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Casting, Gender, and the Creation of Meaning in Contemporary Shakespearean Performance

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Introduction: Women Playing Shakespeare's Men in Contemporary UK Performance

1 Since the millennium, the practice of women playing men in UK performances of Shakespeare has gone from "gimmick casting to standard practice".[1] While in the first fifteen years of the 21st century, women made up just 27% and 28% of acting companies at the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) and Shakespeare's Globe respectively,[2] now the RSC has moved towards a 50-50 casting policy and Shakespeare's Globe has publicly committed to the same target across all its casting. Elaine Aston characterises the 2010s as a period defined by sustained feminist activism,[3] and undoubtedly the work of organisations such as Sphinx Theatre, Tonic Theatre, Act for Change, and ERA 50:50 was integral to the sea change in UK casting practices which defined the late 2010s. These lobbying organisations highlighted the paucity of roles for women across performance media in the UK and lobbied for change, their voices amplified in written works by high-profile performers such as Janet Suzman and Harriet Walter.[4] Their aims were twofold: to provide more employment opportunities for women performers and to provide better representation of women, beyond the figure of the ingénue.

2 Casting women as Shakespeare's men might be understood as a "resistant" casting practice, as it challenges the consignment of women to the figure of the love-interest and makes a wider range of roles available to them.[5] Elizabeth Klett suggests there are multiple reasons why women playing Shakespeare's men might be considered subversive:

> First, they disrupt mimetic theatrical production by rejecting the concept of theatre as a mirror that reflects reality. Instead, they reveal the theatre to be a laboratory where gender can be interrogated and dismantled. Second, they

> perform this disruption through the use of cross-gender casting, by placing a woman's body at the center of representation […]. Third, the actresses intervene in the play's performance traditions, and challenge conventional male-centred interpretations.[6]

3 Gemma Miller likewise suggests there is radical cultural potential in this casting approach, arguing that women playing Shakespeare's men "questions the 'authority' of the originating (male) author, it challenges the hegemony of male-dominated theatrical institutions; and it disrupts culturally embedded ideas of gender hierarchies."[7] On an artistic level, women playing male characters has the potential to channel the subversive potential of drag, whose "parodic proliferation deprives hegemonic culture and its critics of the claim to naturalized or essentialist gender identities."[8] Just as drag kings can "bring to light the artifice of dominant masculinity",[9] so women playing Shakespeare's men might provide a uniquely productive space for gender subversion. Indeed, in rendering the performativity of masculinity visible, women's gendered performance troubles the normative notion that "masculinity 'just is' whereas femininity reeks of the artificial".[10] Ultimately, by revealing the performativity of masculinity, the logic of the gender hierarchy and patriarchy itself can be called into question.

4 Yet, just as colourblind casting has been criticised as a form of assimilation which erases the lived experience of racism and perpetuates the myth of white, male genius, so casting women as Shakespeare's men might similarly be criticised for perpetuating the values of both the canonical and social status quo.[11] As Nora Williams has convincingly argued, "early modern plays have misogyny baked in as an essential component of their dramaturgies" which "cannot be ameliorated by merely adding women to the cast".[12] Indeed, casting women in male roles could exacerbate the issue by rendering Shakespeare's misogynist dramaturgy palatable to a modern audience. Furthermore, as Imke Lichterfeld argues in this special edition, casting trends may

reinforce negative gender stereotypes when women are cast in the roles of weak or indecisive leaders.[13]

5 This paper will argue that, while from an employment perspective, casting women in roles traditionally played as men undoubtedly serves a feminist agenda by creating more employment opportunities and securing greater career longevity for women performers, it does not have such straightforward artistic or dramaturgical outcomes. Indeed, apparently "progressive" casting might be just as much about saving Shakespeare as it is about promoting gender equality.[14] Central to my argument is that the outcomes of casting women in male roles can never be understood as inevitable: there is nothing inherently feminist or radical about the practice, nor is it inevitably reactionary. Instead, I argue that each casting decision must be carefully contextualised and critiqued in order to understand its dramaturgical significance in each specific production. To explore how women playing men might reinforce or subvert the gender ideology of a play, I will begin by exploring the significance of casting terminology before undertaking an analysis of the casting of Shakespeare's most misogynist play, *The Taming of the Shrew.* Focussing specifically on the casting of Petruchio, I will consider what it means for a woman to play a male agent of misogyny.

1. Casting, Meaning and Dramaturgy: Defining Key Terms

6 The nomenclature of casting is inherently unstable, and it is therefore important to define key terms before undertaking an analysis of casting's impact on performance. The meaning of performances will vary greatly depending on how the casting relates to the text; specifically, whether productions keep the pronouns of the text—commonly referred to as "cross-gender" casting—or whether productions alter the gender of a role so that the gender of the actor and character align. In-keeping with the

broadly realist tradition that dominates UK stagings of Shakespeare, regendering is a popular approach. Andrew Hartley defines regendering as a practice in which roles are "played by women and as women, not by women impersonating men".[15] For example, Emma Rice's 2016 production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* replaced Peter Quince with Rita Quince, a woman director with she/her pronouns. Altering the character's gendered identity to align with that of the actor facilitates a realist staging approach which "laminates body to character".[16] In contrast, "cross-gender" casting maintains the gap between actor and role with the gendered signifiers of the actor existing alongside the gendered signifiers of the character, disrupting realism's collapsing of actor and role. "Cross-gender" casting is often used interchangeably with "gender-blind" casting, though there is an important difference between a production in which spectators are encouraged to "see" the gap between actor and role and those in which they are encouraged to be "blind" to it. "Gender-blind" is a contested term which, like "colourblind" casting, implies "blindness to an actor's race [and gender] is not only desirable but also possible."[17] As well as arguably being an ableist term, "blind" casting is also something of a misnomer, as Miranda Fay Thomas has argued "if anything, an audience's awareness of gender is heightened when male actors are cast in traditionally female roles, and vice versa."[18]

7 Surveying the way in which these casting approaches create meaning in performance foregrounds the centrality of casting to a production's dramaturgy. The productions explored in this paper utilise "all-female", regendering, and gender-flipped approaches in their depiction of Petruchio. In an "all-female" production all characters are played by women, as in Jude Cristian's 2023 production of *Titus Andronicus* at the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse. Regendering, as defined above, describes the altering of a character's gender to align with that of the actor, such as Simon Godwin's 2017 National Theatre production of *Twelfth Night* in which Tamsin Greig played Malvolia. While both "single-sex" and regendering approaches have a long theatrical history, more recently "gender-flipped" productions have become increasingly significant. In a gender-flipped production men play women and

vice-versa. Gender-flipping may apply to selective pairs of roles, such as the roles of the Novice and Deputy in Josie Rourke's 2018 *Measure for Measure* at the Donmar Warehouse, or for the whole company, as in productions of *The Taming of the Shrew* at the RSC in 2014 and 2019. That there have been multiple gender-flipped productions of *The Shrew*, reflects the fact that casting is often seen as a creative means to grapple with this play's troubling gender politics.[19]

2. Casting Misogyny: Women Playing Petruchio

8 Ayanna Thompson suggests that *The Shrew* will always "resist rehabilitation and appropriation" in performance because of its "deep misogyny".[20] Understanding misogynistic hostility after Kate Manne as "anything that is suitable to serve a punitive, deterrent, or warning function" in "the enforcement and reestablishment of patriarchal order",[21] it is possible to see that *The Shrew*'s misogyny works on multiple levels. On the level of the plot, it dramatizes the punitive measures inflicted on those who challenge patriarchy and "enacts the defeat of the threat of a woman's revolt".[22] While on the level of the performance, it serves as a warning to its audience not to challenge patriarchal control. As Emily Detmer has convincingly asserted, Petruchio's behaviour should be understood as a form of domestic violence,[23] and as I have argued elsewhere, his use of isolation, starvation, and sleep-deprivation all correspond to a 21st century legal definition of coercive and controlling behaviour.[24] Casting has played an important role in attempts to both mitigate and problematise *The Shrew*'s misogyny, and women played Petruchio in three of the ten productions of the play staged at the RSC and Shakespeare's Globe between 2011 and 2020. It is noteworthy, however, that in each instance, this casting served a very different artistic agenda and scrutinising these performances foregrounds the complexity of meaning created when women play Shakespeare's men.

9 The three productions in which women played Petruchio had varied approaches to casting: Joe Murphy's 2013 touring production for Shakespeare's Globe featured an "all-female" cast, Michael Fentiman's 2014 First Encounter production for young audiences at the RSC was a gender-flipped and cross-gender cast production in which women played roles written as men and vice versa, while Justin Audibert's 2019 production was also gender-flipped, but in this case the roles were regendered and the world of *The Shrew* was reimagined as a matriarchy. Analysing the dramaturgical significance of casting in these productions foregrounds the multifarious meanings that can be created when women play Shakespeare's men.

3. A Single-Sex *Shrew*: Joe Murphy's 2013 All-Female Touring Production at Shakespeare's Globe

10 For Joe Murphy, his "all-female" cast provided:

> an opportunity just to play the play as the play. Because the most powerful argument against its misogyny is just to show its misogyny. It's very obvious that these eight intelligent, empowered women on stage are not condoning it. They're putting it on so you will be repulsed by it.[25]

11 In this respect, the production can be seen to align with a feminist agenda, defined by bell hooks as "the movement to end sexism, sexual exploitation, and sexual oppression."[26] Casting was central to Murphy's critique of the play, as the gap between actor and role provided a space in which the play's misogyny could be questioned.

12 Murphy's staging of *The Shrew* offered a tragic interpretation of the play's central relationship. Initially, Katherine and Petruchio

appeared to have potential as a couple; in Murphy's interpretation, "they actually seem quite good for each other [at first]", but ultimately "Petruchio is so ingrained in that patriarchal society, he has no concept of love other than obedience and ownership".[27] Petruchio's relationship with patriarchy appeared to be influenced by his own fragile masculinity; actor Leah Whitaker lent Petruchio a physically slight frame and observed in an interview that the character "doubts himself a lot".[28] To overcome his physical and emotional vulnerability and claim the patriarchal privilege to which he considered himself entitled, Whitaker's Petruchio self-consciously performed his masculine identity. Sporting jodhpurs, knee-high leather boots, and a hat with flying goggles, Whitaker's Petruchio dressed the part of the swaggering adventurer. Yet, the bravado of his recollection of past triumphs, "Have I not in my time heard lions roar?" (I.2.194),[29] sounded decidedly fanciful; Whitaker's Petruchio gave the impression that he felt the need to assert his masculine prowess through the recitation of former (or perhaps invented) acts of bravery. This assertion of macho dominance also manifested in the character's physicality, with the production making a running joke about the strength of Petruchio's handshake. Together, these aspects of characterisation implied Petruchio had a confidence in his God-given rights as a man living under patriarchy but was also profoundly anxious about his own masculine identity.

13 While these character choices would be available to an actor of any gender playing the role, the "all-female" casting lent an extra dimension to Petruchio's gender anxiety, as his earnest, self-conscious masculinity was juxtaposed with the more playful, hyperbolic masculine performances of the rest of the company. In this context, Whitaker's Petruchio was an anomaly, anxiously concerned with asserting his "natural" masculine authority, while the exaggerated performances of the rest of the company—Kathryn Hunt's Baptista in particular—concomitantly subverted the "naturalness" of the gender hierarchy by revealing masculinity's performativity. By rendering Petruchio an outlier, the production was able to play with gender roles while simultaneously committing to showing the abusive nature of his quest for dominance over

Katherine. The taming plot was further complicated by the fact that Kate Lamb's Katherine was not the stereotypical shrew of the play's title. Lamb observed that "my Kate is not quite as angry and feisty and sort of wantonly violent as perhaps other Kates have been".[30] As a result, more than one reviewer noted with discomfort that Petruchio's "treatment [of Katherine] seems both cruel and unnecessary".[31] In this respect, Murphy's company of women destabilised the comedic foundations of the play, for, as Emily Detmer has observed: "[t]o enjoy the comedy of the play, readers and viewers must work to see domestic violence from the point of view of an abuser—that is, they must minimalize the violence and, at the same time, justify its use".[32] Murphy's casting and staging choices worked to reveal the violence inherent in Shakespeare's comedy, while also subverting patriarchal gender codes.

14 For *Female Arts* blogger Madeline Moore, the casting worked particularly effectively with Shakespeare's text at the points where Petruchio asserted the logic of early modern patriarchy, as "when played by a woman, it doubly highlights the ridiculousness of his attitude".[33] Yet, I would argue that it was not simply Whitaker's gender identity that successfully alienated these words—after all, plenty of female-identifying performers have given an unironic delivery of Katherine's final speech, which articulates the same patriarchal logic of women's inferiority—rather, that the casting of the wiry Whitaker opposite Lamb's Katherine, her physical equal in height and build, served to disrupt the patriarchal logic of women's physical inferiority to men. Whitaker's physicality did not conform to the hyper-masculinity that is associated with male social dominance and in severing patriarchal power from the myth of male physical superiority Murphy's "all-female" casting helped to denaturalise male supremacy and successfully critiqued the misogynistic foundations of Shakespeare's play.

4. A Gender-Flipped *Shrew*: Michael Fentiman's Cross-Gender 2014 RSC First Encounter Production

15 If Murphy's production used women playing men to foreground *The Shrew's* misogyny, Michael Fentiman adopted a gender-flipped approach to casting in a bid to eschew the play's misogynist label:

> I hope this [casting] will help the production bring the emotional journey of the characters to the forefront, and allow a timeless story to emerge; a story about troubled, melancholic but ultimately joyful love, rather than the tale of abuse and misogyny that has made the play infamous.[34]

16 As with Murphy's production, in Fentiman's staging the gap between actor and role was integral to his directorial concept, but in this case it provided a space for playfulness, rather than critique. Fentiman's decision to "embrace [the cross-gender casting] here in a playful way"[35] was arguably influenced by his target audience: this was a First Encounters production, staged primarily for children aged 8-13.

17 In his bid to rehabilitate the play, Fentiman's staging presented a Petruchio who was less a patriarchal abuser and more a concerned educator, eager to teach Katherine how to be playful. Casting and design worked in tandem to establish play as central to the production's dramaturgy, with conflicting gender-signifiers playfully jostling alongside each other. Colin Richmond's "Moderbeathan" design foregrounded gender-play: the male actors wore early modern dresses complete with full farthingales and elaborate ruffs, whilst also sporting beards, and the female actors wore 1950s-style suits. A metatheatrical substitute for the Sly framework further established the significance of costume in both creating and subverting gender: a mischievous stagehand called Claire switched

the male and female costume trunks, leading the actors to don the "wrong" clothing. The audience witnessed a hurried conversation between Stephens and Forbes Masson—the actor playing Katherine—in which they agreed to swap roles. The reworked induction thus served to embed the gender-flipped, cross-gender casting in the production's dramaturgy, defining gender as a site of play and establishing a collaborative relationship between the actors playing Katherine and Petruchio.

18 The production's casting and design rendered identity an inherently theatrical phenomenon and in doing so, it implied that the rules of patriarchy could, and arguably should, be subverted. This was particularly evident in the staging of Katherine's troubling final speech. Stephens's Petruchio instructed his wife: "Katherina, that dress of yours becomes you not: / Off with that trifle, throw it under-foot",[36] at which Masson's Katherine began removing her dress, revealing grey tracksuit bottoms, an off-white t-shirt, and chunky black boots underneath. Stephens followed suit, revealing a plain t-shirt and leggings under her male attire. Having freed themselves of their gender-inscribed costuming, Katherine's speech on wifely duty—so rooted in clearly delineated gender roles—became an extension of the production's gender-play rather than an assertion of patriarchal logic. The fact that Katherine did not have a "soft and weak and smooth" body, but was played by a bearded, red-headed man with visible chest hair added a further element of play to *The Shrew*'s denouement. Thus, the casting, design, and staging worked together to destabilise the celebration of patriarchal norms in Shakespeare's text.

19 Whilst this playful approach might celebrate a liberation from the oppression of gender codes, it arguably implies that gender roles are something that an individual can shrug off, like an item of uncomfortable clothing. In doing so, the production uncoupled gender from the social "reiteration of norms which precede, constrain, and exceed the performer", suggesting that individual agency is more powerful than social codes.[37] The production invested in the idea that Petruchio and Katherine are two quirky outsiders: as Stephens put it, this is a love story about "a pair of

misfits finding each other".[38] This reading frames Petruchio's abuse of Katherine as a necessary part of her development and draws on a critical and theatrical tradition in which Petruchio's lessons liberate Katherine "from raging shrewishness [and] from compulsiveness and destructiveness"[39] by teaching her to play. Certainly, Masson's Katherine exhibited decidedly destructive tendencies, stomping about the stage and at one point mercilessly beating her sister with a riding crop. By the end of the play, Katherine's self-conscious performance of demure femininity implied that Petruchio had succeeded in teaching her that play might be more powerful than violence.

20 This is not to suggest that Petruchio was not violent—at one point he hit Grumio so hard in the mouth that his servant appeared to lose some teeth—but Stephens's physically slight Petruchio was not presented as a threat to Masson's broad, bearded Katherine, nor was he defined by macho bravado.[40] Like Whitaker, Stephens sought to connect with his vulnerable side and suggested that he is someone who "has been emotionally scarred by the trauma of the battlefield" and is "softer than we may imagine".[41] This translated into a softly-spoken Petruchio whose acts of coercive control were broadly framed as benevolent and who ultimately used his patriarchal privilege to liberate Katherine from the strictures of gender. In this way, Fentiman's staging arguably rehabilitated Shakespeare's play, using casting and play to maintain its comic impetus without celebrating its patriarchal logic.

5. A Regendered *Shrew*: Justin Audibert's 2019 Gender-Flipped RSC Production

21 Audibert set his gender-flipped regendering of *The Shrew* "an alternative or parallel version of the 1590s [...in] a world where women are the dominant gender rather than men".[42] The rationale

for this casting stemmed less from a clear directorial conceit and more from an experimental agenda, as he sought to answer the question: "if you reverse it and all the powerful people are women, how do you see the play?".[43] Yet, as the significant interpretative differences between Murphy and Fentiman's productions illustrate, "the play" is not a stable entity, and its gender politics can be understood on a spectrum from "comic and appealing" to "archaic and tragic".[44] Given "there can be *no* authoritative reading"[45] of *The Shrew* it arguably "demands a position on its sexual politics".[46] Yet Audibert's production appeared actively to avoid taking a clear position on the play's sexual politics, leaving the casting and gender-flipping as the primary dramaturgical intervention. In interviews, Audibert suggested that part of his rationale for the gender-flipped casting was that he didn't "think the world needs to see any more imagery of men abusing women",[47] which seems to acknowledge that Shakespeare's play depicts abuse. However, the production itself was ambivalent in its representation of the central relationship, showing the cruelty of Petruchio's "taming" methods, while also suggesting a mutual attraction between the pair.

22 Claire Price's quirky, oddball Petruchia was clearly immediately attracted to Joseph Arkley's Katherine, eyeing him approvingly when he entered in Act II, Scene 1. This wooing scene was notably more physical than Murphy and Fentiman's productions, with Petruchia holding Katherine in a prolonged chokehold and spinning him around stage in their first encounter. Yet despite this verbal and physical assault, when Petruchia called for Katherine's hand at the end of the scene, Katherine, to Petruchia's delight and surprise, gave it willingly. Despite Katherine's apparent attraction towards Petruchia, she did not spare him the brutality of the "taming" process. His hunger was depicted particularly vividly, when in Verona Arkley's Katherine kneeled to lick dregs from Hortensia's plate dressed only in a grubby shift. Yet despite the obvious cruelty of Petruchia's behaviour, reviewers frequently commented positively on the character, describing her as "captivatingly charismatic"[48] and suggesting that "[t]he appealing Price makes this tamer practical rather than spiteful and there is, interestingly, real love between the pair at the end".[49] That "real love" might be

considered a possible outcome of coercive and controlling behaviour foregrounds how urgently this play needs to be interrogated in and through performance.

23 The matriarchal reimagining provided a particular opportunity to explore the commonly held idea—articulated in Katherine's final speech—that patriarchy is "natural" outcome of biology, as women "were [physically] too weak and men were too strong".[50] While many critics commented that it was disturbing to see a woman abuse a man, several struggled to appreciate why Arkley's Katherine accepted such treatment from a woman. For example, Peter Kirwan's discussion of the production suggests that because the tall Arkley might be able to physically dominate the shorter Price, "Audibert's production relied on Katherine's *self*-control, his reluctance to step too far out of the gender role ascribed to him by this society."[51] While a desire to adhere to gendered social codes may contribute to a survivor's decision to remain in an abusive relationship, it is the structural inequalities that shore up those social codes which are particularly powerful, denying survivors access to financial, legal, and practical support to leave abusive relationships.[52] In Audibert's production, these structural inequalities were represented by a matriarchal power that legitimised the abuse of men. Such a twist on conventional power dynamics could have afforded a productive space for examining gender roles in both Shakespeare's play and in modern society. However, the idea that *The Shrew* is "a play about a very specific pair of people"[53] appeared to dominate the dramatic interpretation and resulted in a focus on inter-personal dynamics at the expense of an interrogation of social power relations.

24 Ayanna Thompson has observed a tendency in Shakespearean performance for "theatres [to] go middlebrow, middle road, and try and avoid controversy"[54] and Audibert's production might usefully be understood in these terms. In many ways, the recourse to gender-flipped and regendered casting enabled the production to side-step the play's challenges, couching the production in terms of experimentation and therefore eschewing interpretative responsibility. For some reviewers, Audibert's approach

satisfactorily served both Shakespeare and modern sensibilities. Alexander Thom, for example, suggested that the production "excelled precisely by not attempting to fix the play, while equally refusing to leave it unquestioned".[55] Yet, this is to overlook Audibert's multiple interventions in the play's dramaturgy, including having Katherine fall for Petruchia and having Petruchia ultimately reject Katherine's proffered submission at the play's conclusion.[56] These micro "fixes" worked in tandem with the casting to mitigate the more extreme aspects of the play's power dynamics and saved the staging from the full patriarchal weight of the text.

Conclusion: Gender Fluid Casting

25 Elizabeth Klett has argued that "women's cross-gender performance can change our ideas about what gender and Shakespeare can or should look like".[57] Undoubtedly, these three productions used casting to shed new light on Shakespeare's most misogynist play, while also significantly augmenting the number of employment opportunities for women. Yet their ability to "change our ideas about what gender and Shakespeare can or should look like" ultimately depends on the dramaturgy of casting. While Murphy used women playing men to highlight *The Shrew*'s misogyny, in the case of Fentiman and Audibert's productions the gender-flipped casting rendered a shrew-taming narrative more acceptable for contemporary audiences. In this way, casting women as Shakespeare's men might be more concerned with saving Shakespeare than changing or challenging how we understand his works or interrogating gender roles in contemporary society. Indeed, the concept of "cross-gender" casting might shore up conservative notions of gender, as it relies on stable gender categories and reinforces the gender binary, suggesting a straightforward crossing from one gender to its "opposite", as opposed to recognising gender as both a spectrum and a social construct. This has consequences at both an employment and interpretative level, as it may limit work opportunities for non-

binary or genderqueer actors, as well as inviting reductive critical assessments of the significance of gender in performance from critics, scholars, and audiences.

26 It may be more helpful to employ the term “gender-fluid” casting to casting practices where the gender of actor and character do not align. It is arguably a more inclusive term, as well as more accurately describing the dramatic phenomenon of gender in performance. “Gender-fluid” casting recognises that there will be frequent slippages in the reading of gender in performance: sometimes a spectator may simultaneously see a male character, a woman performer, a contemporary person, a Shakespearean character, a marked/unmarked body, whereas at other points in the performance just one of these identities may dominate reception. Given casting interventions look set to play an important role in the future of Shakespearean performance, conceptualising the meaning of casting in performance as something changeable and fluid serves a valuable critical and creative function. Moving beyond the idea of “women playing men” the framework of “gender-fluid” casting recognises that casting alone cannot do the work of interventionalist dramaturgy, whilst acknowledging the important role casting can play in provoking critical reflection upon identity and its vital role in creating a more equitable employment landscape for performers.

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[1] Stephanie Tillotson, "From Gimmick Casting to Standard Practice: Re-gendering Shakespeare in Performance", in J. Paul Halferty and Cath Leeney (eds.), *Analysing Gender in Performance*, Cham, Springer International Publishing, 2022, p. 259.

[2] Sara Reimers, *Casting and the Construction of Femininity in Contemporary Performances of Shakespeare's Plays*, Ph.D. Thesis, Royal Holloway, University of London, 2017, p. 84.

[3] Elaine Aston, "Agitating for Change: Theatre and a Feminist 'Network of Resistance'", *Theatre Research International*, vol. 41, n°1, 2016, p. 6.

[4] It is noteworthy that both Suzman and Walter reference Shakespeare's heroes in their book titles: *Not Hamlet* (2015) and *Brutus and Other Heroines* (2016) respectively.

[5] For more on "resistant" casting see Kirstin Smith (2020).

[6] Elizabeth Klett, *Cross-Gender Shakespeare and English National Identity: Wearing the Codpiece*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, p. 4-5.

[7] Gemma Miller, "Cross-Gender Casting as Feminist Interventions in the Staging of Early Modern Plays", *Journal of International Women's Studies*, vol. 16, n°1, 2014, p. 6

[8] Judith Butler, *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity*, New York/London, Routledge, 1990, p. 174.

[9] Jack Halberstam, *Female masculinity*, Durham, Duke University Press, 2019, p. 266

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[11] For more on the problems with colourblind casting see: Ayanna Thompson, *Passing Strange: Shakespeare, race, and contemporary America*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011.

[12] Nora J. Williams, "Incomplete Dramaturgies", *Shakespeare Bulletin*, vol. 40, n°1, 2022, p. 2, p. 5.

[13] See Imke Lichterfeld "Gender changes and the weak-queen dilemma", *Shakespeare en devenir*, n°18.

[14] For more on the tension between saving Shakespeare and pursuing a social justice agenda see: David Sterling Brown and Sandra Young, "(Un)Just Acts: Shakespeare and Social Justice in Contemporary Performance", *Shakespeare Bulletin*, vol. 39, n°4, 2021, p. 529-535.

[15] Andrew James Hartley, "Prospera's Brave New World: Cross-Cast Oppression and the Four-fold Player in the Georgia Shakespeare Festival Tempest", in James Bulman (ed.), *Shakespeare Re-Dressed: Cross-Gender Casting in Contemporary Performance*, Cranbury (NJ), Associated University Presses, 2008, p. 131.

[16] Elin Diamond, *Unmaking Mimesis: Essays on Feminism and Theater*, New York/London, Routledge, 1997, p. 52.

[17] Ayanna Thompson, "Practicing a Theory/Theorizing a Practice: An Introduction to Shakespearean Colorblind Casting", in Ayanna Thompson (ed.), *Colorblind Shakespeare*, New York, Routledge, 2007, p. 6.

[18] Miranda Fay Thomas, "Re-defining the Shakespearean Actor: Casting and Diversity and Shakespeare's Globe under Emma Rice and Michelle Terry", *Actes des congrès de la Société française Shakespeare,* n°31, 2021, p. 6.

[19] In addition to the two gender-flipped productions at the RSC (2014 and 2019), there were two additional gender-flipped productions in the UK in the late 2010s: Rae McKen's production for Custom

Practice (Above the Arts Theatre, London, 2016) and Jo Clifford's production for the Sherman Theatre (Cardiff, 2019).

[20] Ayanna Thompson, "*All That Glisters*", *NPR*. URL. Accessed 1 May 2023.

[21] Kate Manne, *Down girl: The logic of misogyny*, London, Penguin, 2017, p. 68, p. 69.

[22] Penny Gay, *As she likes it: Shakespeare's unruly women*, New York/London, Routledge, 1994, p. 86.

[23] Emily Detmer, "Civilizing Subordination: Domestic Violence and *The Taming of the Shrew*", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, vol. 48, n°3, 1997, p. 28

[24] Sara Reimers, "From Theory to Action: Staging a Feminist Production of *The Taming of the Shrew*", *Shakespeare*, vol. 20, n°2, 2024, p. 272.

[25] Quoted in Peter Crawley, "Making a Merry Jest of *Shrew's* Misogyny", *Irish Times*, 6 July 2013. URL. Accessed 27 April 2023.

[26] bell hooks, *Feminism Is for Everybody: Passionate Politics*, New York, Routledge, 2015, p. 33.

[27] Quoted in Peter Crawley, *op. cit*.

[28] IMAGINETV NETWORK, *Taming Of The Shrew (Shakespeare's Globe) - Leah Whitaker as Petruchio*, 9 November 2013. URL. Accessed 17 August 2024.

[29] William Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew*, ed. Ann Thompson, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2017.

[30] Kate Lamb, *Adopt An Actor: Katherine Played by Kate Lamb, Performance*. URL. Accessed 26 August 2013.

[31] Mary Tapper, *The Taming of the Shrew—Oxford Playhouse @ Bodleian*. URL. Accessed 28 August 2013.

[32] Emily Detmer, *op. cit*., p. 274.

[33] Madeline Moore, "*The Taming of the Shrew*—theatre review", *Female Arts*. URL. Accessed 28 August 2013.

[34] Michael Fentiman, "Q&A with the Director", *First Encounter Teachers' Pack: The Taming of the Shrew*. URL. Accessed 27 April 2023.

[35] *Ibid*.

[36] A recording of this production is available to view at the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust.

[37] Judith Butler, *Bodies that matter: On the discursive limits of sex*, London, Routledge, 2011, p. 234.

[38] Quoted in Dan Hutton, "The Tamer Tamed?", *Exeunt*, 3 February 2014. URL. Accessed 27 April 2023.

[39] Peter Saccio, "Shrewd and Kindly Farce", *Shakespeare Survey,* vol. 37, 1984, p. 37.

[40] It is noteworthy that the pair were never violent towards each other: instead of hitting Petruchio in Act II, Scene 1, Katherine blew a prolonged raspberry in his face. This choice ensured that the moment was not ghosted by patriarchal violence: if Katherine hit Petruchio in this casting configuration, the audience would simultaneously see a female character hitting a male character and a male actor hitting a female actor.

[41] Quoted in Dan Hutton, *op. cit.*

[42] RSC, *In a reimagined 1590.* URL. Accessed 3 May 2023.

[43] Quoted in Terri Paddock, "*The Taming of the Shrew* in the Age of #MeToo," *Facebook*, 29 April 2019. URL. Accessed 2 May 2023. It is noteworthy that three professional productions had already explored this question in the five years prior to Audibert's production, but lacking the prestige of a mainstage production and tour for the RSC, perhaps Audibert did not consider their findings conclusive.

[44] Anna Kamaralli, S*hakespeare and the Shrew: Performing the Defiant Female Voice*, Houndmills, Basingstoke, Macmillan, 2012, p. 91.

[45] Quoted in Michael Shapiro, "Framing the Taming: Metatheatrical Awareness of Female Impersonation in *The Taming of the Shrew*", *The Yearbook of English Studies,* vol. 23, 1993, p. 143.

[46] Anna Kamaralli, *op. cit*., p. 91.

[47] Quoted in Peter Kirwan, *op. cit*., p. 136.

[48] Ella Hawkins, "Review of *The Taming of the Shrew* dir. by Justin Audibert", *Shakespeare Bulletin*, vol. 38, n°1, 2020, p. 158.

[49] Fiona Mountford, "*The Taming of the Shrew* Review: Landmark Production as Women Take Charge", *The Evening Standard*, 12 June 2019. URL. Accessed 31 March 2024.

[50] Angela Saini, *The Patriarchs: How Men Came to Rule*, London, 4th Estate, 2023, p. 4

[51] Peter Kirwan, *op. cit*., p. 137

[52] For more on the barriers to leaving an abusive relationship see: Daniel G. Saunders, "Barriers to leaving an abusive relationship", in Robert Geffner, Jacquelyn W. White, L. Kevin Hamberger, Alan Rosenbaum, Viola Vaughan-Eden and Victor I. Vieth (eds.), *Handbook of Interpersonal Violence and Abuse Across the Lifespan: A Project of the*

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[53] Shakespeare for All, *Playing Petruchia at the RSC — an Interview with Claire Price*. URL. Accessed 17 August 2024.

[54] David Sterling Brown, "'Unicorns and Fairy Dust': Talking Shakespeare, Performance, and Social (In)Justice with Ayanna Thompson and Farah Karim-Cooper", *Shakespeare Bulletin*, vol. 39, n°4, 2021, p. 542.

[55] Alexander Thom, "Review of Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* (directed by Justin Audibert for the Royal Shakespeare Company) at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, 5 April 2019", *Shakespeare*, vol. 15, n°4, 2019, p. 428.

[56] Shakespeare's text leaves Petruchio's response ambiguous, but the related anonymous text, *The Taming of a Shrew*, includes a stage direction which overtly states that Katherine submits.

[57] Elizabeth Klett, *op. cit.*, p. 167.

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