intended for young girls, as boys generally had access to their father's libraries (18). As a result, boys had access to the original work, while their sisters faced a secondary telling of the plays. The preface to *Tales from Shakespear* claims, "The following Tales are meant to be submitted to the young reader as an introduction to the study of Shakespeare, for which purpose his words are used whenever it seemed possible to bring them in" (1). The preface goes on to explain that the authors have tried to keep the overall language of the work as close to the original language as possible. However, this version of the tales is still distilled. For instance, *Romeo and Juliet* is in the anthology, but the joint suicide is less extreme. They still kill themselves in the same way, but the language

focuses the scene on love, so the violence of the moment is lost (259). As such, daughters were exposed to only certain aspects of Shakespeare to keep them protected and innocent in a way that was not deemed necessary for their brothers.

The accessibility to Shakespeare's modified work continued even as girls grew older in Victorian society. In *Shakespeare in the Victorian Periodicals,* Kathryn Prince attributes Shakespeare's Victorian popularity to the attention he received in the periodical press. Through the dissemination of his work in periodical magazines, he established himself in the English literary canon. As previously mentioned, long before Shakespeare became a common part of children's education in 1870, children were introduced to his work with books such as Charles and Mary Lamb's *Tales from Shakespear*. Prince explains that unlike young boys, whose periodicals emphasized adventure, the periodicals for your girls continued the pressures to be perfect. "The ideals of self-sacrifice and endurance that created the Victorian 'angel in the house' permeate virtually every issue of the girls' magazines, whether manifested in competitions to make mittens and blankets for London's poor, articles about work in the caring professions, or first-hand accounts by young wives and mothers" (Prince 38). While boys were exposed to all aspects of Shakespeare, Prince's account of the subject matter for boys versus girls is an example of the censorship I have been discussing. Girls only saw the acceptable virtues that he presented in his plays. He was there to guide girls, but only certain aspects could manipulate girls into becoming appropriate Victorian women.

The idea that Shakespeare was being censored in a manipulative way can be seen in one periodical that Prince cites called *Little Folks,* who published six short stories in 1877 based on plays. In particular, Prince focuses on "The Story of Miranda," which emphasizes Miranda's role as a "dutiful daughter" in *The Tempest* (39). Prince claims that the gendering of the plays

continues even more strongly in the magazines meant for older children, as those for girls highlight a moralizing tendency, while the boys' are devoid of any such ulterior motive (40). Unlike the girls' magazines, "in the boys' magazines Shakespeare was depicted less often as a 'mere poet' than as an exemplar of English manliness" (42). Based upon Prince's assessment, while girls were expected to view the heroines as a model for proper womanhood, boys studied him as a literary figure. The question Prince leaves unanswered is why he was expected to influence girls as they developed while boys experienced him as purely educational. I would argue the reason for a difference is the way in which girls and boys had traditionally been educated. Boys were educated for the sake of going on to a profession or to run an estate. On the other hand, girls were educated to attract a husband and subsequently make good wives and mothers, so their education consisted of the arts and modern languages. Marshall explains the shift between boys and girls by writing, "Suitably mediated then, Shakespeare might improve taste and provide the foundation of concepts of greatness and goodness; whether in literary or moral terms in not specified, but probably both are indicated in this typically vague aspiration" (16). If Marshall is correct in her ideas about virtue, it is thus understandable that when learning about Shakespeare, they would have been taught to view him as an example of what they needed to become in order to be successful in life, which happened to be solely determined by how well they married.

A pointed and intentional application of Shakespeare went past the education of girls and into manipulating their thoughts. Marshall describes an 1887 essay writing contest entitled "My Favorite Shakespeare Heroine," writing,

> To the young girl, emerging from childhood and taking her first steps into the more active and self-dependent career of woman-life, Shakespeare's vital precepts

> and models render him essentially a helping friend…She can take her own disposition in hand, as it were, and endeavor to mould and form it into the best perfection for which it is capable, by carefully observing the women drawn by Shakespeare…For moral introspection and self-culture Shakespeare is a grand aid, as well as for mutual discipline; and, perhaps, peculiarly so, as regards women: since he, the most manly thinker and most virile writer that ever put pen to paper, had likewise something essentially feminine in his nature, which enabled him to discern with sympathy the innermost core of woman's heart. (20)

Marshall's analysis of the contest supports my assessment that Victorian society emphasized behaving properly, and the role of Shakespeare in forming this image is significant. He was not only studied but also emulated. Marshall suggests that it was Shakespeare's distinctly feminine aspect that made girls likely to relate to his characters. Marshall is correct; however, she does not take into account that the version of Shakespeare to which girls were exposed was not Shakespeare in his pure form. Rather, they were seeing a version of his characters that lightened the darker areas and emphasized the "good."

The censoring of Shakespeare was not an action that was unique to Victorian men, but it was instead an act of adults upon their female children. Marshall shows that Shakespeare was consumed in acceptable society to educate women, and the women themselves took a part in bringing him to the family. Yet, they were still expected to exercise him judiciously, as most parts of their education, so that he would not have undo effects. Shakespeare's strong women then can be seen as a source of danger if not regulated for the "good" of the young girls. Ellis further supports my idea of censoring in the home, as she writes,

> That sense of danger may have a fear of exposure to specific issues, such as sexuality, at its root, but it is articulated here as a fear of reading and its effects: its engendering an anti-social approach, its disruption of the family unit, and its exempting the girl form the normal round of female duties. How then was Shakespeare rescued form this position of moral obloquy? By mid-century he was, for some, a guarantor of appropriate femininity, and specifically a safeguard against inappropriate reading habits. (18)

He may have become socially unambiguous, but the tendency to concentrate on certain aspects proves that he still could have a rebellious influence. Rather than dealing with the idea of rebellion, they glossed over it. However, novelists began to view him as an inspiration. While toning down aspects of the stories that may be considered controversial, they were not abandoned entirely.

Victorians did address tragic heroines, but they did not give them a pedestal. A Victorian educator described both Ophelia and Desdemona as failures because their downfall was the result of being untrue to a man (Marshall 28). Marshall writes, "The exemplariness of the tragic heroines for Victorian commentators is troubling, and it is highly instructive to see Victorian girls' own active rejection of such figures, and the aesthetically compelling and seductive response of the *Paper* to that act of rebellion" (42). Based upon Marshall's analysis, Shakespeare's heroines were a model for girls to intellectualize their emotions, becoming better wives and mothers. I would add that the focus on the tragedy of rebellious heroines would have created a cautionary tale that was meant to frighten girls into obeying others. Rather than focusing on the relationship of Romeo and Juliet, the tale showed girls how their lives would end tragically if they went against their parents' wishes.

Theater and the Victorians

Theatrical representations of Shakespeare were less censored than versions of his plays that appeared in print, but they did not remain in their original forms. Theatricality was transforming throughout the nineteenth century, and it was significantly different from Shakespearean theater. For instance, in *Victorian Theatricals,* Sara Hudston explains, "Drawing-room theatricals soon became standard home entertainment for the respectable middle classes and charades came to be regarded as tame, even somewhat passé" (35). I would argue that because theatricality had moved from the stage and into the home, Shakespeare was able to move from the stage to the shelf and into education and the novel as a form.

The nineteenth-century stage was a particularly unique place for Shakespearean productions because it was known for theatrical innovation. For instance, pantomime and burlesque were common forms of stage productions. In the introduction to *Victorian Pantomime*, Jim Davis describes pantomime as one of the most successful and profitable forms of entertainment. Even today, pantomime takes both its form and structure from the Victorians (Davis 1). As well as theatricality inspiring novelists, pantomime likely played a role in their novels because it was so popular. Charles Dickens was not only a frequent theater patron, but also he was a regular visitor to pantomime shows (2). As pantomime developed throughout the century, it combined with the extravagance of the burlesque, which drew significantly from Shakespeare (2). Even though the Victorians were creating new forms of theater, they were still using the Shakespearean tradition to influence their stage productions, keeping him on the cusp of the innovation I will continue to discuss in later chapters. In Jacky Bratton's "Pantomime and the Experienced Young Fellow," she explains that the eighteenth century created a conflict between Shakespeare and the rest of the stage, as he was considered the "legitimate stage" while

Harlequin's attempted exclusion had to do with cultural gatekeeping. Overall, pantomime and its slapstick nature were seen as the opposition to Shakespeare's great words (90). However, in the nineteenth century, pantomime developed its own merits, so its influence transferred to even the "legitimate" stage.

Generally, in the nineteenth century, Shakespeare was considered high British culture. In "Shakespeare and Drama," David Taylor describes the difference between the illegitimate Shakespeare of the burlesque and the legitimate Shakespeare of the stage. He claims that Shakespeare showed what the British stage had been and what it should be again. Shakespearean references were "necessarily an act which mobilized key issues of cultural and ideological definition; an act which often consciously sought to reinvigorate or contest a theatrical nationhood" (Taylor 130). Taylor's analysis supports the idea that Shakespeare not only represented a cultural and national pride, but he also appeared in the burlesque fashion. Even as he was honored and becoming a part of the national canon, he was still being adapted to reflect current popularity. While the modernization of an older work is common, it is interesting that most of Shakespeare's adaptations take a distinctly feminist viewpoint. The juxtaposition of the burlesque and Shakespearean performances merely reflected the values of the day as viewers judged a play by its ostentation, rather than its content (Styan 17). Shakespeare was eventually performed with consideration for these preferences.

Through his adaptations on stage, Shakespeare's heroines were brought to light in a way that was distinctly different from the Elizabethan performances. The change was primarily due to the participation of female actresses, which made the heroines excessively more realistic and relatable. The Elizabethan stage consisted of all-male casts, so boys played the parts of women. The theaters were torn down soon after the Elizabethan Era in Britain, but when they were

rebuilt during the Restoration in the eighteenth century, female actresses finally took the stage, so the cross-dressing boy was no longer commonplace. By the nineteenth century, actresses were a norm.

As well as the addition of actresses, Shakespeare was being adapted on the stage in other ways. In *The Shakespeare Revolution,* J.L. Styan explains that the British were continuing to edit and change Shakespeare for the stage in the early 19th century (11). These included significant cuts, such as specific speeches as well as censorship, as *Measure for Measure* was edited for "bawdy" content (11). Connecting the editing of these particular elements to the earlier discussion of education suggests that Shakespeare was actually being conditioned to the times in a way that restricted his original work. It also means that theater was approaching his work in the same way as the texts intended for young girls. On the other hand, some of the edits suggest there were more progressive reasons for altering the original play. For instance, a version of *Twelfth Night* removed Feste's "O mistress mine" speech because a woman played the role (Styan 12). While Styan does not linger on this example, the casting of an actress in the place of Feste is a telling choice for this particular play. The play was written about the transferability of gender, as Viola spends most of the play pretending to be a boy. It also reflects the Elizabethan stage because boys, who had not yet reached puberty, played the parts of women. By reclaiming a male part for a female actress, the Victorians were in fact reversing the traditional gender hierarchy, in which men were given preference. The gender reversal only went so far, however, as the character's gender was also changed. It was not a complete reclaiming of the hierarchy, but it was the beginning of a change.

Several actresses came to be known specifically for their roles in Shakespearean productions during the Victorian period. Among these were Helen Faucit, Fanny Kemble, and

Ellen Terry (Marshall 153). Marshall describes the actress as a path through which Shakespeare's work found a place in modern gender politics (153). However, Marshall does not take into account the fact that the stage was generally using Shakespeare in a purer form than other manifestations. The theater's regulation of Shakespeare was not an attempt to censor him in the same way as education, but rather, the "legitimate stage" created an environment in which he could be uplifted as a source of culture and class. If the audience saw his work as proto-feminist, it was primarily based upon his original work. Whether or not Shakespeare meant his work to be proto-feminist, it is important that the Victorians could see him as having that motivation. Because theatrical retellings were generally pure, they were not as modernized for the current political culture. Rather, it took innovations outside of the stage to create a Shakespeare that could be employed for change.

Women and Shakespeare

As girls grew up into women, they began to see Shakespeare as less of a cautionary tale or a lesson in morality. Instead, through experiencing his full works, they began to look to him as a source of inspiration. Women in the Victorian period were gaining rights and power. In "Women and Shakespeare," Georgianna Ziegler explains that John Ruskin had raised women from Angel to Queen in his essay "Of Queens' Gardens," as he saw them as equal to their husbands, just active in different spheres. The problem with Ruskin's "separate but equal" mentality Ruskin described was that it did not consider the inequalities. Women were gaining power, but they still did not have the right to vote. The obsession with the heroines was in fact symptomatic of the time. Rather than merely revealing that women had taken power, it was symbolic of their struggle. In looking to Shakespeare for the ideal woman, Ruskin wrote that

Shakespeare did not produce heroes, only heroines (223). I would argue that Ruskin's analysis suggests that the Victorians were seeing the Shakespearean movement as a distinctly feminist movement because they so favored to the heroines. Ziegler explains that Ruskin only saw Ophelia and the evil women as weak. I would argue that in order to understand their attitudes toward Shakespeare's women, it is more important to look at the villains. While it is interesting that one of the most famous tragic heroines was seen as "weak," it is also important that the evil women were described as weak. The views on tragic heroines and villains suggests that while older women were seeing a fuller picture of Shakespeare, he was still being monitored by society, lest women move away from a strict social contract. The simplistic view that resulted from moral gatekeeping is particularly disturbing when considering what makes an "evil" woman in a Shakespearean play. For instance, Tamora is typically cast as the villain in Shakespeare's first play *Titus Andronicus.* However, the hero of the play, Titus, begins the violence, and he commits acts that are just as heinous as Tamora's. Were the play to be titled *Tamora,* Titus would likely be cast as the villain. By making the "evil" women black and white, the social view was not allowing for the ambiguous nature of morality.

Even if Shakespeare's "good" women could be cast as the ideal women, there are still problems in the application to real life. Ziegler points out that Ruskin's problem was in "translating this ideal of womanhood into real women, such as his long-suffering wife Euphemia Gray" (223). Like Ruskin, Ziegler says that female critics also looked to Shakespeare's heroines as the ideal. "Because Shakespeare created so many and varied compelling female roles, his works attracted both women readers and actresses, providing ordinary women with topics of thought and conversation at home and in book clubs, and actresses with complex characters who challenged their skills of performance" (223). Ziegler's assessment supports my argument that

writers could adapt the characters as a model of feminine independence. Ziegler concludes the essay by explaining that women found in Shakespeare a means of self-expression that allowed a woman to be more than a wife, but one who could also find a place in her own world (223). Ziegler does not take into account the problem that persists if women were still using another's voice to achieve "self-expression." At the same time, his importance to them in this capacity suggests a relationship that went beyond the merely academic relationship that boys faced. Making the relationship between young girls and Shakespeare an inspirational one was originally a way to police behavior, but the relationship eventually became a means through which women departed from societal expectations for their behavior. Finally, the parallels between Shakespeare's society and the Victorians should be considered in determining how women valued Shakespeare. Ziegler claims, "It was a happy coincidence that Shakespeare began his career during the reign of Elizabeth I and that his greatest revival occurred three hundred years later during the reign of another woman, Queen Victoria" (205). While Ziegler suggests that the rise of Shakespeare's heroines coincidently occurred during the reign of two English queens, in fact, Shakespeare's heroines emerged at two different times in which women's rights were growing significantly and in which women were in power. Their overwhelming presence reflects the empowerment that women seem to derive by interacting with him.

Grown women encountered Shakespeare in a more varied way than their young counterparts. In 1895, Kathleen Knox wrote to a young friend:

> The nineteenth century has given education, enlightenment, and freedom, the twentieth century will, it is to be hoped, temper these somewhat stormy elements into a serene and harmonious whole, but what is it all without what the sixteenth century has said first? If for no other reason, my dear Dorothy, than your own

> embellishment, study Shakespeare's women, and be assured that without the deep heart of Cordelia, the devotion of Imogen, the patience of Hermione, the generosity of Portia, the gentleness of Desdemona, the joyousness of Rosalind, and the grace of Perdita, all the enlightenment and freedom of the nineteenth century will but serve to make you a byword in your generation (Marshall 2-3).

Knox' letter suggests that the Victorian woman was not only interested in being educated in Shakespeare's work, but she specifically looked to Shakespeare's heroines for inspiration rather than regulation. While he was originally meant as a source of behavioral policing, he became an inspiration for behaving against society.

Shakespeare was in a unique position to interact with Victorian women, as Marshall writes,

> the playwright inhabits a space in Victorian women's culture which, as we will see in the body of this book, is characterized by a discursive, interrogative energy. Indeed, even when a woman takes on the mantle of the ideal figure that Knox and Ruskin extract from Shakespeare as Helen Faucit arguably does in her stage performances, and in her subsequent book on Shakespeare's heroines, the resulting figure is far from the simple icon that the commentators envisage. As far as Faucit is concerned, Shakespeare enables her to support a career, first as an actress and then as an author, which won for her a considerable measure of fame and financial reward, and a degree of influence which went far beyond Knox's and Ruskin's visions. (4)

Shakespeare's influence moved past the mere inspirational as Marshall explains. To add to Marshall's claim, the idea that Shakespeare supported female playwrights extends to the way in

which novelists were able to approach him. Either they were women writing about women, or they were forming the strong female character.

One particularly important work to consider in terms of both women's interpretation of and a girl's education is Mary Cowden Clarke's *The Girlhood of Shakespeare's Heroines*, which provided a background history for some of the most popular female characters. One critical reception of the piece published in 1851 wrote,

> To say that Shakespeare had no such view of the early life of his heroines is but superficial argument. He gives us the development of certain characters with a skill and potency never yet equaled, and we must be dull indeed, if we cannot understand and duly appreciate the devotion which, after the perusal of such a work, shall desire to trace out, with a friendly hand, the early life, the circumstances surrounding it, the educational training, and natural temperament of the individual which he has put forth in all this breadth and fullness of maturity. ("Review of Shakespeare's Heroines")

Furthermore, Clarke was a well-respected Shakespearean scholar, so while the work is fiction, its foundation is in his actual works. Ann Thompson and Sasha Roberts suggest in "Mary Cowden Clarke: Marriage, Gender and the Victorian Woman Critic of Shakespeare" that one problem with looking at the works of Mary Cowden Clarke and her husband Charles is that their work has primarily been considered in the domestic sphere rather than the literary one (171). The two argue that instead of her husband's influence making their criticism distinctly domestic, it shows how she had become the primary critic of works in which they were generally on equal footing. I would add that there is a clear connection to contemporary novelists as Clarke dedicates "Meg and Alice: The Merry Maids of Windsor" to Charles Dickens. The connection suggests Clarke

was an established member of the literary world and is a good test subject for the approach to Shakespeare at the time.

In Clarke's choice of heroines, there is an interesting balance between traditional well-behaved women, such as Olivia, and the more adventure savvy Viola. Both are from *Twelfth Night*, which suggests a need to balance the traditional with the more rebellious. In another instance, Rosalind and Celia paired in a single story, and the focus becomes their relationship as cousins. While their relationship is part of the original story of *As You Like It*, it can take center stage when the romance has been removed. Thus, Clarke wrote the stories to narrow the focus to the women, so their personal relationships could be scrutinized, creating a story that is in fact all about the women's characters.

As opposed to Viola and Olivia or Celia and Rosalind, the tragic heroines appear alone in Clarke's work. While their reincarnations are isolated partly because tragic heroines appear detached in their original tales, it does make the relationships of these girls more fabricated. Clarke also writes tales about these tragic heroines to make their demise understandable in the plays themselves. Ophelia does not seem as weak when Clarke gives her a fuller background. It is also significant that there are no appearances by "evil" characters. While Lady Macbeth has a story, the actual witches are not included. There is not a story dedicated to Hecate. While categorizing her as a "heroine" is debatable, it should be noted that actual evil could not be justified as evil actions could be justified in the case of Lady Macbeth. Involvement with Shakespeare in Clarke's tales still did not involve action, but Victorian novels did.

Novelists and Shakespeare

Rather than occurring on stage, it was through female novelists and male novelists with female characters that the Victorian Shakespeare adapted a distinctly feminist tone to rebel against social tradition. While there were attempts to suppress and regulate any sort of rebellious tendencies in young girls, adult women novelists embraced all aspects of Shakespeare, particularly through references to his comedic heroines. An initial look at the way in which female novelists utilized Shakespearean references suggests that the novelists were not particularly influenced by their censored girlhood exposure to Shakespeare. Marshall claims the "accounts of girl readers themselves witness the ways in which those readers subverted the punitive aspects of Victorian readings of Shakespeare's plays, choosing instead those heroines who might provide a better adventure, or, alternatively, attempting sympathetically to re-write the tragic heroines' stories" (42). I would argue that based on Marshall's analysis, while the stories they received were primarily devoid of adventure, girls actually sought out the more exciting heroines, as they did for the adult novelists.

References in the works of adult female novelists also reflect a partiality to certain types of Shakespearean women. In *Engaging with Shakespeare: Responses of George Eliot and Other Women Novelists*, Marianne Novy explains that Charlotte Brontë focuses on the renewal of the tragic hero through *Jane Eyre*'s Rochester (12). Indeed, his brooding is distinctly similar to Hamlet. The difference is that the novel is not a tragedy. As it ends with a marriage, it must in fact be a comedy. Novy points out that female novelists tend to quote the comedies instead of the tragedies (26-27). Among several examples, she links Anne in Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* to Viola in *Twelfth Night* (30). While Austen was not a Victorian, she served as a predecessor to the novelists of the late nineteenth century, so it is still relevant that she was making those

comedic connections. Novy also links *Jane Eyre* to *As You Like It* (23). It is interesting that Novy points to these two particular Shakespearean comedies as chosen by nineteenth century women, as both heroines also choose to pretend to be men as part of their rebellion. While actual cross-dressing was not common in the nineteenth century, their fashion was moving toward reflecting men's fashion, as they adopted statements such as the tie. More importantly, the choice to focus on women who were not hindered by gender hints at a push for a societal and behavioral change in women.

While the preference for comedies could be interpreted as a call back to the censoring of Shakespeare, the novelists make these choices with a much more deliberate purpose than the censorship of certain Shakespearean rebels. Censorship for young girls was meant to help them avoid dangerous notions and keep the "angels" pure while providing a cautionary tale. On the other hand, the choice of the female novelists to focus on the comedies allows for the rebellion of strong characters without dire consequences. Rather, the choice focuses on the strengths of Shakespeare's heroines and provides a rebellious model for the girls who were once exposed to him selectively as a model of "proper" female behavior were now seeing the way to rebel properly through his female characters.

George Eliot must be addressed when looking at novelists who utilized Shakespearean references, as she referenced him throughout her work and in her private correspondences. Eliot was once described 'the greatest woman that has lived on the earth—the female Shakespeare, so to speak' (Taylor 208). Taylor claims that Eliot had her doubts. In response to being asked to write a volume on Shakespeare in 1877 for a series of works on influential English male writers, Taylor writes, "She did not explain her refusal, but elsewhere she wrote that a woman needed 'as nice a power of distillation as the bee to suck nothing but honey from [Shakespeare's] pages'"

(208). Taylor explains that Eliot was referring to the obscenity in several of his works. Rather than being a criticism of Shakespeare as Taylor suggests, Eliot seems to be criticizing the time. The desire only to see the "good" Shakespeare may have been thrust upon young women, but Eliot, at least, did not have any sort of misunderstanding of his full contents.[1]

As well as the female novelists, male novelists utilized theatricality and Shakespeare to strengthen their female characters. For instance, it is commonly acknowledged that Charles Dickens drew from *Hamlet* while writing *Great Expectations.* The difference between the two works is that both writers deal with women of tragedy, but Dickens' Miss Havisham draws strength and control through her insanity. Ophelia was considered one of the more dangerous Shakespearean influences during the Victorian period, and she continues to be criticized for weakness in modern times. Dickens' depiction of a woman's insanity while clearly referencing *Hamlet* suggests that a woman gaining power through insanity could have occurred for Ophelia as well.

Another male author who should be considered is William Thackeray and his famous anti-heroine Becky Sharp in *Vanity Fair*. The work draws significantly upon metatheatricality. Furthermore, Thackeray makes several direct references to Shakespeare's works. For instance, he describes mothers by making a direct reference to *The Tempest.* He writes, "If you had told Sycorax that her son Caliban was as handsome as Apollo, she would have been please, witch as she was" (29-30). There are several theatrical references throughout the work as well, as the novel begins with a literal comparison to performance and theater in the prologue, as it is instead titled: "Before the Curtain" (5). The narrator then refers to himself as the "Manager of the

[1] Marshall goes on to argue that this shifted during the 1890s. This part of her argument is irrelevant for this paper, as I am dealing primarily with works published at least 20 years before this shift.

Performance" (6), enforcing the idea that the novel will be a performance as opposed to a silent text.

The novel's full title is *Vanity Fair: A Novel Without a Hero*. The title is likely because Becky is considered an anti-hero. It also harkens back to the idea that Shakespeare only created heroines, not heroes. In a way, it suggests that Thackeray will be focused on women, so there is not room for a male hero. Generally, Thackeray keeps women at the forefront of the action, as he immediately focuses on Miss Pinkerton's academy for young ladies, so it begins with a distinctly feminine tone (7). Additionally, Becky is the center of the novel. She is distinctly unlikable, as Thackeray first introduces her:

> Miss Rebecca was not, then, in the least kind or placable. All the world used her ill, said this young misanthropist, and we may be pretty certain that persons whom all the world treats ill deserve entirely the treatment they get. The world is a looking-glass, and gives back to every man the reflection of his own face. Frown at it, and it will in turn look sourly upon you; laugh at it and with it, and it is a jolly, kind companion; and so let all young persons take their choice. This is certain, that if the world neglected Miss Sharp, she never was known to have done a good action in behalf of anybody; nor can it be expected that twenty-four young ladies should all be as amiable as the heroine of this work, Miss Sedley (whom we have selected for the very reason that she was the best-natured of all; otherwise what on earth was to have prevented us from putting up Miss Swartz, or Miss Crump, or Miss Hopkins, as heroine in her place?)—it could not be expected that every one should be of the humble and gentle temper of Miss Amelia Sedley; should take every opportunity to vanquish Rebecca's hardheartedness and ill-

> humour; and, by a thousand kind words and offices, overcome, for once at least, her hostility to her kind. (16-17)

While Thackeray compares Becky to Amelia, finding Becky wanting, he does not focus on Amelia, because she follows the model of a good English woman. Rather, he emphasizes Becky, who is much more interesting. She is rebellious, but she does manage to accomplish her goals throughout the novel. Becky is also a return to the actress, as she acts and manipulates her way to success. Hudston points out that it is fitting, for instance, that Becky triumphs in a game of charades (26). She is the victor of her play because she is the best actress. Theatricality and Shakespeare have contributed into creating the rebellious heroine who is not punished for her actions.

Becky is an ideal example of the way in which Thackeray, and other novelists, challenged the Victorian view of Shakespearean heroines as the ideal feminine behavior. As an anti-heroine, Becky is ruthless and sharp-witted. She is manipulative and successful in most of her cons. In *Empty Houses,* David Kurnick similarly assesses Becky as a symbol of the new social order. He writes, "Becky's exile to the outskirts of polite society indicates less the fallen woman's inevitable slide to the gutter than a shifting social landscape in which the transformative energies of the fair are being consigned to the symbolic margins" (52). While Kurnick explains society's change in passing, I would argue that the shifting landscape is the key to understanding the proto-feminist view Thackeray has created in his novel by allowing the shrew to continue at the end of the play, as Becky is similar to, yet more complex than, Katherine from *The Taming of the Shrew*. The relationship becomes clear in the very beginning of the novel, when she is compared to her friend, Amelia, a counterpart of Bianca. While Amelia is sweet and gentle, Becky is manipulative and harsh. Unlike Katherine, Becky willingly displays

a sweet façade most of the time. She reveals her true nature only in semi-private moments, such as when she throws her dictionary from the carriage as she leaves school. The moment is particularly similar to Katherine, as it is a moment of physical display. Likewise, Katherine first enters the stage chasing and scaring Bianca.

In comparing the two female characters, they take extremely different routes at the end of their stories. Katherine is famous for being "tamed." Her final monologue is an explanation of her new attitude and encouraging the women around her to be likewise submissive and obedient. She says,

> Thy husband is thy lord, thy life, thy keeper,
> Thy head, thy sovereign, one that cares for thee,
> And for thy maintenance commits his body
> To painful labour both by sea and land,
> To watch the night in storms, the day in cold,
> Whilst thou liest warm at home, secure and safe,
> And craves no other tribute at thy hands
> But love, fair looks, and true obedience,
> Too little payment for so great a debt. (V.2.150-158)

Although Katherine's sincerity in the final scene is often called into question, if she is taken literally, her speech perfectly parallels the Victorian idea of the angel in the home. The Victorians could therefore have read Katherine as the epitome of a converted rebellious woman.

On the other hand, Becky makes a similar speech to Amelia about the role of men as protectors toward the end of the novel. She says, "You must go away from here and from the impertinences of these men. I won't have you harassed by them; and they will insult you if you

stay. I tell you they are rascals; men fit to send to the hulks…Jos can't protect you, he is too fat and weak, and wants a protector himself" (680). Becky specifically speaks against Jos, whom she later marries. Rather than seeing her future husband as a protector, she sees him as someone who needs protection. Becky goes on to say, "You are no more fit to live in the world than a baby in arms. You must marry, or you and your precious boy will go to ruin. You must have a husband, you fool" (680). Becky reiterates Katherine's idea of the husband as the protector; however, the view only applies to Amelia. She has described Amelia as a "baby" and as a "fool." Amelia is unfit to live without a protector, but Becky neither applies the same logic to herself, nor does she see any of her husbands in the light of a protector. Thackeray has rewritten Katherine, so she is unambiguously untamed. Instead of looking to her husband for protection, Becky moves from husband to husband, caring for herself. The example that should have modeled Victorian behavior then is transformed into an example of female independence.

Conclusion

Throughout the Victorian period, women were exposed to Shakespeare in a variety of ways. In modernizing his work for women, the Victorians created Shakespearean heroines that were often cut and distilled to emphasize their virtues. However, several novelists began to reference his work with a proto-feminist tone. As well as pointing to the novelists' agenda, their recreation of his heroines suggests that they saw him as a source of female empowerment. Although Victorian society worked to repress his more empowered women, novelists brought him to the forefront, updating his feminist tone while remaining true to the original character. I further discuss specific examples of the novelists' proto-feminist tone in the next chapter.

Chapter 2

Of Governesses and Gypsies

Negotiating Gender and the Gaze

Among those adapting Shakespeare were the three Brontë sisters and Charles Dickens. In *Shakespeare and the Victorians,* Adrian Poole explains that Charlotte Brontë's "earliest prose, in the 1830s, had been suffused with Shakespearean quotations, almost as many as the Biblical; particularly favoured plays were *Othello, Macbeth and A Midsummer Night's dream"* (102). Additionally, it is well-established among critics that Charles Dickens often took from Shakespeare, specifically in *Great Expectations,* which is often viewed as a retelling of *Hamlet.* One difference in Victorian retellings of these stage productions is the direction and shifting of the gaze away from the female character, which, like the theater, includes the gaze of both audience members and other characters. Both male and female authors gave the adapted heroine more agency. In doing so, they corrected the tragic heroine while further strengthening the comedic heroine, yet they employed both types of heroines to create a clear model of the rising feminism. In this chapter, I argue that adaptation falls into three gender roles. The first is a revisiting of Shakespeare's tragic heroines. The second is the mingling of his tragic heroines with his comedic ones. The third is the reversal of gender roles entirely, so the woman gains power. The role reversal can be explained through the traditional gaze, which is reversed through characters cross-dressing, both literally and through playing non-traditional roles. These means of altering the gaze all contribute to a proto-feminist adaptation of the Victorian Shakespeare. The authors I discuss who altered Shakespearean heroines with a proto-feminist tone are Charlotte and Emily Brontë and Charles Dickens.

Tragic Heroines

In rewriting the tragic heroines, novelists gave the characters more agency. For example, while the Brontës seemed to latch onto the comedic final ending involving a marriage, the tragic heroines and heroes do still appear in their work, specifically in *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights.* Adrian Poole compares Bertha to Lady Macbeth. Particularly, he looks at the scene in which Bertha slips into Jane's room in the night. Poole explains that there is nothing playful about Bertha's embodiment of Lady Macbeth, but she serves as a warning (103). To build on Poole's comparison between the two characters, I would argue that other characters from *Macbeth* make an appearance. For instance, to begin with Poole's initial connection, she connects the sleepwalking scene in *Macbeth* and Bertha's invasion in *Jane Eyre*. The Gentlewoman in *Macbeth* says that Lady Macbeth insists on keeping a light by her at all times in the night (5.1), and Jane is similarly woken up by Bertha carrying a candle (*Jane Eyre* 241-242). However, I would argue that Bertha has become a perversion of Lady Macbeth, and she is more extreme. While Lady Macbeth sends Macbeth to commit the murders and carries a candle, Bertha herself attempts to kill Rochester in his bed with fire. In addition, while Lady Macbeth leads to Macbeth's downfall and eventual death, Bertha nearly kills Rochester, and she destroys his sight. Finally, Lady Macbeth's "unsex me" (1.5.31) speech returns through Bertha, who seems to be the answer to Lady Macbeth's prayer, as she is described as a vampyre but not as a woman. In fact, she fails in traditional feminine roles, as her marriage ends in shambles. Bertha still has a more immediate effect on the destruction than Lady Macbeth, whose control in the play is debated by scholars.

One of the most important changes Brontë makes to the character of Lady Macbeth is the depiction of blood. Perhaps the most famous monologue by Lady Macbeth is when she sleepwalks and says,

> Out, damned spot! out, I say!—One; two: why,
> then 'tis time to do't: --Hell is murky!—Fie, my
> lord, fie! a soldier, and afeard? What need we
> fear who knows it, when none can call our power
> to account?—Yet who would have thought the old
> man to have had so much blood in him? (*Macbeth* 5.1.35-40)

In the play, Lady Macbeth is not the cause of blood, but she does become covered in the blood of Duncan. Bertha is similarly covered in blood when she attacks Mr. Mason. Mason tells Rochester, "She sucked the blood: she said she'd drain my heart" (*Jane Eyre* 181). Rochester responds, "Come, be silent, Richard, and never mind her gibberish: don't repeat it" (181). While Lady Macbeth reveals her own guilt through the speech, Bertha does not speak, but she is caught in the act. Lady Macbeth may have ambitions that lead to her association with violence and blood, but Bertha instead is more terrifying in her lack of a clear motivation for her actions. Finally, while Lady Macbeth went insane due to her involvement with violence, Bertha is still violent in her state of insanity. Rather than merely killing herself, Bertha tries to bring the entire house with her. Lady Macbeth helped Macbeth destroy himself, but, Bertha is the direct cause of destruction.

Bertha does indeed encompass the character of Lady Macbeth, but her role alone does not cast Rochester as a manifestation of Macbeth. In *Engaging with Shakespeare: Responses of George Eliot and Other Women Novelists*, Marianne Novy compares Rochester to several tragic

heroes and suggests that he is in fact a renewal of the figure (23). I would argue that a connection to Macbeth in particular is important to consider, as both men cause their own downfalls through their own personal mistakes. Rochester tells Jane, "Mind, I don't say a *crime*; I am not speaking of shedding of blood or any other guilty act, which might make the perpetrator amenable to the law: my word is *error*" (*Jane Eyre* 186). Indeed, just as Macbeth is driven by Lady Macbeth and the witches, Rochester's father convinces him that the marriage to Bertha, which eventually destroys his home, will be for his own benefit. Both may have been encouraged by outside forces, but it is ultimately both men's decisions that bring about Macbeth's death and Rochester's economic fall. Rochester still chose to marry Bertha, and she leads to the destruction of his house. However, the parallels between Rochester and Macbeth is not as noteworthy as Bertha and Lady Macbeth. In fact, it seems fitting that as Lady Macbeth, Bertha does not need a male counterpart because she encompasses both the decision-making aspect of Lady Macbeth and ability to commit the crime as Macbeth. In the play, she is the doer of the action and must coax Macbeth into ambition. In reimagining the play, one of the great tragic heroines is able to stand on her own in the end of the Victorian novels. While she still meets a tragic end, she does so independently.

Rather than Rochester fitting into the mold of Macbeth, Poole suggests that he may in fact be an incarnation of Hamlet. Indeed, *Hamlet* was one of the most popular plays in the Victorian era (John 46). Poole writes,

> Rochester returns to it when he seeks to reassure the anxious Jane that she may marry him without causing pain to anyone else. He is lying. 'That you may, my good little girl: there is not another being in the world has the same pure love for me as yourself—for I lay that pleasant unction to my soul, Jane, a belief in your

> affection' (ch. 24). This is an ominous misquotation, a travesty of Hamlet's good counsel to his mother not to lay 'that *flattering* unction to your soul' (3.4.147). A line or so later Hamlet is speaking of ulcerous places of rank corruption and unseen infection—figures for the violent and diseased passions which Rochester is trying to ignore. (105)

I agree that Rochester seems to fit the brooding Hamlet better than Macbeth. Specifically, he mimics Hamlet's madness against Ophelia. In the "Get thee to a nunnery" speech, Hamlet says, "I am very proud, revenge-/ful, ambitious, with more offences at my/ beck than I have thoughts to put them in,/ imagination to give them shape, or time to act them in" (3.1.125-128). Similarly, Jane says, "Yet I had not forgotten his faults; indeed, I could not, for he brought them frequently before me. He was proud, sardonic, harsh to inferiority of every description: in my secret soul I knew that his great kindness to me was balanced by unjust severity to many others" (125). Both men share a certain amount of madness in temper and similar faults. Additionally, Hamlet seems to be pretending to be mad, but he may in fact also be insane, as suggested by him seeing his father's ghost. Likewise, Rochester reaches a point of insanity after Jane leaves him. Rochester as an incarnation of Hamlet suggests a strong affiliation with tragedy generally in the novel.

If Rochester is indeed Hamlet reborn, as the love interest, Jane would become the modern Ophelia. Indeed, there are several similarities. The most notable is the scene in which she sleeps outside after being separated from Rochester, which seems to be a direct revision of Ophelia's death, as the Queen describes it:

> There is a willow grows aslant a brook,
>
> That shows his hoar leaves in the glassy stream;

There with fantastic garlands did she come
Of crow-flowers, nettles, daisies, and long purples
That liberal shepherds give a grosser name,
But our cold maids do dead men's fingers call them:
There, on the pendent boughs her coronet weeds
Clambering to hang, an envious sliver broke;
When down her weedy trophies and herself
Fell in the weeping brook. Her clothes spread wide;
And, mermaid-like, awhile they bore her up:
Which time she chanted snatches of old tunes;
As one incapable of her own distress,
Or like a creature native and indued
Unto that element: but long it could not be
Till that her garments, heavy with their drink,
Pull'd the poor wretch from her melodious lay
To muddy death. (5.7.162-181)

Due to this speech, Ophelia is often shown lying face up in the water, as she will be pictured in the famous Ophelia painting by John Everett Millais, painted four years after the publication of *Jane Eyre* (See Appendix, Figure 1). Like Ophelia's death scene, Jane describes sleeping in the heath after she has run from Rochester. She says, "I looked at the sky; it was pure: a kindly star twinkled just above the chasm ridge. The dew fell, but with propitious softness; no breeze whispered" (276). It is important to note that in lying and facing the sky, she is mimicking Ophelia's pose in death. Furthermore, water covers her, but in a less-dramatic way than the

drowning Ophelia. Jane continues, "Nature seemed to me benign and good; I thought she loved me, outcast as I was; and I, who from man could anticipate only mistrust, rejection, insult, clung to her with filial fondness. To-night, at least, I would be her guest, as I was her child: my mother would lodge me without money and without price" (276). Similarly, Ophelia surrounds herself with flowers and nature in her final moments before she dies. They are both lying in the same position and surrounded by nature, separated from their respective versions of Hamlet.

With the many parallels between Jane and Ophelia, it was a distinct choice on Brontë's part to make Jane an incarnation of "not Ophelia." Jane clearly veers away from Ophelia, if only by eventually leaving the heath. She says, "But next day, Want came to me pale and bare. Long after the little birds had left their nests; long after bees had come in the sweet prime of day to gather the heath honey before the dew was dried—when the long morning shadows were curtailed, and the sun filled earth and sky—I got up, and I looked round me" (277). Although she stays in the position for a long time, Jane still chooses to get up and continue living. Brontë's choice suggests she is correcting a "mistake" in the original work.

The question that remains then is why Jane does not become Ophelia, when it would be so easy for her to do so. In some readings of *Hamlet,* it is believed that Ophelia has actually consummated her relationship with Hamlet. When he delivers his "Get thee to a nunnery" (*Hamlet* 3.1.121-130) speech, it is possible that he is telling Ophelia to go because she is pregnant, as he says,

> Get thee to a nunnery: why wouldst thou be a
> breeder of sinners? I am myself indifferent honest;
> but yet I could accuse me of such things that it
> were better my mother had not borne me… (3.1.121-124)

The clear references to birth juxtaposed with those to a nunnery make Ophelia's pregnancy a distinct possibility. With this reading, Ophelia has committed a sin, and her death may be a punishment. Ophelia is sullied, unlike the pure Jane, who chooses morals over happiness by not becoming Rochester's mistress. The debate then becomes whether Brontë is espousing feminine purity or condemning it. Instead of either of these possibilities, she seems to be invoking an empowerment that goes beyond mere virginity. Instead, Jane veers away from Ophelia by making choices in her life, so she does not come to a horrific end, although she is on the edge of a tragic end for the entire novel. For instance, Poole describes Bertha as a "living ghost: 'do not forget' that the story that begins in romantic courtship can end like *this*" (103). Bertha is a reminder of both a tragic heroine and what Jane may become. Even though it could easily have been a tragedy, *Jane Eyre* has a comedic ending. Poole explains, "Discipline, passion and punishment are closely intertwined in the study of courtship and marriage that owes the most explicit debt to Shakespeare in Brontë's work" (105). I would argue that just as Shakespeare's comedies are tragedies that end in marriage instead of death, a marriage takes place after the death of Lady Macbeth to ensure a fairytale ending. The comedic end only occurs because Jane chooses to be "not Ophelia." In correcting the tragic heroine, Brontë has given her more agency.

The Victimizing Gaze

Along with specific character parallels, the world of Shakespeare's theater is revisited in the victimizing gaze upon women. The gaze did not occur with female actors, as there were no female actors, in Shakespearean theater. Rather, his female characters became subject to the gaze of the male characters. In her essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," Laura Mulvey employs Freud's theories to describe scopophilia and phallocentricism in the Alfred Hitchcock

films "Rear Window" and "Vertigo." She discusses the idea that both the male audience members and the male characters in the films derive sexual pleasure from watching the female characters. Most importantly, the men derive more pleasure from the image of the woman than from the woman herself. Mulvey says that in film, the woman is the "bearer of meaning, not maker of meaning" (7). The same occurs in several of Shakespeare's plays. For instance, in *A Winter's Tale,* Hermione is onstage for the final act as a statue. Her husband observes the statue, saying,

> "Her natural posture!
> Chide me, dear stone, that I may say indeed
> Thou art Hermione; or rather, thou art she
> In thy not chiding, for she was as tender
> As infancy and grace. But yet, Paulina,
> Hermione was not so much wrinkled, nothing
> So aged as this seems" (5.3.27-33).

Instead of being a character to participate in the action of the play at the end, she is there as an object for her husband to observe. Even when she reanimates so the play may have a happy ending, she is not the doer of the action, but rather she is the object of the action.

A similar incident to that in *The Winter's Tale* occurs in *Hamlet*, as Ophelia is the one who is looked upon.[2] When she kills herself, the scene does not occur on stage, but rather, the actors describe it to one another (5.7). Furthermore, when Hamlet delivers his "To be or not to be" speech (3.1.57-92), Ophelia is on stage, so it is as though he is speaking to her. While the position gives Ophelia a bit of a spotlight, she becomes more the object of the gaze, making her

[2] The balcony scene in *Romeo and Juliet* is similar in that it primarily involves Romeo staring at Juliet while she remains unaware.

role even more passive. Finally, when Laertes mourns Ophelia, she becomes merely a prop as he jumps into her grave. Instead of creating the scene of mourning, she is a symbol of it. Almost the same scene occurs in *Wuthering Heights.* Heathcliff tells Nelly,

> I'll tell you what I did yesterday! I got the sexton, who was digging Linton's grave, to remove the earth off her coffin lid, and I opened it. I thought, once, I would have stayed there: when I saw her face again—it is hers yet!—he had hard work to stir me; but he said it would change if the air blew on it, and so I struck one side of the coffin loose, and covered it up: not Linton's side, damn him! I wish he'd been soldered in lead. And I bribed the sexton to pull it away when I'm laid there, and slide mine out too; I'll have it made so: and then by the time Linton gets to us he'll not know which is which! (209)

The distinct difference is that Brontë's scene occurs twice removed from the audience, as Heathcliff is telling the story to Nelly, who is telling the story to Lockwood, who is telling the story to the reader. Nelly is the object in the scene, but she is not subjected to any actual gaze, other than Heathcliff's. Women become the object of the gaze in both Shakespearean comedies and tragedies, but as some of the Victorian novelists revise his work, women become less of a prop and more of a character, which gives them more agency than they had in the original work. When the novelists chose to adapt the gaze with the transformation of character, they also redirected the overpowering male gaze.

One way in which the gaze continues to operate in a victimizing manner is in *Jane Eyre* is the gaze on the female child. There is an obsession with Jane's appearance as a child, and she and her Lowood companions are forced to stay humble and plain looking. When Mr.

Brocklehurst rules that the girls must cut their hair, he first makes them turn so he can look thoroughly at their hair. He says,

> I have a Master to serve whose kingdom is not of this world: my mission is to mortify in these girls the lusts of the flesh; to teach them to clothe themselves with shame-facedness and sobriety, not with braided hair and costly apparel; and each of the young persons before us has a string of hair twisted in plaits which vanity itself might have woven; (54)

The girls are made an object of visible scrutiny based solely upon their appearances, which also determines their worth. Unlike the Lowood girls, Adele is featured as a tiny performer throughout the novel. When Jane first meets her, the child sings a song from an opera, which seems to be strangely chosen in terms of subject matter for a child. However, Jane observes, "I suppose the point of the exhibition lay in hearing the notes of love and jealousy warbled with the lisp of childhood; and in very bad taste that point was: at least I thought so" (87). Jane notes that the child is being made to become an object of performance before an appropriate age. In the process, the gaze upon the girl turns her into a woman in the same way that the gaze upon the boy actor turned him into the adult woman. The difference that occurs in *Jane Eyre* is that Jane critiques and identifies the gaze as victimizing. At times, Rochester does not even have the patience to listen to Adele. He tells Mrs. Fairfax, "Good evening, madam; I sent to you for a charitable purpose. I have forbidden Adèle to talk to me about her presents, and she is bursting with repletion: have the goodness to serve her as auditress and interlocutrice; it will be one of the most benevolent acts you ever performed" (111). She can be gazed upon, but Rochester does not actually want to listen to the child. The gaze is employed in order to control all children.

The gaze upon the child was incorporated by Charles Dickens, as well. Most accept that Dickens based *Great Expectations* on *Hamlet* (John 46). Juliet John explains in "Dickens and Hamlet" that Dickens' fascination with the play was more about anxieties that the valorization of Hamlet promoted "a model of intellectual and aristocratic disengagement from the public sphere unhelpful in an age of burgeoning democracy and mass culture" (46). He was not necessarily espousing the virtues of the play, but rather, in a way, he was condemning the play. If Pip is Hamlet, Estella, his love interest, is Ophelia. Based upon John's idea, Dickens is also condemning the original casting of Ophelia, instead making her both beautiful and complex. I would argue her beauty is the most important characteristic to consider. Pip continuously stares at Estella, yet when he begs Miss Havisham to allow him to go home, he says, "I am not sure that I shouldn't like to see her again, but I should like to go home now" (63). Although he is miserable and dislikes Estella, he admits that he would still like to look at her, as she is "very pretty" (63). While the gaze could be attributed to the male author writing about the young woman, it does not hold as he would likewise be looking at Pip. Instead, the important gaze in the scene is that of Miss Havisham, who has successfully adopted the role as the gazer. There is a brief reversal of gender roles in the novel, as Miss Havisham enjoys watching the children play. She says, "I sometimes have sick fancies,…and I have a sick fancy that I want to see some play. There, there!...play, play, play!" (61). Pip and Estella are an amusement that she can watch. While it is a woman watching a boy, the power dynamic between the rich and poor allows the occurrence. However, as Pip has not gone through puberty, he is still in the age range that he is not very different from girls his age, and she stops having him over to the house once he is old enough to be Joe's apprentice. In addition, Estella is still a distinct part of the scene. In essence, the same gaze given to Shakespearean heroines is permissible with female Victorian children.

While the gaze on children appears to be employed in the same manner as in Shakespeare with the women, it is different because it is children. The focus of the gaze is unquestionably patronizing upon the child, so the fact that it is no longer on the woman emphasizes the female refusal to be subjugated. The Victorians are pointing to the gaze and showing that it is a sign of inequality.

While the girl child accepts the gaze, the grown women that are the object of the gaze tend to revolt against it, which did not occur in the plays by which they were inspired. The revolt against the gaze by the characters proves that the novelists were reacting against an inequality and trying to correct it. For instance, Miss Havisham exacts her revenge upon all men through the gazes cast upon the beautiful Estella, shifting the original purpose of the gaze and using it to her advantage. Similarly, in *Jane Eyre,* Jane is initially treated as the object of the gaze by Rochester. Once they are engaged, Rochester attempts to dress her in expensive, beautiful clothing, changing her image from that of the modest governess. She eventually refuses to be the object, and in contemplating her uncle's offer to adopt her and make her his heir, Jane thinks, "It would, indeed, be a relief…if I had ever so small an independency; I never can bear being dressed like a doll by Mr. Rochester, or sitting like a second Danae with the golden shower falling daily round me" (229). Through her refusal, Jane moves away from the object of the gaze into a being with her own will and power. It is particularly important that she refers to herself as being treated as a doll. A doll is for play, and it does not have a will of its own. It is expected to look pretty, but it is not helpful outside of play. In refusing to be an object, Jane is shrugging off the gaze of Mr. Rochester. She takes her refusal further by becoming the giver of the gaze. In another scene between Rochester and Jane, he says, "Tell me now, fairy as you are—can't you give me a charm, or a philter, or something of that sort, to make me a handsome man?" (209).

Jane responds, "'It would be past the power of magic, sir;'" and, in thought, I added, "'A loving eye is all the charm needed: to such you are handsome enough; or rather your sternness has a power beyond beauty'" (209). In her speech, Jane has turned the gaze back upon Rochester, so he is the object instead of herself.

In returning to the comparison between Jane and Ophelia, the gaze upon Ophelia versus Jane is particularly important, especially in considering difference in the audience's focus between the two characters. Ophelia's death occurs offstage, and it is merely described by the characters on stage. She only returns in death when it is time to bury her. However, Jane's similar scene in the heath is at the forefront of the action and the focus of the novel at that point. She is the protagonist, and all other characters have ceased to appear. Even though Rochester's voice manifests on the wind, it is debatable whether or not Jane is in fact hearing his voice or imagining it. Adult Victorian women are able to escape the gaze or reverse it, which suggests yet another moment in which the heroines have been adapted but given more agency. In order to have a comedic, happy ending, Jane had to return to Rochester on her own terms. Similarly, in order for Jane as Ophelia to have a happy ending, she must refuse the gaze and bring herself into the spotlight on her own terms. In altering the gaze, Brontë has rewritten the tragic heroine's end.

Comedic Heroines

While the gaze must disappear for the heroines of tragedies when writers such as Brontë were transforming them, the employment of the comedic heroines results in a strengthening of the heroine because of the gaze. Many of Shakespeare's tragic heroines are considered the weaker of the female characters, but Victorians adapted them for their own purpose. In "Toward a Feminist Renaissance," Natalie Strong and Carolyn Swift write, "In Shakespeare, we find a

startling depiction of our victimization, which may become the first step to empowering ourselves in this world" (224). While the Brontës acknowledge the full victimization of women in their novels, they also move toward feminine independence by presenting the heroines who also find their own way. In *Engaging with Shakespeare: Responses of George Eliot and Other Women Novelists,* Marianne Novy points out that women in particular tend to quote the comedies (26-27). Additionally, they brought in the comedic heroines as further embodiments of power. In her Introduction to *Women's Re-Visions of Shakespeare,* Novy writes,

> For centuries women have been reading Shakespeare with a point of view related to their social position as women and thereby offering a critical direction new in their own time and culture. In letters, prefaces, and essays, poems, novels, and plays from the seventeenth century on and in journals, classrooms, and discussion groups, women have contributed to constructing a cultural image of Shakespeare they could find congenial, and have re-constructed previous images by analyzing and rewriting the gender relations in his plays" (1).

The same was true of Victorian women. When they could, they liked to leave Shakespeare as he was, but when his work was incongruous with their modern ideas of gender, they corrected him. Specifically, they corrected him in the manifestations comedic heroines. Mary Lamb, along with her brother Charles, wrote *Tales from Shakespeare: Designed for the use of Young Persons,* in 1807. Poole explains that Mary's writing should be read while keeping in mind the constraints that she was under both as a female writer and writer of heroines. Poole adds, "She begins, albeit gingerly, the process of sympathetic identification with the beleaguered and resourceful heroines of the plays, especially the comedies, on the strength of which her successors will more boldly elaborate" (90). Poole's argument supports the idea that Victorian female writers could

retain the elements in Shakespeare that they saw as his more feminist moments, rather than changing him entirely. I would also argue that the same idea could apply to male writers who were creating proto-feminist works.

Overall, the Victorian Shakespeare became a source of feminist ideals. In *Shakespeare and the Victorian Woman,* Gail Marshall explains,

> ...the playwright inhabits a space in Victorian women's culture which, as we will see in the body of this book, is characterized by a discursive, interrogative energy. Indeed, even when a woman takes on the mantle of the ideal figure that Knox and Ruskin extract from Shakespeare as Helen Faucit arguably does in her stage performances, and in her subsequent book on Shakespeare's heroines, the resulting figure is far from the simple icon that the commentators envisage. As far as Faucit is concerned, Shakespeare enables her to support a career, first as an actress and then as an author, which won for her a considerable measure of fame and financial reward, and a degree of influence which went far beyond Knox's and Ruskin's visions. (4)

Marshall also points out that the draw to Shakespeare occurred simultaneously with the increase in women's education. He was a symbol of knowledge and independence. As previously established, Jane has close ties to Ophelia, yet she does not adequately serve as a reincarnation of the woman. Rather, she is closer to Rosalind, from Shakespeare's *As You Like It.* Poole writes, "One good reason for liking and admiring and even wanting to *be* Rosalind is that whatever else she is, she is triumphantly not Ophelia" (94). Is Jane simply Rosalind because she is not Ophelia? After all, common opinion is that readers like Jane. However, their parallels run significantly deeper than this one difference. While Novy suggested that Rosamond is a

reincarnation of Rosalind (42) due to the similarity of the names, the analysis does not seem like an adequate way in which to consider the implications of the reemergence one of Shakespeare's most beloved female characters. As Rosamond merely appears as St. John's love interest, she becomes the object of the gaze that she decidedly shrugs off in the original work. In the play, Rosalind begins as the object of Orlando's "love-at-first-sight." However, she rids herself of her original role when she runs into the woods as Ganymede. Instead, she chooses a relationship based entirely on not seeing reality. Similarly, Jane chooses to escape into the wilderness in favor of a deeper relationship. While Rosalind's primary goal was to escape her uncle, the results are still the same. In addition, it is while Rosalind is in disguise that she can truly express herself and live without consequences. Jane has the same experience in running to nature and eventually living with her cousins.

The result is that Brontë was not merely rewriting *Hamlet*. Rather, she was correcting it by replacing Ophelia with Rosalind. The strength of the characters chosen from the comedies is significant in comparison to those of the tragedies. Jane's ending then can become a happy ending, as there is a marriage in spite of Hamlet and in spite of Lady Macbeth. When Jane and Rochester reunite at the end of the novel, she says, "No, sir; I am an independent woman now" (370), which proves that the roles of power have reversed, so they can now be happy. Similarly, once Rosalind and Orlando can meet on equal terms of power in the forest, by shrugging off her gender and his poverty, they can conclude with a happy ending.

Another method specifically for female writers was in developing his minor characters and furthering their stories. In discussing Mary Cowden Clarke's *The Girlhood of Shakespeare's Heroines,* Poole argues that the women lent themselves to Clarke's type of Victorian fan fiction because their roles are typically less-fully developed than those of the male characters. Poole

writes, "But in every case they remain at least partly dependent on their men. Wealthy, beautiful and independent, Portia is particularly important for the later Victorians as at once the most desirable role model and prize. And it is the problem of dependence, independence and interdependence that intrigued the Victorians, as it affected women both on the page and off it" (94). In addition, they seemed to have moved much more toward independence as they rewrote Shakespeare. In adding to the story of the women, the stories filled a blank left by Shakespeare.

The Gaze Redirected

In clinging to the clear gender roles introduced by Shakespeare, the Victorians were seeking to negotiate their own changing times. However, the natural problem that arose was that Shakespeare had not actually made the gender boundaries as clear as the Victorians sought to make them. They had difficulty adapting the gender roles of Shakespeare in two ways. The first method they tried was through the literal acting of men in women's roles. The second was the gender bending within the plays themselves. The Victorians corrected these imbalances primarily by creating masculinized women that were closer to the modernized women that intrigue feminist theorists. Drawing on Shakespeare's heroines, the Victorians created a modernized definition of gender, which was moving toward the era of the suffragettes. In addition, they reversed the cross-dressing scenes so that men instead became women. Finally, the heroines of Victorian novels take on the persona of the more independent, and incidentally cross-dressing, Shakespearean heroines. By changing traditional gender roles, the characters cause the gaze to constantly change directions, so it equalizes instead of separates the two genders.

Shakespeare was fascinating to the Victorians in part because he was capable of creating realistic characters of the opposite gender. Gary Taylor points out in *Reinventing Shakespeare* that the Victorians were fascinated with reinventing his literary career (171). Novy writes, "A closely related reason why women might identify with Shakespeare is the biographical base of Shakespeare's metamorphic power—his career as an actor, unparalleled among the more stereotypically masculine writers with whom he might be contrasted" (*Introduction: Women's Re-Visions of Shakespeare* 5). Novy goes on to say that the language employed to describe his transformations echo the language of actors from the seventeenth century forward (5). She writes,

> In *The Madwoman in the Attic,* Gilbert and Gubar give much evidence that Western culture has often seen literary authority as masculine. Nevertheless, this collection shows that one survival strategy for many women writers may have been to construct and image of one male author whose metaphorical gender, at least, was somehow not only masculine. This version of Shakespeare could be a model with whom they could feel some affinity—one great counter-example to the image of the writer as stereotypically male. They did not need to define their creativity exclusively as rebellion, in the agonistic model of literary influence Gilbert and Gubar borrow from Harold Bloom; in relation to Shakespeare, they could also see creativity as appropriation. (5)

While there was also an image of the actor as being deceitful, the connection to Shakespeare the actor still existed because the casting of boy actors suggested that the sexes were not actually different (6). Because Shakespeare was able to connect easily with women, they brought him into their stories. I would add to Novy's argument that the reallocation of Shakespeare then

provided a more nuanced definition of gender generally. In the theatrical world, gender was transitive and temporary, as actors could play women and actresses could play men. Likewise, gender could be undefined in Victorian novels.

While women appeared on the stage in the Victorian era, they were aware in the nineteenth century that young boys played the original Shakespearean characters.[3] In "Acting Naturally: Brontë, Lewes, and the Problem of Gender Performance," Lynn Voskuil argues that the idea of natural acting was the prominent feature that Victorians looked for in performances. Building upon Voskuil's theory suggests that when Rochester dresses as a gypsy woman, he is in fact embodying his natural identity. She adds to the argument by explaining that theater accommodated a certain definition of gender, which she supports by quoting Charlotte Brontë, who wrote, '"Thackeray's lectures and Rachel's acting,' she wrote to Elizabeth Gaskell, 'are the two things in this great Babylon which have stirred and interested me most-simply because in them I found most of what was genuine whether for good or evil. . . .'" (409). Voskuil also explains that Victorian audiences often preferred performances that lacked stage effects that might distract from an otherwise truthful telling of life (410). Voskuil's analysis also suggests a yearning for the simpler staging of a traditional sixteenth-century performance.

In looking for acting that rang true, the Victorians were looking for the truth within the performance. While George Henry Lewes saw natural acting as refocusing the audience on the natural and true world, Brontë saw it as refocusing the performance on the subject itself (Voskuil 411). Acting created and reflected femininity through female performers in a way that revealed truth as opposed to the construction of a false femininity in Shakespearean boy actors. In discussing gender, Voskuil writes, "…many Victorians believed in a theatricality that sometimes

[3] *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* takes place around 1840, according to Mark Twain in his introduction. In the novel, the characters acknowledge that Shakespearean female characters were played by young boys, and it is the reason Huck portrays Juliet.

revealed and sometimes obscured a timeless, innate self; in this view, an authentic core identity is separated from an external, performing, artificial self" (410). Based upon Voskuil's analysis of natural acting, I would argue that had the Victorians watched male actors on the stage performing as women, they would have looked for the truth in their disguise. As such, the original Rosalind, who was a male actor playing a woman dressed as a man, was revealing the true masculinity of the actor by dressing as a man once again.

Cross-dressing within the novels likewise would have revealed a certain truth about the characters. In particular, Rochester cross-dresses as an elderly gypsy woman. As the gypsy, he says,

> You are cold, because you are alone: no contact strikes the fire from you that is in you. You are sick: because the best of feelings, the highest and the sweetest given to man, keeps far away from you. You are silly, because suffer as you may, you will not beckon it to approach; nor will you stir one step to meet it where it waits you. (168)

Like Rosalind and Orlando, Rochester has a freedom to speak to Jane when they are of the same gender. He even goes so far as to ask specifically if she loves any of the men. Rochester's familiarity with Jane is extremely similar to Ganymede and Orlando's conversations about Rosalind. Following the transitive property, Jane is like Orlando in that she does not try to take on the characteristics of another gender. Rochester must be fooling everyone with a double disguise. If the scene were staged, a female actress might in fact play Rochester, which would not only bring women to the forefront even more by creating an all-female cast, but also it would give the writer more power. Brontë originally published as Currer Bell, an androgynous name. While she is not an actress, Brontë is using the moment of cross-dressing to reveal her own

womanhood as the woman creating the character of Rochester. When Rochester convincingly acts the part of the gypsy woman, he is in fact accessing part of his true nature. As the actor in the scene, as well as a temporary woman, Rochester is now the object of the gaze.

Some of the cross-dressing in novels involves a change of gender roles as opposed to literal cross-dressing. In particular, Charlotte Brontë's *Shirley* depicts the reimagining of gender as Shirley chooses to go by Shirley, Esq. Additionally, several of the anti-heroines in other novels adapt the persona of the "shrew" by taking directly from Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew.* In the play, Katherine is eventually "tamed" in her final speech as she offers her hand to her husband, although her sincerity in that scene is often debated. Unlike the shrew in Shakespearean times, which is "dealt with," the shrew-like characters are allowed to roam free in Victorian novels. For instance, anti-heroines such as Lizzie Eustace and Becky Sharp destroy the lives of those around them, but they are permitted to ride off into the sunset alone. The Victorian anti-heroines can also be seen as the opportunity for the shrew to remain the same and ultimately win. It is also making Katherine's final speech an act for the sake of manipulating her audience. As the shrew is often just an empowered woman, the idea that the shrew character may have a happy ending suggests yet another moment of empowerment.

As women veered away from their traditional roles, they re-assigned the gaze. For instance, as *Jane Eyre* concludes with Rochester blind, the gaze has been completely shifted to the one side of the gender line. Although he descends into madness in Chapter 36, it is important that he comes out of the madness when Jane has assumed the role as the male provider in their relationship. Additionally, Rochester's vision is restored in the last pages of the novel, both literally and figuratively. It is once out of his delusions that Hamlet's madness may leave him. In speaking to Jane, Rochester says, "Great God!—what delusion has come over me? What

sweet madness has seized me?", and Jane responds, "No delusion—no madness: your mind, sir, is too strong for delusion, your health too sound for frenzy" (369). The gaze has been equaled through both having been the object of the gaze and the giver of the gaze. Now, the gaze is redirected to the child and the next generation as they look at the eyes of their son. The difference is that the child is not being forced to perform.

Conclusion

Ultimately, the adaptation of both tragic and comedic heroines resulted in a re-appropriation and redirecting of the gaze. While Victorian novelists looked to both for inspiration, they generally empowered their own versions of the heroines so they were models of the rising feminism of the time. Shakespeare became accessible and women found a way to have him serve their own purposes. As part of the Victorianization of Shakespeare, the gaze was adapted and redirected. For instance, cross-dressing was given a new spin as both women and men changed gender roles. Finally, Shakespeare's heroines were able to exert their power further, serving the vision of gender that the Victorians already saw.

Chapter 3:

Of Maids and Marginalization:

The Reinvention of the Servant, Jew, and Victim

In adapting Shakespeare from play to novel, the novelists inherited the gaze. In controlling the gaze, they were able to direct it to certain issues. Generally, they acknowledged Shakespeare's tradition and adapted him with reverence and mild correction. At the same time, novelists sought to bring out further characters that had largely been ignored. Maggie Berg first introduced the idea of focusing on marginal writing in *Wuthering Heights: The Writing in the Margin,* in which she describes the moments that occur in the margins of the novel. For instance, she concentrates on Cathy's writing in the Testament, as well as the way in which a character may be marginalized figuratively in the action of the novel. While Berg chose to concentrate on characters she feels are in the margins in the nineteenth century, I will argue these characters are in fact more central to the novel than she seems to believe. While novelists were adapting Shakespeare, they specifically recreated his characters that would have existed in the margins of society. Among the marginalized to enter the gaze of the reader are those of the lower class, those of the Jewish religion, and those in abusive situations. By choosing these specific characters, novelists were bringing social problems to the forefront and recasting Shakespeare as a vehicle for social change.

Macbeth and *Wuthering Heights*

Servants are one group Shakespeare chose to depict and the Victorians adapted and highlighted. In doing so, they showed the problems with the current class inequality by making

servants an integral part of the story. The position of the gaze in Shakespeare's plays versus Victorian novels is clear in a comparison between *Macbeth* and *Wuthering Heights,* first made by Virginia Woolf in *A Room of One's Own.* Woolf imagines that had Shakespeare's sister actually written, it would have looked like the Brontës. In "Shakespeare and the Brontës," Paul Edmondson looks at two contemporary reviewers of *Wuthering Heights* to explain the depth of comparisons between Shakespeare and Brontë. He writes,

> G. W. Peck, reviewing the novel for the *American Review* in 1848, mentions that 'in conversation we have heard it spoken of by some as next in merit to Shakespeare for depth of insight and dramatic power'. Sydney Dobell, assuming that Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell were one and the same, praises *Wuthering Heights* for its psychological insights: 'it has been said of Shakespeare, that he drew cases which the physician might study; Currer Bell has done no less [he means Ellis Bell, Emily not Charlotte, since he's writing about *Wuthering Heights]'}* Dobell's comparison was endorsed by Algernon Charles Swinburne in 1877. (191)

Edmondson calls attention to the comparative nature of the two main settings in *Wuthering Heights,* which takes on a similar role of Shakespearean settings, such as the court and the Forest of Arden in *As You Like It* (192). Edmondson specifically compares the novel to *Macbeth* by likening Cathy to both Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. Building on these previous connections made between Emily Brontë and Shakespeare, I will compare *Wuthering Heights* and *Macbeth* with a focus on the lower class. I will argue that Nelly is the descendant of the Gentlewoman, and Joseph is the reimagining of the Porter. The difference is that Brontë was taking

Shakespeare's characters and forcing her audience to look at them closer, so they became more sympathetic and brought attention to the marginal servant class.

In considering the servants in particular, several critics have previously brought attention to their overall presence in *Wuthering Heights*. In "Masters And Servants In Wuthering Heights," Graeme Tytler writes of the master servant relationships in *Wuthering Heights.* Tytler writes,

> The reader of *Wuthering Heights* is made continually aware of the existence of servants in both households through references to the sundry tasks they perform in the house, in the grounds, on the farm, and others in or near Gimmerton, and even through references to their attendance at church or chapel, presence at a funeral, participation in the leisure pursuits of their superiors, and so on. (45)

I would build upon Tytler's idea that the presence of the servants is impossible to ignore throughout *Wuthering Heights* and argue that Brontë wanted the gaze to move away from the central upper class characters and wanted to look at those along the edges of the story.

In citing *Wuthering Heights,* Berg explains that Cathy is a clear example of the women society traditionally marginalized, manifested in her writing in the margins of her Testament. Cathy as the example for Berg's argument is reasonable, as an upper class woman would still have lacked a certain amount of control over her life and particularly her marriage choices. Although Cathy is important to consider, I would argue Nelly, whom Berg does not cite, is the most significant marginalized character. As a female servant, she existed in the margins of society by both class and gender. Despite Nelly's social class, Brontë chose to make her the narrator of the story. Nelly pushes herself to the outskirts by taking a spectator position rather than a primary actor in her story, yet it is her voice that comes out more than anyone else's does. While Mr. Lockwood is technically the primary storyteller, Nelly's voice is the primary focus,

not his. The way in which she controls the reader comes out in the way she colors the reader's opinion of Cathy; Nelly holds the power over her employers' legacies. Rather than merely observing, she comes to be the main holder of knowledge in the story.

Critics have ignored Nelly Dean in recent years. While many critics argue that altering from Nelly Dean's voice to a present-day perspective creates confusion in terms of the consistency of narration, in "Wuthering Heights and the Text between the Lines," Bette London looks at the narratives of Nelly and Lockwood first, and the central love story becomes the secondary tale (35). She also considers the displacement of Nelly's narrative as the result of Terry Eagleton's idea of double marginalization, as Nelly was both a woman and a member of a disappearing social class (36). London's argument reinforces the idea that by pushing Nelly to the position of watcher in the novel, she has actually become the central focus. In "'The Situation of the Looker-On': Gender, Narration, and Gaze in Wuthering Heights," Beth Newman raises questions about the role of the gaze in relation to the narrator. While discussing the relationship of Nelly's gaze and the narrative voice, Newman writes, "The role of onlooker, the conventional position of the masculine spectator with respect to the feminine spectacle, is in this novel precisely the situation of the narrator" (1035). Newman describes Lockwood's gaze as erotic, while Nelly's is less threatening and more about observation and storytelling. Building upon Newman's argument, I would argue Nelly becomes empowered by her role as the spectator. She takes back control both politically and sexually, which in turn creates a strong narrative voice that happens to originate in the lower class. While critics have argued for the parallels between Lady Macbeth or Macbeth and Cathy or Heathcliffe, Nelly has yet to be addressed as a Shakespearean figure. As *Wuthering Heights* is a reimagining of *Macbeth,* Nelly is the descendent of the Gentlewoman, who likewise tells the story of her mistress. The difference is

that Nelly has a more crucial role in the novel than the Gentlewoman has in the play, which is evidence that Brontë was bringing the servant figure to the attention of her audience.

While Shakespeare's servants took on the form of the fool most often, they also played an integral role in the story-telling aspect of the plays. The Gentlewoman in *Macbeth* takes on the same role as Nelly, which highlights the servants' importance. The significance of the scenes in which the servants actively take part reveals their true purpose. In *Hamlet,* one of the most telling scenes is 5.1, in which Lady Macbeth delivers her "Out, damned spot" speech (5.1.39-45). The scene is telling in terms of Lady Macbeth's mental state, as she is revealing guilt over her actions, which is the first time she is depicted as a "traditionally feminine" woman. Prior to the sleepwalking sequence, Lady Macbeth had pushed her husband toward murder, had asked to be unsexed, and had explained the way in which she could murder her own child. Specifically, in asking to be "unsexed," she was denying her own womanhood in order to attain power, simultaneously driving Macbeth forward toward his own tragic end. The shift occurring when Lady Macbeth sleepwalks is significant because she has moved from the driving force of violence and toward her own tragic end. The loss of her sanity then occurs simultaneously with the end of her own life.

Despite the importance of the scene, it would be significantly less important if it were not for the spectators in the scene watching the demise of Lady Macbeth. Because the Doctor and Gentlewoman see Lady Macbeth sleepwalking, there are witnesses to her general demise that can then report to Macbeth. While both the Doctor and the Gentlewoman witness the sleepwalking queen, the Gentlewoman is by far the more influential character. She reports upon incidents that have been occurring before the scene. The characters within the play do not need the Gentlewoman to give the background information. If she were not there to explain, Macbeth's

actions would not change, as evidenced by his reaction to his wife's death. Rather, Shakespeare is employing a common narrative strategy by asking the character on-stage to explain actions that previously occurred off-stage, casting the Gentlewoman as a narrator and bringing her to the attention of the audience. While she would not have been a servant in the strict definition of the word because she was a member of the nobility, she does occupy the space of a servant by assisting Lady Macbeth and by being privy to private conversations.

The Gentlewoman's specific lines in the scene further cast her as the narrator of the story. The scene opens with the Doctor doubting the Gentlewoman, as she has been the only witness to Lady Macbeth's sleepwalking. He says, "I have two nights watch'd with you, but/ can perceive no truth in your report. When was it/ she last walk'd?" (4.1.1-3). The Doctor has not witnessed the sleepwalking woman yet, and he is instead acting based upon the story the Gentlewoman has told to him. The Gentlewoman says,

> Since his Majesty went into the field, I
> Have seen her rise from her bed, throw her night-
> Gown upon her, unlock her closet, take forth paper,
> Fold it, write upon 't, read it, afterwards seal it, and
> Again return to bed; yet all this while in a most
> Fast sleep. (5.1.4-9)

Shakespeare did not include the Gentlewoman's narrative to help the Doctor, as he has already made it clear that she has confided these details in him already, and it does not change the actions already occurring on-stage. Instead, the Gentlewoman explains the background to the audience to help the storyline. It is nothing more, and yet, it is an integral part of the play, as it indicates significant details. Before Lady Macbeth enters, the Gentlewoman refuses to relay all

of the information to the Doctor, as she will not report upon anything Lady Macbeth actually said, stopping short of becoming the only gateway into the story. She refuses based on "having no witness to confirm my speech" (5.1.20-21). Unlike Nelly, her position in society constricts her power, as she does not want to risk speaking against the queen.

The importance of the Gentlewoman's role in the sleepwalking scene becomes more apparent in Act 5, scene 6. The Seyton delivers the news of Lady Macbeth's death, but the women's cries within the castle alerts them to the event. It is specifically a woman, as the stage directions indicate "A cry of women within" (5.6). The waiting women drive the narrative forward. Once again, Lady Macbeth does not affect the action, but rather, Macbeth acknowledges his wife is gone and continues into the action. He says, "She should have died hereafter; / There would have been a time for such a word" (5.6.17-18). There is a clear decision on the part of Macbeth to continue as though the death had not occurred, but the audience is affected more.

Like the Gentlewoman, Nelly views the main action closely throughout the actual story, as her primary participation in the action is that of an observer, and her perception is the main perception of the story. At the same time, Nelly is significantly more involved in the narration and the action than the Gentlewoman. For instance, Cathy's death scene directly parallels the sleepwalking scene in *Macbeth*. The scene stands out due to the visual imagery. While Nelly reports their words, she focuses on their body language. For instance, in describing their embrace, Nelly says,

> He neither spoke nor loosed his hold for some five minutes, during which period he bestowed more kisses than ever he gave in his life before, I dare say: but then my mistress had kissed him first, and I plainly saw that he could hardly bear, for

> downright agony, to look into her face! The same conviction had stricken him as me, from the instant he beheld her, that there was no prospect of ultimate recovery there—she was fated, sure to die. (115)

Nelly provides details similar to those the Gentlewoman gave in her tale. Cathy is close to death, which Nelly explains through the exposition in the speech. Nelly's most significant contribution at this moment is her directing of the reader to look at the visual elements of the sequence. While Nelly's descriptions are unnecessary for a play, they are vital for understanding the sequence in the novel. In *Macbeth*, the Gentlewoman was the key to that which occurred off-stage. In *Wuthering Heights*, the majority of the play occurs off-stage, and only Nelly's brief descriptions paint the picture of Cathy's moment of death. Notably, Nelly focuses on the tenderness of the moment through the kisses and caresses. However, she does not bring attention to Cathy being nine months pregnant during their embrace. While most nineteenth-century literature did not openly discuss pregnancy, the detail is conspicuously absent.

Another interesting aspect of the scene with Cathy and Heathcliff is that Nelly's emotions are involved in the moment. The Gentlewoman shows a brief moment of self-preservation in refusing to reveal the words of Lady Macbeth, but Nelly is clearly involved in the lives and deaths of her gaze's objects. Further into the scene, Nelly says, "The two, to a cool spectator, made a strange and fearful picture. Well might Catherine deem that heaven would be a land of exile to her, unless with her mortal body she cast away her mortal character also" (115-116). Nelly does not merely describe the embrace, but rather she inserts poetic language to try to create a feeling that mimics the energy in the room at the time of the event.

In comparing Heathcliff and Macbeth's reaction to their loves' deaths, there is a clear distinction between mourning the death and having the death drive them forward. Macbeth says,

> Out, out brief candle!
> Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
> That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
> And then is heard no more. It is a tale
> Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
> Signifying nothing. (5.6.23-28).

While Shakespeare generally writes Macbeth's speech in iambic pentameter, he cuts the last line short to emphasize the idea that death means nothing because life means nothing. In essence, Macbeth's wife meant nothing. He mourns her, but he also fully acknowledges that her death will not change the world, or, more importantly, the war. His attitude is a direct shift from the beginning of the play when his wife had to drive him to action. While Macbeth has a slightly neutral reaction to the news of his wife's death, Heathcliff blames everyone for taking Cathy away from him, he sets out to destroy their lives and control their fortunes. Cathy's death completely drives the action of the rest of the play, which is evidence that Nelly plays a more important role than the Gentlewoman. As long as their mistresses remain within the action, the servant women play an integral role in the narration of the story.

Cathy's death continues to drive the play, placing her in the action even after her death, unlike Lady Macbeth. Similarly, Nelly still participates in the action of the play as well as being the narrator. The Gentlewoman is clearly the predecessor to Nelly. Like the Gentlewoman, Nelly is a close and valued servant. While the Gentlewoman was still among the upper class, Nelly belongs to the lower class, yet her employers make her their confidant, and she is valued as evidenced by Cathy insisting she accompany her to Thrushcross Grange. In "The Fourth Couple in the Taming of the Shrew," Brian Blackley considers the "couple" of Lucentio and Tranio as

the other relationship in the play. Blackley writes, "Their relationship is thus foregrounded for the audience, and it is so harmonious that the differences between master and servant are blurred" (67-68). Brontë likewise is playing with the role of the servant by looking at the way in which everyone confides in Nelly. Furthermore, we know Nelly's history as she explains her employment has spanned three generations by the end of the novel. From the beginning, Nelly is a more fully formed character than the Gentlewoman is. She also plays a larger role in the narrative.

The changes from *Macbeth*'s Gentlewoman to *Wuthering Heights'* Nelly in these particular scenes clearly shows a more detailed and evolved narrator. Both narrators are necessary for the telling of the story, but Nelly is a servant who is giving a detailed and biased description of the events that have occurred. The adaptation of the Gentlewoman into Nelly proves Brontë was taking Shakespeare's original idea and forcing the audience to look at it more closely. *Wuthering Heights* then becomes *Macbeth* as told by the servants. Brontë is directing the story to bring the serving class to the forefront. She emphasizes her past as a governess, which would have been similar to Nelly and Gentlewoman, as she would have been neither among the servants nor among the family. Instead, she would have been privy to all aspects of their private lives. The adaptation therefore shows a distinct need to bring what Shakespeare started to the forefront. Shakespeare brought the Gentlewoman to the attention of the audience. Brontë made Nelly impossible to ignore.

As well as playing an important part narratively, Shakespeare's servants are also comic relief. For instance, I would like to point to a couple that Blackley briefly mentions in *The Taming of the Shrew*: Christopher Sly and his fake wife. Christopher Sly is a beggar and only appears within the frame story as the object of a game, which does not entirely disappear during

the nineteenth century. To continue with the comparison between *Macbeth* and *Wuthering Heights*, the Porter is an earlier version of Joseph. One of the major instances of a comic servant in *Macbeth* is the Porter. His purpose appears to be no other than comic relief, as his main scene occurs immediately after the tension of Duncan's murder. His jokes consist primarily of lower humor, as he explains the three results of drinking (2.3.26-24). At the same time, he does have an ironic humor. When he first walks on-stage, he approaches the door, saying,

> Here's a knocking indeed! If a man were porter
> of Hell Gate, he should have old turning the key.
> (Knock.) Knock, knock, knock! Who's there, i' th' name
> of Beelzebub? Here's a farmer, that hang'd himself on th'
> expectation of plenty. Come in time—have napkins
> enow about you; here you'll sweat for't. (Knock.) Knock,
> knock. Who's there, in th' other devil's name? Faith,
> here's an equivocator, that could swear in both the scales against either scale,
> who committed treason enough for
> God's sake, yet could not equivocate to heaven. O, come
> in, equivocator. (2.3.1-11)

The humor here of course suggests hell has already entered the castle, and the servant is now acting as a gatekeeper to hell. While he is playing the part of the fool, he is still important to the plot as the character to let in Macduff, who will then discover the dead king. Despite his seemingly superficial appearance, the Porter does play a vital role in the story line of the play. In *Service and Dependency in Shakespeare's Plays,* Judith Weil writes,

> Unlike the numerous domestic messengers, attendants, torch-bearers, and servers who have already appeared at Inverness, engaged in their tasks, the Porter has the stage wholly to himself and can prevent us from taking his work for granted…As far as the Porter himself is concerned, he is invisible and can therefore turn his occupation into a game for his own enjoyment. This simply does not happen in other plays where comic receptionists please themselves by wittily delaying the access of one character to another…Because he is alone while he entertains himself and the audience, the Porter seems like an exception to one of the rules proposed in this study: service generally functions in relation to other dependent roles. (146)

Weil generally depicts the Porter as the turning point in the play, which supports the idea that Shakespeare wrote him so he would be integral to the story as well as noticed by the viewers.

Joseph in *Wuthering Heights* then becomes the gatekeeper, as Lockwood encounters Joseph, not the family, when he attempts to enter Wuthering Heights the first time. Joseph initially refuses to answer, giving the image of the gatekeeper more validity (5-6). Furthermore, Joseph becomes the gatekeeper of hell through his role as spiritual keeper of his employers. He alone determines right and wrong, if through a slightly strict doctrine. In her Testament, Cathy reports that Joseph tells them of the Bible, '"T' maister nobbut just buried, and Sabbath not o'ered, und t' sound o' t' gospel still i' yer lugs, and ye darr be laiking! Shame on ye! sit ye down, ill childer! there's good books eneugh if ye'll read 'em: sit ye down, and think o' yer sowls!" (14). Joseph is the only one to encourage the two children to think of the afterlife and heavenly things, acting as the only person between them and hell. Heathcliff and Cathy must first escape him in order to be free on the moors. In the same journal entry, Cathy continues,

> I reached this book, and a pot of ink from a shelf, and pushed the house-door ajar to give me light, and I have got the time on with writing for twenty minutes; but my companion is impatient, and proposes that we should appropriate the dairywoman's cloak, and have a scamper on the moors, under its shelter. A pleasant suggestion—and then, if the surly old man come in, he may believe his prophecy verified—we cannot be damper, or colder, in the rain than we are here.' (15)

Rather than escaping their actual guardian, the children's only challenge is Joseph, the servant. He has a place within the family and within the novel that is not in line with his social position. By making him the guardian along with Nelly, the two servants have replaced parental guidance and influence.

Joseph and the Porter both act as gatekeepers to hell. However, although he is still the fool, Joseph is not funny. He is borderline abusive at times. Only Cathy and Heathcliff, whom other characters often depict as evil, can laugh at him. Joseph has also become more interweaved within the story, depicted by all three narrators: Nelly, Lockwood, and Cathy. The Porter has transformed into a darker and more prominent version in Brontë's story than he was in Shakespeare's, when he only appears for one comic, yet significant, scene.

In adapting Shakespeare's servants, Brontë created complex characters that become an integral part of the storyline. As Tytler explains,

> …whereas there is a certain predictability about the behaviour of Emily's masters and mistresses, there is a complexity about her servants that makes their conduct especially worthy of discussion. Indeed, it is by virtue of that very complexity that the author puts the question of masters and servants, as it were, on the operating

> table, dealing with it not merely as a matter of economics but as a means of adding to our understanding of human nature. In other words, she invites us to consider, and perhaps even to question, a time-honoured system whose workings she astutely takes apart and lays bare for us. (45)

According to Tytler, Brontë fights to create servants who are interesting and relatable. I would argue she was simultaneously adapting Shakespeare's pattern of creating servants that were vital to the storyline. As she rewrote Shakespeare, she was adding an emphasis so they were in the spotlight even more and attention was given to a class that was often neglected.

The Merchant of Venice and *Daniel Deronda*

Another marginalized group captured by both Shakespeare and the Victorians were members of the Jewish religion. Similar to servants, the reimagining of the Jew in the nineteenth-century led to a more sympathetic character that supported equal treatment of those who were not Christian. I will cite examples from Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice,* as the play contains the villain Shylock, and George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda,* as it features several Jewish characters at its center. Eliot was a prominent Shakespeare scholar, so if she were writing about a Jewish character, she would have been well aware of Shylock. Shakespeare emphasized the stereotypes surrounding Jewish men in his play, but Eliot adapted him to create sympathetic characters and a unique image of Zionism, the movement to create a Jewish homeland. Furthering her emphasis on Jewish culture, Eliot begins with a Christian man who discovers he is Jewish. She takes her title character and purposefully places him in the minority. Eliot does more than simply creating sympathy for the Jewish man, but rather Eliot alters the story so the hero is an incarnation of the villain. In doing so, she shows the need for equal treatment and

consideration of a minority group. I will argue that in *Daniel Deronda*, Eliot rewrites Shylock as Mordecai and Jessica as Mirah.

Shylock is famous for being the villain of *The Merchant of Venice.* He is a greedy moneylender, who tries to exchange money for a pound of Antonio's flesh. Shylock fits the stereotypes about Jewish men and money. In adapting *The Merchant of Venice,* Eliot created Mordecai as the descendant of Shylock. Daniel cannot be considered as Shylock's heir because he is not aware of his heritage for a large part of the novel, and his heritage does not define him until the end. While Shylock is famous for his obsession with money, Mordecai's humbleness is emphasized from the moment Daniel meets him. In describing him, Eliot writes,

> Mordecai had no handsome Sabbath garment, but instead of the threadbare rusty black coat of the morning he wore one of light drab, which looked as if it had once been a handsome loose paletot now shrunk with washing; and this change of clothing gave a still stronger accentuation to his dark-haired, eager face which might have belonged to the prophet Ezekiel—also probably not modish in the eyes of contemporaries. It was noticeable that the thin tails of the fried fish were given to Mordecai; and in general the sort of share assigned to a poor relation—no doubt a "survival" of prehistoric practice, not yet generally admitted to be superstitious. (381)

While Mordecai is the reincarnation of Shylock, Eliot depicts him as distinctly the opposite of the moneylender. Eliot was well aware of what she was doing in creating a new Jewish character. Mordecai is a re-envisioning of Shylock with the premise that he is in poverty and striving to be a hero for his people instead of creating and purporting negative stereotypes.

The two men have distinctly different goals as well. Shylock is motivated by the desire to better his own circumstances, while Mordecai wants to better the circumstances of the entire Jewish population. Their motivations become apparent in their speeches. In his most famous speech, Shylock says,

> …I am a Jew. Hath not a
> Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses,
> affections, passions; fed with the same food, hurt with the same
> weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same
> means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer as
> a Christian is? If you prick us do we not bleed? If you tickle us
> do we not laugh? If you poison us do we not die? And if you
> wrong us shall we not revenge? If we are like you in the rest,
> we will resemble you in that. If a Jew wrong a Christian, what
> is his humility? Revenge. If a Christian wrong a Jew, what
> should his sufferance be by Christian example? Why, revenge.
> The Villainy you teach me I will execute, and it shall go hard
> but I will better the instruction. (3.1.49-61)

While Shylock's speech begins the idea of the Jewish man as an equal to the Christian man, he is also independent and alone. He is not arguing to better the group's circumstances, but rather, he is justifying his right to revenge. On the other hand, Mordecai's speech argues for a separation of the two groups, creating an equal nation. In speaking to Daniel, Mordecai says,

> But the hidden reasons why I need you began afar off…began in my early years
> when I was studying in another land. Then ideas, beloved ideas, came to me,

> because I was a Jew. They were a trust to fulfill, because I was a Jew. They were an inspiration, because I was a Jew, and felt the heart of my race beating within me. They were my life; I was not fully born till then. I counted this heart, and this breath, and this right hand"—Mordecai had pathetically pressed his hand upon his breast, and then stretched its wasted fingers out before him—"I counted my sleep and my waking, and the work I fed my body with, and the sights that fed my eyes—I counted them but as fuel to the divine flame. (477)

Mordecai has a distinct connection to the Jewish people as a whole, and he is working toward giving them a better life. In creating a sympathetic Jewish hero, Eliot gave the marginalized group a new focus. She also showed a support for the Zionist movement.

Despite their different storylines, neither character has a particularly happy ending. Shylock loses his money, and Mordecai dies. If the play was told from Shylock's point of view and concentrated on his fate, the play would be classified as a tragedy instead of a comedy. When Eliot rewrote Shylock as Mordecai, she gives him a tragic death, but it is accompanied by the comedic element of a marriage. The ending is also distinctly hopeful because the marriage takes place between the Jewish characters of Daniel and Mirah. Mordecai dies, but his purpose is being carried on, so Eliot has given him the hopeful ending Shakespeare denied Shylock.

Because Eliot rewrote a positive version of the Jewish man with Mordecai, she must be thinking of Jessica in writing Mirah. The most problematic aspect of Jessica as a character is her denial of her heritage, as she chooses to defy her father. Unlike Christianity, the Jewish religion relies significantly upon lineage, making it more than a religion. In changing her religion, Jessica will alter her entire identity. She says,

> Alack, what heinous sin is it in me

To be asham'd to be my father's child!
But though I am a daughter to his blood,
I am not to his manners. O Lorenzo,
If thou keep promise, I shall end this strife,
Become a Christian and thy loving wife. (2.3.15-20)

Jessica is the antithesis of her culture, defying her father and going so far as to call him evil. The play ends with her successful marriage and conversion, as well as Shylock's guarantee of leaving her his estate as an inheritance. While Shakespeare casted the minority as the villain, he balances the condemnation with the saved daughter. Shakespeare has therefore succeeded in casting one sympathetic Jewish character. At the same time, he has still found it necessary to have her convert to Christianity.

Eliot then is able to take the Jewish woman and create a rounded heroine in the form of Mirah. There are several similarities between the two women. Mirah also has a torrid relationship with her father, who has forced her into a life of performance away from her mother and brother. One clear nod to Shakespeare is Mirah's acting career. The performativity aspect of her life is furthered through her eminent forced marriage to a man that is not Jewish, in which she will have to play a new cultural role. It is significant that Eliot has chosen to make the conversion to Christianity forced rather than a choice. In *Figures of Conversion: "The Jewish Question" and English National Identity,* Michael Ragussis argues that in novels such as *Daniel Deronda*, there is a critique of the plotline that centers around the conversion of the Jewish figure. He writes that the novel resists the conversion of Mirah, instead converting Gwendolen in that she comes under Daniel's influence (10). As well as resisting the conversion plot, I would claim that Eliot is specifically defying Jessica's conversion. Ragussis also explains that in Maria

Edgeworth's *Harrington,* the Jewish figure performs a deconstructive reading of *The Merchant of Venice,* making the figure reborn as a cultural critic (83). I would add that this is likewise Eliot's method, though her references are more subtle. Additionally, while Ragussis maintains that Eliot is continuing Edgeworth's project, I would argue that she is likewise looking at Shakespeare directly, as she was a Shakespearean scholar. While Mirah is in a similar predicament to Jessica, the situation has been turned so it is now the inability to remain Jewish that would be tragic. Furthermore, if Mordecai is the rewritten Shylock, there is instead a coming together of the characters rather than a tearing apart of the family. Rather than deny her Jewish heritage, Mirah becomes a member of the Zionist movement, embracing her heritage. The happy ending comes from her remaining Jewish. Finally, the traditional masculine and feminine roles have been reversed, so Daniel changes his identity to be with Mirah. Had Daniel remained unaware of his ancestry, he would likely have married Gwendolen. Instead, he chooses to embrace his Jewish history and be with Mirah. Jewishness as a whole has gained a new societal power.

In "'The Beloved Ideas Made Flesh': *Daniel Deronda* and Jewish Poetics," Cynthia Scheinberg deals with the Jewish elements in Eliot's novel. She writes,

> Each hero is constructed and ultimately claims his identity by engaging with Jewishness from a variety of directions, yet one of the central issues that Eliot's novel raises without ever fully answering is: from where does Daniel's ultimate affinity for Jewishness and Judaism come, from his own intellectual and personal inquiry into Jews and Judaism, initiated by his meeting Mirah, or from his blood, his body born from his lost family of Jewish origin? In refusing to name the source of Daniel's Jewish sensibilities, Eliot maintains the slippery nature of

> Jewish identity as represented in the Christian Scriptures, where Jewishness can be claimed or disowned, understood as a problem of blood or a benefit of belief. (816-817)

Scheinberg is correct is identifying the aspect of free will associated with a Jewish identity in the novel. I would add to her argument by suggesting Eliot is bringing the idea of Jewishness to the forefront because her characters do choose to embrace their heritage.

In dealing with a marginalized group, Eliot has transformed the Jewish man and woman Shakespeare originally created, making them distinctly different yet clearly their offspring. Shakespeare cast the Jewish character as a villain, but he did not depict the entire nation as evil. Rather, he gave Jessica as an example of how a Jewish woman could marry a Christian man. While there are definitely still problems with Eliot's approach to Jewish culture, she has begun to bring a Jewish character to the forefront. It is indeed similar to Othello, who is the hero of his play, yet he can only have a tragic ending. Eliot has then picked up where Shakespeare left off by presenting a story in which being Jewish is the happy ending.

As You Like It, *Hamlet*, and *Vanity Fair*

A common practice for nineteenth-century authors was to write their stories with a focus on social issues. For instance, Charles Dickens was particularly adept at social writing, as he brought the plight of the poor to the attention of the masses. Another area that was beginning to become prominent was the idea of domestic abuse of both the child and the wife. While domestic abuse of women and children is a women's issue, both male and female novelists addressed the problem. Shakespeare's plays also brought trauma of the child and woman to light, but at the time, it was not commonly acknowledged as a social issue. His heroines in the face of trauma

both rose against it and succumbed to tragedy. Shakespeare's contribution was acknowledging it. To consider the psychological effects of trauma on Shakespearean heroines, I will ignore women who were killed through abuse, such as Desdemona in *Othello*. Instead, I will look at women who played a part in their own demise or survival, emphasizing the way in which trauma effected the overall fate of Shakespeare's women and proving that the Victorians were inspired by trauma in Shakespeare. In adapting the same type of trauma as Shakespeare, the Victorians emphasized its lasting effects and argued for change by displaying the damage.

The abuse of women in Shakespeare is common, and women encounter many types of trauma through his works. For instance, Lavinia in *Titus Andronicus* is raped and mutilated before her father kills her. What is particularly interesting is how Shakespeare brings in examples of domestic abuse between partners in his plays, specifically Ophelia in *Hamlet.* In 3.1, Ophelia attempts to end their relationship by giving Hamlet back the presents he had given to her. He denies their relationship ever existed, which is a clear manipulation of her emotions. Hamlet also violently accuses her of being evil. He says,

> …God
> hath given you one face, and you make yourselves another. You
> jig, you amble, and you lisp, and nickname God's creatures,
> and make your wantonness your ignorance. Go to, I'll no
> more on't. It hath made me mad. (3.1.142-148)

As well as being cruel in his speech, Hamlet also suggests Ophelia and he have had a sexual affair by pointing to the ignorance of women. The confrontation with Hamlet in Act 3 is among the reasons for Ophelia's insanity and suicide. By showing a specific instance of domestic abuse, Shakespeare has tied earlier trauma to Ophelia's tragic ending. Contrary to Shakespeare, when

dealing with marital abuse, the Victorians were not opposed to the woman overcoming her circumstances, unlike Ophelia. The depiction of marital abuse is particularly evident in Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, in which the abused woman is able to have a happy marriage even after a highly abusive one.

Trauma occurs for the female child as well as the married woman in both Shakespeare and the nineteenth century. The abuse of the child is particularly evident in Shakespeare's *As You Like It.* While Rosalind is separated from her own father, she suffers emotional abuse at the hands of her uncle. He tells her he does not trust her because she is her father's daughter. When he banishes her to the forest, he says,

> She is too subtle for thee, and her smoothness,
> Her very silence, and her patience
> Speak to the people, and they pity her.
> Thou art a fool. She robs thee of thy name,
> And though wilt show more bright and seem more virtuous
> When she is gone. (1.3.71-76)

Duke Frederick accuses her of malice and undermines her natural personality. He also accuses her of hurting Celia, who is Rosalind's closest confidant. While Duke Frederick's speech in Act 1 occurs when Rosalind is an adult, it is unlikely to be the only time her uncle has punished her in her father's place. Rosalind is able to escape her abuser when she runs to the Forest of Arden. When she is there, it is as though the abuse had never happened. Shakespeare constantly implies she is choosing to be happy, as she says to the melancholy Jacques, "I had rather have/ a fool to make me merry than experience to make me sad" (4.1.24-25). Rosalind moves past her painful

past and toward a comedic, marriage plot. Shakespeare is therefore depicting a situation in which a woman can completely leave her traumatic past behind.

Childhood trauma is depicted more explicitly and with more lasting effects in *Vanity Fair*, in which William Thackeray creates one of the most interesting and notorious anti-heroines in Becky Sharp. As established in Chapter 1, there are clear connections between Thackeray and Shakespeare. Often through deceit and trickery, Becky successfully survives life. What drives her throughout is not only her desire to succeed, but also her painful past. For instance, she was the daughter of a poor couple, which means she only received an education through charity. The narrator quickly explains, "As it was with the utmost difficulty that [Mr. Sharp] could keep himself, and as he owed money for a mile round Soho, where he lived, he thought to better his circumstances by marrying a young woman of the French nation, who was by profession an opera-girl" (17). The possibility of one day returning to the lower part of society makes her strive to find a husband with money. Critics have long acknowledged Becky's financial motivation, but I would add that it is also the trauma in her past that leads Becky down her particular road. In describing Becky's father, Thackeray writes,

> He was a clever man; a pleasant companion; a careless student; with a great propensity for running into debt, and a partiality for the tavern. When he was drunk, he used to beat his wife and daughter; and the next morning, with a headache, he would rail at the world for its neglect of his genius, and abuse, with a good deal of cleverness, and sometimes with perfect reason, the fools, his brother painters. (17)

Before Becky moved into the school, her father would drunkenly beat her. Becky then adopts several signs of being the victim. For instance, she actually clings closer to her father's memory,

crying when presented with one of his paintings (33-34). She also hardens herself against the world, which Thackeray consistently enforces through comparisons between Becky and the sweet Amelia. As well as the admitted physical abuse, Becky was also sexually abused by her father. In describing her relationship with her father, the narrator writes, "But she never had been a girl, she said; she had been a woman since she was eight years old" (19). Soon after, Becky is described as making a "virgin-like curtsey" (25). Becky is not a virgin; she is like a virgin. Becky's general promiscuity can then be explained as also being the result of being sexualized at a young age. If Becky is not a virgin, she has a more urgent need to find a husband, as it will legitimize her status as a non-virgin.

Despite her past, Becky rises in society. She marries a series of wealthy men, and she ends the novel as a wealthy widow. At the same time, the trauma that occurs with her father is never truly gone, as reflected in her poor relationship with her own son. While Rosalind was able to rise and flourish after her childhood trauma, Becky is only able to survive. Thackeray is acknowledging a traumatic past cannot be easily overcome.

There is another way to look at Becky's trauma as compared to a different Shakespeare play. *Vanity Fair* is clearly inspired by *The Taming of the Shrew*, as Bianca and Katherine give way to Amelia and Becky. In *The Taming of the Shrew,* critics often debate the legitimacy and seriousness of Katherine's final speech. As Katherine kneels, she says,

> Then vail your stomachs, for it is no boot,
> And place your hands below your husband's foot,
> In token of which duty, if he please,
> My hand is ready, may it do him ease. (5.2.180-184)

While the final speech could be interpreted as Katherine acknowledging the game Petruccio has been playing, Katherine has been broken by Petruccio either way. She has endured starvation and emotional abuse since the onset of their marriage. Quite literally, in order to survive, she must change her behavior. In comparing Katherine the shrew to Becky the anti-heroine, Becky has learned to survive by giving the impression of a kinder woman than she actually is. Unlike Katherine, she does not change her behavior as she continues to marry to climb the social ladder. Edmondson points out a revision of *The Taming of the Shrew* in *Wuthering Heights* when Catherine Linton refuses to eat, in contrast to Kate not being given the choice. He writes, "allusions to Shakespearian comedies in *Wuthering Heights* serve to invert any comic possibility and contribute instead toward the novel's overriding tragic outcome" (194). Unlike Edmondson, I would argue the inversion actually points to the cruelty of a situation in which a woman was being starved, whether the context was Shakespearean or Brontëan.

The difference Thackeray has now presented is one in which trauma does not necessarily conquer a woman, as it did with Katherine, nor can a woman necessarily flourish after trauma, as Rosalind did. Instead, he brings the trauma and its effects out in his work, suggesting the victim can learn to survive. In dealing with domestic trauma, the Victorians had several different takes on how the victim could suffer long-term effects. They adapted Shakespeare's suggestion and instead turned the gaze toward the effects, bringing the issue to the attention of the reader. Domestic abuse did not receive much attention in England until John Stuart Mill's writings and the 1878 publication Frances Power Cobbe's "Wife-Torture in England" (Pike 356-357). Thackeray and Brontë's particular instances of abuse in the novel occurred almost 30 years before the issue was prominent and were on the cusp of a movement that was just beginning.

Conclusion

In creating incarnations of Shakespearean characters, Victorian novelists took the opportunity to direct the gaze at those who existed in the margins of society. While Shakespeare had begun the process of bringing to the forefront versions of the servant, Jew, and victim, the Victorians often turned the gaze even more deliberately toward these characters. In doing so, they acknowledged their reverence of him while driving social issues of their time. Shakespeare then became a tool through which they could highlight societal problems.

Conclusion

Victorian adaptations of Shakespeare long have been of interest to critics. However, they typically consider him merely as a literary figurehead for the nineteenth century. While he did play this role, he was much more transformative for the writers of the period. By examining the way in which Victorians modernized Shakespeare to further their social causes, it becomes clear that Shakespeare was more than a literary touchstone for writers. He was not merely a fixture in British society, but rather he was still evolving for them.

In Chapter 1: "Of Censorship and Rebellion: Reviving Shakespeare's Heroines," I demonstrated the educational attitude of the Victorians toward Shakespeare. While Victorians often censored him to protect a strict social code, the same code was not applied when adapting his works in novels. As his heroines were modernized, they were often rebellious and feminist. For instance, Thackeray did not choose to make the heroine of *Vanity Fair* the Bianca figure, but rather, he chose to allow the Shrew to be anti-heroine. In adapting Shakespeare so his rebellious figures were in the spotlight, they came to represent a view of Shakespeare that prefers a feminist movement to tradition.

Chapter 2: "Of Governesses and Gypsies: Negotiating Gender and the Gaze" explains the way in which theatricality played a part in adapting Shakespeare in the Victorian period. As I delved deeper into the specific rewritings of Shakespeare, it became clear that the Victorians adapted the theatrical gaze, so it became a source of power for women. In the same way that women replaced young boys on the stage, the rewritten Shakespearean heroines were able to skirt the gaze. As well as avoiding it entirely, they were able to reverse it by turning the gaze toward male characters. The use of the gaze as empowering makes it clear that the Victorians were purposefully correcting an imbalance in the original works. However, they kept more of the

original than they changed, which suggests they already saw the feminist gaze occurring in his work, and they were bringing it out more. Additionally, it is important that they were referencing a familiar and popular work to show the difference that needed to occur in society. In particular, they were choosing Shakespeare to bring attention to the feminist movement, when they could have used any reference.

In the final chapter, "Of Maids and Marginalization: The Reinvention of the Servant, Jew, and Victim," I prove that the Victorians employed the same method of adaptation to further Shakespeare's original social concerns. Shakespeare brought attention to characters that were typically overlooked due to the level of their class, the prejudices against their race, and the lack of understanding for their situation. Shakespeare brought attention to these characters by casting them in his plays. When the Victorians adapted these particular characters, they brought them into the spotlight for a larger part of their works. While Shakespeare made the audience consider these characters, the Victorians made them impossible to ignore, reflecting a society that was making an effort to improve life for those marginalized by society.

In rewriting Shakespeare in the novel, the Victorians redirected the theatrical gaze for the reader to bring focus to new characters and social issues. While Shakespeare's popularity had reached new heights in the nineteenth century, he was still censored in girls' education. His popularity and the censorship itself made him an ideal symbol for change. By looking at how they adapted him to emphasize social issues, it becomes clear that the Victorians did not merely enjoy him. Rather, it reflects the depths of his role as a symbol of English identity and culture. If he was a symbol of English nationalism, he was also the ideal method through which to show how England needed to change.

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Appendix



Figure 1: *Ophelia* by John Everett Millais'

Vita

Joanna Zimmerman was born in Huntsville, Alabama to Arthur and Diane Zimmerman. She graduated from Virgil I. Grissom High School in 2008. After graduation, she attended Louisiana State University, entering as one of the Top 100 Freshman. In 2011, Phi Beta Kappa named Zimmerman the top junior in humanities at LSU. She earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Mass Communication with a concentration in Journalism in 2012. Through the Chancellor's Future Leaders in Research program, Zimmerman spent four years working as a research assistant in the Manship School of Mass Communication. In 2012, she also earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in English with a concentration in literature and a minor in Italian. Zimmerman graduated from LSU with honors, summa cum laude. After graduation, she accepted a graduate teaching associateship at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. As well as completing her own coursework, she taught courses in English composition. Zimmerman graduated with a Masters of Arts degree in English from UTK in May 2014.