SHAKESPEARE AND THE THIRTIES: REPRESENTATIONS OF THE PAST IN CONTEMPORARY PERFORMANCE

by

JAMI ROGERS

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the performance history of Shakespeare focusing on those productions performed as a period analogue of the nineteen-thirties. It engages with the material in two ways. It first attempts to locate influences that have led to the development of this style of performance, finding correlations with both theatrical production and televisual drama. It then examines the productions as performed, focusing on the construction of scenography and actor performances. Throughout the analysis, this thesis engages with shifts in the representation of the historical past on both stage and screen.

For my grandfather, who told me about West Virginia in the thirties
when I was very small

Herbert C. Rogers

1916-2003

"Take Me Home, Country Roads"

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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ABBREVIATIONS

All's Well	*All's Well That Ends Well*
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
Bertie	*Bertie and Elizabeth*
BFI	British Film Institute
Birmingham Rep	Birmingham Repertory Theatre
Brideshead	*Brideshead Revisited*
Caesar	*Julius Caesar*
Dream	*A Midsummer Night's Dream*
Edward	*Edward and Mrs Simpson*
ESC	English Shakespeare Company
Forsyte	*The Forsyte Saga*
IOS	*Independent on Sunday*
Jewel	*The Jewel in the Crown*
LIACC	*Love in a Cold Climate*
Masterpiece	*Masterpiece Theatre*
Measure	*Measure for Measure*
Merchant	*The Merchant of Venice*
Much Ado	*Much Ado About Nothing*
NT	Royal National Theatre
NUM	National Union of Mineworkers
Old Vic	Old Vic Theatre
PBS	Public Broadcasting Service
Rose	*The Rose Between Two Thorns*
RP	Received Pronunciation

RSC	Royal Shakespeare Company
Swan	Swan Theatre
Troilus	*Troilus and Cressida*
TSTAMD	*To Serve Them All My Days*
Two Gentlemen	*The Two Gentlemen of Verona*

INTRODUCTION

I. PERIOD ANALOGUE

"the period a Shakespeare production is set in is the first question you ask"

~Nicholas Hytner[1]

I begin with Hytner's statement in part because the director is an example of what W. B. Worthen refers to as "Shakespeare's *auteurs*", part of a profession that had come into "being at the moment that 'drama' gains an independent existence as literature".[2] The critic views this development as one consequence of the emergence of the naturalistic stage movement from its equivalent in literature. Worthen argues that this evolution in theatrical practice "created the need for directors…to manage the dense scenic detail of naturalism".[3] The contemporary function of the director evolved from the perceived need for a single person to orchestrate the images of the *mise-en-scène*. In charge of the full elements of theatrical production, the post of director has developed into one in which she or he manages the "relationship between the dramatic text – as 'literature', inscribed with values of coherence and transcendence – and theatre."[4] Not simply coordinating the mechanics of production, the contemporary Shakespearean director has evolved into an author producing not only the *mise-en-scène*, but also an "interpretation" of the text. The director's authorial status also now

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[1] Annette Vieusseux, Rehearsal diary, Stagework.org, <http://www.stagework.org.uk/stageworks/muchado/rehearsaldiaries.html>, accessed 14 January 2008.

[2] W. B. Worthen, *Shakespeare and the Authority of Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) 47.

[3] Ibid., 46.

[4] Ibid., 47.

referred to by the manner in which productions are discussed, for instance "Peter Brook's *Dream*".

It is this aspect of theatre – the interpretation of text in performance – with which this thesis is concerned, which begins at the intersection of literature and theatre. As W. B. Worthen observes, "books [printed playtexts] and theatres" are interdependent upon each other in dramatic criticism, "frame[ing] the divided identity of drama itself."[5] Shakespeare's *auteurs*, the directors, thus exist in the space that bridges the playtext and theatre. Directors (along with their assembled staff) produce the theatrical equivalent of the literary close reading with an interpretation of Shakespeare's play through theatrical production. As Worthen has observed (and as Hytner's quotation illustrates), "Setting the play…is at once the most visible dimension of the director's work and a mark of how the 'director' becomes a functional site for the attribution of meaning".[6] For Hytner, "period" is an essential ingredient of Shakespearean production, upon which much of the production's "meaning" is sited. It is also the style of Shakespearean theatre that this thesis proposes to examine.

In contemporary theatre, the use of an historical epoch as an interpretive tool is an approach to Shakespearean performance that has become known to critics as the "period analogue". Two attempts to define this type of theatrical practice have been made by Peter Holland and Ralph Berry. Holland states that the analogue is, in part, a method of production that engages with a "precise analogy in recent history to serve

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[5] W. B. Worthen, "Reading the Stage" in *Shakespeare Bulletin*, Volume 25, Number 4 (Winter 2007) 70.
[6] Worthen, *Shakespeare and the Authority*, 63.

to explicate the Shakespearean text".[7] To Holland, the representation of historical period is thus used as an explanatory tool for the early modern work.

In his introduction to *On Directing Shakespeare*, Berry attempts to map out the full scope of the interpretive possibilities for theatrical production. While admitting that "categories are not watertight", he places the period analogue in its broader theatrical context, finding that contemporary Shakespearean production falls into four broad groupings: "Renaissance; modern; a historical setting that is neither Renaissance nor modern; and eclectic."[8] In his breakdown of the historical setting, Berry uses illustrative examples of production to define the properties of the analogue, discussing the work of directors Peter Brook and Tyrone Guthrie in order to help the reader visualise the parameters of the category. As with Holland, Berry views the period analogue and its costuming as a way "to explain the play, as well as dress [costume] it."[9]

The setting is inextricably linked with what Dennis Kennedy calls the "clear relationship between what a production looks like and what its spectators accept as its statement and value."[10] Given the literary bias of performance criticism and its substitution of "the literary signifiers of text (diction, allusion, poetic structure and effects etc.) [for] those of the stage (delivery, costume, light, gesture and so forth)", as Andrew James Hartley observes, the historical setting is a primary method by which

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[7] Peter Holland, *English Shakespeares: Shakespeare on the English stage in the 1990s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) 95.
[8] Ralph Berry, *On Directing Shakespeare: Interviews with Contemporary Directors* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1989) 13.
[9] Ibid., 17.
[10] Dennis Kennedy, *Looking at Shakespeare: A Visual History of Twentieth-Century Performance*, second edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) 5.

reviewers (audiences) analyse Shakespearean production.[11] In the analysis of the analogue, the reading of the work is frequently influenced by the depiction of the director's chosen historical milieu.

Critics' use of the period analogue as a form of literary interpretation can be illustrated with two recent examples. In writing about Phillip Breen's *Measure for Measure* at Clwyd Theatr Cymru, Carol Rutter notes that the director chose to set this particular production in "1890s Vienna". Analysing the setting at length, she continues,

> The culture on view was a culture that took itself seriously – a culture who wore black, played Chopin études and, for kicks, dressed its whores in Kaiser helmets; a culture whose physical geography inscribed on its surfaces hypocrisies (or perhaps just confusions of purpose) that it simultaneously exposed and repressed, an urban geography shared by the licit and illicit.[12]

The culture in which the play was set was used by Rutter to explicate the production's meaning, the text mediated by the analogue. Charles Spencer also places importance on period analogue as a method by which the play's action is framed. In his *Daily Telegraph* review of Alan Strachan's 1998 production of *Troilus and Cressida* at the Open Air Theatre, Spencer notes that the director's

> choice of the Edwardian period successfully reflects the complacency of the characters, and their habit of banging on about honour while behaving

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[11] Andrew James Hartley, "The Schrödinger Effect: Reading and Misreading Performance", in *Shakespeare Survey 62* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009) 230.
[12] Carol Chillington Rutter, "Shakespeare Performances in England (and Wales), 2008", in *Shakespeare Survey 62* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009) 373.

dishonourably. Those fighting the war seem like arrested public schoolboys, still trying to win their colours, and one is reminded of the attitudes that prevailed before the officers and men discovered the true horrors of war.[13]

Within both reviews, the settings are an integral part of the critical analysis of the productions.

While acknowledging that directorial intervention is a key producer of meaning to the performative text, the prevalence of historical settings warrants further examination. This thesis seeks not to challenge the manner in which the Shakespearean period analogue is interpreted by both directors and critics, but rather to examine it from other perspectives. With the majority of directors choosing some kind of historical framework within which the plays' actions takes place, the potential field of enquiry into the period analogue is vast. For purposes of scope, I have limited the consideration of this production style largely to a body of work performed in the professional British theatres. The raw material for this thesis is confined to productions of Shakespeare set in the inter-war years, in particular those using the thirties as their interpretive framework. Apart from productions using modern dress in the thirties, the period was largely (although not wholly) unused by theatre practitioners until the 1980s. Given the bulk of thirties-set productions occurred post-1980s, I have chosen to restrict consideration to productions that were staged in the last two decades of the twentieth century, the date of the first identifiable thirties analogue in this time period. A full list of the productions encompassed by this thesis is available in Appendix A.

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[13] *Daily Telegraph*, 15 June 1998.

One omission worth mentioning at the outset is that while I consider representations of the thirties onstage, I have confined the analysis of the Shakespearean analogue in performance to its manifestation on the stage. In part, this is because the handful of thirties-set Shakespearean films are covered in detail elsewhere. The relationship between their stage version and the film, in particular with regard to *Richard III* with Ian McKellen, has also been considered in film studies. Further consideration here would be a diversion from my primary task of the examination of the thirties setting as it is staged in a theatrical environment.

II. RECYCLING HISTORY

One crucial aspect that I shall be exploring in this thesis is the representation of the historical past in the dramatic form of the period analogue. Marvin Carlson investigates the theatre's relationship with its own history in *The Haunted Stage*. In his monograph he asserts that the "dynamic of recycling is deeply embedded in the process of theatrical reception".[14] Including "recycling" Carlson uses several terms to describe this phenomenon of the re-use of narrative, actor and prop in theatrical production, with "ghosting" perhaps being the most evocative. Shakespearean theatre participates in this activity through numerous methods. In narrative terms, for example, the texts themselves are a series of recycled stories. This re-use has advantages in the ability to craft material with which the audience is already familiar. Not only is the re-telling of stories already a proven way of ensuring box office

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[14] Marvin Carlson, *The Haunted Stage: The Theatre as Memory Machine* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2001) 35.

receipts (the popularity of *Dirty Dancing* the West End musical, for example, capitalising on knowledge of the story from its original cinematic form), it enables a type of shorthand language to be developed in narrative terms. With theatre a more concise format for storytelling, there is often not time for lengthy exposition. Thus, a familiar story gives the dramatist the means "to plunge directly into the action at or near a point of maximum interest" (beginning *in media res*).[15]

Shakespeare's work contains numerous examples of the re-use of narratives recognisable to Elizabethan audiences. The majority of his plays were re-workings of earlier narratives of folklore and mythology. *Troilus and Cressida*, for example, is the playwright's response to the Trojan War. Similarly, Shakespeare recycled themes explored by Boccaccio and Chaucer in crafting *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. Although Shakespeare's handling of his themes was groundbreaking in terms of the professional theatre, from its origin Shakespearean theatre was thus participating in the recycling of narrative material in the production of an onstage product.

As well as folklore and myth, Carlson also identifies the recycling of current and historical events as key to the production of theatre. As with narrative re-use, this was an established part of Elizabethan theatrical culture. Shakespeare's history plays provide ample evidence of the popularity of the re-telling of historical events, for example. Carlson cites the re-telling "of a sensational and highly publicized crime of the previous generation in Kent" in *Arden of Faversham*, the anonymous play from 1592.[16] Our contemporary theatrical culture also provides copious examples of the

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[15] Carlson, 23.
[16] Ibid., 34.

recycling of historical narratives. Playwrights regularly draw inspiration from the past in the production of new work. To cite but one example, Richard Nelson crafted his fictional account of the events leading up to the 1849 Astor Place riots in New York in his 1990 play *Two Shakespearean Actors*.

Current events also provide an arena for the theatrical re-telling of already-familiar narratives. Two of David Hare's plays, for example, were crafted from interviews with eyewitnesses and others involved in two highly-publicised occurrences: *The Permanent Way* which investigated the state of the rail system in the wake of a spate of fatal train crashes and *The Power of Yes* which attempted to explain the "credit crunch" (2008-09) to its audience.

In exploring the thirties period analogue, I want to take Carlson's work a step further, applying it to contemporary Shakespearean theatre. In doing so, I would like to suggest that the use (and re-use) of historical periods is another version of theatrical recycling. In examining the period setting in performance, it is useful to think of its historical aspect in terms similar to those described in the examples of *Troilus and Cressida* and *The Power of Yes*. The practical advantage to both playwrights was prior knowledge of the events depicted brought by at least some members of the audience into the auditorium. The previous encounters with the narratives allowed Shakespeare and Hare to recycle mythological and recent events in dramatic form, largely due to the assumption of familiarity of the audience with the back-story without resorting to lengthy explication. The audience (with a little help in the form of the prologue in *Troilus* and a character loosely masquerading as Hare himself as Chorus) provided the context from their own knowledge of these stories. In effect, a shorthand was thus

made possible by the re-use of already-familiar narratives. It is on this level – what can be considered a form of narrative shorthand – that the historical recycling might be observed to exist within the theatrical Shakespearean period setting. I want to explore this idea first in terms of the historical knowledge of practitioner and audience, then to illustrate Carlson's "ghosting" through the historical imagery presented by production.

In discussion of their use of period setting for Shakespeare's plays, practitioners often speak of the choice in terms that relate it to their own historical knowledge. Tim Luscombe directed a production of *The Merchant of Venice* for the English Shakespeare Company set in the Italy of 1938. In his pre-production research he had found parallels between the Venice of Shakespeare's time and that of Mussolini's. Luscombe named two aspects of Venetian society in the two eras which he had found particularly resonant: the curfew that allowed Jews to trade during the day but confined them to the ghetto at night and the restrictions on marriage outside their religion.[17] The fruits of Luscombe's historical research were available to those in the audience who had purchased the souvenir programme. In it two timelines were included which outlined the similarities between early modern and early twentieth century Venice, the information clearly informed by the director's research. Thus the historical knowledge acquired by the director framed the production, which was transcribed into a partial re-telling of the events of 1938 through the prism of Shakespeare's text.

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[17] Tim Luscombe, in conversation, July 2007.

For her 1992 production of *As You Like It*, Maria Aitken likewise used her historical knowledge in crafting the period setting. In an article written for *The Times*, Aitken admitted that she "had always been intrigued by the figure of Gerald Berners, the model for Lord Merlin in Nancy Mitford's novels *The Pursuit of Love* and *Love in a Cold Climate*, who turned his country house into a place where professionals and amateurs collaborated in the making of music in the Thirties."[18] This curious mix of the fictional representation (Merlin) of a real person (Berners) inspired Aitken to use the framing device of a country house where amateurs and professionals were assembled to make an amateur film of Shakespeare's pastoral comedy. As with Luscombe's production, Aitken also reiterated her historical framework in an essay in the souvenir programme.

The danger of ghosting historical material onto a Shakespearean production in the form of its period setting can be observed in the reception of Aitken's *As You*. To some extent, the director may have assumed that her audience possessed identical historical knowledge to hers. As with *Troilus* and *The Power of Yes*, the assumption was possibly that the audience would be able to understand Aitken's framework *because* their understanding of the thirties was similar to the director's. While Nancy Mitford and Lord Berners/Merlin are not unknown to the reading public, it seems that Aitken's historical understanding of the era was not necessarily widely shared. Charles Spencer's somewhat derisive response to Aitken's authorial imposition began with "Though you'd never guess if it weren't for a lengthy programme note, the action is supposedly staged in the garden of the aristocratic Gerald Berners".[19] The

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[18] *The Times*, 18 July 1992.
[19] *Daily Telegraph*, 22 June 1992.

implication being that because the programme note was necessary in order to comprehend Aitken's use of the period, the director's interpretation was obscured by an unfamiliar use of historical knowledge.

With practitioners rarely on hand to inform the audience before curtain-up of the historical framework used in creating their production setting, the souvenir programme becomes a key site for the recycling of history in Shakespearean production. For some audience members (those who wish to spend a minimum of £3 to acquire the specialist knowledge), the programme notes are their initial exposure to any production. As Miriam Gilbert observes, programmes can "create expectation for the audience, even tell the audience what they should think."[20] The productions of Luscombe and Aitken represented (recycled) their historical knowledge in the fashioning of their production settings. Crucial to the reading of the historical *milieux* was the assumption that audiences would be able to deconstruct the onstage era, using their own understanding of the decade to extrapolate the meaning of the production. The programme further recycled the historical period, re-presenting in print form those aspects of the depicted era that were used onstage, ensuring that this historical knowledge was identical on both sides of the theatrical curtain.

The recycling of history in performance goes beyond its use by directors in the crafting of their interpretations (and subsequent programme notes). In scenic design terms, the material of history is also re-used from production to production, creating layers of familiarity for audiences (regular theatre-goers the major group to benefit, in

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[20] Miriam Gilbert, "Performance as Deflection", in *A Companion to Shakespeare and Performance*, ed. by Barbara Hodgdon and W. B. Worthen (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005) 320.

Carlson's estimation). This is an effect Carlson refers to as "ghosting", to which he attributes its presence in infinite variety in theatrical production. As with Luscombe's and Aitken's use of historical knowledge in crafting their period setting, in terms of the representation of history on the stage this "ghosting" may viewed as fulfilling audience expectation.

In terms of reproducing the historical material culture, it is likely that expectation plays an important part in the recycling of the physical signifiers of various eras. Certain objects seem to be essential ingredients to the material signification of historical periods. For example, productions that wish to evoke the medieval England of Shakespeare's history plays use chain mail (no doubt a lighter version of the original) for their warriors (Bastard, *King John*, RSC, 2006; Henry V, *Henry V*, RSC, 2008; Queen Margaret, *The Plantagenets*, RSC, 1988). The British presence on the Indian subcontinent during the Raj is often signified through the use of wicker furniture as scenery (*Much Ado About Nothing*, RSC, 1976; *Twelfth Night*, Young Vic, 1983). Maids in uniform, complete with long black skirt and the prerequisite cap, can be seen in multiple versions of the Victorian and Edwardian eras (*Twelfth Night*, Chichester Festival Theatre, 2007; *Twelfth Night*, RSC, 2007). While the chain mail, wicker furniture, and maids function as signifiers for the historical periods represented onstage, their use in multiple productions is significant. In the popular imagination, chain mail is associated with the middle ages and as such is a logical signifier of the era. Its repeat appearances onstage also reinforce the expectation that chain mail is an integral part of the visual representation of the middle ages, history being recycled through the reappearance of this piece of costuming over multiple productions.

The recycling of history, both in terms of narrative and material culture, is an integral part of the Shakespearean period setting. Information derived from historical fact can drive the representation of an era onstage, as in the Luscombe and Aitken productions. Established methods of communicating the historical era to the audience are forged through the recycling of costume and scenic materials, such as the chain mail, wicker furniture and period-specific servant uniforms mentioned above. In order to examine other important venues for this "ghosting" process, it is necessary to expand the discourse from stage to the wider dramatic forum.

III. THE CENTRALITY OF TELEVISION AND HISTORICAL RECYCLING

The cultural context in which Shakespearean productions have been performed has been a rich vein of study within the performance history discipline. Scholars such as Virginia Mason Vaughan and Gary Jay Williams have made valuable contributions to contextualizing performances of *Othello* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in their respective theatrical histories. This continues to be a central tenet in performance criticism with Shakespearean productions analysed through numerous social and cultural factors. This thesis engages in contextualising the thirties-set Shakespearean productions through other forms of non-Shakespearean performance, notably television period drama.

In *Shakespeare and the Force of Modern Performance*, W. B. Worthen observes that "live and mediated performance are now often implicated in one another."[21] His

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[21] W. B. Worthen, *Shakespeare and the Force of Modern Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) 2.

examples range from electronic media produced for a specific stage production to the adaptation of television shows for the theatre. The inclusion of the televisual as a part of theatrical performance plays on audience familiarity with the medium. Contemporary Shakespearean theatre is not immune from this invasion of the televisual in theatrical production. As Laurie Osborne notes, "The conventions of feature films [and television] reach into stage productions" and references to the moving image as well as the signification of the media have both been present in various contemporary productions.[22] Nicholas Hytner regularly signifies the media in his Shakespearean modern dress interpretations, with television camera and sound crews that broadcasted the (propagandistic) speeches of Henry V or Claudius (RNT: *Henry V*, 2003; *Hamlet*, 2010). The English Shakespeare Company (1989) used this same effect of the manipulation of the media by a country's leader, with a televised address by the new king-conqueror of *Richard III*, Richmond. These examples help to establish that theatre is not disconnected from the influence of other media and regularly recycle mediatized imagery in its creation.

Despite this interconnectedness in practice, the study of Shakespeare on stage, television and film have largely developed as separate lines of enquiry. While they each contain commonalities of approach – the printed text as departure point, for example – the disciplines have remained connected primarily through the raw material, the script. Recent scholarship has attempted to bridge this gap, some of which has highlighted the interconnectedness of these dramatic forms. One such example is Andrew James Hartley's article for *Shakespeare Bulletin*, which explores

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[22] Laurie E. Osborne, "Speculations on Shakespearean Cinematic Liveness", in *Shakespeare Bulletin*, Volume 24, Number 3 (Fall 2006), 50.

inter-textualities between the television show *Star Trek*'s reference to Shakespeare's

Tempest, the programme's star Patrick Stewart and the actor's appearance as Prospero

in Rupert Goold's 2006 RSC production. The critic asserts that the presence of the star

and his previous incarnation as the television character Jean-Luc Picard are integral to

Tempest's reception of the production by its theatre audience.[23]

Without direct reference to Carlson's work, Hartley's piece positions itself within that

complex arena of reception that is frequently referred to in *The Haunted Stage* as

"ghosting". The inter-textual references between art forms provide the meaning,

although as Hartley rightly points out, "Meaning is constructed by audiences based on

what they experience" which includes "their prior experience with the play, with the

actors, their interests, beliefs, biases and prejudices."[24] Despite these difficulties in

gauging audience reception, what is clear is that television can be viewed as an

ingrained part of that reception. With Hartley's work in mind I want to posit the idea

that television drama, with its multiple portrayals of the past, is inextricably linked to

the Shakespearean period analogue. This operates on multiple levels, stemming first

from the primacy of television in our contemporary cultural discourse. It also operates

in the formation of cultural memory, as historical eras are (re)produced in multiple

dramas, using prior familiarity as a "ghosting" tool as viewers are reacquainted with

the represented past.

The sheer power of television's cultural force must first be acknowledged in order to

unravel the links between television and the theatrical presentations of history. John

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[23] Andrew James Hartley, "Remembering the Actor: Embodied Shakespeare and the Individual in the Audience" in *Shakespeare Bulletin*, Volume 25, Number 3 (Fall 2007) 41-51.
[24] Ibid., 43.

Fiske and John Hartley have described television in relation to what they call "its centrality to our culture".[25] Television ownership statistics back up this claim, which show that by the early nineties at least one television is present in 97 to 98 per cent of western homes.[26] This is coupled with further research that shows that Britons, on average, watched 24 hours of television per week in 2001.[27] This means that nearly every home has a television set and that set is frequently turned to the "on" position during leisure hours. This has led, as Corner observed, the television set to "become a part of contemporary domestic furniture" that has "quickly [become] naturalized as a cultural requirement".[28]

As John Corner points out, however, "influence" is "one of the most treacherous and confusing terms in all mass media research."[29] In theatrical terms, there is clearly a case to be made for the media influence on how meanings in production are projected and received. Andrew Hartley's reception of the RSC's *Tempest* with Patrick Stewart was clearly mediated through his knowledge of Stewart's work in *Star Trek*. Evidence of film and television programmes feeding into audience reception can also be found in production reviews. The film *Singing in the Rain* was used as a descriptor for the opening moments of Nancy Meckler's *Romeo and Juliet*.[30] The television serial *Capital City* was evoked in the assessment of David Thacker's *Merchant of Venice*.[31] Michael Dobson uses the comedy of *Carry on Cleo* and *Up Pompeii* to illustrate the

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[25] John Fiske and John Hartley, *Reading Television* (London and New York: Routledge, 1978, 2003) 3.
[26] John Corner and Sylvia Harvey, "Introduction", in *Television Times: A Reader*, John Corner and Sylvia Harvey, eds. (London: Arnold, 1996) xii.
[27] Jack Williams, *Entertaining the Nation: A Social History of British Television* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2004) 14-15.
[28] John Corner, *Critical Ideas in Television Study* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) 87.
[29] Ibid., 91.
[30] *Cahiers Élisabéthains*, special issue 2007, 29.
[31] *The Guardian*, 5 June 1993.

production style of Christopher Luscombe's *Comedy of Errors*.[32] In the same way that Luscombe and Aitken expected their audiences to be possessed of the same historical details as themselves, these authors seem to assume that because they are aware of these pieces of pop culture so, too, are their readers. While this is not necessarily the case, to those readers familiar with the references the benefit is what amounts to an operational shorthand in the audience's collective mind's eye. In those cases, images of tap dancing (*Romeo*), young, rich City stock traders (*Merchant*) and broad comedy (*Comedy*) are readily available for the decoding of the production *mise-en-scène*.

The reviewer's assumed familiarity of audiences with mass media forms of drama poses interesting questions for the interdisciplinary study of stage and screen (in either its cinematic or television varieties). Clearly, familiarity with other media is not confined to either end of the review spectrum, as both journalistic reviewers and performance scholars utilise this type of shorthand in crafting their production assessments. This highlights the dominance of the moving image in contemporary culture, but its exact influence on theatrical production is tentative and awaits detailed attention. However, the part mediated images play in the reception of theatrical work is made clear through these examples (and Andrew Hartley's article) and this effect extends beyond the reception of theatre by critics.

In his introduction to *Television Histories* Gary Edgerton asserts that "Television must be understood (and seldom is) as the primary way that children and adults form their understanding of the past." He cites both the prevalence of historical documentary

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[32] Michael Dobson, "Shakespeare Performances in England, 2006", in *Shakespeare Survey 60* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) 305.

programming and fictional depictions of the past on television and film as providing the viewer with a "frame of reference" for historical events. Edgerton uses a cluster of dramas and documentaries portraying the experience of slavery to illustrate his point: *Roots* (1977), *Amistad* (1997) and *Africans in America* (1998). His implication is that viewers draw on history in its various forms, using television and film as sources about the era depicted.[33] Historical knowledge is thus ghosted between formats, each re-visit to the era providing the viewer with a growing base of knowledge from which impressions are made of the re-enacted era(s).

A similar view of depictions of history on television comes from Sonia Livingstone, who also cites the mass media as a major source from which

> …we gain all kinds of knowledge about the world that we precisely did not have before—about other countries, past periods in history, other lifestyles, inaccessible institutions (the Houses of Parliament, law courts) or rarely encountered places (hospitals or prisons), even inside our own bodies via medical science programmes….Mediated knowledge is not just about recognition of the familiar or legitimation of the known, but also about the discovery of the new, about becoming familiar with the unknown…[34]

While knowledge about the past can come from many sources, it is this idea that the collective "we" have become "familiar with the unknown", rendering the unfamiliar

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[33] Gary R. Edgerton, "Television as Historian: A Different Kind of History Altogether", in *Television Histories: Shaping Collective Memory in the Media Age*, ed. by Gary R. Edgerton and Peter C. Rollins (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2001) 1-2.

[34] Sonia Livingstone, "Mediated Knowledge: Recognition of the familiar, discovery of the new", in *Television and Common Knowledge*, ed. by Jostein Gripsrud (London: Routledge, 1999) 97.

recognisable through television programming that is of interest here. In order to explore this further, I want to examine the potential for links between television and film portrayals of the past and the Shakespearean period analogue.

The first cross-pollination site between dramatic forms I want to consider is in audience composition. Demographic evidence exists which suggests there is some overlap in audiences for both Shakespeare and television (and film) period drama. Outside the industries themselves, audience information is difficult to obtain as the figures are generally only used internally and the fine details are not shared with those outside. The similarities between the available demographic information is, however, instructive and worth detailing here.

According to Mary Butlin, the Head of Market Planning at the Royal Shakespeare Company, the RSC has not commissioned audience research that specifically asks whether their patrons watch period drama. This obviously hampers drawing any direct conclusions about the similarities in the audience composition of both dramatic forms. However, Butlin did state that "There is a bias in our audience to women over 45 years old who are well educated and in the higher social grades…We also know our audience are 'avid readers', over half of whom enjoy Radio 4."[35] This is consistent with Andrew Higson's assertion in *English Heritage, English Cinema*, based on research done by "cinema, advertising, and video industries". From this, he deduced that "period dramas were overwhelmingly favoured by women, by older cinemagoers,

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[35] Mary Butlin, private correspondence, March 2009.

and by more upmarket cinemagoers."[36] The important point here is that both the RSC and the cinema costume drama audiences skew toward older elements of the demographic range. This is a trend that can also be found in other information that breaks down theatre and television audiences by age, income and education levels.

A recent Arts Council audience segmentation report found that a group they referred to as "traditional culture vultures" consists primarily of highly educated persons, nearly two-thirds of whom are women. Those women typically tend to be older, with two-thirds aged between 45 and 74. Their most watched television choices were "BBC1, BBC2 and UKTV Drama", with TV drama programmes one of these viewers' top four genres of interest.[37] Unfortunately the study does not break down the TV drama genre further, but high-profile period dramas are aired with relative frequency on BBC1 with less airing on the other two channels cited. However the possibility remains that a portion of the theatre audiences polled by the Arts Council (being "culture vultures") would also have been interested in the dramatisations of classic novels depicted in the period drama genre. Although again there is no direct correlation between costume drama and Shakespearean theatregoing, the Arts Council's information corresponds with that of the RSC, again indicating the demographic possibility that audience overlap exists.

Although I have been unable to access British television audience demographics for period drama, I did obtain the information from a key US programme in the genre. *Masterpiece Theatre* has broadcast and co-produced period drama with British

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[36] Andrew Higson, *English Heritage: English Cinema: Costume Drama Since 1980* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003) 101-102.
[37] *Arts audiences: insight* (London: Arts Council of England, 2008) 13-14.

broadcasters since 1971. It has aired the majority of high-profile serials in the genre on the US public broadcasting network, PBS.[38] *Masterpiece* also has an audience demographic similar to those detailed above, showing that the programme has a similar demographic breakdown to those above, with women 50+ making up 39 per cent and men 50+ 28 per cent of its audience; the overall population of the US is 16 per cent women and 14 per cent men respectively.[39] Again, these figures are far from conclusive, but given their similarities, I would suggest that there is overlap in theatre audiences with those who also enjoy period drama in its film and television formats. This increases the potential for historical recycling to occur, with audiences using previous knowledge acquired from one depiction of an era (televised) to inform the Shakespearean period analogue (theatre).

Marvin Carlson suggests that audiences bring into the theatre with them associations of an actor's previous work allowing them to ghost prior roles onto the actor's current one.[40] Therefore, the work of practitioners is also an important consideration as a site for historical recycling. A more easily documented overlap between forms of drama can be seen in the fact that practitioners work regularly in a combination of theatre, film and television. This intersection between television and theatre can be substantial, with actors in particular shuttling frequently between them. This, in turn, can provide actors, directors and designers with experience in the re-creation of numerous historical eras. Actors would also bring their own experiences and past roles to bear on their current project, with the knowledge of past eras (the thirties)

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[38] PBS is an acronym for the Public Broadcasting Service, the television network's full name. I use the acronym as the broadcaster is known by "PBS" both by employees and viewers.
[39] PBS, National Audience Handbook 2005-2006 (compiled from Nielsen Television Research data); John Fuller, (retired) Senior Director, PBS Research, private correspondence, 19 March 2009.
[40] Carlson, 8.

acquired in one context feeding into their next encounter with the decade, for example. This is particularly true when practitioners (actors, directors, designers) have experience with classical, contemporary and period drama. To take one recent example, Nancy Carroll's stage experience alone has spanned Mamet, Shakespeare, Ibsen, new drama at the Bush Theatre and a revival of Terence Rattigan's 1939 play *After the Dance*. Carroll's television work is equally varied, including two dramas set in the thirties (*Cambridge Spies*, *The Gathering Storm*) as well as other period-set and contemporary dramas. Given her multiple experiences with the period setting, Carroll's understanding of the thirties acquired from her television work may well have informed her portrayal of Joan Scott-Fowler in *After the Dance*.

The work of other practitioners also contains significant overlap between television and theatre, including examples of multiple engagements in various thirties settings in Shakespeare and period drama. Before directing the RSC's 1991 *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, David Thacker had directed productions of *French Without Tears*, *The Glass Menagerie*, and a verbatim play crafted from memories of the thirties, *The Rose Between Two Thorns*. Sam Mendes had delved into Weimar Germany (*Cabaret*) and Depression-era America (*The Glass Menagerie*) before using a colonial thirties setting for his 1997 *Othello*. By 1999 when he played Shylock in Trevor Nunn's *The Merchant of Venice*, Henry Goodman had appeared in numerous period dramas on stage and television including Arthur Miller's 1938-set play *Broken Glass*, which made its UK debut at the National Theatre and was subsequently filmed by the BBC and *Masterpiece Theatre*. The Beatrice of Gregory Doran's thirties-set *Much Ado About Nothing*, Harriet Walter, had also had extensive experience on stage and in television period drama, including her appearance as Harriet Vane opposite Edward

Petherbridge's Lord Peter Wimsey in a 1930s-set Dorothy L. Sayers trilogy, *Strong Poison, Have His Carcase* and *Gaudy Night*.

How much effect this overlap has on performance and reception is difficult to quantify. However, Marvin Carlson's argument in *The Haunted Stage* is valuable in this regard, remarking that "The expectations an audience brings to a new reception experience are the residue of memory of previous such experiences."[41] Given the repetition in theatre, film and television of dramas depicting both contemporary events and historical eras (including the thirties), the "ghosting" effect is applicable to these multiple images of the past. Through this accumulation of images, for example, audiences would be able to overlay with each other their experiences of encountering a particular epoch. Representations of the past could thus be compared with one another, each version adding to the viewer's (or indeed practitioner's) knowledge as they become reacquainted with an era they had previously seen (re)enacted. The narrative of an era could also be said to linger with the ability to overlay the knowledge, filling in the gaps of one version of events with an awareness of them through previous experience.

This ghosting of Shakespeare with period drama can be demonstrated through the (perhaps) unusual venue of the BBC's Shakespeare series, produced between 1978 and 1985. As is widely known the BBC's series was ambitious in scope in its dramatisation of the then-accepted full canon, while simultaneously being artistically conservative. This latter point has been attributed to the reliance on funding from an American partner, the distributor Time-Life Television (its direct business progeny is

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[41] Carlson, 5.

BBC Worldwide Americas). As Olwen Terris notes, the "stated desire" (via Time-Life's directives) of the series was "to meet perceived audience expectations of how Shakespeare's dramas should look and sound [including the dictums that there must be]…no cutting or re-arranging of text, no modern costumes, no foreign or regional accents, no radical interpretations."[42] Audience expectation, in this case, was likely to have been the expectation of its American viewers (perhaps as narrowly representative as employees at Time-Life), whose knowledge of British television drama in the seventies would have in all likelihood derived largely through the broadcast of period drama on *Masterpiece Theatre*.

The BBC Shakespeares also conformed to the aesthetic that was dominant in television period drama of the time, as the various plays were often set in naturalistically represented historical eras. Their production was also dominated by a studio-bound videotaped quality, a shared visual aesthetic with period dramas of the time. Ghosting was effected both by actors who had experience in Shakespearean theatre and television period drama, dominated by those who regularly worked in both genres. Perhaps the most eloquent example of this ghosting of the BBC Shakespeare by period drama, however, comes from the production of *Julius Caesar*. Several layers of ghosting are present within this production, providing a cogent example of the interconnectedness between period drama and its Shakespearean equivalent. The series producer, Cedric Messina, had chosen Herbert Wise to direct Shakespeare's Roman tragedy largely, as James Bulman notes, on the basis that Wise had also helmed the highly successful (Roman) epic, *I, Claudius* a few years previously. While

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[42] Olwen Terris, "Shakespeare and British Television", in *Shakespeare Survey 61* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008) 207.

Sam Dastor was the only cast member to make the transition from one Roman-set classic to another, Wise recycled sets he had used for *I, Claudius* re-presenting them as Rome in *Julius Caesar*. As Bulman remarks, the director was "perhaps hoping that familiarity would breed respect."[43] The ghosting of the visuals of *I, Claudius* over the look of Rome in the BBC's *Julius Caesar* clearly played on then-contemporary expectations of what Rome should look like. The imitation of the visual of a previous production was clearly an important method in the re-creation of the past for the visual language of period drama. I would suggest that the recycling of history onstage in the form of the Shakespearean period setting follows a similar format, with familiarity affecting the manner the staged past is created. Through historical recycling, this thesis in part poses the idea that the cross-pollination between stage and the moving image plays an important role in the reception of the Shakespearean period-set staging.

IV. THE PERFORMANCE TEXT

One of the central debates of performance criticism is the definition of what Barbara Hodgdon refers to as the "performance text", which she recognises as "an apparent oxymoron that freely acknowledges the perceived incompatibility between the (infinitely) flexible substate(s) of a Shakespearean play and the (relative) fixity of the term 'text.'"[44] I choose to adopt Hodgdon's phrase here (rather than an alternative such

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[43] James C. Bulman, "The BBC Shakespeare and 'House Style'" in *Shakespeare on Television: An Anthology of Essays and Reviews*, ed. by J. C. Bulman and H. R. Coursen (London: University Press of New England, 1988) 54.
[44] Barbara Hodgdon, *The End Crowns All: Closure and Contradiction in Shakespeare's History* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991) 19.

as that presented by Pascale Aebischer, "performance-as-text"[45]) because it encompasses both the literary and performance aspects of theatre. "Text" acknowledges the fact that the crafting of performance begins with words, in this case those printed on the page. The placement of "performance", however, privileges the production of live performance constructed with the text as its raw material. The phrase "performance text" thus encompasses the words of the play, but also contains within it the multiple elements of performance. In a thesis to which the performance of Shakespeare on the stage is central, it will be necessary to define the parameters of the performance text as it appears within the pages that follow.

There is evidence to suggest that the foundation of Shakespearean productions is the literary close reading. The published handbooks on playing Shakespeare focus on how to "read" the verse (lines) largely through its poetic devices. As Abigail Rokison notes in *Shakespearean Verse Speaking*, "the authors [of the Shakespearean acting handbooks] speak of versification and lineation as deliberate 'authorial' means of guiding the actors in the delivery of the lines."[46] The works of John Barton, Cicely Berry, Oliver Ford Davies, Peter Hall, Kristin Linklater and Patsy Rodenburg all have commonality in this regard.[47] Each author-practitioner discusses the performance of Shakespeare's verse by using identical literary terms to pick out "authorial" meanings embedded in the playtexts. Their monographs are broken down into similar sections

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[45] See Pascale Aebischer, *Shakespeare's Violated Bodies: Stage and Screen Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) 12-19; Pascale Aebischer, "Silence, Rape and Politics in *Measure for Measure*", in *Shakespeare Bulletin*, Volume 26, Number 4 (Winter 2008), 1.

[46] Abigail Rokison, *Shakespearean Verse Speaking: Text and Theatre Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009) 11.

[47] John Barton, *Playing Shakespeare* (London: Methuen, 1984); Cicely Berry, *The Actor and His Text* (London: Harrap, 1987); Oliver Ford Davies, *Performing Shakespeare* (London: Nick Hern Books, 2007); Peter Hall, *Shakespeare's Advice to the Players* (London: Oberon Books, 2003); Kristin Linklater, *Freeing Shakespeare's Voice: The Actor's Guide to Talking the Text* (New York, NY: Theatre Communications Group, 1992); Patsy Rodenburg, *Speaking Shakespeare* (London: Methuen, 2002).

with topics such as prose, rhyme, blank verse, iambic pentameter, monosyllables, puns, onomatopoeia, antithesis, alliteration, and assonance recurring in two or more of the Shakespearean handbooks.

This view of the close reading of the text as crucial to the act of staging Shakespeare's work is problematic in the realm of performance criticism. While these handbooks provide tools for the actor in both comprehending and using the early modern language, they rarely address non-textual elements of performance. When they do, the material is constructed in a way that still privileges the written text. John Barton's introductory episode/chapter discusses the differences between the contemporary naturalistic tradition and early modern theatrical practice. Although this is a useful and cogent dissection of the modern actor's challenges in performing four hundred year old plays, the bulk of *Playing Shakespeare* focuses on the close reading of the texts. Kristin Linklater writes of bodies but this is not the actor's body in performance, but rather an explanation of the body and its humours found in E. M. W. Tillyard.[48] Oliver Ford Davies briefly discusses the mechanics of actor's body in performance in movement and posture, but seemingly contradicts his assessment by stating "It's the words themselves that carry meaning and emotion, not what the actor lays on top of them."[49]

Abigail Rokison describes these practical guides as collectively having been "extremely influential in the establishment of principles of Shakespearean verse

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[48] Kristin Linklater, *Freeing Shakespeare's Voice: The Actor's Guide to Talking the Text* (New York, NY: Theatre Communications Group, 1992) 57-65.
[49] Oliver Ford Davies, *Performing Shakespeare* (London: Nick Hern Books, 2007) 173.

speaking on the modern British stage."[50] The phrase "verse speaking" signals, however, that these handbooks are primarily concerned with text and vocal technique, both of which are components of the performance text but not its sole constituents. There is tacit acknowledgement in most of these works that the actor provides more than close reading of the text and vocal technique in crafting her/his performance. The omission of a broader dialogue within the verse speaking manuals between their subject matter and the actor's craft helps to position Shakespeare's text as the most important aspect of *performance*.

There is probably no clearer tangible indication that performance is more than the sum of the words on the printed page than the working document known as "the book". With varying degrees of detail, the promptbook records the mechanics of performance. These books are constructed either by pasting torn-out pages of a printed text (script) one by one onto blank sheets of paper or alternatively by printing the full text (single-sided) from a computer file. These are then collated and bound together, usually in a ring binder. It is at this stage that the printed text becomes a promptbook, as annotations are made on the blank pages facing each printed page; until this point in the process, the words have only held the promise of performance. Adjacent to the printed words are marks that indicate the timing of lighting, sound and music cues, entrances and exits, and blocking; occasionally gestures and vocal tone are also included in this written record. These marks in the margins of the promptbook provide indelible proof that *performance* is comprised of these additions to the text, each one unique to the production being documented.

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[50] Rokison, 1.

The annotations in the promptbook are the result of the design and rehearsal processes. This is work that is integral to the performance text but is rarely considered, largely due to problems of access for the researcher during a production's formative process. This is often work that encompasses aspects of performance that are in excess of the early modern text, beyond the close reading of its linguistic devices. For example actors apply analogies to aspects of the text drawn from elements in contemporary society, enabling them to connect with a perceived meaning of the script. The information they use is often influenced by the directorial concept or other interpretive elements.

With a modern dress production the parallels can be drawn in conjunction with the setting, as Adrian Lester did in discussing his appearance in the title role in Nicholas Hytner's *Henry V* at the National Theatre. In embarking on research for the production, Lester investigated both the history of Shakespeare's time and "the history that was being made while ours was in rehearsal."[51] The event to which Lester refers was the controversial 2003 invasion of Iraq by British and American armed forces. The analogy between Tony Blair and Henry V was easily drawn by both Lester and in the play's critical reception in the context of its modern dress staging.

Although contemporary parallels are more visible when Shakespeare is produced in modern dress, practitioners also find connections with their contemporary experiences when the design signifies other eras. Geoffrey Streatfeild who played Henry V (and Prince Hal) at the RSC five years after Lester in a production that straddled modern

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[51] Adrian Lester, "King Henry V", in *Players of Shakespeare 6*, Robert Smallwood, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) 146.

and medieval, searched for contemporary parallels in order to help him understand Hal's behaviour.[52] The behaviour of musician Pete Docherty and his well-publicised liaisons and drug addition was cited by the actor as one analogy, which he loosely linked to his Shakespearean character's experiences in Cheapside.[53] In conversation about Sam Mendes' thirties-set *Othello*, Maureen Beattie also straddled the present-day and the historical through analogy. For example she referred to the Venetian army's presence in Cyprus using contemporary phraseology. Calling it a "peacekeeping force", Beattie applied a term that referred to the presence of NATO forces in the former Yugoslavian nations at the time of performance.[54] With these analogies, the actors were ghosting contemporary culture onto the early modern texts.

As Harriet Walter expressed it, reference points that "feed [the actor's] imagination" are not confined to those stemming from contemporary culture.[55] As will be more fully explored in chapter six, Walter and her fellow cast member John Hopkins researched the society in which their production was set. Using films, books and other resources, the impressions they reached about the Sicilian culture used by Gregory Doran for his thirties-set *Much Ado About Nothing* clearly informed their thinking about their characters. There is a direct corollary between the research Walter and Hopkins undertook and the motivations that their characters portrayed. Their performances were based on their understanding of the context of Sicilian social mores, formed by their research into Sicilian society. Walter, for example, stated that the patriarchal society in which her Beatrice operated helped to explain the long

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[52] Geoffrey Streatfeild played Hal and Henry V in the RSC's full cycle of history plays, collectively titled *The Histories* (2006-2008).
[53] Geoffrey Streatfeild, in conversation, February 2008.
[54] Maureen Beattie, in conversation, January 2008.
[55] Harriet Walter, in conversation, August 2006.

silence the character has during Hero's shaming in the church.[56] John Hopkins (Claudio) used the information he'd gathered, responding to the Sicilian setting by using the "sense of violence being an undercurrent" (as portrayed in the *Godfather* films) in his aggressive response to Don John in act three.[57] In critical terms, knowledge of practitioner research and its resultant performative decisions can be viewed as irrelevant; it is the finished product as performed on the stage that is the ultimate object of interest. However, I would argue that discussion of the resources and contemporary analogies used in crafting the production are integral to the finished product. While acknowledging the problems with access potentially hindering discussion, the practitioners' work done in excess of the text can be formative to the final performance text viewed onstage and, as such, can be invaluable in its analysis.

Due to the difficulties inherent in obtaining information about *process*, the primary method by which performance is analysed is through its performance elements. Therefore, in examining the period setting the two key elements of my performance text are the environments created by the design and the way the actor negotiates the designed world with their bodies. In defining what comprises the performance text within the context of this thesis, I take my cue from an observation made by Carol Rutter. She observes in *Enter the Body* that "Designers who locate Shakespeare in a period (his, ours, or something in between) construct a 'whole' world, one that, by conceit, simulates reality, is authentic, consistent, self-contained".[58] In period settings the signifiers of the reconstructed era are visual (costumes, furniture, props) and aural (music, sound cues). In various combinations, these elements provide clues for the

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[56] Ibid.
[57] John Hopkins, in conversation, September 2006.
[58] Rutter, *Enter the Body: Women and representation on Shakespeare's stage* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 106.

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audience about the onstage world they are observing. These signs inform the audience, as Dennis Kennedy puts it, about the "where and when, class and circumstance" that the designed world is evoking.[59]

As well as how design creates a thirties world, the manner in which the actors negotiate their stage environments with their bodies is the second focus of my discussion of the thirties analogue performance text. Carol Rutter states that "In the theatre, the body bears the brunt of performance; it is the material Shakespeare's text works on, works through."[60] If the design communicates the "'whole' world" through visual interpretation, it is the actor who communicates the text. As Michael Dobson observes, "any performance's provision of bodies and voices inescapably exceed any cues or implications we may wish to attribute to the text".[61] Thus my discussion of the performance text negotiates the actor's relationship with her/his onstage surroundings, gestures made and the characters' inter-personal relationships, as well as her/his use of text through pause and inflexion. In doing so I enter the difficult territory of discussing an aspect of theatre for which, as noted by Lynette Hunter, the "critical vocabulary for talking about how the actor's body works is in short supply".[62] My aim is, however, not to invent the language *per se*, but rather to present ways of discussing the interrelationship between body, voice and design environment in performance. In this way, I hope to bolster Hodgdon's assertion that in performance, the "text" is greater than the sum of its words.

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[59] Kennedy, 13.
[60] Rutter, *Enter the Body*, xii.
[61] Michael Dobson, "Writing about [Shakespearian] Performance", in *Shakespeare Survey 58* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) 160.
[62] Annabel Arden, Margo Hendricks, and Lynette Hunter, "Gesture, Language and the Body" in *Shakespeare, Language and the Stage: the Fifth Wall: approaches to Shakespeare from criticism, performance and theatre studies*, Peter Lichtenfels and Lynette Hunter, eds. (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2005) 61.

In discussing the actor's body and its relationship to the designed environment, this thesis cannot but engage with issues of naturalism. As Roberta Barker notes, the naturalistic tradition "continues to reign on most mainstream contemporary English-speaking stages."[63] In terms of period settings consideration of naturalism is vital because its rhetoric, as Worthen acknowledges, "claimed to transform stage space into an 'environment'"[64]; or, in Rutter's phraseology, a "'whole' world". The illusion of the thirties is dependent on its portrayal in design terms; the strength of that illusion is predicated on what type of world is created, whether it is a naturalistic environment or a more impressionistic playing space. In acting terms, naturalism is an integral part in the way an actor approaches a text. John Barton seems to foreground naturalistic practices by ghosting them onto Shakespeare's intentions, when he states that Shakespeare "wrote these infinitely rich and complex plays with great psychological depth."[65] Thus naturalism in both design and acting terms (the performance text) will be a key component of the analysis within the pages that follow.

In approaching the material, I have limited it to the study of British professional theatrical productions since 1980. I have chosen to confine it in this manner for two reasons. First, the sheer breadth of Shakespearean production worldwide would render a study of all thirties-set productions, professional and amateur, unwieldy. Although other mediatized performances are considered in order to provide context for the analogue productions, I have confined this study of Shakespearean performance solely to its theatrical incarnation. This is both through preference in that I am most

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[63] Roberta Barker, "Realist Acting And/As Performance Text", in *Shakespeare Survey 62* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009) 252.
[64] Worthen, *Shakespeare and the Authority*, 46.
[65] Barton, 13.

interested in stage performance and for the practical reason that thirties-set Shakespearean films are covered elsewhere and in greater detail than their stage counterparts. The professional thirties-set productions that have informed my thinking are listed in Appendix A. This list was compiled by research using both theatrical reviews and the annual *Shakespeare Survey* listing of British theatrical productions. Although every effort was made initially to incorporate every thirties-set production, there are undoubtedly omissions due either to misrepresentation of the era in the reviews or simply the paucity of information that remains for much Shakespearean production.

The scarcity of resources by which theatrical history is researched has had an impact on this thesis. For the majority of thirties-set productions, the only traces that remain of the theatrical event are reviews. Smaller-scale productions, in particular, are often overlooked in the pages that follow because the paucity of information available did not provide detailed information on either their scenic designs or performances. For example, few reviewers chronicled the 1988 *Twelfth Night* (Theatre Royal, Stratford East) making detailed analysis of it problematic. For other productions, the only extant record of them is found in the *Shakespeare Survey* annual production survey. David Harewood's first outing as Othello in a thirties setting at the Swan Theatre in Worcester has been impossible to include within this thesis for that reason. A definitive performance history of thirties period staging has, therefore, been impractical.

Writing about performance is also fraught with difficulties, not least because more often than not a scholar is reliant on the material traces of performance: reviews,

promptbooks, production records, photographs, costume designs, and archive videos, not all of which are extant for every production. As Emma Smith points out, these archival resources "aren't, severally or compositely, the performance, but material proxies for it."[66] In discussion of the performance text I rely heavily on these material proxies, in particular the archive videos. There are problems inherent with the video evidence given the fixed-camera nature of them, which negates discussion of the more subtle points of theatre such as actors' facial expressions. The archive video is invaluable, however, in assessing vocal quality, physical movement and the stage pictures created by performance elements. They also provide historical perspective in that the records at the RSC now contain thirty years' worth of material, with recording having begun in 1981. The National Theatre's videos provide less material but now incorporate a body of work produced over the past fifteen years, since 1994. Therefore, the archive video has been invaluable in the analysis both of the historical narrative of stage production embedded within production design and the shifts in the ways in which an actor negotiates her/his performance space.

This thesis lays out the material in two separate but interconnected halves. As there has been little critical work published on the use of period settings on the Shakespearean stage, the first part of this thesis engages with the thirties setting through theatre history. This is not, however, an attempt at a definitive stage history of either the broader period setting genre or the use of the thirties specifically. Instead the aim has been to open up discussion of the period setting through identifying influences that contributed to the emergence of period analogue as an interpretive

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[66] Emma Smith, "'Freezing the Snowman': (How) Can We Do Performance Criticism?" in *How to Do Things With Shakespeare: New Approaches, New Essays*, Laurie Maguire, ed. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008) 284.

tool. Chapter one concentrates on the theatrical origins, beginning with the influential modern dress productions by Barry Jackson in the twenties. These are important both in terms of the time period in which they occurred and the naturalistic manner in which they were performed. The development of the modern dress setting as an interpretation is also considered, exemplified by Michael MacOwan's 1938 *Troilus and Cressida*. This can be seen as crucial because the production, like Jackson's, was rooted in the naturalistic depiction of the present. MacOwan however projected a political message onto the text in his use of modern social signifiers, perhaps the first director overtly to use modern dress as an interpretation. The chapter concludes with a consideration of how theatre production gradually shifted into the use of period analogue as interpretation. Using Tyrone Guthrie as a case study, I look at how his approach to modern dress differed from Barry Jackson's. I conclude with the example of Guthrie's *Troilus* which appeared to ghost MacOwan's approach to the play while also using the historical past to emphasise his reading.

In exploring the genesis of the period setting, chapter two turns its focus to non-theatrical influences. Key to this is the quest to discover the answer to why the phrase "modern dress" has slipped from its original usage as applied to the productions in the twenties and thirties. In late twentieth century theatrical discourse, the phrase "modern dress" has expanded from its original meaning to one that includes descriptions of the recreated historical era. The second chapter thus focuses on the connection between media representations of historical eras and their use on the Shakespearean stage. In particular, I focus on television period drama and its relationship to the stage through multiple angles. Using *The Forsyte Saga* and *The Merchant of Venice* as examples, I first look at how reception of theatre can be interconnected with period drama; how

the historical epoch portrayed by the latter can be used to read the era of the former. I then turn to the influence of trends in period drama and how they relate to the (re)production of an era in Shakespearean theatre, using the seventies interest in the Edwardian era as an example.

Building on the previous two chapters, chapter three considers the emergence of the thirties as a Shakespearean analogue. I begin with a brief look at the historical moment in which the thirties became popular as a setting for television drama. The historical parallels between the eighties and the thirties are outlined as a possible explanation for the abundance of dramatic portrayals of the thirties on television. I then consider the types of images of the thirties that were being produced by mass media before moving on to the connection between those and the emergence of the thirties setting on the Shakespearean stage.

The second section of this thesis deals with the theatrical performance of the thirties analogue. Chapter four presents the historical framework within which the theatrical productions are discussed. The thirties period analogue timeline spans approximately twenty years and in that time, both theatre and period drama production has evolved. This chapter seeks to place the performances in the context of this history, looking at changes in period drama and theatrical presentation of Shakespeare during that time in order to more fully assess the period analogue in performance.

Chapter five concentrates on designing the thirties for the stage. It first outlines thirties signifiers present in the decade's theatrical representation. It then examines the production styles prevalent during the historical timeline, naturalism in the first half

and the predilection for the bare stage in the second. These shifting approaches in scenography also feature in chapter six, which examines how the design affected the performance of the actors. Chapter seven concludes the thesis with a case study of two productions of *Two Gentlemen of Verona*. Its primary focus is the comparison of two versions of the thirties, played at opposite ends of the production timeline. However, in doing so it also pulls together both the performance history and analysis strands which run through this thesis, with the aim of more fully examining the issues raised throughout. Chapter seven also attempts to provide a series of guidelines for possible use in further refining the Kahn/Berry categories of period analogue, providing a way of reading the two versions of the play as either "concept" or "*décor*". Within this framework, I aim to illustrate that the period analogue is more complex and warrants further study.

PART ONE

Historical perspectives

CHAPTER ONE
THEATRICAL INFLUENCES

I. "MODERN DRESS" SHAKESPEARE

The twentieth century style of Shakespearean performance known as "modern dress" began as an inter-war phenomenon. It was, as Dennis Kennedy puts it, one of "the major visual contributions to English Shakespeare in the 1920s".[1] It appeared in the early twenties as western Europe was coming to terms with the carnage of the First World War. While he had his imitators, modern dress was introduced to the Shakespearean theatre-going public largely through the work of Barry Jackson's Birmingham Repertory Theatre. Beginning in 1923 with a production of *Cymbeline*, Jackson and his collaborators, director H. K. Ayliff and designer Paul Shelving, staged six "modern dress" Shakespearean experiments which spanned the twenties. The trio's second production is the one with which Jackson's modern dress movement is most associated, the 1925 *Hamlet* which premiered at London's Kingsway Theatre. There followed, with varying degrees of success, four more modern dress versions of Shakespeare: *All's Well That Ends Well* (1927), *Macbeth* (1928), *The Taming of The Shrew* (1928) and *Othello* (1929).[2] The initial inter-war phase can perhaps be said to have ended not with Jackson's work, but with an excoriation of war in a modern dress production of *Troilus and Cressida* directed by Michael MacOwan on the eve of the Munich crisis in 1938.

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[1] Dennis Kennedy, *Looking at Shakespeare: A Visual History of Twentieth-Century Performance*, second edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) 109.
[2] For a full account, see Claire Cochrane, *Shakespeare and the Birmingham Repertory Theatre 1913-1929* (London: Society for Theatre Research, 1993).

Critics discuss Jackson's modern dress productions in terms that highlight their influence on Shakespearean theatre production. Dennis Kennedy, for example, notes that with the use of contemporary dress "Ayliff and Shelving were forcing a reconsideration of the entire conventional structure that supported Shakespearean interpretation in England. The comfortable familiarity of a classic is seriously threatened when it is presented as if it were just written."[3] That the contemporarily dressed characters in *Hamlet* caused discomfort for some in the audience can be demonstrated in the relief expressed by one critic in a review of Lewis Casson's traditional version of *Henry VIII*. The review's headline read "Sybil Thorndike in 'Henry VIII.' Fine Shakespearean Production. Back to the Golden Age." The body of the text first evoked "Tree at His Majesty's" and then "Irving at the Lyceum" before concluding this reverie with the opinion that the "panoply" of Casson's production had "made the notorious 'alibi' Hamlet (in modern clothes) seem very sick and sorry."[4]

In this attempt to pinpoint the thirties analogue's theatrical origins, I want to elaborate on a point made by critics about Jackson's productions that has frequently been obscured by the emphasis placed on the contemporary costumes. In his analysis of the Birmingham Rep's modern dress Shakespeares, Dennis Kennedy notes that Jackson's production "method was simple: set the plays in the present and act them like Chekhov or Noel Coward."[5] Kennedy's passing reference to the two playwrights obfuscates an important aspect of Jackson's Shakespearean work: the adoption of naturalism as a playing style for Shakespeare. Without discounting the importance of the contemporary dress aspect of Jackson's productions, I want to view them in the

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[3] Kennedy, 111.
[4] *Daily Express*, 24 December 1925.
[5] Kennedy, 110.

context of naturalism. In particular, it is their embodiment of John Barton's "two traditions" – "Elizabethan and modern acting" – that I wish to highlight here.[6] These modern dress versions were the first to visibly meld naturalism with Shakespearean production. It is in this light that they are worth examining as an initial theatrical predecessor of the thirties-set Shakespearean analogue.

In the years preceding the advent of the company's modern dress Shakespeares, the repertoire of the Birmingham Repertory consisted not only of revivals of classical and early modern plays but, as Claire Cochrane notes, also "new or controversial realist drama in the early years: plays by Shaw, Galsworthy, Barker and Ibsen."[7] In the immediate post-first world war period the Birmingham Rep staged many of these realist dramas, including Shaw's *Arms and the Man* (revived three times between 1919-1920), *Candida* and *Getting Married*, Galsworthy's *The Foundations*, Granville Barker's *The Voysey Inheritance* and Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler* and *Ghosts*. It is within this theatrical context that Barry Jackson's company initiated their modern dress Shakespeares.

It is difficult to pinpoint the moment at which naturalistic drama techniques were first incorporated into the Rep's Shakespearean repertoire. However, there are indications that the influence of naturalism in contemporary drama had begun to affect the theatre's Shakespearean work by the early twenties. Claire Cochrane notes that "Although there was no formally-stated directorial policy, there [were] signs of a transition to a more naturalistic delivery of [Shakespeare's] verse" around this time.[8]

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[6] John Barton, *Playing Shakespeare* (London: Methuen, 1984) 6.
[7] Cochrane, *Shakespeare and the Birmingham Repertory Theatre*, 16.
[8] Ibid., 93.

This change can be faintly detected in reviews such as Crompton Rhodes' assertion that "*Romeo and Juliet* is poetry and beautiful poetry, but also it is a 'slice of life' as decidedly a 'slice' as any modern tragedy by Ibsen".[9] The equation of Ayliff's 1922 production of *Romeo and Juliet* with the drama of Ibsen indicates that naturalism had begun to shape the reception of Shakespearean performances (and probably the performances, as Cochrane indicates) at the Birmingham Rep even before the 1923 *Cymbeline*.

At this remove, it is difficult to judge precisely how the Rep's Shakespeares evolved into a more naturalistic style, but the theatre's repertoire is one probable influence. Jackson's troupe falls into what John Barton has described as "a group of modern actors who work mostly on modern plays."[10] Colin Keith-Johnston, who was to play Hamlet in Jackson's 1925 production, was a typical actor in this regard. By the time he played the Dane, he had appeared in *Candida*, *Back to Methuselah*, and as Oswald in Ibsen's *Ghosts*. He had also played Benvolio in the 1922 *Romeo* and Guiderius in Jackson's modern dress *Cymbeline* the following year.[11] The experience of actors working on Ibsen, Granville Barker, and their contemporaries would have made naturalism a familiar style, if not the prevalent one; a method that Jackson readily applied to Shakespeare played in modern dress as the characters were surrounded by the trappings of contemporary life.

In the production of naturalistic drama, the details of costume and set are an important component. As J. L. Styan points out, Ibsen "visualized his Nora right down to the

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[9] quoted in Cochrane, *Shakespeare and the Birmingham Repertory Theatre*, 88-89.
[10] Barton, 8.
[11] Cochrane, *Shakespeare and the Birmingham Repertory Theatre*, 104.

'blue woollen dress' she wore."[12] For Ibsen, costume was an extension of the psychological realism with which he endowed his characters. In Jackson's modern dress productions the costuming of Shakespeare's characters was equally important, both for their reception and the characterisations. Sensational accounts of the contemporary clothing put the focus firmly on what Shakespeare's characters wore on the Rep stage. Headlines heralded "Shakespeare in 'Plus Fours'"[13] and lengthy descriptions of costume were included in many reviews. Many of these reduced the clothing to their basic fashion component, describing fabrics used and noting the Parisian origins of some items.

The costumes also played a crucial function in the depiction of contemporary society. For example, in an era when "service" was regarded both as a profession and a denotation of class, the modern dress costumes provided visual signification of Shakespeare's servants' status. Tranio in the 1928 *Taming of the Shrew* was dressed as "a chauffeur masquerading as his own master", his post as modern as the motorcar.[14] Likewise, in the 1927 *All's Well*, Lavatch had morphed into a character with a feather duster and a black apron. His costume piece signified his status in the Countess' household, with the prop reinforcing the clothing's class-based visual.

Costume was also used to provide a recognisable allusion for characters that have no contemporary equivalent, as with the Soothsayer in *Cymbeline*. Ayliff and Shelving transformed him into a modern-day equivalent, a spiritualist who wore "a black wide-

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[12] J. L. Styan, *Modern Drama in Theory and Practice: Volume 1: Realism and Naturalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981) 20.
[13] *Daily Express*, 10 April 1923.
[14] *Birmingham Post*, 17 December 1928.

awake hat, a cape, a haggard expression and long white beard".[15] While not immediately recognisable to a twenty-first century sensibility, this choice would have been particularly evocative to an audience in the twenties.

It was in the immediate post-first world war era that "widespread interest in supernatural phenomena of all kinds" grew in popularity, largely due to the unprecedented loss of life during the conflict.[16] Some of those who had lost loved ones in the trenches attended séances in order to "contact" those who had perished in the carnage. Jay Winter and Blaine Baggett describe those through whom "contact" was established:

> Some Spiritualists were unbalanced; others were charlatans. Most were honest true believers. Their activities were controversial and occasionally bizarre, but the social and intellectual prominence of leading Spiritualists [including Arthur Conan Doyle], as well as the wide-spread belief in the paranormal among soldiers, made it difficult to brush them aside simply as crackpots.[17]

Whether this cultural reference deployed by Jackson, Ayliff and Shelving was meant to be politically provocative, or indeed whether the soothsayer was portrayed as unbalanced or a charlatan, is unclear. However, the inclusion of the spiritualist was typical of the Rep's modern dress production's attention to naturalistic detail through costuming, a feature that permeated all of Jackson's modern dress Shakespeares.

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[15] *Birmingham Gazette*, 21 April 1923.
[16] Martin Pugh, *"We Danced All Night": A Social History of Britain Between the Wars* (London: The Bodley Head, 2008) 9.
[17] Jay Winter and Blaine Baggett, *1914-18: The Great War and the Shaping of the 20th Century* (London: BBC Books, 1996) 385.

The attempt to reproduce daily life in scenic terms through naturalistic environments was also a key feature of Jackson's productions. The signification of character through environment is arguably the most important aspect of the Birmingham Rep's modern dress productions, one that would be emulated by several period analogue productions later in the century. For his scenic designs, Paul Shelving "worked within the original three-stage framework with false proscenium, steps and curtains, established since the earliest days of the theatre."[18] Within this basic set the trappings of contemporary life were placed to signify a variety of locales, often with a minimum of set pieces.

In these early modern dress productions, tables, chairs, beds, and cocktail trays carried in by footmen were all used to help evoke locations in an imitation of contemporary life. The 1928 *Macbeth* was perhaps the most elaborate of the stagings, but Claire Cochrane's description of the scenic design will help to illustrate the care with which the then-present day had been reproduced:

> At the back of the stage, a triple arched stone-like frame spanned three steps leading to the imposing door of the murder chamber. The cushioned divan with its purple brocade cover was placed downstage right. To the left stood a small elegant table which displayed some of the accoutrements of modern civilization – a green shaded electric lamp, a whisky decanter and glass tumblers, a cigarette box and lighter, and a potted plant. The offstage gramophone entertained Duncan as he sat at supper.[19]

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[18] Cochrane, *Shakespeare and the Birmingham Repertory Theatre*, 100.
[19] Claire Cochrane, "Paul Shelving and Modern Dress Shakespeare", in *Paul Shelving: Stage Designer* (Birmingham: Birmingham Museums and Art Galleries, c1986) 26.

Although Cochrane does not directly equate this setting with any naturalistic stage business, she does provide one example that could potentially have been staged in this imitation of "a suburban drawing room."[20] After Duncan's body had been discovered, "Macbeth signalled his nervousness by lighting himself a cigarette and failing to offer a light to his guest, Lennox", presumably using the cigarette box and lighter mentioned in Cochrane's description.[21]

More definitive examples of naturalistic business encouraged by the modern *mise-en-scène* can be found in the accounts of the Rep's 1925 *Hamlet*. In this production, the King not only smoked as he contemplated Hamlet's future, but in act three "before Claudius sought spiritual consolation, he calmed himself after the shock of the play with a whisky and soda poured from the decanter and soda siphon set out on a table positioned on the main stage."[22] The modern prop and accompanying stage action was also helpful to the actor playing Claudius, Frank Vosper. As Anthony Dawson reports it, Vosper found "that the siphon bottle from which he added a squirt of soda to his tumbler of whisky…gave him a naturalistic grip on the moment that the traditional paper maché goblet smelling of gold paint inhibited."[23] Once again, the non-verbal action was crucial to the observation of everyday life that is a feature of the naturalistic tradition. As with Macbeth and the cigarette, the trappings of modern life thus illuminated the character in ways a more traditional production would have obscured, both for actor and audience.

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[20] Cochrane, *Shakespeare and the Birmingham Repertory Theatre*, 140.
[21] Ibid., 141.
[22] Ibid., 110.
[23] Anthony B. Dawson, *Shakespeare in Performance: Hamlet* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1995) 86-87.

Naturalistic techniques were also incorporated into extra-textual stage business with props used to increase both actor and audience engagement with the early modern texts. Stage properties were deployed in conjunction with particular words or lines, layering a modern context onto Shakespeare's writing. One example can be found in the written record for the Birmingham Rep's 1928 production of *The Taming of the Shrew*. The naturalistic context within which the production was played is fully illuminated by a description of two moments where text and prop functioned in conjunction with each other:

> There is, for instance, the way in which Curtis says "There's fire ready," and thereupon calmly produces an electric heater. But of the many examples the gem is the motor scene, representing Petruchio and Katharine returning to Padua. Imagination—and perversity—could hardly have achieved a bigger joke, kept within the strict letter of the script, than Mr. Ayliff's fitting of Petruchio's opening exclamation, "Come on, i'God's name." to a stranded motorist churning round the starting handle of his car.[24]

While the props were probably chosen for their comic potential, the actors' naturalistic use of them is displayed vividly in this account. The technique illustrated here is one that transforms an early modern word and its context into a contemporary idiom, similar but not identical to the original meaning.

My final example of the naturalistic features inherent in Jackson's modern dress productions is the change in the actor's delivery of lines that occurred. As noted

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[24] *Birmingham Mail*, 17 December 1928.

above, naturalistic speech had begun to feature in the (comparatively) more traditional Rep productions prior to the first modern dress experiment in 1923. In order to comprehend the revolution in stage speech that the naturalistic movement achieved in Shakespearean production, J. L. Styan's description of nineteenth century delivery illustrates this contrast. As Styan explains, the earlier style

> was associated with a special "theatre voice" and a rich declamatory manner, although all the full-blooded passions, the romantic sentiment and bravado, the excess of cliché and platitude, were actually a direct result of thin-blooded, stock characters. If the moment was serious, the language was sonorous, balanced, rhetorical; if lighter in vein, it was perforce witty, paradoxical, scintillating. None of it had to do with the way people really spoke.[25]

The naturalistic movement, by contrast, embedded modern drama with the rhythms of everyday speech.

The founder of the Independent Theatre Society and the influential champion of Ibsen, J. T. Grein, praised the natural qualities of the verse speaking within Jackson's modern dress productions. Reviewing *Hamlet* for *Sketch*, Grein noted that although there were cuts to the text he "wished reinstated…generally the dialogue, speeded up in diction to emulate modern parlance, was handled with great reverence, and, one felt it, immense enthusiasm on the part of the players. No mumbling or murmuring this time."[26] While there are no concrete examples in the reviews, Grein's comments

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[25] J. L. Styan, *Modern Drama in Theory and Practice: Volume 1: Realism and Naturalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981) 10.
[26] *Sketch*, 2 September 1925.

explicitly point toward the idea that naturalistic stage speech had been incorporated into the Rep's Shakespearean drama.

Negative comments about the actor's approach to speaking the verse also indicate they had adopted a more natural rhythm. For example, not altogether positive in discussing the 1925 *Hamlet*, *Punch* claimed the players "adopted a break-neck speed of speech".[27] Likewise, the *Birmingham Post* dismissed the speaking style in *Cymbeline* as "bad and indistinct delivery" with the reviewer despairing that "when a young man mumbled he mumbled, and no consolation was to be found in admiring his embroidered cloak or his damascened helmet."[28] That the debate about speaking Shakespeare was raging in the press indicates that the speech imitated contemporary vocal patterns.

Although not all were deemed successful, echoes of Barry Jackson's modern dress productions can be observed in many contemporary-set productions that have followed them. Jackson's aim had been to "bring out [Shakespeare's] humanity" by imitating modern life thereby making "his creations live as flesh and blood to-day."[29] Jackson's modern dress experiments not only brought the clothing up-to-date, he had pioneered a new way of acting Shakespeare. Although modern dress productions would remain relatively rare until the latter half of the twentieth century, the Birmingham Rep's naturalistic revolution provided a theatrical template for later stagings. The melding of naturalistic drama with the early modern text had been proven as a viable option to traditional methods of designing and speaking

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[27] *Punch*, 2 September 1925.
[28] *Birmingham Post*, 23 April 1923.
[29] *Daily Express*, 10 April 1923.

Shakespeare. It was on these foundations that Michael MacOwan produced the next step in the process of innovation leading to the emergence of the period analogue.

II. MICHAEL MACOWAN'S *TROILUS AND CRESSIDA*

There is evidence to suggest that Barry Jackson's 1928 *Macbeth* went beyond his earlier productions' use of contemporary dress to imitate modern life and was possibly intended as an interpretation of the play. This is plausibly indicated by Claire Cochrane when she remarks, "It seems curious now that the generation which had endured the carnage of the First World War should have been unconscious of the implications of Shakespeare's text married to the sights and sounds of modern battle."[30] There is no concrete evidence to suggest Jackson's evocation of the battlefield was meant to be read in terms of contemporary politics. The nearest the reviews come to addressing the issue was one which opined, "Poetry on the lips of a soldier is no more incongruous in the days of Rupert Brooke than it was in the days of William Shakespeare".[31] However, no critic appears to have placed an anti-war reading on the production in its analysis. By contrast, Michael MacOwan's production of *Troilus and Cressida* a decade later was to overtly use the play in this interpretive way.

As his inaugural offering for the newly formed experimental London Mask company, Michael MacOwan chose to produce Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* at the Westminster Theatre in September 1938. Like the productions at the Birmingham Rep in the previous decade, his was a modern dress offering which blended naturalistic

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[30] Cochrane, *Shakespeare and the Birmingham Repertory Theatre*, 144.
[31] *Town Crier*, 9 November 1928.

stage techniques with Shakespeare's text. However, the 1938 *Troilus and Cressida* diverges from Jackson's productions in one significant way. Where Barry Jackson exploited modern dress as a way of making the early modern text accessible as contemporary drama, MacOwan used similar techniques to provide an interpretation of the play.

Michael MacOwan's interpretive intent was signalled by the production's souvenir programme. In the days before lengthy notes were used to provide audiences with the context in which a production should be read, both the *Troilus* advertising leaflet and its programme are unusual. These two items were used to explain MacOwan's rationale in the manner expected of today's interpretation-led Shakespearean theatre. The advertising card first informed its audience that the play was to be performed "IN MODERN DRESS", a fact that also highlighted the play's relevance to the contemporary world. The advertisement then précised the production with this description:

> This strange, fierce and fascinating play is an elaborate debunking of the romantic and heroic view of war. Shakespeare must have written it in much the same mood of horror and disgust which the world feels today. It is one of his least-known and most consistently misunderstood plays. For these reasons we believe that to see a re-interpretation of the play in modern dress and atmosphere will be a novel and exciting experience.[32]

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[32] Theatre Museum collection, Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Two things are striking about this prose: first, the use of "re-interpretation" indicates that the intention of the director was to provide a literary-type reading of the play through his concept; and second, the advertisement's inclusion of the phrase "mood of horror and disgust" as a selling point, surely an unusual way to promote most plays. MacOwan's language in his programme preface was more succinct as the director begins by stating unequivocally that "This play is a tragedy of disillusion". As we will see, MacOwan used *Troilus* to explore contemporary anxieties, the modern dress chosen to accentuate the parallels presented through his interpretation.

Evidence of MacOwan's production is scant and no promptbook appears to have survived, but reviews and photographic evidence provide basic information. The contemporary setting was used to evoke the sights and sounds of the most recent conflict, the first world war. The sound of anti-aircraft guns was used and scenes were enacted with field telephones and large-scale territorial maps as props, "the ministers and instruments of" the modern "cruel war" (*Troilus*, Prologue, 4-5).[33]

Although undoubtedly staged and therefore not necessarily an entirely accurate picture of MacOwan's production, there is photographic evidence of more evocative scenography. A still of II.3 shows its four characters in partial silhouette: Patroclus, Achilles and Ajax in military uniform with Thersites in barely discernible civilian clothes, dressed as "a dingy war-correspondent".[34] Behind them is an almost bare stage and the only scenic element visible stage left of the figures is a weather-beaten

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[33] Unless otherwise stated, references for Shakespeare's plays are taken from *The Oxford Shakespeare Complete Works*, second edition, ed. by Stanley Wells, Gary Taylor, John Jowett, and William Montgomery (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005).
[34] *New Statesman and Nation*, 1 October 1938.

fence adorned with barbed wire.[35] The wire was undoubtedly meant to suggest for the audience the "No Man's Land" of the western front in the 1914-1918 war, providing a visual focus for MacOwan's emphasis on disillusion in the wake of the carnage of war.

The text of *Troilus* is replete with a palpable disenchantment with war, making it a useful vehicle for MacOwan's theme. The Greek and Trojan heroes are satirised and found unworthy of their mythical status. The language of the play is also immensely bitter in its assessment of armed conflict and the futility of its casualties often remarked upon. Diomedes finds that the war's catalyst, Helen of Troy, is

> bitter to her country…
>
> For every false drop in her bawdy veins
>
> A Grecian's life hath sunk; for every scruple
>
> Of her contaminated carrion weight
>
> A Trojan hath been slain.
>
> (IV.1.70-74)

While not as angry as Diomedes, Hector's greeting to Ulysses similarly calls attention to the war dead as he says,

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[35] *The Sketch*, 21 September 1938.

Ah, sir, there's many a Greek and Trojan dead

Since first I saw yourself and Diomed

In Ilium, on your Greekish embassy.

(IV.7.97-99)

With no end to the conflict in sight, Hector's and Diomedes' litanies of the dead are matched in their futility by Thersites' damnation of "Lechery, lechery, still wars and lechery; nothing else holds fashion" (V.2.9-97).

The contemporary "mood of horror and disgust" referenced in the programme had its roots in the conflict of which MacOwan's modern imagery was redolent. Churchill's phrase of the "Gathering Storm" has been used as a metaphor for the turbulent thirties and to foreshadow world war two, but it should be remembered that the cataclysm of the Great War was still a recent memory in 1938. Although the physical, political and psychological cost of the war of 1914-1918 has been well documented elsewhere, one aspect of its aftermath is key to contextualising MacOwan's interpretive framework for *Troilus*.

By the mid-thirties, "the international situation", as Robert Graves and Alan Hodge phrased it, had become "disturbingly unsettled".[36] Largely a product of the harsh terms agreed at Versailles, the economic situation in Germany in the twenties had resulted in Adolf Hitler becoming Chancellor in 1933. Dictators had also gained power in Italy and Spain, the former under Benito Mussolini who came to power in

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[36] Robert Graves and Alan Hodge, *The Long Week-End: A Social History of Great Britain, 1918-1939* (London: Hutchinson, 1985) 298.

1922. With aid from both Hitler and Mussolini, General Francisco Franco makes up this loose triumvirate of autocrats, as he emerged victorious in the Spanish Civil War.

By September 1938, when MacOwan's production opened, there had been several international crises sparked by the actions of these fascist dictators. Mussolini's army had marched into Abyssinia in 1935 and the lack of a convincing protest by the other European powers encouraged Hitler's aggression. In part as a consequence of the non-intervention policy of the British government, the German dictator subsequently reoccupied the demilitarized zone of the Rhineland in 1936. As Graves and Hodge noted,

> [German] troops marched in without even being served out with ammunition, so certain was Hitler that France and Britain would not intervene. Nothing in effect happened. It was not as though Hitler had reoccupied Alsace-Lorraine, the British remarked.[37]

This last sentence is indicative of the dominant mindset in Britain during the thirties, linked to the aftermath of the first world war.

Keith Robbins' observation about that conflict's residual effect on the British psyche is instructive:

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[37] Graves and Hodge, 327.

One sentiment…was expressed in the ritual silences of gloomy November post-war armistices: never again! The only proper tribute to those who had died was to ensure that the Great War had indeed been the "war to end war".[38]

The fact that Britain did not react militarily to Germany when Hitler reoccupied the Rhineland is indicative of this overwhelming desire to avoid another emotionally costly armed conflict. As James P. Levy notes,

Hitler understood that after World War I, the threshold for resorting to war had risen. It was going to take more than a simple provocation to push nations over the precipice and into another world war. Very few people anywhere wanted a repeat of the rush to war in 1914.[39]

Various expressions of this desire for neutrality appeared during the inter-war years. In 1930, the Lambeth Conference resolved that "war as a method of settling international disputes was incompatible with the teachings of Jesus Christ". As Robbins notes, this was a policy in opposition to that which had been "expressed by clerical 'Holy Warriors'" during the Great War.[40] This change of direction also reflected public opinion, which had turned from war mongering to pacifism. Another privileged organisation, the Oxford Union, also absorbed the public mood in passing "a motion that the house refused in any circumstances to fight for King and Country" shortly after Hitler had come to power in 1933.[41] It was this largely pacifist mood that

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[38] Keith Robbins, *Appeasement*, second edition (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997) 24.
[39] James P. Levy, *Appeasement and Rearmament: Britain 1936-1939* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006) 53.
[40] Robbins, 26.
[41] Ibid, 27.

led to the policy known as appeasement, whereby fascist aggression would not be challenged militarily.

Appeasement has largely been discredited with the benefit of hindsight, but it is worth remembering its roots in the pacifist instinct. The historians Martin Gilbert and Richard Gott have noted that the policy was an emotive reaction to any potential new war. They have argued that "Appeasement was an affair of the heart, intuitive, not taught; a strong emotion, not an academic speculation."[42] Strong emotions can be detected not just in the policies of the Church of England and the debates of the Oxford Union, but also in diaries and letters written at the time. For example, Margot Asquith's comments are in accord with those apparent at the Lambeth Conference:

> There is only one way of preserving Peace in the world, and getting rid of yr. enemy, and that is to come to some sort of agreement with him – and the *viler* he is, the more you must fight him with the opposite weapons than his…The greatest enemy of mankind today is *Hate*…[43]

To those of us aware of appeasement's final outcome, Asquith's view is, to say the least, naïve. It illustrates, however, the strength of the anti-war sentiment connected with the public's fear of another devastating conflict.

Naturally alternative opinions to those that advocated appeasement were expressed at the same time, including those of Bob Brand who was then a director of *The Times*. Brand was a proponent of rearmament, derived largely from his first-hand

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[42] Martin Gilbert and Richard Gott, *The Appeasers*, revised edition (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1967) 5.
[43] quoted in Gilbert and Gott, 30.

observations of the Nazi regime in the mid-thirties. *The Times'* editorial board did not share Brand's view, as can be seen from a conversation Brand recalled. The exchange with Barrington Ward, the assistant editor of the paper, included Brand explaining to Ward that with France only twenty-four miles across the Channel, Great Britain should not leave the country unprotected. Ward replied, "All I can say is there must never be another Passchendaele."[44] Ward's evocation of one of the worst battles of the first world war is indicative of the passions the debate between peace and war aroused in the thirties.

Austen Chamberlain also employed heightened rhetoric to state his point of view. Writing a piece in *The Daily Telegraph* deploring the anti-Communist rhetoric of the Nazi government Chamberlain stated, "Communism is alien to our tradition and as incompatible with our institutions as Nazism itself…. The verbal contests of Nazi and Bolshevik are not worth the bones of a British Grenadier."[45] The sentiment behind this final sentence could not be clearer; the ideological squabbles of two other nations could not be a justifiable reason for losing a single British soldier on European soil. His half-brother, Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, articulated a similar sentiment in 1938 after Hitler had invaded Czechoslovakia: "How horrible, fantastic, incredible it is that we should be digging trenches and trying on gas masks here because of a quarrel in a faraway country between people of whom we know nothing."[46] The impulse to avoid war at all costs led Chamberlain to his now-infamous peace conference in Munich, his return clutching his piece of paper coinciding with the opening of Michael MacOwan's *Troilus and Cressida*.

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[44] James Fox, *The Langhorne Sisters* (London: Granta, 1998) 493-494.
[45] quoted in Gilbert and Gott, 28-29.
[46] quoted in Levy, 89.

The timing of *Troilus*' opening as Chamberlain returned from his second Munich conference waving the Agreement and proclaiming "Peace for our time", accentuated the production's interpretive message. MacOwan's reading of *Troilus* was clear to the audience, as the review in *The Times* suggests: "War rather than love becomes the dominant theme…. The mood it imposes is the mood of frustration and anger, with war as the catastrophe to be feared…".[47] The production's topicality – its interpretation – was also the subject of a series of letters to the editor in *The Times*.

Dorothy L. Sayers took umbrage at *The Times*' dramatic critic, writing that he "seems a little surprised to discover that *Troilus and Cressida* is a play about a war and not about a love affair." She defended MacOwan's use of modern dress, stating that "in even a cursory reading of this most difficult work is that here is the great 'war-debunking' play, whose savage bitterness has never been equalled before or since." In her defense of the contemporary staging that highlighted the cynicism of the play Sayers concluded, "If ever there was a play for the times it is this."[48]

Una Ellis-Fermor concurred with Sayers in a response a few days later, stating that "in Shakespeare's picture of the devolution of society there opens abyss below abyss of doubt and instability" which MacOwan's production had delved into simply by holding the mirror up to contemporary society.[49] A further editorial picks up, possibly unintentionally, on MacOwan's language in a comparison between *Troilus* and Lewis

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[47] *The Times*, 22 September 1938.
[48] *The Times*, 24 September 1938.
[49] *The Times*, 27 September 1938.

Casson's more bombastically patriotic production of *Henry V*, playing simultaneously at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane:

> [*Troilus and Cressida*] is a play of disillusion – disillusion about love, about honour, about heroes, above all about war. It is a play to blight any tender little shoots of illusion, especially about war, which may have dared to push out since the Treaty of Versailles was signed.[50]

The disillusion, horror and disgust that accompanied the growing sense of the inevitability of another war was dissected in a modern dress Shakespearean form by Michael MacOwan. With the MacOwan production and its interpretive stance, it was the *play's* contemporaneity that had become the focus of production. MacOwan had taken the modern dress style in a new direction by using it as an interpretive tool. The use of history in the form of the Shakespearean period analogue as a different type of interpretive tool would soon follow.

III. TYRONE GUTHRIE AND THE BEGINNINGS OF THE PERIOD SETTING

Tyrone Guthrie is the practitioner with whom the early use of period analogue for interpretive purposes is most closely associated. Guthrie's work, like MacOwan's before him, can be viewed as a descendent of Barry Jackson's modern dress Shakespeares. Guthrie's response to the Birmingham Rep's groundbreaking *Hamlet*,

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[50] *The Times*, 28 September 1938.

however, appears to have been ambivalent. Writing in *Theatre Prospect* in 1933, Guthrie had been impressed enough with the production to describe it as

> enthralling as a modern Ruritanian drama; it revealed much in the characters that one had not noticed before; it made the story really exciting – an excitement I have never experienced in previous or more recent contact with the play.[51]

Despite this apparent enthusiasm for the overall experience of Jackson's *Hamlet*, Guthrie went on to express reservations about the staging at much greater length:

> The producer, Mr. Ayliffe [*sic*], sufficiently reconciled the discrepancies between modern behaviour and the action of the play, but not those between modern speech, crisp and unemphatic, and the diction of the play. Poetry went by the board and could not be replaced by the racy terseness of good modern dialogue. Also in the matter of scenery, this production illustrated clearly the difficulty of applying the naturalistic method to any form that requires number or variety of settings. The sets, pleasing enough pictorially, were neither wholly in the realistic convention of the dresses and acting, nor in the formal and heroic convention of the play. Thus, although it revealed *Hamlet* not merely as the familiar poetic tragedy, but also as a well made, rather pompously written modern melodrama, and although it blazed a trail for similar entertaining experiments, it did not suggest that the discrepancies between the play and modern naturalism could ever possibly be reconciled.

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[51] Tyrone Guthrie, *Theatre Prospect* (London: Wishart, 1932) 50.

For which reason this method is not calculated to do the fullest justice to the masterpieces of the past. And, since it did not depart from a naturalism, already too familiar, it did not offer new technical suggestions, either to contemporary playwrights or producers, as guideposts to the future.[52]

Guthrie's difficulty with Jackson's method of producing Shakespeare in modern dress seems to have been primarily in its fusion of modern social mores with the requirements of the play, compounded by lines delivered as "modern speech". The making of a naturalistic drama out of the Shakespearean text through setting and the actors' use of scenic design seem to be the focus of his disapproval. It is unfortunate that Guthrie did not elaborate further on those aspects he found both compelling and troubling about Jackson's *Hamlet*. However, what is clear is that Guthrie's reservations about the naturalistic manner in which the play's text was delivered appear to have outweighed the fact that he had found *Hamlet* "enthralling" in performance.

Despite the director's misgivings about Jackson's method of portraying contemporary society in Shakespearean performance, Guthrie used the naturalistic techniques culled from Jackson in a 1945 production of *The Alchemist*. Little has been written about the Old Vic Theatre Company's regional touring policy although a postscript in *Old Vic Drama* briefly outlines it. Audrey Williamson cites Tyrone Guthrie as the "presiding genius" over what would be today's equivalent of the national touring programmes of the National Theatre and the RSC. Williamson does not specify the period in which this regional activity took place, but it seems from the partial chronology that it

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[52] Guthrie, 50.

occurred primarily during the years of the second world war. The Old Vic, however, did not simply tour but seems to have begun a second operation outside London, as Williamson recounts:

> In 1942 the directors of the Liverpool Repertory Theatre, the Playhouse, which had suspended its activities owing to war conditions, let the theatre to the Old Vic for a period to extend until one year after the end of hostilities. Liverpool, therefore, for the next four years became the Old Vic's first permanent provincial theatre.[53]

It was in Liverpool at the Playhouse that Tyrone Guthrie directed Ben Jonson's *The Alchemist* in 1945.

Recalling *The Alchemist* over 60 years later, Roger Howells described the production as having been done "in completely modern dress".[54] The now-retired RSC production manager remembered two features of the production. First, that the references in the text to the plague had been updated to the Blitz. Confirming Howells' memory is designer Tanya Moiseiwitsch's account, in which she stated that Guthrie had "proposed to do it in modern dress with a wartime situation: people leaving London because of the bombs, instead of, as written, because of the plague."[55] Howells also recalled that Face had been played by Peter Glenville as "Captain Face, a black market 'spiv'; a bogus Captain dressed in beautifully tailored battle dress and a

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[53] Audrey Williamson, *Old Vic Drama: A Twelve Years' Study of Plays and Players*, Second edition (London: Rockliff, 1953) 213.
[54] Roger Howells, in conversation, October 2009.
[55] quoted in Alfred Rossi, *Astonish Us in the Morning: Tyrone Guthrie Remembered* (London: Hutchinson, 1977) 51.

pencil moustache".[56] While this anecdotal evidence is far from conclusive, it points to Guthrie's absorption of Barry Jackson's methods in producing Shakespeare in modern dress. Although Jackson and Ayliff had refrained from updating the text, the modern dress of *The Alchemist* was distinctly contemporary and the characterisation of Face was as topical as the Soothsayer/Spiritualist had been in Jackson's 1923 *Cymbeline*.

While clearly not averse to using modern dress to update the Jonson play, Guthrie's choice had been a modified version of modern dress for his 1938 *Hamlet*. Rather than using naturalistic techniques in the emulation of contemporary life as Jackson and MacOwan had, Guthrie had adapted modern dress into a format that was more subtly contemporary. That Guthrie's portrayal of contemporaneity differed from Jackson's can be partially illustrated by the recollections of the actor who played the title role, Alec Guinness:

> Tony's production was called modern-dress but it wasn't – I mean no one smoked cigarettes, no one fiddled around with glasses. It wasn't that, it was sort of *fin de siècle* with a modern touch, pointing up the social standing of people and the time of day or night, if they're in dressing-gowns or night-gowns or things which very often get totally lost in a period piece.[57]

The comment about cigarettes and glasses refers specifically to the type of stage business that Barry Jackson used to craft his naturalistic productions as though they were contemporary drama.

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[56] Roger Howells, in conversation, October 2009.
[57] quoted in Rossi, 58-59.

As Guinness intimates, Guthrie appears to have avoided these overtly naturalistic devices in favour of what the *Daily Telegraph* review described as a production aesthetic that "steered a felicitous middle course". Comparisons between Jackson and Guthrie were clearly important to the *Telegraph*'s reviewer, who first recounted Jackson's effort:

> At the Kingsway in 1925, when the modern dress production of the play startled London, the insistence seemed to be on modernity. Ophelia's dresses appeared to be excessively short and Hamlet's plus-fours particularly sporty. There were telephones and cocktails and other unnecessary features of the day.[58]

The review also echoed Guinness' statement regarding Guthrie's staging, observing that "The men's uniforms and the women's long frocks do not shriek out for attention, and after the first few minutes one accepts the 'modern dress.'"[59] Like Guinness, this reviewer clearly preferred this streamlined version to the more contemporarily rooted versions of Barry Jackson.

This pared-down modern dress version of *Hamlet* can be viewed as Guthrie's initial stage in his evolution of the modern dress form into period analogue. The descriptions of the setting of Jackson's and Guthrie's *Hamlet*s are indicative of Guthrie's progression from the former to the latter. Guthrie had found Jackson's *Hamlet* "enthralling as a modern *Ruritanian* drama [*my italics*]". Alec Guinness referred to Guthrie's setting of their *Hamlet* as "sort of *fin de siècle* with a modern touch".

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[58] *Daily Telegraph*, 12 October 1938.
[59] Ibid.

"Ruritanian" and "*fin de siècle*" are words that recur often within accounts of Guthrie's *Hamlet* and his later work. As "Ruritanian" occurs more often and has become disused in recent decades, it is worth further clarification.

The phraseology stems from the Ruritania depicted in *The Prisoner of Zenda* and, in particular, the films based upon the novel. In discussing another of Guthrie's "Ruritanian" productions, the 1959 *All's Well That Ends Well* at Stratford, Robert Shaughnessy defines the term as one that "had survived in the lexicon as a synonym for the comically self-important but politically impotent nation-state."[60] Roger Howells, who began working in stage management at the Royal Shakespeare Company in 1962, has the practitioner's viewpoint on the term. He clarified the phrase stating that it was "a shorthand for the visual costume look". Howells described this as "smart, tight, military uniforms; tight breeches with pale blue stripes down the side; tight tailored tunics and calf-length boots; long, grey greatcoats. Full of that vision of little European states, which were all linked in to the Austro-Hungarian Empire."[61] For either definition facet, the key point is that "Ruritanian" was a visual evocation of late Victorian and Edwardian Europe and was not rigidly accurate in its recreation of time period or country. By the 1950s, Guthrie's Shakespearean productions had shifted from a modern dress (possibly an early version of his "Ruritanian") to the depiction of the Edwardian era as period analogue.

The 1956 production of *Troilus and Cressida* at the Old Vic was the first of Guthrie's most successful productions to use a "Ruritanian" setting in the interpretive sense. Paul Rogers, who played Pandarus, recounted that Guthrie had "put *Troilus and*

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[60] Robert Shaughnessy, *The Shakespeare Effect* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002) 139.
[61] Roger Howells, in conversation, October 2009.

Cressida into about 1912. He said it was the last moment in history when war was considered as glorious by the young men, when it was as much a sport as grouse shooting, among the better-bred young men".[62] The difference in the language between Guinness' description of the modified modern dress and Rogers' is striking. While Guinness' language emphasises the contemporary feel, Rogers was clearly talking in terms of *Troilus* being interpreted through its period setting.

For his *Troilus*, Guthrie used techniques honed by Jackson and, particularly, Michael MacOwan and applied them to his historical setting. The production of *Troilus* at the Old Vic in 1956 ghosted that which MacOwan had produced nearly two decades previously. Guthrie's scenography was relatively simple, with red and blue curtains functioning as backdrops for the Greek and Trojan council scenes respectively. The same table was used for both, around which the separate factions debated their continued participation in the war. For the civilian locations, pre-set trucks were rolled onto the stage creating a flat for Helen and Pandarus' house. On the basic costume level, Guthrie's Trojans and Greeks were differentiated in a similar manner to that of MacOwan: the former depicted as English Edwardians and the Greeks portrayed as pre-first world war Prussians. The Trojans' costumes were based on Horse Guards uniforms, yellow with dove-grey breeches, while "their opponents wear helmets crowned with eagles or spikes, affect monocles, and move with heel-clicking precision."[63] For both directors, the colour coding was a device helpful to the audience for differentiating the two warring sides.

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[62] quoted in Rossi, 170.
[63] *The Times*, 4 April 1956.

For Jackson and MacOwan, the creation of specific locations in which a scene's activity could take place was a key naturalistic feature of their productions. Tyrone Guthrie's recycling of the MacOwan *Troilus* was also undertaken on this level. For example, the Trojan council scene (II.2) was staged by both directors as a post-prandial discussion, with props and setting signifying an exclusive male-dominated establishment. In MacOwan's version, the Trojans were placed in an officers' mess, smoking and partaking of after dinner port. Guthrie's scenic design was similar, as one detailed account shows:

> The curtains rose again to show the inside of Priam's palace where the old king and his sons were drinking after dinner. Ignoring the dessert, Priam's sons waded steadily into the drinks, Troilus achieving sudden talkativeness through copious draughts of *crème de menthe*. Priam, doddery and bewildered, could not even remember the contents of Nestor's message (*Deliver Helen*) without referring twice to the written paper.[64]

In both versions the scenic placement of the characters into an after-dinner ritual, combined with the props provided the play's naturalistic environment.

Guthrie also staged IV.1, the morning after Troilus and Cressida's assignation, in a manner similar to MacOwan's production. In the MacOwan version, Pandarus entered Cressida's bedroom wearing his dressing gown and slippers, bringing the lovers their morning cup of tea. This wholesome touch of delivering the morning's liquid invigorator was eschewed by Guthrie who, while still having Pandarus appear in a

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[64] quoted in *Shakespearean Criticism*, Volume 18 (Detroit: Gale Research, 1992) 315.

dressing gown bearing refreshment, staged the scene so that Cressida's uncle brought them an early morning bottle of champagne to celebrate their consummation. The substitution of champagne for tea was indicative of the shift in emphasis, as Guthrie used his Ruritanian framework to establish Troy as a decadent society interested only in its own pleasure.

One further example of Guthrie's re-use of aspects of MacOwan's staging will help to illustrate the point that these productions are linked in approach, if differentiated by time period. We have already seen that the 1938 version of Thersites appeared as a left-wing war correspondent, possibly stemming from contemporary images of the Spanish Civil War. This is a tradition that some late twentieth century productions have continued, as the cynical journalist as commentator maintains its currency. Guthrie also clearly played with these images, with Clifford Williams' Thersites described by one critic as a "war-correspondent, in cloth cap, knickerbockers, and brown boots".[65]

One account of the stage business gives a flavour of the way Guthrie's Thersites was re-interpreted within the pre-Great War context. He is first described in V.2 as a professional who "had the born reporter's nose for where the next good story would develop and he sidled swiftly across the very edge of the stage to reach Calchas' tent before Diomedes." Throughout the scene, he was "skulking in the shadows, making notes all the time, pouring out his vile commentaries". Later in act five, during the battle, Thersites "clutching his camera, dodged in and out, finding shelter to get his war pictures and never missing a good entrance – such as Hector silhouetted against a

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[65] Richard David, "Drams of Eale" in *Shakespeare Survey 10* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957) 131.

smoking background."[66] As well as reusing MacOwan's updating of the choric Thersites as a journalist these descriptive passages indicate that the portrayal made was in the naturalistic tradition, using his props and his surroundings to add further context to his characterisation.

Paul Rogers' statement about the rationale for Guthrie's choice of period setting indicates that the director was interested in showing his Trojan War within the context of pre-first world war society. Guthrie's production was also apparently entertaining, however, perhaps to the detriment of his analogue concept. *The Times*' critic called attention to the production's comic elements stating, "Tyrone Guthrie appears to have gone through the text with a magnifying glass for incidents that might be turned to comic stage account".[67] However, this may have been done in the context of sending up a futile war given that the two sets of officers may have been portrayed irreverently with the Prussian (Greek) army officers stereotypically heel-clicking and the Trojans depicted as "glass-smashing cavalry officers".[68]

That these comic moments did not entirely detract from the intended use of the period analogue setting can be observed in other reviews. There were several comments including this excerpt from the *Manchester Guardian*, which viewed the costumes and the analogue's meaning in terms similar to Paul Rogers'. The reviewer located Guthrie's *Troilus* in "1913 – the most recent year presumably when anyone could still regard war as a grand schoolboys' game."[69] Richard David had an opposite view, but

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[66] quoted in *Shakespearean Criticism*, Volume 18 (Detroit: Gale Research, 1992) 316.
[67] *The Times*, 4 April 1956.
[68] *The Observer*, 8 April 1956.
[69] *Manchester Guardian*, 5 April 1956.

nevertheless read the production in the context of its period setting, finding the production's historicity unconvincing:

> It was a pity to place this play, of which a main subject is war, in a period that emphasized only war's glamour and never its reality. Ceremonial uniforms filled the scene, and the battles, including the killing of Hector, were perfunctory.[70]

Audrey Williamson's reading of the production was more explicit in terms of equating Guthrie's period analogue with the cataclysm it was attempting to foreshadow. Williamson found Guthrie's use of the Edwardian milieu both full of pathos and an appropriate historical analogy for Shakespeare's work. For her the production's

> Ruritanian trappings did less injury to the essence of the tragi-comedy than might have been imagined. For the 1914-1918 War towards which Europe was then moving was to be the last of the "glamour" wars, the wars undertaken with a flourish of patriotic banners which were to become tattered shreds in the mud and blood of the trenches; just as the Homeric conception of heroism in the Greek and Trojan War was split and shattered in Shakespeare's bitter play showing the frivolity, prostitution and treachery beneath the military glamour.[71]

In Williamson's review, it is clear that Guthrie's pre-war framework had been used as an interpretive tool in the analysis of his *Troilus*. The historical associations that were

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[70] David, 131.
[71] Audrey Williamson, *Old Vic Drama 2: 1947-1957* (London: Rockliff, 1957) 203.

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brought into the theatre both by Guthrie and the reviewers played a crucial part in the production's reception. The period analogue as defined by Peter Holland ("recent history" used to "explicate the Shakespearean text") had clearly arrived, although it was to be several decades before the thirties would be used in interpretations of Shakespeare's plays.[72]

Although the evolution in Shakespearean theatre is the result of the staging of multiple plays over many years, the examples I have laid out in this chapter provide the framework for the production shifts that occurred. The modern dress productions at the Birmingham Rep merged naturalistic scenic and acting techniques with the Shakespearean text. In this they represented the contemporary social order and gave the early modern plays the illusion of having been created by contemporary playwrights. Michael MacOwan further developed the modern dress genre by combining modern dress and naturalism to give his *Troilus and Cressida* a clear interpretation grounded in thirties political discourse. Finally, with Tyrone Guthrie's productions came interpretation through the lens of history, albeit one with a more comic bent than its *Troilus* predecessor. As we will see in the pages that follow these are each important developments, the echoes of which would continue to feature in later period analogues. Any consideration of the history of the emergence of the thirties analogue must also consider the impact of the mediated performance on theatrical depictions of the past. In the next chapter, I will consider the influence of television period drama on the development of the stage's use of history in the Shakespearean period analogue.

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[72] Peter Holland, *English Shakespeares: Shakespeare on the English stage in the 1990s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) 95.

CHAPTER TWO
TELEVISUAL INFLUENCES

I. "MODERN DRESS", *THE FORSYTE SAGA* AND SHAKESPEARE

Having established in the previous chapter theatrical trends in which the origins of the thirties period analogue can be observed, I will now shift forward temporally two decades from the fifties and introduce mediated images of the past into this consideration of potential influences in the development of the thirties period analogue. I want to fast-forward from Guthrie's interpretive "Ruritanian" stagings to the seventies in order to investigate the connection between television period drama and the Shakespearean period analogue.

In the previous chapter, I discussed the MacOwan and Guthrie productions of *Troilus and Cressida* as having provided interpretive frameworks for the play. From those examples, it is clear that directorial interpretation began prior to the seventies. However, in Shakespearean theatre there are indications that practitioners in the seventies began to experiment more regularly with the period analogue. This may have been in part the result of design innovations and, as Dennis Kennedy maintains, the visual language at the RSC (arguably the most influential company performing Shakespeare in the UK at that time) in the sixties was artistically "conservative about setting and costume" under Peter Hall. When Trevor Nunn took over as artistic director, the company became visually more varied (and correspondingly more interpretive) including, importantly for this study, forays into period analogue.[1] It was

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[1] Dennis Kennedy, *Looking at Shakespeare: A Visual History of Twentieth-Century Performance*, second edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) 238-239.

perhaps this interest in the scenic elements of production that contributed to an apparent increase in the period analogue. In order to discuss other factors in the development of the production style, however, it will be useful to return once again to the phrase "modern dress."

By the seventies the phrase "modern dress" as applied to the Shakespearean production style, had evolved from its original meaning in the twenties and thirties. As we have seen, in those decades "modern dress" described clothing that evoked the immediately contemporary society at the time of production. Subsequently in the latter half of the twentieth century, a certain amount of elasticity had occurred in its usage as the Ruritanian productions of Guthrie had also been described as "modern dress". For example, Tyrone Guthrie's 1959 *All's Well That Ends Well* was set primarily in the Edwardian era, yet had garnered headlines that proclaimed it as clothed "in 'modern dress'".[2] This usage may be explained as a by-product of the reproduction of an era that director, star (Edith Evans), and no doubt a (possibly high) proportion of its audience had lived through; personal familiarity with the era in this case rendering it "modern".

Less clear, however, is that the same era used by Guthrie for *All's Well* and his 1956 *Troilus* has continued to be termed "modern" by some reviewers late into the twentieth century. One example of this can be observed in the descriptions applied to the setting of John Barton's 1981 *The Merchant of Venice*. The Stratford production

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[2] *Manchester Guardian*, 23 April 1959.

was correctly described by Michael Greenwald as "vaguely Edwardian"[3] and the term "late 19th century" was also applied to its costuming by one reviewer.[4] At the time of Barton's staging, the era he had chosen to depict had occurred at least sixty years previously. With this in mind, it is noticeable that Irving Wardle found Barton's production to be "a modern dress version".[5] This reading of the era as "modern dress" would be unremarkable if it were an isolated example. As a 2007 production of *Twelfth Night* directed by Philip Franks will further illustrate, however, the phrase had by then moved beyond its original twenties-era application.

Philip Franks staged *Twelfth Night* at the Chichester Festival Theatre and the director states in the programme that he chose the immediate post-war period of 1919-1920 for its setting. The set for the production resembled a conservatory, evoking the hothouses at Kew Gardens (ghosting the set for Trevor Nunn's 1981 Edwardian *All's Well That Ends Well*, in which Franks played Bertram in London and the Broadway transfer). The milieu, for Franks, suggested "the sense of the distant, golden, vanished summer of 1914…a world which has a pall of mourning drawn across it, which needs to be healed." There were numerous visual cues provided through which the audience could place the time period through scenography and character action.

The opening image of Franks' *Twelfth Night* was an unscripted cross by an Olivia attired in an ankle-length mourning dress and carrying a wreath of poppies, presumably *en route* to a memorial service. Presenting a further Edwardian visual, Olivia's household was headed by the Malvolio of Patrick Stewart who played the role

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[3] Michael L. Greenwald, *Directions by Indirections: John Barton of the Royal Shakespeare Company* (London and Toronto: Associated University Press, 1985) 109.
[4] *Daily Telegraph*, 23 April 1981.
[5] *The Times*, 22 April 1981.

in a Scots dialect. The combination of Stewart's adopted accent and the production's setting invoked the memory of – and seemed an *homage* to – the late Gordon Jackson's seminal portrayal of the butler Hudson in London Weekend Television's *Upstairs, Downstairs*. In 2007, this setting presented a gap of ninety years between the historical and re-enacted eras. Despite these costume and cultural references, one reviewer raved about "this gorgeous modern dress production of Shakespeare's most popular comedy."[6] Although not necessarily related, the combination of the televisual reference and the reviewer's adoption of "modern dress" to describe the setting is interesting. It is this reading of the past as "modern" (or perhaps more importantly, familiar) that warrants further examination in relation to Shakespearean production.

As we have seen, signifiers in the modern dress productions of Jackson and MacOwan were based on the depiction of their own contemporary societies. The tools necessary to "read" in the visual language of Jackson's *Cymbeline* the depiction of the Soothsayer as a spiritualist, for example, stemmed from an awareness of social trends. However, the reading of a society (such as Edwardian) with no personal knowledge requires a different set of tools for the activity. As one possible explanation, I want to suggest that the prevalence of history as generally depicted in the media, and particularly in period drama, can provide audiences with an ability to read the past. The past rendered familiar through period drama, the familiarity also renders the past "modern" through that familiarity.

Through depictions of other eras, audiences develop expectations about the past's visual as well as its social mores. The experience of one version of an historical era is

[6] *The Sun*, 10 August 2007.

ghosted upon the others, with repeat visits to that era building on the images from previous encounters. I want to explore these issues of historical recycling in theatre and television period drama to suggest that the period analogue onstage can be influenced by the portrayal of history on television. To do this, I want to examine it from three angles: reception, the depicted era's on-screen popularity and the recycling of those prevalent depictions of history from screen to stage.

In examining how the reception of a theatrical event can be influenced by television period drama, I want to turn to two influential productions. Specifically, I want to look at one television and Shakespearean drama both of which were produced within three years of one another. In 1967, the BBC aired *The Forsyte Saga* which had been adapted from John Galsworthy's novels. In 1970, Jonathan Miller directed *The Merchant of Venice* at the National Theatre with Laurence Olivier as Shylock. Both productions were set in the late Victorian era with Olivier, in *On Acting*, stating that he had wanted to find a setting for *Merchant* that would give the play

> a feeling of dignity and austerity. [To that end] I hit upon 1880-1885, that period when the Victorians had found their maturity. Tall hats and frock coats, a time of clean and polished fingernails.[7]

While Olivier seemed to focus on the appearance of the era, Miller emphasised more than its surface material.

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[7] Laurence Olivier, *On Acting* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1986) 119.

In the time period Miller found a deeper layer of meaning, drawing on the cultural implications of the late Victorian era to provide a social context for Shakespeare's action. As James Bulman notes, Miller is "a theatrical iconoclast with an interest in social history far keener than Olivier's, [who had] located the roots of modern [anti-Semitic] prejudice…in economic theory and power relations."[8] The late Victorian setting enabled Miller to portray a society in which

> usurers were now called bankers or financiers; a world where Jews such as Rothschild and Disraeli seemed (but only seemed) at last to have overcome the obstacles that for so long had denied them the rights of citizenship. By updating the play to 1880, therefore, Olivier [and Miller] appropriated Shakespeare's text to explore a society in which the economic and social tensions emergent in Elizabethan England had become more intricate and codified.[9]

This same society is the backdrop for John Galsworthy's *Forsyte Saga* and − in a demonstration of the familiarity with the era produced by the television serial − parallels were drawn between the television programme and Miller's *Merchant* in the play's reception.

To understand how the ghosting of *Forsyte Saga* worked within the reception of Miller's production, it will be helpful to first detail the influence of the BBC series. *The Forsyte Saga* aired from January to July 1967 on the BBC's then-fledgling second

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[8] James C. Bulman, *Shakespeare in Performance: The Merchant of Venice* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991) 76.
[9] Ibid., 76.

channel. At the time it was commissioned, the public broadcaster was intent on airing a series that would raise the profile of BBC2. *Forsyte*'s producer, Donald Wilson, convinced the Corporation that an adaptation of Galsworthy's novels would help to achieve this goal.[10] Wilson's reasoning was predicated on the notion that the novels were "more middlebrow than highbrow…having 'quality' overtones (as a literary, costume drama) yet also having sufficient popular appeal (its 'soap opera' qualities) to attract a broad audience."[11] To say that *Forsyte* fulfilled these expectations is an understatement, as the miniseries broke viewing records on BBC2, was repeated the following year on BBC1 and was ultimately transmitted in 45 countries.[12] Such is the level of its achievement that the series "eventually reached an estimated worldwide audience of 160 million, even breaching Cold War barriers as the first BBC series sold to the Soviet Union."[13] It is considered, as the television critic James Walton stated "the first big costume drama in the way that we would recognise it now."[14]

Not simply a ratings and foreign sales success, *Forsyte* appears to have captured the imagination of the British public. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the "nation shut down each Sunday night for the [broadcast]. Pubs closed early and the streets were deserted. The Church even rescheduled its evening worship services so that the immense audience could be ready for the start of the show at 7:25pm."[15] The impact of the series was such that the obituary of Nyree Dawn Porter, who played Irene

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[10] "*The Forsyte Saga*, Circa 1967", *Masterpiece Theatre* website, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/masterpiece/forsyte/ei_saga.html>, last accessed 2 February 2009.
[11] Lez Cooke, *British Television Drama: A History* (London: British Film Institute Publishing, 2003) 83.
[12] Lez Cooke, 84.
[13] Jacqueline Conciatore, "*Forsyte Saga* remake 'goes for the youthful passion'", *Current*, 22 October 2001, http://www.current.org/drama/drama0119forsyte.html, last accessed 3 January 2008.
[14] *The Story of the Costume Drama*, Episode 1: "The Greatest Stories Ever Told", ITV Productions Limited, aired ITV3, 1 December 2008.
[15] "*The Forsyte Saga*, Circa 1967", *Masterpiece Theatre* website, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/masterpiece/forsyte/ei_saga.html>, last accessed 2 February 2009.

Forsyte, devoted the majority of its allotted space to her appearance in the series, noting that

> The scene in which Soames Forsyte enforces his conjugal rights by raping [his wife] Irene remains one of the most shocking episodes in television drama. At the time it was broadcast, it provoked a national debate about violence within marriage. "It was staggering how seriously it was taken," Nyree Dawn Porter recalled. "Politicians had televised discussions on whether Soames was right to rape his wife."[16]

Given its popularity when it aired and afterward, *Forsyte* was clearly a period drama whose broadcast had far-reaching consequences, including its use in the reception of period analogue Shakespeare.

There is no evidence to show whether the majority of the cast, director, crew or reviewers of Jonathan Miller's production watched the broadcast of *Forsyte*. Given its apparent popularity combined with the existence of only three television channels, it is highly likely that Miller and Olivier were aware of the serial's impact if not actually familiar with it. Even if the production team as a whole had no knowledge of the television programme, it is clear that there was demographic overlap in journalistic review circles between those who watched *Forsyte* and those who were in the audience at the Old Vic Theatre for Miller's *Merchant*.

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[16] "Obituary of Nyree Dawn Porter", *Daily Telegraph*, 12 April 2001: 33.

Two reviewers of *Merchant*, John Barber and Peter Lewis, use identical phrasing in their comparisons of Shakespeare's character Antonio with Galsworthy's Forsytes. Barber in the *Daily Telegraph* states that "Here the Merchant *looks like* an elder Forsyte, with rolled umbrella and spats, while his gadfly friends sport dashing checks and wear bowlers [*my italics*]."[17] Peter Lewis's *Daily Mail* critique begins with reservations about the time period's relevance to the play. He went on to admit, however, that "It has advantages—Shylock is played as a businessman and his adversary Antonio *looks like* an elderly Forsyte [*my italics*]."[18] This double "looks like" is indicative of something *observed* (the television programme) rather than read (the novels). The use of the phrase speaks to visual culture, rather than literary, indicating the ghosting of Victorian social mores onto the stage production from its television predecessor.

As well as the purely visual associations with the outward signification of period through costume, the reception of *Merchant* was coloured by the social framework that *Forsyte* had also provided. Alfred Friendly, reporting on the production for *The Washington Post*, wrote that

> He [Miller] has converted the old story into an essay on greed, ostensibly still set in 16th century Venice, but actually in late 19th century England. As a young man, Soames Forsyth [*sic*] would have known all of the characters.[19]

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[17] *Daily Telegraph*, 29 April 1970.
[18] *Daily Mail*, 24 April 1970.
[19] *Washington Post*, 26 July 1970.

This excerpt provides another example of the historical ghosting which occurs between dramatic forms. In this example, the television programme was used to provide what Marvin Carlson refers to as cultural memory.[20] Through viewing *The Forsyte Saga* knowledge of late Victorian society had been provided to Friendly about the period setting and had subsequently produced expectations about the era, which he was able to layer on top of the *Merchant* he was reviewing. His understanding of Shakespeare's play had been enhanced through associations of commerce and greed (or property in Galsworthian terms), stemming from the television adaptation.

Bearing in mind that *Forsyte* had been an international success (coupled with the appearance onstage of Laurence Olivier as Shylock which had excited worldwide interest), global press reviews of *Merchant* also drew on *Forsyte* to provide readers with the production setting's cultural context. Several reviews from German, Dutch, French and Italian newspapers are preserved in the National Theatre archive. Even without an English translation, it is apparent the television serial had influenced the production's reception, as with these two representative examples: "sir larry spelt shylock in forsyte-sfeer" and "Shylock bei den Forsythios". Clearly language was not a barrier to understanding the cultural framework of both screen and stage versions of the Victorian era, with knowledge of the Forsytes contextualising the Shakespearean interpretation.

It is clear from the examples above that the broadcast of *The Forsyte Saga* provided a familiar context for audiences of Miller's *Merchant of Venice*. What I have been

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[20] Marvin Carlson, *The Haunted Stage: The Theatre as Memory Machine* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2001) 78.

suggesting here is that through the recycling of history, the ability to read the past interpretively has been enhanced by the growth in popularity of the period drama genre. Through its depiction of the past period drama portrays aspects of the social mores and relationships of the re-created era, which allows them to be seen as behaviour typical of that particular society. By the dramatic re-enactment of the late-Victorian world, those watching Miller's production could therefore build social associations made familiar through the period drama. By using the Victorian setting in ways that, whether deliberately or not, mimicked the obsession with commerce seen in *Forsyte*, the audience for *Merchant* could reuse the cultural memory provided by the television programme to interpret the behaviour of Shakespeare's characters through those associations. For the remainder of this chapter I want to explore how multiple images of one era can impact the Shakespearean period analogue, concentrating on the post-*Forsyte* interest in the Edwardian era that occurred in the seventies.

II. THE "EDWARDIAN CRAZE"

In discussing the relationship between portrayals of the past in mediatized dramatic formats, in particular television period drama, it may be useful to visualise them as layers of ghosting. As the seventies progressed, it became apparent that period drama was in the midst of what Robert Giddings and Keith Selby have labelled an "Edwardian craze".[21] While acknowledging that there were other historical eras depicted on television at the time, I want to continue to concentrate on the televisual Edwardian setting as it was clearly favourite territory for television producers

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[21] Robert Giddings and Keith Selby, *The Classic Serial on Television and Radio* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001) 27.

throughout the seventies. The quantity of the historical impressions would, in theory, provide multiple points of historical reference for its audience, with each new encounter deepening historical cultural memory.

The subject matter of this cluster of Edwardian-set drama varied widely and Lez Cooke has observed that period drama in the seventies warranted the label "historical drama".[22] There was, in fact, a strong historical bent to what was produced for television with historical biographies popular subject matter. These factually-based dramas ranged from the 1975 series based on the life of *Edward the Seventh*, starring Timothy West as the corpulent monarch to the series *Lillie*, dramatising the life of one of Edward's numerous mistresses, Lillie Langtry. The Hapsburg dynasty was the topic of another series, *The Fall of Eagles* (1974) while the BBC produced a series of single-play biographies, which were broadcast under the aptly titled *The Edwardians* umbrella. It depicted the lives of eight eminent Edwardians, including David Lloyd George, Arthur Conan Doyle and Charles Rolls and Henry Royce. The sheer volume of Edwardian-set period drama produced what can be thought of as an accumulation of images of the era. In turn, they collectively provided multiple sites from which could be drawn various historical views of the Edwardians. As with *The Forsyte Saga* previously, the information provided within them could be used to produce impressions of the Edwardian era that could be applied elsewhere (ghosted) including the Shakespearean period analogue.

Among the subject matter the Edwardian-set period dramas collectively depicted was the struggle for women's rights, issues of social class and the first world war from

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[22] Lez Cooke, 166.

multiple angles. It will be helpful to provide examples here of some of the types of content broadcast on Edwardian-set television dramas in the seventies. The efforts of women to obtain the vote were dramatised by the BBC in the series *Shoulder to Shoulder*, with each of its six episodes a single play based around one aspect of the struggle. As well as *Shoulder to Shoulder*, *Upstairs, Downstairs* also made use of the historical parallels between the struggle for voting rights and the women's liberation movement. In its second series, the daughter of the Bellamy household becomes involved with the suffragettes. The decade-long "Edwardian craze" culminated in the BBC's dramatisation of Vera Brittain's memoir, *Testament of Youth* in 1979. The series detailed Brittain's pre-war struggle for equality within her family unit as Brittain fought to receive the same parity in education as her brother. As the first world war began, she was finally allowed by her patriarchal father to take up a place at Somerville College, Oxford.

With trades union activity entering what Pearce and Stewart referred to as "a particularly militant phase in their history", strikes, the three-day week and the Conservative government going to the polls asking the voters to choose them via the slogan "Who governs?", society in the seventies seemed preoccupied with class.[23] This was reflected in the choice of subject matter that was dramatised in television serials. Period dramas were used to debate some of these issues through the prism of history (in a similar manner to Shakespeare's in his history plays).

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[23] Malcolm Pearce and Geoffrey Stewart, *British Political History 1867-2001: Democracy and Decline*, third edition (London: Routledge, 2002) 496.

On one level, Edwardian society was depicted as one in which there was a degree of social mobility. For example, Vera Brittain's father was a middle-class, self-made businessman, who (in Emrys James' characterisation) spoke with a northern accent. His social aspirations included sending his son to a minor public school, an achievement that had been enabled by class mobility. Lillie Langtry and David Lloyd George were hardly aristocratic, but one became a successful actress (possibly more famous for having been the mistress of a king) and the other Prime Minister.

Arguably the most influential, and most popular, of the Edwardian-set period drama of the seventies was the long-running London Weekend Television series, *Upstairs, Downstairs*. Within its premise was perhaps the most nuanced depiction of the Edwardian class system, which often portrayed its rigidity, rather than the mobility dramatised elsewhere. Where other series, such as *Forsyte Saga*, focused on upper-middle-class property owners, the initial idea for *Upstairs, Downstairs* had been unique to television drama. As John Hawkesworth said of the initial "pitch" made to him by series co-creators Jean Marsh and Eileen Atkins, the intention was "To look at downstairs as carefully as upstairs for the first time was the pearl in the oyster, because really forever servants had been kind of mobile props."[24] To that end, *Upstairs, Downstairs* followed the lives of the entire Bellamy household, masters upstairs *and* servants below stairs.

The juxtaposition with *Forsyte*, which had aired a few years previously, was marked as Alistair Cooke observes, stating that the

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[24] quoted in Richard Marson, *Inside Updown: The Story of Upstairs Downstairs* (Bristol: Kaleidoscope Publishing, 2001), 3.

servants of the Galsworthy households existed as lowly mechanics necessary to the maintenance of a prosperous upper-middle-class family. They were not developed as a parallel family of agonizing and rejoicing human beings."[25]

The parallel families in *Upstairs, Downstairs* were portrayed as two separate but interconnected entities. "Upstairs" was nominally headed by a Member of Parliament, Richard Bellamy, but in reality the household was a matriarchy run by Richard's aristocratic wife, Lady Marjorie. They had two grown children, James and Elizabeth, the former of whom would feature prominently in the latter half of the series. At the pinnacle of the "downstairs" hierarchy were the butler, Mr Hudson, and the cook, Mrs Bridges. Under them were a variety of maids, footmen, chauffeurs, and scullery maids, who made up their family unit.

The use made of the class issue in the first two series of *Upstairs, Downstairs* was relatively unimaginative, with the two "families" portrayed more as separate entities, rather than the "parallel" families admired by Alistair Cooke. As the series matured, the portrayal of class became more nuanced in later episodes. In the first two series, the class barriers were decidedly in place as James Bellamy fell in love with the under-house-parlourmaid-turned-chorus-girl Sarah. Having made her pregnant, James was exiled and sent to India in the army by his parents when he attempted to marry her. However, from the third series the class system within this Edwardian household had begun to imitate the reality of what Hawkesworth had seen as signs of the melting

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[25] Alistair Cooke, *Masterpieces: A Decade of Classics on British Television* (London: The Bodley Head, 1982) 181.

of the "rigid class barriers", epitomised by the introduction of Hazel Forrest into the Bellamy household.[26]

The character of Hazel had entered the series as Richard Bellamy's typist and, as such, had a "place" neither upstairs in the Bellamy household nor downstairs as part of the servants' "family". Her middle class background put her at a social disadvantage, accentuated when the Bellamy heir James fell in love with her, proposing marriage. Although this plot line idealises the situations within *Upstairs, Downstairs*, it had as its basis historical fact as the aristocracy began to marry "down". For audiences who had followed the series from its beginning, the transition from the rigid social structure that allowed for no mobility to one in which a typist could marry "up" was likely to have shifted impressions of the Edwardian social structure. It had, perhaps, become more believable that a middle class woman, not far removed from servant status in the household, could become the lady of the house in name if not in attitudes.

Along with its depiction of class, *Upstairs, Downstairs* was arguably the first television drama programme to introduce the first world war to its audiences in any depth.[27] The commercial serial used all thirteen episodes in its fourth year to dramatise that war. As a direct result of the series being largely studio-bound, the effect of the war on the characters was predominantly explored through the perspective of those on the home front. The men, both upstairs and down, returned from the front disillusioned and shell-shocked; the butler Hudson became an air warden; the Bellamy ward, Georgina, went to the front as a VAD; the kitchen maid

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[26] quoted in Marson, 10.
[27] Marson, 208.

briefly left to work in a munitions factory. Issues of Belgian refugees, an ill-prepared army, psychological trauma to the men returning from the front were among the topics explored, and the deaths of loved ones affected the "families" both up and down.

The BBC's dramatisation of Vera Brittain's *Testament of Youth* also depicted the personal ramifications of the first world war. The bulk of Brittain's memoir, and the television series based on it, is devoted to the effect of the first world war on her, as one by one her fiancée, brother and two friends were either killed or were to eventually die of wounds. Many of the experiences that had been dramatised in the fictional *Upstairs, Downstairs* reappeared in the biographical *Testament of Youth*. The shattering emotional effects that came from losing the people who formed her inner circle were explored in detail. Also, in what can be seen as a symbiosis of the two serials, Brittain's VAD work was to become a lasting image of *Testament of Youth*, the uniform featuring on the cover of one of its paperback reissues.

I have been highlighting class, women and the first world war here because they had become recurring themes in multiple Edwardian-set dramas of the seventies. The reappearance of these topics in more than one serial can be seen as a form of historical recycling, their recurrence influencing both audience expectation of the era and the manner in which the Edwardian era could be read. Through repetition, the treble issues of class, women and the Great War were reinforced as dominant historical images of the Edwardian era. These were soon to be re-used on the Shakespearean stage in the form of a period analogue.

III. FROM SCREEN TO STAGE

Trevor Nunn's RSC production of *All's Well That Ends Well* was set in the Edwardian era, its interpretive framework ghosting recent televisual portrayals of the period. It was produced in 1981, at a time when the themes of class, women and war that had been recycled in multiple dramas were still fresh in its audience's minds. That Nunn had intended the production to be read in these terms can be seen from the remarks made by two of his original cast members: Geoffrey Hutchings, who played Lavatch and the production's Bertram, Mike Gwilym. Between them they covered the three issues that had been prevalent in the Edwardian-set television dramas, citing them as integral to their understanding of the period.

Reiterating the director's explanation of the milieu in his account of the production in the *Players of Shakespeare* series, Geoffrey Hutchings stated that

> The optimum historical setting seemed to be 1910, the *Belle Epoque*: Europe just after the turn of the century and just prior to the first major world confrontation. The importance of class in the play and the emergence of women in society were both helped by this choice.[28]

Hutchings indicates that the emphasis of the production had been on the social aspects of the Edwardian era, which had influenced the staging of his scenes as Lavatch. In a reference to the first world war Mike Gwilym, who played Bertram, stated that the

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[28] Geoffrey Hutchings, "Lavatch in *All's Well That Ends Well*" in *Players of Shakespeare*, Philip Brockbank, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985) 83.

play had been placed in the Edwardian era in order "to create the feeling…that people think they are in control of their destinies, but the bombs are about to explode."[29] What underpins these two statements are the recycled images of the era that were familiar to audiences from various television programmes including *Upstairs, Downstairs*, *Shoulder to Shoulder* and *Testament of Youth*. Nunn's production had been designed to exploit these familiar themes in order to provide a social context for his version of *All's Well*. Given that in 1910 the Great War was still four years in the future, Trevor Nunn was not necessarily seeking to depict the era with complete historical accuracy. Instead, it was the impressions of the Edwardian era that were emphasised, ghosting associations of class, women and the first world war onto the Shakespearean period setting.

In *All's Well* social mobility and class are intertwined, the possibilities of attaining a higher social status epitomised by Helena. In Nunn's production, Helena was the Countess's housekeeper, the keys hanging from her waist signalling her social status. One method by which Nunn signified the society to which Helena belonged was through the use of servants, his "mobile props" (as Hawkesworth termed the pre-*Upstairs* method of using them). Numerous footmen and maids in uniforms and lace caps crossed the stage during the scene changes as daily household activities were mimicked. This bustle echoed the depictions of servants in numerous period dramas although, unlike in *Upstairs, Downstairs*, they were not given a voice. Instead, their presence and activity was likely included to provide Helena with a plausible household to run. This interpretation also contained echoes of *Upstairs, Downstairs* in that this Helena belonged neither "upstairs" with the Countess nor "downstairs" in the

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[29] *The Observer*, 8 November 1981.

servant's hall. In Harriet Walter's Helena the ghost of Hazel Forrest could be observed.

Helena's social inferiority in the household (if not in the eyes of Peggy Ashcroft's Countess) was confirmed by Bertram's attitude toward her at the French court. The scene in which Helena, at the King's behest, chooses Bertram for her husband (II.3) was set in a ballroom, the upper class venue for courtship. It began with the entrance of five couples, waltzing around the stage with verve. Their attire was full evening dress, with the men in coats and long tails and the women in pastel-shaded ball gowns. The elimination game was staged as an Edwardian walking musical chairs, with each suitor being refused by Helena as the music stopped mid-strain. The implications of Helena's place in his mother's household were made clear by Philip Franks' Bertram, class demarcation embedded in his response.[30] The vehemence with which he uttered

> But follows it, my lord, to bring me down
>
> Must answer for your raising? I know her well.
>
> She had her breeding at my father's charge.
>
> A poor physician's daughter my wife! Disdain
>
> Rather corrupt me ever.
>
> (II.3.113-117)

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[30] Although Mike Gwilym originally played Bertram, the archive video was filmed in 1982 after Philip Franks had taken over the role for the run at the Barbican Theatre. My performance information, unless otherwise stated, comes from this video.

was punctuated by the emphasis Franks gave to "me down", "breeding", and "charge". Concluding with the rising tones of the last two lines, the delivery of this short passage encapsulated the class barriers that had become a feature on *Upstairs, Downstairs* in the previous decade. In a reversal of ghosting, this Shakespearean version of James Bellamy had made it clear that he would never marry a Hazel Forrest (unless forced to by his monarch).

With the King's insistence that Bertram would marry Helena came the introduction of a second occurrence of historical recycling. As Gwilym intimated, by conflating the timeline and fast-forwarding it from 1910 to 1914, Nunn signified that Bertram had volunteered to fight on the western front. The short scene with the Duke of Florence (III.1) was played with the Duke in martial dress, followed by three men whom the promptbook refers to as "recruits". The scene is frequently omitted in performance, yet by retaining it Nunn was able to enhance the action through the use of its period context. The elation with which the Duke and his recruits marched off mimicked the early enthusiasm held by the British population for the conflict in 1914.

The war signifiers Nunn included, like the class aspect of the production, contained echoes of the recent television serials that had depicted the Great War. The images of wounded soldiers at the field hospital being tended by nurses (VADs) had been made familiar to audiences through television period drama. In Nunn's production, the second half curtain rose on what the promptbook calls the "Field Hospital". The lights slowly faded up on III.3 as a mournful tune was played on a harmonica by one of the wounded men.

The detail by which the scene was created can be observed in the props list which details the numerous signifiers involved in re-creating a first world war battlefield. Four mattresses and two blankets were required, as well as hurricane lamps, a folding screen, and a "blooded sabre". The number of supernumeraries in this scene was also extended to a "dummy on table and sheet", presumably representing a wounded soldier in need of medical attention. The overall stage picture was thus one which had been recycled from depictions of the war on television. Uniformed nurses tending to the wounded on stretchers completed the visual allusion to the front line. The scene ended as Bertram conversed with the Duke of Florence and the sound of artillery shelling filled the auditorium.

The production's first world war imagery was cemented with Helena's next appearance. She entered, reading a map with a case and Gladstone bag, her textual "pilgrim" status that of a nurse (or a member of the Voluntary Aid Detachment) looking for the medical station to which she had been assigned. Her costume, like that of those attending to the wounded in III.3 was the nurse's uniform: black cloak, headdress and boots. This image of Helena as a VAD contained in it ghosts from both *Upstairs, Downstairs* and *Testament of Youth*.

A more complex layering of ghosting can be found in the example of *Testament of Youth*. One final link between the visual imagery of period drama and Shakespearean theatre can be found in the casting of Nunn's *All's Well*. Cheryl Campbell, who played Diana, had recently won a BAFTA award for her portrayal of Vera Brittain in the BBC's adaptation of *Testament of Youth*. To audiences who had watched Campbell's embodiment of Brittain, it was a masterful portrait of a young woman destroyed by

the conflict she had, like so many others, originally welcomed. There would undoubtedly have been people watching Nunn's Edwardian *All's Well* who would have recognised Campbell as Vera Brittain. With the series still fresh in the minds of those members of the audience, associations between television drama and theatrical period setting were available to be drawn.

The effect of this historical recycling of a decade's-worth of accumulated Edwardian impressions can be seen in reviews of Nunn's production. The interpretation and the reception seemed to be in harmony, perhaps because of the production's re-use of history that had become familiar through television. Jack Tinker's review, for example, was a thoughtful reaction to the setting, combining an understanding of the era's class system with knowledge of its treatment of women:

> By setting it in that uneasy twilight of Europe just before the First World War beneath a palatial cast iron and glass hothouse construction Trevor Nunn demonstrates exactly the difficult subtleties that have eluded past productions of this sombre comedy. Suddenly it all slots into focus. The hideous snobbery of Bertram, refusing to marry Helena merely because she is only a doctor's daughter…takes on the aspect of a young man not so much damned by his own mean spirit but imprisoned in the straitjacket of his class.[31]

The sympathy with which Tinker assesses Bertram's situation is reminiscent of James Bellamy's having also been straight-jacketed by class, as in his failed attempt to marry Sarah and subsequent exile in the early *Upstairs, Downstairs* episodes. Tinker was not

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[31] *Daily Mail*, 18 November 1981.

the only critic to respond to the milieu of class in this way, as one further example illustrates: "[Nunn] has found an ideal period setting for this play of class-consciousness and sexual oppression in an Edwardian world…"[32]

Similarly, the director's choice to allude to the first world war also made its appearance in the reception. In the newspaper headlines, references to the First World War setting were rampant. For example, the *Worcester Evening News* introduced the production as "All's well on Western Front".[33] Erich Maria Remarque's novel may have provided the pithy soubriquet for the Worcester paper's copy editor, but the *Daily Telegraph*'s reviewer was more substantive in its analysis of Nunn's setting. Eric Shorter opined that the setting emphasised "…in its allusion to the Western Front, the horrors of the alternative to marriage (by Royal Command) for the fugitive young Bertram".[34] James Fenton's review in *The Sunday Times* also drew much setting-related nuance from the production, stating that

> Trevor Nunn's production and John Gunter's design offer us the last period in European history in which both these points can be convincingly established: the eve of the first world war, a period in which the code of chivalry of the officer class can be seen in a most vivid and ironic light…The brilliance of this production derives from its exploitation of all the possibilities of the period it evokes.[35]

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[32] *Morning Star*, 30 November 1981.
[33] *Worcester Evening News*, 18 November 1981.
[34] *Daily Telegraph*, 18 November 1981.
[35] *Sunday Times*, 22 November 1981.

In these examples, the reception also ghosts those same aspects of Edwardian society that had been prevalent in both period drama and Nunn's production.

That reception and interpretation of Trevor Nunn's *All's Well* were filtered through programmes such as *Upstairs, Downstairs* and *Testament of Youth* can perhaps be best illustrated through comparison with that of other productions of *All's Well*. At the same time Trevor Nunn's production of *All's Well* seemed to be ghosting period drama in its depiction of Edwardian society, it was also recycling Tyrone Guthrie's 1959 Stratford production. Several elements of Nunn's production were mirrors of Guthrie's as J. L. Styan notes, "The world of Renaissance honour translated well into one of twentieth-century monocles and boiled-shirt formality, and Guthrie's characters were real people conscious of class and propriety."[36] Where the productions clearly diverged was in Guthrie's approach to the Italian scenes. As Robert Shaughnessy describes it, in them the director was "going for anachronistic broke…by costuming his troops in the berets, khaki and baggy comedy shorts…circa 1941."[37]

The reception of Nunn's production had been coloured by impressions of social structure and the effects of war from depictions of the Edwardian era on television depictions. While Guthrie's playing of the Italian scenes negated any pathos hindsight creates of the era, also missing from the reception of his production is any mention of social class and women. Crucially, what cultural, historical or emotional connotations the period might have had for the audience are absent from the majority of reviews preserved in the Shakespeare Centre's newscuttings collection. If mentioned at all, the

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[36] J. L. Styan, *Shakespeare in Performance: All's Well that Ends Well* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984) 8.
[37] Robert Shaughnessy, "Tyrone Guthrie" in *The Routledge Companion to Directors' Shakespeare*, ed. by John Russell Brown (London and New York: Routledge, 2008) 136.

milieu was described in terms of a perceived Edwardian sunset, as in "The setting is, more or less, Edwardian-fairy-tale".[38] The sombre facet of the production was equated not with the looming carnage on the Western Front, but was instead viewed as having "all the gentle melancholy of a Tchekovian [*sic.*] masterpiece".[39] I would suggest that the absence of discussion of the setting in the reception – and the inclusion of it in reviews of Nunn's production – illustrates by omission the impact television period drama had on audience perception of the Edwardian era of the 1981 production.

Subsequent productions of *All's Well* have been comparatively rare, with the RSC having produced the play three times and the National Theatre once since 1981; no director has as yet reproduced the Edwardian setting as a period analogue. Barry Kyle opted for a Carolinian visual (RSC, 1989), while both Peter Hall (RSC, 1992) and Gregory Doran (RSC, 2003) used Elizabethan costuming. Noticeable, however, has been a gradual erosion of the class aspect of the play in performance. It is acknowledged, but without the detailed reading that combined knowledge *setting* and *class* that was apparent in the reception of Nunn's recycled (televisually) class-obsessed Edwardian era depiction.

Directed by Marianne Elliott at the National Theatre in 2009, the most recent production of *All's Well* completely negates the play's class aspect. As with Nunn's production, the influence of televisual media can be seen in Elliott's placement of the play in the fantasy world of the fairy tale. The research Elliott and her designer initially undertook was that of these filmic worlds, eventually reporting to Nicholas

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[38] *Stratford-upon-Avon Herald*, 24 April 1959.
[39] *Morning Advertiser (London)*, 25 April 1959.

Hytner that the production concept would mimic a Tim Burton film.[40] The budgetary constraints of the Travelex-sponsored "£10" season reduced their original conception, but the finished product was replete with references to film and fairy tales, including a Little Red Riding Hood cloak and Dorothy's red slippers worn in Oz; the dark, angular shadows cast across the stage were also imitative of Burton's (and Disney's) imagery.

A programme note by Marina Warner reinforced for the audience Elliott's directorial concept of "Once Upon a Time in Rossillion". Warner concentrates on discussing how Shakespeare breaks the conventions of traditional "folk tales", while at the same time supporting Elliott's reading of *All's Well* as a contemporary fairy tale. Using motifs found in the production, Warner equates the Countess with both the "Wicked Queen" and "fairy godmother" and Helena as Cinderella. Only once in the piece does Warner allude to the class issue that is prevalent in Shakespeare's text, and then only with the simplistic phrase, "Helena's lowly birth". Warner provides no discussion of Bertram's status, and the textual references of his class-bound rejection of Helena are not addressed. The exclusion of the topic from the programme highlights the fact that this aspect of the play was not a priority for the director.

Although Helena's upbringing as a ward of the Countess is a fact made plain by Bertram in his initial refusal to marry her, Elliott's production milieu was one in which the class issue was avoided. The world created by the fairy tale allusions was one in which *un*reality dominated. The difficulty is that in fairy tales, as in other Shakespearean comedies, the beggar-bride often turns out to be a princess in disguise.

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[40] Marianne Elliott, NT Platform, 24 June 2009, recording in National Theatre archive, London.

In *All's Well*, Shakespeare breaks the mould and offers a heroine who is inferior to her intended. Yet, Elliott's production used fantasy images as a way of solving the perceived textual difficulties of a "problem play", including that of class.

Unlike Nunn's production, where the familiar images were those of the Edwardian class system, the reception of Elliott's production virtually ignored the class-based relationships within the play. If discussed at all in reviews, class is mentioned in passing (mimicking Marina Warner's programme essay) and Charles Spencer's critique completely excises the fact from his précis of the plot:

> At the start Helena, the orphaned daughter of a doctor, cures the French king of a life-threatening illness. As a reward she is allowed to marry whom she chooses - and she picks the callow young Bertram, the snobbish son of the countess who has brought her up after her father's death.[41]

This disregard in the reception of Elliott's production of Helena's place within the social world of the play is interesting. It is also worth noting that Michael Billington's review of Nunn's production calls the story of *All's Well* "a fairy-tale plot, about a miracle-curing heroine and her defecting husband", he also emphasised the class barrier, saying "Partly he does this by updating the play to a precise Edwardian world where class-differences are crucial"[42] Despite equating Shakespeare's plot with a fairy tale, Billington's review focuses on the aspects of Edwardian society which had been explored in depth in television drama. For Billington, as for many of his colleagues in

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[41] *Daily Telegraph*, 1 June 2009.
[42] *The Guardian*, 7 July 1982.

the early 1980s, what was familiar about the Edwardian era was the depiction of social class, paralleling the content of much Edwardian-set television drama.

This idea that television can bring familiarity to an era is one that is crucial to understanding how period drama can affect the production of the Shakespearean analogue. I began this chapter by discussing the phrase "modern dress" and the reception of Shakespeare through the prism of historical information provided by television. Impressions of the Edwardian era were also created for the audience by television because of its popularity as a dramatic setting. More material meant that multiple facets of the society were explored, opening up these images to provide greater nuance than would have been possible in a single televisual exploration. The multiple facets were thus easily transferred and applied within a Shakespearean play through its performance in the period analogue style. These are issues that will recur throughout the pages that follow and in the next chapter I will turn to the emergence of the thirties period setting onstage.

CHAPTER THREE
THE THIRTIES PERIOD SETTING

I. THE HISTORICAL MOMENT

The historical moment in which late twentieth century society became interested in the thirties was one with which it had several similarities. Although it will not be possible to go into detail here, it will be helpful to note some of the historical parallels between the thirties and the eighties. Through my examples, my intention is to provide a contrast between those televisual and staged images of the thirties that will be discussed later in this chapter and the historical detail of the decade. This will help to provide the wider historical context for interest in the thirties that had developed in dramatic form.

Perhaps the most obvious similarity between society in the thirties and the eighties was their high unemployment rates. Although there had been other periods of economic decline and recovery in the intervening fifty years, the numbers of jobless in the eighties had reached levels that had not been seen since in Britain since the Depression. Unemployment reached 3.3 million during 1982-83, which was greater than the 2.8 million out of work in 1931.[1] During both decades, the jobless rate became a political issue, exacerbated by what has been termed the north/south divide. In the thirties, unemployment rates were in double figures in areas such as Jarrow, but Oxford and Coventry had a mere (by comparison) five per cent of its population out

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[1] Jeremy Black, *Britain Since the Seventies: Politics and Society in the Consumer Age* (London: Reaktion Books, 2004) 127; Juliet Gardiner, *The Thirties: An Intimate History* (London: Harper Press, 2010) 119.

of work.[2] With the collapse of heavy industry and the closure of coal mines in the eighties there was a similar jobless distribution for the regions, with those in the northern areas suffering proportionally higher unemployment rates than in the relatively prosperous south.[3] In both the thirties and the eighties, unemployment was a root cause of political and social unrest.

Political unrest was manifested in a variety of forms in both decades, including strikes and hunger marches, with ideological debate sometimes swelling into physical clashes between the politics of left and right factions. Probably the best-known example of labour activism in the years between the two world wars is the 1926 General Strike. Protesting reduced wages, the abolition of the minimum wage and longer working hours it began as a miners' walk-out which other heavy industries quickly followed. For most workers the General Strike lasted nine days, but many miners stayed out for several months leaving what Juliet Gardiner has described as "a bitter legacy" in the areas affected by the privations it caused.[4]

Strikes were not confined to the coalfields, however, and the thirties saw a vast array of worker discontent not all of which was restricted to heavy industry. In 1931 the crews of twelve Royal Navy ships held a sit-in protest and refused the order to sail. Their objections were to across-the-board pay cuts which had potentially left their families in "real hardship…[and in consequence] furniture would be repossessed, clothes and shoes would not be replaced, some families might be evicted, others go

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[2] Malcolm Pearce and Geoffrey Stewart, *British Political History 1867-2001: Democracy and Decline*, third edition (London and New York: Routledge, 2002) 355.
[3] Arthur Marwick, *A History of the Modern British Isles: 1914-1999* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000) 313-315.
[4] Gardiner, 148.

short of food."[5] Robert Graves and Alan Hodge chronicled other industrial action in the decade including the beginning of sit-down strikes in the pits in Monmouthshire, where the workers would literally camp in the mines, and a London bus strike during the Coronation of King George VI in 1937.[6]

The eighties were similarly rife with industrial action and Margaret Thatcher had come to power in 1979 in part as a result of what became known as the "winter of discontent", culminating in well-publicised strikes by public sector workers. Perhaps the most enduring image of this period was provided by the walkout by the dustmen with "uncollected rubbish, piled high in the streets".[7] Five years later, what became "a major confrontation" between Thatcher's government and the National Union of Mineworkers occurred with the Miners' Strike in 1984. It polarised opinion on the left and right, with NUM president Arthur Scargill spouting what Peter Clarke refers to as "class-war rhetoric" as Margaret Thatcher branded the strikers "the enemy within".[8] The populist view of events was expressed by journalist Andrew Marr as "macho policing" being matched by "violence from striking miners."[9] These "violent clashes" had "made for vivid televised images" and, consequently, probably coloured public perception of events, as much as had the heated rhetoric of Scargill and Thatcher.[10]

The rhetoric of Thatcher and Scargill was symptomatic of the political polarisation between left and right that was apparent not only in the eighties, but the thirties as well. In the earlier decade political positions were divided as the idealists promoting

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[5] Gardiner, 151.
[6] Robert Graves and Alan Hodge, *The Long Week-End: A Social History of Great Britain 1918-1939* (London: Hutchinson, 1940, 1985) 332, 369.
[7] Peter Clarke, *Hope and Glory: Britain 1900-1990* (London: Penguin, 1997) 356.
[8] Ibid., 378.
[9] Andrew Marr, *A History of Modern Britain* (London: Macmillan, 2007) 415.
[10] Clarke, 378.

capitalism, communism and fascism vied for a position of prominence within political discourse. These ideological conflicts sometimes deteriorated into acts of violence. Hunger marchers, for example, encountered physical opposition from the authorities, as the experience of a group of unemployed Lancashire workers in Stratford-upon-Avon shows, where they "were seriously batoned by the police at a workhouse" and "arrived [at the march's destination] in Hyde Park heavily bandaged."[11]

Far-right sentiment was also present within England in the thirties, although the level of threat the fascists posed is debatable. In *English Journey*, J. B. Priestley recounted having attended a "fascist meeting near the docks" in Bristol:

> Neither of the black-shirted young men, who looked as fierce as Mussolini himself, could make himself heard for more than half a minute at a time, because most of the audience consisted of communists, who stolidly sang their dreary hymn, the *International* [*sic*].

Priestley felt that had he "stayed longer [in Bristol], I might have seen some trouble".[12] The trouble of which he wrote was the violence that was often an undercurrent of such encounters.

The most notorious of British fascists in the thirties was a failed MP, Sir Oswald Mosley, and his wife, the former Diana Mitford. The rise of the far-right movements in England in the thirties had been economically driven. As Juliet Gardner explains, "Mosley believed that fascism would come to power in Britain as it had in Germany:

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[11] Gardiner, 156.
[12] J. B. Priestley, *English Journey* (London: William Heinemann, 1934) 29.

when the economy collapsed and people sought extreme solutions".[13] That this possibility was not taken entirely seriously at the time is illustrated by the wry comments of Graves and Hodge on the subject in *The Long Week-End*:

> Mosley produced no plan for solving Britain's problems, and never secured his "people's mandate". His call for "Action", however, attracted a number of tough young men, who seemed to enjoy strutting about in black shirts and behaving aggressively to Communists and to the poorer Jews.[14]

While likely reflecting majority opinion, their tone obscures the fact that Mosley himself was prone to "virulent anti-Semitic diatribe[s]".[15]

Violence was a feature of British Union rallies (Mosley had had dropped "Fascist" from the name by 1935) and "anti-Semitism became the predominant political force of the BU…With the economy stabilising in 1936, the BU [had] increasingly turned to blaming Jews for Britain's ills – or imagined ills."[16] Oswald Mosley and his followers were thus adopting policies that had been forged by Adolf Hitler in Germany. In fact, by the summer of 1936, acts of political violence had become so acute that confrontations between fascists and anti-fascists occurred in cities around the country.[17]

As with the economic collapse of the thirties, the socio-economic decline of the seventies and eighties also contributed to the resurgence of far-right ideology.

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[13] Gardiner, 433.
[14] Graves and Hodge, 311-312.
[15] Gardiner, 435.
[16] Ibid., 437.
[17] Ibid., 441.

Protesting against the immigrant communities that had emerged in post-war society, the movement in the late twentieth century was also racially motivated. As had been the case in the thirties, violence was instigated both by neo-Nazis and in protest of their activities during the seventies and eighties. According to Richard Thurlow, "the extent of the confrontation was more serious than in the 1930s" as "Street politics from the 1970s became at least as bitter as in the 1930s", with deadly consequences.[18] The inner city riots of the 1980s – including those in London, Liverpool, Manchester and Birmingham – also had roots in the racial attitudes of neo-Nazis, fuelled by the "the disaffection of working-class youth and the decay of inner-city areas."[19] In 1981, the sight of rioting youths confronting lines of police sheltering behind body-length shields became common images that were broadcast worldwide. These were transmitted virtually simultaneously with those of the "fairytale" wedding of the Prince of Wales to Lady Diana Spencer.

While the historical parallels between the thirties and the eighties are apparent, it is also worth noting two differences. Britain's relationship to Europe is one such distinction when in the inter-war years, the "drift towards authoritarianism on the Continent fostered the sense of Britain as distinct and separate from the rest of Europe."[20] By the eighties Britain had entered into the European economic and political union (then the EEC). This has resulted in the forging of stronger ties with countries on the continent albeit sometimes tetchily. In the thirties Britain still had an Empire which included large swathes of the globe, no country more symbolic to it than the Indian subcontinent. By the eighties the Empire had ceased to exist, a fact

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[18] Richard C. Thurlow, *Fascism in Modern Britain* (Phoenix Mill: Sutton Publishing, 2000) 148-149.
[19] Clive Unsworth, "The Riots of 1981: Popular Violence and the Politics of Law and Order" in *Journal of Law and Society*, Volume 9, Number 1 (Summer 1982): 65.
[20] Martin Pugh, *"We Danced All Night": A Social History of Britain Between the Wars* (London: The Bodley Head, 2008) 390-391.

that had plunged Britain into an identity crisis twenty years after India and Pakistan gained independence in 1947. As Peter Clarke puts it, the dissolution of Empire had "raised social and cultural issues of identity for individual Britons."[21] Much of the far-right violence in the eighties was as a direct result of these issues, as waves of immigrants from former colonies settled in the UK.

It is important to note that the history of both the thirties and the eighties is complex. I have thus far attempted to provide some historical context for the interest in the thirties during the eighties. The social and political unrest, however, presents an important juxtaposition between history and the images used in its recreation in dramatic formats, and it is to these images to which I now turn my attention.

II. THE THIRTIES ON STAGE AND TELEVISION

In the previous chapter, I noted that the interest in reproducing the Edwardian era in television drama had been driven in part by the impulse to explore contemporary social issues through its prism. As television's interest in the Edwardian era faded, producers looked with greater frequency to reproducing the thirties on screen. This occurred roughly simultaneously with the historical moment in which parallels between past (thirties) and present (eighties) could easily be drawn. As with the previous interest in the Edwardian era, this was likely caused by both the social similarities and a nostalgic view of the past.

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[21] Clarke, 320.

In my demonstration of artistic developments significant to the emergence of the thirties setting in Shakespearean drama, I have largely compartmentalised theatrical and media influences. In detailing the advent of the thirties setting on the late twentieth century Shakespearean stage, I want to now fuse stage and television. Presentations of the decade in the theatre and on the small screen developed at a differing pace from one another. Perhaps in accordance with the centrality of television to contemporary culture televisual representations of the thirties were first to appear, beginning in the late seventies and early eighties.

As with the interest in the Edwardian era detailed in the previous chapter, taken as a whole the multiple televisual portrayals of the thirties provided a set of complex images that presented the decade through a series of multi-faceted historical images. By comparison, the thirties setting on the Shakespearean stage was slower to develop. Although there were a few examples of the decade used for Shakespearean period analogue purposes in the eighties, the era did not gain theatrical currency until 1990 over a decade after television had begun its interest in the decade. In looking at these two timelines simultaneously, I aim to discuss in broad terms the development of the thirties images. In tandem with this, I will propose one possible explanation for the delay in the period analogue use of the thirties. In exploring the images of the thirties as portrayed by television, I want to again think of them in terms of the ghosting of the historical era through its repeated representation in period drama.

I want to begin with what is arguably one of the most influential dramas of the eighties: Granada Television's adaptation of Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited*. The impression of the inter-war years given by the serial provides what can be viewed

as a template for much of the portrayals of the thirties that followed. Its images also provide a stark contrast between its visuals and the historical parallels I recounted above, erasing many of the thirties' less palatable aspects.

Granada's eleven-part serial depicts a nostalgic vision of the past primarily through its luxurious location shooting and its focus on characters from the upper social classes. Playing out their emotional upheavals, the staples of their televisual lifestyle were travel, dancing, drinking cocktails and aperitifs, and formal dining in lavish settings with an abundance of servants attending to their employers' every need (breaking with the *Upstairs, Downstairs* template and once again functioning as "mobile props"). The characters' activities were undertaken in a variety of locations, filmed in the environs of several stately homes. Interiors opulently visualised libraries, drawing rooms, dining rooms, bedrooms, ornate entrance halls. Only rarely was the audience given a brief glimpse of the servants' quarters as the younger Flytes visited their now-retired Nanny. The exterior locations, which have drawn the most attention from critics, were comprised of "the golden hues of Oxford, Venice, [and] Paris".[22] These, along with picturesque visions of the now-iconic exterior of Castle Howard, Yorkshire, provided the series with its model for the Flyte family seat as well as its most iconic imagery. These impressions of indolent leisure are among the most enduring of portrayals of the inter-war years and, as we will see, indirectly affected its Shakespearean thirties-set counterparts.

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[22] Lez Cooke, *British Television Drama: A History* (London: BFI Publishing, 2003) 158.

Brideshead Revisited was not alone in the televisual portrayal of the inter-war years as a decade of "great wealth".[23] Several other series exposed viewers to the privileged lifestyles of titled figures and their entourages. In what may be considered a collective bout of escapist imagery, these serials portrayed an idealised vision of the decade that showed the upper-class in their luxurious environments. The first episode of *Edward and Mrs Simpson*, for example, depicts a series of private indulgences undertaken by the Prince of Wales, the "Edward" of the title. The second segment of the serial took place in an elite nightclub, with the men and women dancing in formal evening clothes and cocktails being prominently consumed at each table. This was followed immediately by the depiction an official visit to Africa and a subsequent private safari. Tea was served in the bush from a formal service as well as pre-dinner cocktails and a champagne picnic, which were also portrayed in the African sequence. Likewise, the 1981 *Love in a Cold Climate* portrayed the "higher" social strata, albeit in the satirical tone of Mitford's source novel. Nevertheless, stately homes, formal dinners and debutante balls featured prominently in the early episodes. Missing from these dramas was any substantial representation of either the working class or the mention of the widespread unemployment of the Depression.

As its title probably evokes *Edward and Mrs Simpson* was also part of a series of television biographies, which presented viewers with the historical context in which the fiction of *Brideshead*, *Love in a Cold Climate* and other dramas were played out. Collectively, the serials covered three momentous events of the thirties: the Abdication Crisis, rearmament and appeasement. *Winston Churchill: The Wilderness*

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[23] Tana Wollen, "Over our shoulders: nostalgic screen fictions for the 1980s", in *Enterprise and Heritage: Crosscurrents of national culture*, ed. by John Corner and Sylvia Harvey (London and New York: Routledge, 1991) 183.

Years introduced viewers to Churchill's struggle to regain a position in the government while contesting that same government's policy of appeasement by advocating rearmament to counter Nazi Germany. *Nancy Astor* dramatised the life of the first woman to sit in the House of Commons, whose advocacy of appeasement during the thirties wrongly harmed her post-war reputation. *Edward and Mrs Simpson* detailed the events which led to the Abdication Crisis of 1936. Although they focused on historical events, their point-of-view remained resolutely focused on the political and aristocratic elite. However, their presence on the small screen provided another layer of familiarity with the thirties which complemented the fictional period dramas.

In the early eighties, other dramatisations of thirties-set novels did provide a contrast with the images of wealthy privilege presented by serials such as *Brideshead* and the various biographies. Images of the middle- and working-classes were also seen in period drama airing in the seventies and early eighties. As with *Brideshead*, some of these portrayals were nostalgic in approach. Perhaps the most obvious of these would be the BBC's adaptations of James Herriot's semi-autobiographical novels. Chronicling Herriot's veterinary career in the Yorkshire Dales, the stories were populated by a cast of eccentric animals and humans and broadcast under the collective title *All Creatures Great and Small*. The long-running series portrayed a simpler way of life that had all but vanished by the time of transmission. It also showed the poverty under which the Dales farmers worked, highlighting their positive spirit under adverse conditions. Other programmes, however, provided harsher images of the lives of the working class in the thirties.

In 1983 the BBC opted to air a dramatisation of what Ross McKibbin describes as "perhaps the representative novel of the 1930s."[24] Published in 1937, A. J. Cronin's *The Citadel* sold 40,083 copies in its first nine days of publication and was subsequently made into the most popular film of 1938 by MGM.[25] Precisely why the BBC decided to adapt it in the eighties is unclear, but the decision was possibly taken because of the novel's contemporary echoes. In *The Citadel*, the newly qualified and idealistic young doctor, Andrew Manson, arrives in a small Welsh village, appalled to discover the conditions in which the town's miners live and work. Above ground, typhus is rampant due to a dilapidated sewage system; below ground, the miners are daily exposed to lethal coal dust. With encouragement from his wife, Manson begins a scientific study of the relationship between the inhalation of coal dust and silicosis, with the intention of forcing the mine owners to implement precautions to guard against the deadly disease. With its protagonist crusading for the welfare of the working class, the choice to broadcast *The Citadel* can potentially be viewed as a politically-motivated one on the part of the public service broadcaster.

Another BBC serial mixed historical events with fiction in ways that challenge *Brideshead Revisited*'s culturally dominant portrayal of the thirties as the preserve of the aristocracy and the wealthy. In the post-*Brideshead* era, the BBC serial based on R. F. Delderfield's 1972 novel *To Serve Them All My Days* has been overlooked by television critics, even as the Granada Television production has received scrupulous attention. The differences between the two help to illustrate the contrast in images of the thirties produced by the period drama of the early eighties.

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[24] Ross McKibbin, "Politics and the Medical Hero: A. J. Cronin's *The Citadel*" in *The English Historical Review*, Volume CXXIII, Number 502 (June 2008) 651.
[25] Gardiner, 669.

Brideshead was, in fact, still in production as the Delderfield serial was broadcast in late 1980. Despite this, the British Film Institute website seems to censure *To Serve Them All My Days* in terms reminiscent of those used in the "heritage" debate. This criticises *Brideshead* and other films for perpetuating a non-realistic view of Englishness. The BFI couples *TSTMAD* with the Granada serial stating that both "nostalgically eulogised the academic life of the past and indirectly endorsed the Thatcherite view of Britain as a place rightfully dominated by privilege and wealth."[26] However, to view the BBC serial in such simplistic terms is to misread both Delderfield's work and the BBC's adaptation, the latter almost certainly crafted with its contemporary relevance in mind.

To Serve Them All My Days primarily takes place in a minor public school in Devon, known as Bamfylde and based on Delderfield's own *alma mater* West Buckland School. The series subtly portrays national and international events as the protagonist, David Powlett-Jones, reacts to and is buffeted by them. This is a contrasting point of view to the ones depicted in television biographies, as thirties society is shown from the point of view of the working class. It may have been what Alistair Cooke describes as Delderfield's "acute sense of the social structure of Britain" that led the author to place a Welsh coal miner's son at the centre of his novel.[27]

David Powlett-Jones arrived at Bamfylde in 1918, recovering from wounds and still shell-shocked. His thick Welsh accent marked him immediately as an outsider and his

[26] British Film Institute, <http://www.screenonline.org.uk/tv/id/1294415/index.html>, last accessed 19 November 2009.
[27] Alistair Cooke, unpublished "Intro" to *To Serve Them All My Days* (BBC, 1980), Episode 1, broadcast on *Masterpiece Theatre* (WGBH-TV/Boston for PBS), 10 October 1981, *Masterpiece Theatre* archive, WGBH Educational Foundation (WGBH-TV), Boston, Massachusetts.

comments highlighted his initial unease ("I'm not officer class" he says to the Headmaster, Algy Herries, at his interview). With Herries' encouragement, Powlett-Jones quickly discovers his vocation for teaching, his subject history with an interpretation focused on learning from its mistakes. Powlett-Jones' radical politics, born of life in the Valleys, informed both his teaching and impacted personal life. In later episodes, Powlett-Jones becomes involved with a Labour parliamentary candidate, Christine Forster, and the events of the decade are told through the prism of this relationship. Powlett-Jones stated to his future wife at their introductory encounter, "People here [Wales] know what the world is like. It's at places like Bamfylde that they need someone to tell them." The politics of the thirties are told via Forster's experience and the audience absorbs her outrage at Labour Prime Minister Ramsay Macdonald's formation of a coalition government with the Conservatives ("sold out"). The rise of fascism and the coming war against Hitler is framed by Powlett-Jones' seminars with his sixth-form history pupils, the generation that will go on to fight the brewing international conflict.

Despite its ostensible dramatisation of the past, Andrew Davies' adaptation of Delderfield's 572-page novel was distilled into a 13-part serial in ways that emphasised class issues by using an idiom that was far more stridently political than the original. For example, the line referenced above – "I'm not officer class" – does not appear in the passage of the novel that describes Powlett-Jones' interview with Algy Herries. Likewise, Davies forged David's tame initial meeting in the novel with the aspiring socialist politician Christine Forster into waspish dialogue in which Christine challenged his commitment to socialism. Their bristly first meeting was

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more dramatically engaging, but it radicalised the material and bore little resemblance to Delderfield's own dialogue.

There are of course limitations with the presentation of the thirties through period drama, either fictional or biographical. For example, none of these productions mentions the hunger marches that took place throughout the decade, even though occasional references to unemployment are made. Thus, a major event of the thirties was wiped from this site of cultural memory. Also, if poverty was depicted, it was generally only briefly as with *Edward and Mrs Simpson* in which the Prince of Wales pays brief visits to a Glasgow tenement and a Welsh coal-mining town. (As Graves and Hodge note, during a visit to South Wales the King "had expressed surprise and horror at the living conditions in the Special Areas and declared that 'something must be done'". This led the *Daily Mail* to compare "the King's energy" with "the National Government's inactivity".[28])

Despite these drawbacks, what the saturation of television period drama by portrayals of the thirties built was a complex picture of the decade in terms of historical imagery. In its initial form in the late seventies and early eighties, there was no single over-riding image of the thirties. Instead the decade was collectively portrayed through multiple television images as multi-layered, encompassing not just a *Brideshead*-type nostalgic view of leisure and wealth but also alternate views that portrayed other lifestyles and political points of view.

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[28] Graves and Hodge, 361.

As we will see, it may in fact have been the number of thirties images that stalled the decade's adoption as a Shakespearean period setting until the early nineties. In the time-span of the late seventies and early eighties I have been considering thus far, Shakespearean theatre used the thirties as a period setting for only four professional productions. While the information on two of these productions is scant or non-existent, it is clear that two *Twelfth Night*s adopted a colonial thirties milieu (Young Vic Theatre, 1983; Theatre Royal, Stratford East, 1988). Instead of reflecting the thirties as portrayed by television, these two *Twelfth Night*s appear to have absorbed another cultural obsession: the Raj. (Or, as Giddings and Selby observed, "a massive nostalgia for the days of the Raj" in film and television.[29]) Instead of historical ghosting of the thirties the productions chose less complicated imagery, ghosting props and furniture such as topees and wicker furniture that had been reused in the multiple film and television portrayals of the Raj. These simplified images provided the stage context of the milieu through the recycling of Raj signifiers from television. It was not until the thirties images were treated with equal simplicity on television that the era became popular in its Shakespearean theatrical format.

III. SHIFTING PERCEPTIONS OF THE THIRTIES

Images of the working class, their hardships and the political strife of class warfare that had been present in early eighties representations of the thirties had, by the nineties, been replaced by those that showed only the stylishly wealthy. It was this set of imagery that was to form a model for the thirties analogue on the Shakespearean stage, the historical recycling occurring only once televisual portrayals had settled

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[29] Robert Giddings and Keith Selby, *The Classic Serial on Television and Radio* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001) 69.

into a single overriding impression. I want to explore some potential reasons for this shift in relation to the emergence of the thirties period analogue in the early nineties.

One probable factor in this consolidation of impressions of the thirties was the technological shifts that occurred in television production during the eighties. These impacted the visual aesthetics of most dramas, but period drama in particular seems to have been more noticeably affected. In the eighties television production was undergoing what were "perhaps the most radical changes in British television since the advent of colour and the ability to record and edit tape."[30] The studio-based, multi-camera recording of programmes on videotape that had been the dominant production style was gradually being abandoned for location shooting, the primary medium of which was film. With the introduction of film, the quality of a production became inextricably intertwined with its visual aesthetic. By the early nineties television drama and film had almost seamlessly merged, an evolution made tangible by the foundation of film departments within the major public service broadcasters, notably BBC Films and Channel 4 Films.

This transformation from videotaped to filmed content also led to a gradual shift in audience expectation that television programmes would be more visually sophisticated (perhaps a form of production ghosting). As the director Simon Langton explained,

> Now virtually every expensive drama is done on film, as opposed to being
> done on [video]tape, and so a whole generation of people, who have grown up

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[30] David Rose, "Forward" in *British Television Drama in the 1980s*, ed. by George W. Brandt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) xv.

entirely weaned on all film productions, will not stand for the more limited standards of tape – the sort of tape you associate with soap-operas and things like that…[31]

These two evolutionary factors in period drama – its overall amount and the technological revolution – led in turn to a shift in the presentation of the thirties on television. With film better able to enhance the visual aesthetic of programmes, the promotion of the luxurious material past became the optical norm for period drama. Stately homes and opulent interiors (a trend that *Brideshead Revisited* is probably rightly credited with beginning in the late twentieth century) became *de rigueur* for period drama.

The second probable factor in the shift from multiple to the single impression of the thirties available through period drama content was the period's steady decline in popularity as the eighties progressed. In 1981 there had been twenty-five period dramas televised in various formats – from serials to single films – on the BBC alone. In 1991, the BBC's output had shrunk to a total of eight dramas set in the historical past. Even after including data from all four major broadcast channels, only fifteen period dramas were aired that year which amounted to a significant decline in output by the end of the decade. Out of those broadcast in 1991, only four serials were set during the inter-war years.

Of the four titles broadcast in 1991, three were set in the thirties, while a fourth depicted the twenties: *Agatha Christie's Poirot*, *Jeeves and Wooster*, *Tonight at 8.30*

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[31] quoted in Giddings and Selby, 105.

and *The House of Elliott.* To put that in the context of a diminishing output of those set in the thirties, in 1981 a total ten programmes had dramatised those same two decades. Of the period dramas aired in the late eighties and early nineties, Robert Giddings and Keith Selby noted that "Television viewers' taste for the style and mores of bygone years had to make do with 1930s upper-class crime novels" in order to fulfil their desire for period drama.[32] Although the statistics do not uphold their assertion, the critics' insistence that the thirties dominated period drama's portrayal of the past is worth unpicking.

What may colour Giddings and Selby's conclusions about the type of period drama available in the late eighties and early nineties is the popularity of *Poirot* and *Jeeves and Wooster*. These two series, along with *The Darling Buds of May*, were the "blockbusters" of 1991 in period drama terms. Impressions of the thirties were undoubtedly filtered through both *Poirot* and *Jeeves*, both of which also conformed to the template set by *Brideshead* a decade earlier. In keeping with the emphasis on the visual aesthetic that had come to dominate period drama, in each case a premium was placed on the re-enacted decade's perceived style as portrayed through the lifestyles of society's upper echelons. For example, lives of leisure were frequently portrayed in *Poirot* and *Jeeves* with drawing rooms, dining rooms, servants and travel figuring prominently in re-creating the overall thirties social environment for television. The thirties were not only evoked in terms of elegant clothing and sumptuous interiors, but also through establishing shots of art deco buildings that indicated interior locations. This was in direct contrast with the more complex impression of the thirties audiences would have been able to build of the era in the early eighties.

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[32] Giddings and Selby, 79.

It is perhaps precisely because of the simplicity of these thirties images in the late eighties and early nineties that allowed the period analogue to emerge as a framework for Shakespearean productions. An explanation of this may be connected with Marvin Carlson's argument about the recycling of images in theatrical practice. Several of his examples of reuse in *The Haunted Stage* occur through simple devices: furniture, props, and costumes. In his monograph, Carlson traces what he calls "scenic recycling" through multiple cultures and theatrical environments. For example, he notes the existence of a "so-called Molière salon" in a provincial theatre at Montpellier in 1806 illustrates that "a certain set was associated with a certain style of production."[33] Through theatrical recycling of scene design, expectations were thus created for the specific environment in which a Molière play would be performed.

Discussing the implications of period setting in Kenneth Branagh's *Hamlet* and the McKellen/Loncraine *Richard III*, Russell Jackson has also noted a link between expectation and the historical past stating that "we are stalked by the way that period has been depicted" in film and, as I would argue, also on television.[34] The depiction of the thirties in mediated dramatic forms has created expectations that, in turn, feed into historical recycling on the stage. Carlson's "scenic recycling" is important to this because costumes and locations, including furniture and props, are important visual cues for the audience about the era being depicted. It is important to note that Carlson's examples of scenic recycling are the product of a simple visual shorthand. Historical recycling is, in effect, based on simplistic impressions of an era. Thus when

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[33] Marvin Carlson, *The Haunted Stage: The Theatre as Memory Machine* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2001) 123.
[34] David Bradby, Greg Doran, and Russell Jackson, "Gestures that Speak: Spectators who listen", in *Shakespeare, Language and the Stage: the Fifth Wall: approaches to Shakespeare from criticism, performance and theatre studies*, ed. by Peter Lichtenfels and Lynette Hunter (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2005) 98.

a primary site of information about the past (period drama) was reduced to a simple set of images, it was more easily transferrable into the period analogue. When the thirties period analogue emerged, its visual aesthetic was dominated by the image of the decade as one of stylish wealth that had become prevalent by the late eighties. I would suggest that these two points are interconnected, as Shakespearean theatre ghosted popular images of the thirties from television for the creation of the period analogue.

Arguably the most influential thirties-set Shakespearean production was Richard Eyre's 1990 National Theatre production of *Richard III*. A year later, David Thacker directed an acclaimed *Two Gentlemen of Verona* at the RSC that "turned Shakespeare's flop into an undoubted hit."[35] These were both produced within nine months of each other, the former premiering in July 1990 and the latter in April 1991. In the space of the two years in which the Eyre and Thacker productions premiered, a total of ten thirties-set Shakespearean productions were staged which more than doubled the number staged during the preceding decade.

In their presentations of the thirties it is significant that both the Eyre and Thacker productions favoured the types of thirties imagery that had become the dominant image of the decade in televisual representations. Although the Thacker production will be discussed at length in the final chapter, it is worth noting that it followed the template set by *Brideshead* of portraying wealth through a series of visually elegant images. As with its period drama counterparts, the action of Thacker's *Two Gentlemen* was played in a series of stylish interiors and exteriors, as the characters inhabited a

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[35] *Daily Telegraph*, 19 April 1991.

world of opulence and leisure (as far as the theatrical budget allowed). The characters were depicted as primarily upper class with servants. They were also placed in locations that had been made familiar through the period dramas that portrayed a wealthy society. The audience viewed Shakespeare's characters engaging in pre- and post- supper activities, at formal balls, embarking on a journey on luxury ocean liners and motoring to country (or Mediterranean) villas. These varied locales and activities were all forms of scenic recycling as television locales were transplanted into an equivalent theatrical visual language. Extensive use of luxuriant fabrics in the construction of costumes – chiffon, satin, silk, georgette, crepe de chine, velvet – enhanced the appearance of characters' affluent lifestyles.

Like Thacker's *Two Gentlemen* Richard Eyre's *Richard III* also reproduced a world of privilege, albeit with a slight change of emphasis. Eyre's production's recycling operated on two levels: the straight historical and the televisual recycling. Where Thacker showed the upper class at leisure matching the play's personal focus, Eyre presented characters obviously modelled on the royal family and politicians of the thirties as the director explored the play's political aspect. The likenesses of many characters to their thirties public figure counterparts was – to some – uncanny. Reviewers were able to pinpoint the characters' resemblances to their historical counterparts: Richard as the Duke of Windsor; Buckingham as George V; and, to Benedict Nightingale, "those accompanying Edward IV in his wheelchair look remarkably like Queen Mary and Neville Chamberlain".[36] The environments in which the action took place, however, were constructed through the same ghosting of familiar images of a thirties inhabited primarily by the upper class.

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[36] *The Times*, 26 July 1990.

Richard Eyre placed his historical lookalikes into environments that accentuated their status, again in ways that imitated the thirties lifestyle then familiar from televisual portrayals: at dinner in formal dining rooms as a butler oversaw footmen serving at table; posing for commemorative photographs; and red-carpeted, ceremonial arrivals at train stations. The costuming was equally elegant with Buckingham's attire, for instance, ranging from a black evening tail suit over a cream brocade waistcoat to a black morning coat with pin-striped trousers. For more ceremonial scenes a top hat, medals, grey gloves, sash, and silver topped black cane were added to his basic morning coat. The Duchess of York's costumes were similarly lavish; constructed of velvets and silks, her outfits were adorned with strings of pearls, pearl and diamond earrings and a tiara (alluding to the historical Queen Mary's jewellry). All of these elements combined to present the thirties visually in ways imitative of television period drama. The ghosting of history also confirmed audience expectations of the way the period should look.

What is interesting about these comparisons – and perhaps sheds more light on the reasons this particular subgenre of Shakespearean production came to the forefront at this particular moment – is certain critical parallels between the two genres, theatrical and televisual. The early nineties was the point at which the "heritage" debate was developing, an important strand of which was criticism of period films and television. *Brideshead* itself is cited by critics as belonging to a group of film and television dramas that have been collectively described as "heritage". Common to the "heritage" critics' analysis of films and television within this narrow canon was the assumption that "heritage films were conceived as a 'genre' *centrally* engaged in the construction

of a *national* identity."[37] The national identity that was being constructed – and perhaps more importantly, exported – was that depicted by *Brideshead Revisited* with its picturesque locations and visual images of leisured and opulent wealth. The primary charge levelled at the "heritage" canon of period films and television programmes was its deliberate construction of a national identity that was narrow – as narrow as the imagery of the televised thirties had become by 1991. As Lez Cooke notes, it was "not the industrial heritage of coal mines, factories or shipyards…but the upper-class and aristocratic heritage of country houses and stately homes which features in the work of novelists from Jane Austen to Evelyn Waugh."[38] The construction of the national identity through the depiction of the thirties in televisual terms was one which by the nineties had erased the working class experience from period drama, leaving images of stylish wealth the abiding image – the image the thirties period analogue adopted.

IV. *RICHARD III* AND NATIONAL IDENTITY

The use of the Shakespearean text to bolster notions of national identity has been a feature throughout the performance history of the plays. In his monograph *The Making of the National Poet*, Michael Dobson has amply demonstrated the "promotion of Shakespeare as both symbol and exemplar of British national identity" from the seventeenth century onward.[39] In the previous section, I suggested that the thirties period setting emerged in part because of its depiction on television. I want to

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[37] Claire Monk, "The British heritage-film debate revisited", in *British Historical Cinema: The history, heritage and costume film*, ed. by Claire Monk and Amy Sargeant (London and New York: Routledge, 2002) 179.
[38] Lez Cooke, 157.
[39] Michael Dobson, *The Making of the National Poet: Shakespeare, Adaptation, and Authorship, 1660-1769* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992) 185.

also posit the idea that the thirties period analogue emerged in the early nineties for more complex reasons.

While on one level the early thirties-set theatrical productions reproduced the aesthetically pleasing, stylish and wealthy imagery. These were layered with what could be perceived as the current visual language of national identity, in terms of the heritage debate. As we will see, Richard Eyre's influential production of *Richard III* used this visual language to examine contemporary societal preoccupations through the historical metaphor of the thirties. I want to explore the idea that his use of the thirties setting was rooted in the use of period analogy to explore and critique contemporary setting.

While Eyre's production ghosted images of the thirties that seemed to reinforce heritage drama's engagement in constructing a national identity predicated on wealth, a second layer of imagery privileged contemporary social concerns. What Eyre was reportedly doing with his thirties-set production was exploring fascist imagery with "…an 'It could have happened here' idea", as his designer Bob Crowley phrased it. As Crowley recounts, the director was drawing "very obvious parallels between Richard's rise to power and the fascist movement that was going on in England prior to the Second World War."[40] By "it could have happened here", Crowley was of course referring to a government takeover by English fascists in the thirties.

This "It could have happened here" idea both explored an alternative version of history while simultaneously critiquing one particular aspect of contemporary society.

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[40] Adam Pirani, "Royal Design: Crowley, Bechtler and Kalman create a *Richard III* and *King Lear* for the Road", *Theatre Crafts International*, November 1990 (Number 68): 13.

I began this chapter by demonstrating some historical parallels between the thirties and the eighties, including the presence of far-right organisations in both eras. I want to expand on that discussion and briefly trace the emergence of the neo-Nazi movements of the seventies and eighties. As Stephen Small has expressed it,

> The changing economic and political climate of the 1970s and 1980s in England was also fruitful ground for the resurgence and consolidation of racialised ideologies….Thatcherism and the resurgence of the right wing have prevailed in a context which has seen the continued manipulation of nationalist (white) English identity (such as during the Falklands War) and efforts to restore Britain to its former material and psychological splendour—to put the "Great" back in Britain.[41]

The English national flag became a powerful symbol for the far-right, one that was used to both celebrate and visually embody English national (white) identity.

That the Saint George cross has been identified with white English nationalism is perhaps nowhere best illustrated than by its circulation around the national game, football. As noted by the Social Issues Research Centre,

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[41] Stephen Small, *Racialised Barriers: The Black Experience in the United States and England in the 1980s* (London: Routledge, 1994) 91.

In Britain, racist chanting at matches still occurs [in the twenty-first century], but at nowhere near the levels it reached in the 1970s and 80s, when black players were often greeted with monkey-noises and bananas.[42]

According to a *Manchester Guardian* report, one of the favourite recruiting grounds for far-right organisations such as the National Front were "football terraces", which provided access to a working-class then under stress from the effects of unemployment.[43] This link between the national game and racism was exacerbated by the use of the English national flag by football spectators, the overtones of which were distinctly xenophobic.

Football and the English national flag became indelibly linked with the violence that occurred around the sport, dubbed "hooliganism" by the press. With the ensuing publicity, the English flag became a powerful semiotic for neo-Nazi groups. As Rob Gifford noted in a report on English football, which aired before the 2006 World Cup on National Public Radio's newsmagazine *Morning Edition*, "The red cross of Saint George itself has become a symbol of the skinheads on the far political right."[44] By the time of Eyre's production of *Richard III*, the Saint George Cross had become synonymous with far-right extremism.

Richard Eyre's depictions of national identity were inextricably linked both with the symbolic use of the English flag and the nationalist symbol of the monarchy. In his depiction of the thirties, Eyre had been "fascinated by the idea of portraying an

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[42] Social Issues Research Centre, "Football violence in Europe – Executive Summary", <http://www.sirc.org/publik/fvexec.html#_VPID_7>, last accessed 4 November 2010.
[43] Peter Jenkins, "Myths that fuel the fears", *Manchester Guardian Weekly*, 12 April 1981: 5.
[44] *Morning Edition*, "English soccer fans seek return to glory days", National Public Radio, 12 June 2006, http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5478153, last accessed 4 November 2010.

English tyranny."[45] To that end, the production was alluding to the pro-fascist sympathies held by members of the aristocracy including Oswald Mosley. Its deliberate physical mimicry of historical figures of the era made it clear that this was the English, not a German, thirties being evoked.

In his depiction of fascism Eyre was also developing an analogue production motif that dates back to Orson Welles' production of *Julius Caesar*, a deliberate parallel between Caesar and Hitler. This strand of thirties analogue has more historical basis than the productions that imitate the decade's glamour (through wealth) while excising its hardships. Importantly, the portrayal of fascism also has – for the post-world war two viewer – the benefit of hindsight. From this vantage point, we are aware of the persecution and slaughter that occurred under totalitarian regimes, the Holocaust being the most prominent example. In the thirties, the outcome of these political events was less clear and some responses viewed fascism in a positive light. As Robert Graves and Alan Hodge observed, "travellers came back from Rome and Florence with enthusiastic praises for the new Italian spirit…That Fascism could possibly grow into a menace to the British Empire was considered fantastic".[46] Portrayals of fascism within the context of the post-war Shakespearean stage are, by contrast, far from ambivalent. Within the thirties setting, images of these far-right regimes are used to unequivocally mark characters as evil.

As we have seen, in his reproduction of the thirties Eyre mixed images of the social strata to which Mosley belonged with the ghosting of historical figures onto Shakespeare's characters. However, for all its apparent deference to the reproduction

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[45] Richard Eyre, in conversation, October 2009.
[46] Graves and Hodge, 248-249.

of national identity as depicted through the recycling of images of the thirties, Richard Eyre's *Richard III* was subverting this imagery even as it duplicated it. Although the director had placed the play within a context that highlighted one key image of national identity, the monarchy, the addition of a second image destabilized that particular signifier. In one example Eyre and Crowley introduced one of the most visible symbols of fascist power, the blackshirt uniform. As Richard's power grew, both Gloucester and his political supporters adopted this piece of clothing. Along with this obvious ghosting of fascist symbolism, Eyre and Crowley produced similar iconography based on another key symbol of national identity.

Richard's supporters adopted military armbands that the production's designer had based on the English national flag, the cross of Saint George. This symbol was a simple red cross on a white background, which Crowley largely retained while embellishing it with a boar in the centre and black stripes bordering the red of the cross itself. This stage flag (and the armband) thus nodded toward Nazi iconography, yet retained the visual impact of the English national flag. This was repeated in the larger form of a banner, as Crowley reproduced the design to signify Richard's new national flag. As Eyre put it, "When Richard comes to power, he redesigns the uniforms, puts on an arm-band, and redecorates the place after a fashion which it is a mistake to identify too quickly as German."[47] In fact, this particular design borrowed elements from Nazi iconography even as the overall concept mimicked the English flag.

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[47] Richard Eyre, "On Directing *Richard III*", in *Le Tyran: Shakespeare Contre Richard III*, ed. by Dominique Goy-Blanquet and Richard Marienstras (Amiens: C.E.R.L.A. Amiens-Charles V, 1990) 135.

The most visible use of the co-opted English flag took place in III.7, Richard's usurpation. This scene was likened to a Nuremburg rally, as seen through Leni Riefenstahl's propagandist chronicle of the 1934 event, *Triumph of the Will*. Richard was revealed betwixt two clergymen atop a mechanical lift, wearing blackshirt uniform complete with jackboots. The usurping king addressed the throng assembled on the stage below through a period microphone, his voice echoing around the auditorium. Through the use of the sound system, the Nazi motif was pushed even further as the verse merged into the din at the Nazi political rally. The archive video reveals that on Buckingham's "Long live King Richard, England's royal King!" (230), the Mayor's reply of "Amen" (231) became not a single person's response but the chant of a mob. "A-men" was repeated, imitating the Nazi rallies the scene evoked. An ominous chord of music, resembling the thunder of Churchill's gathering storm, played and that discordant note sounded long and loudly. The chanting reverberated around the theatre, increasing in volume as two torchbearers entered and Richard's dais was lowered to the ground. Richard, the new Füehrer-King took Buckingham's hand as part of this ceremonial event. The watching public knelt to their new king. This brief ceremony completed, Richard retreated back to his podium. With ominous crescendoeing music, Richard turned to face the audience once again and put his good arm diagonally across his chest and raised it above his head in the Nazi salute. The lights then went down on the first half and England was under the spell of a fascist dictator, as "Richard III" was projected onto the closing Lyttelton Theatre fire curtain.

This insertion of the modified English flag into the Eyre production is important, as it illustrates the contemporary debate about national identity had not been confined to discussion of the portrayal of Englishness as a vista of a wealthy elite inhabiting

stately homes in "heritage" drama. Instead, Richard's flag visually alluded to the usurpation of the English national flag by far-right movements in the seventies, images that lingered well into the nineties. Eyre's staging represented what the director described as "the spirit of the age."[48]

That Eyre's production was responding to contemporary social preoccupations can also be seen by the fact that issues of fascism were being simultaneously explored in other theatrical productions. *Richard III* debuted at the National Theatre in July 1990 and within an eighteen-month period between 1989 and 1990, several plays depicted various facets of "Fascism and Its Consequences" (as a marketing department might have dubbed the sequence). The subject matter ranged from the effects of the Holocaust on individual survivors (Peter Flannery's *Singer*, RSC; Barbara Lebow's *A Shayna Maidel*, King's Head Theatre) to persecution, survival and destruction under Nazi oppression (Joshua Sobol's *Ghetto* and Martin Sherman's *Bent*, both at the NT).

Each of these plays explores extreme moral dilemmas: Max's choice in *Bent* to beat his lover to death rather than admit to his homosexuality to the Gestapo; Stefan Gutman's supplying the Auschwitz commandant with underage children in order to procure food in *Singer*; Gens, the Vilna Ghetto's police chief, sacrificing residents on the orders of the SS in an attempt to save others. At the heart of each of these plays was the fundamental question of silence and complicity in the face of institutionalised persecution, as in Nazi Germany. Looked at from another angle, collectively they formed a series of what Bob Crowley described as "It could have happened here" scenarios, cautionary tales of fascist excess.

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[48] Eyre, in conversation.

I would suggest that *Richard III*, like *Singer*, *Ghetto*, *A Shayna Maidel*, and *Bent*, were all absorbing current social concerns concerning far right activism. It is this that made Richard Eyre's decision to place *Richard III* within a re-creation of the *English* thirties, combining it with the outward trappings of fascism, striking. With the perspective of nearly twenty years, it becomes clear how unusual it was for a director of a Shakespearean play to depict England as a harbour of fascism. No other production using the thirties fascist milieu has made the *location* England, in the thirties or otherwise. Instead, the choice has been to present either Mussolini's Italy or Hitler's Germany as the location where fascism takes place. I would argue, however, that the parallels between contemporary events and thirties history provided Eyre with a series of potent images that was rooted entirely the present moment.

V. AFTER *RICHARD III*

Richard Eyre's *Richard III* remained in the National Theatre's repertoire for two years, interspersed with tours of England, Europe and Japan before finally closing in Los Angeles in the summer of 1992.[49] The extension of the run by more than a year, albeit with major cast changes, is indicative of the production's success and by extension its influence. Its afterlife has been further extended, and no doubt coloured, by the film based on the stage version using a screenplay by Ian McKellen and its director Richard Loncraine. The film appears to have fit easily into the period drama mode of reproducing the past, furthering the historical ghosting between the three dramatic formats. That Loncraine's version of Eyre's concept influenced theatrical production

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[49] Ian McKellen, *William Shakespeare's Richard III: a screenplay written by Ian McKellen and Richard Loncraine* (London: Doubleday, 1996) 7.

of the thirties setting is probable, as when *Richard III* was released a spike in the number of thirties analogue productions occurred.

I briefly alluded earlier to the fact that in the eighties only four Shakespearean productions had utilised a thirties setting as their onstage milieux. This number had more than doubled in 1990 and 1991 with a total of ten productions set in the thirties, including Eyre's *Richard III* and Thacker's *Two Gents*. The following year, the thirties seemed to briefly lose popularity with only one production utilising the setting in 1992 and 1993, with that number doubling to two the following year. A direct correlation between the release of the McKellen/Loncraine version of Eyre's *Richard III* in December of 1995 can be seen in the apparent resurgence of the thirties setting on the Shakespearean stage. In 1996 the number of productions set in the thirties jumped from two in 1995 to five, indicating a renewed interest in the time period as a setting possibly spurred by the *Richard III* film. In subsequent years, the number of thirties-set productions declined once again to one or two per year being staged at theatres around the country. The last two major thirties-set analogues were a Riviera version of *Twelfth Night* in 2005 at the West Yorkshire Playhouse in Leeds and a *Much Ado About Nothing* placed in Sicily at Bristol's Tobacco Factory in 2007. Prior to that, the RSC staged its last thirties setting in 2004 with a touring version of *Two Gentlemen of Verona*. The National Theatre's final production in the thirties genre had occurred five years previously with Trevor Nunn's 1999 *Merchant of Venice*.

It is worth noting that the inter-war years appeared sporadically in other dramatic forms over this period, having also declined steadily in number since the eighties. The majority of these thirties-set dramas were produced for film including *Gosford Park*,

The Remains of the Day, a 2008 film version of *Brideshead Revisited* (once again using Castle Howard as the Flyte family seat, visually ghosting Granada's television version), *Bright Young Things* and Kenneth Branagh's *Love's Labour's Lost*. The images of the thirties circulating within contemporary society through these examples remained those of a decade comprised solely of wealth and privilege. Thirties society was thus depicted as only consisting of one social strata, rather than encompassing multiple images of the decade.

As noted earlier, the amount of period drama on television has diminished from the early eighties with a subsequent drop in the amount of drama set in the thirties. The perennial exception is *Agatha Christie's Poirot*, which after twenty-one years continues to regularly air new episodes. The few other exceptions include a new BBC version of *Love in a Cold Climate* in 2001, a television film biography of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth (*Bertie and Elizabeth*), and a re-telling of Churchill's battle for rearmament in the thirties (*The Gathering Storm*), and a 2010 reprise of *Upstairs, Downstairs* set in 1936. Television period drama thus also remained cemented into the portrayal of the thirties as a society populated by the elite.

The portrayal of the thirties on the Shakespearean stage has also had a certain amount of overall stability in its choice of images by which to portray the era. The majority of them fall into one of two (or both) broad categories into which *Richard III* fell, portraying either a fashionable and wealthy elite or using historical signifiers to suggest a fascist regime. Throughout the thirties-setting production timeline, the genre has evolved and the manner in which the thirties has changed dramatically. In the pages that follow, I will attempt to chronicle these changes in order to uncover how

the period setting functions in performance. That the evolution of the thirties setting has been affected by shifts in both television period drama and theatrical production will be the focus of the next chapter. In the remaining sections, I will detail the relationship between scenography and its creation of the thirties environs. In this manner, I shall be able to explore in more detail the changing usage of the thirties as a period analogue in Shakespearean theatrical production.

PART TWO

The thirties period setting in performance

CHAPTER FOUR
PERFORMANCE TRENDS

I. HISTORICAL DRAMA TO COSTUME DRAMA

In attempting to trace the influences that contributed to the emergence of the thirties
as a period analogue in Shakespearean production, I have drawn parallels between
television drama's representations of history and its Shakespearean counterpart. In this
I have posited that the theatrical recycling of material includes the reuse of images of
the past from television drama depictions, particularly those of period drama. In the
previous chapter, I also suggested that the shift in the types of images that were
available (i.e., a telescoping of the thirties into a single dominant image) contributed
to the emergence of the thirties as a period analogue. In order to explore these
implications further in the discussion of the thirties period analogue in performance, it
will be useful to begin part two of this thesis with a broad overview of the changes
that have occurred in television period drama over the past thirty years. In the
chapters that follow, the historical perspective will help to contextualise the changing
methods by which the thirties have been constructed on the Shakespearean stage.

The performing arts are in a constant state of evolution. The dramatic performance
responds to, absorbs and reflects the culture in which it is performed making shifts in
performance style inevitable. The second section of this thesis attempts to chart these
changes as they relate to the thirties period analogue. The productions with which this
thesis is concerned have taken place over a span of more than two decades. In that
time period, the style of performance of the thirties period analogue has evolved from
one that reconstructs the decade through use of a naturalistic environment (a remnant

of Barry Jackson's modern dress work) to one that appears to favour more symbolic use of period; sketching in the outline rather than applying detail to create an environment. As if responding to the intellectual arguments about the cultural contexts of performed Shakespeare, television period drama has drastically changed at the same time these shifts in the Shakespearean period analogue have occurred. Influenced by both theatrical and television trends, the evolution in the staging of the period analogue cannot be fully understood without remembering theatre's tendency to the reuse and recycling of material. In terms of the analogue these shifting stylistics in production are likely to be influenced by shifts in television's representations of the past. The shifting perception of what history looks like on television is likely to colour how period analogues are presented. It is for these reasons that I want to begin my discussion of the analogue in performance by mapping the shifts in period drama before examining the thirties-set theatrical productions in the remaining chapters of this thesis.

In televisual terms, it will be useful to think of the changes in approach to the representation of the past in period drama through Lez Cooke's categorizations of the genre in three broad, decade-defining categories: the seventies consisted of "historical drama"; the eighties, "heritage drama"; and the nineties, "costume drama".[1] These groupings are, of course, not watertight and overlaps in approach are inevitable, but they serve as a useful benchmark in distinguishing gradations inherent in evolution within the performing arts. What these categories broadly represent is the transition in period drama from the attempt to reconstruct an era authentically to representing the present in historical clothing.

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[1] Lez Cooke, *British Television Drama: A History* (London: British Film Institute Publishing, 2003) 166.

By the time Cooke's subgenre of "historical drama" was prevalent, the classic serial had been a staple of radio and television since the inception of public service broadcasting in the UK in the thirties.[2] Ingrained as an important part of television schedules, prior to the seventies period drama had tended to dramatise Victorian and Edwardian novels, as well as "occasional forays into Jane Austen or…the eighteenth century."[3] Apart from a relatively stable content-base, what is key here is the word "dramatise", the distinctions drawn by Robert Giddings and Keith Selby. They state that "The intention was to serialise this fiction but to treat it with respect in an attempt to do justice to the original work…. These were not adaptations. They were dramatisations."[4] Putting aside issues about the instability of text, printed or performed, it is a distinction that should be drawn; the *intention* was to serve the text as faithfully as possible, rather than to create contemporary drama. Inevitably, these two issues collide, but the approach here is key to understanding how television's representations of the past changed during the previous three decades.

Driving this desire for faithful dramatisations of the classics is the legacy of the first director-general of the BBC, John Reith. As Lez Cooke puts it,

> From the beginning, Reith was concerned that the BBC should fulfil its designated responsibility as a national broadcasting organisation and set a high moral tone for the whole of the nation. The BBC, according to its Royal Charter, had a duty to "inform, educate and entertain" and in his policy

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[2] For a more detailed account of the history of period drama, see Robert Giddings and Keith Selby, *The Classic Serial on Television and Radio* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave, 2001).
[3] Giddings and Selby, viii.
[4] Ibid.

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statements Reith left little doubt that the first two of this famous trinity were paramount and that the entertainment should be of an "improving" kind.[5]

While this cannot be taken as a universal eschewing of entertainment in favour of educational programming, the approach of television networks to period drama was likely influenced by these Reithian principles (i.e., dramatisation rather than adaptation). This was an attitude that was clearly in operation in the seventies, the period Lez Cooke has identified as one in which the genre can be termed "historical drama".

Period drama in the seventies appears to have had a multi-layered engagement with its historical subject, both in terms of content and how the past was recreated. I briefly discussed in chapter two what Giddings and Selby termed an "Edwardian craze" in period drama in the seventies and its implications for the emergence of the period analogue. What is also noteworthy in this Edwardian obsession was the shift away from what had become staples of dramatisation, the Victorian and Edwardian *novels* to historical dramatisation. That there was an emphasis on retelling history in the seventies, primarily through television biographies, can be observed through the subject matter depicted. Edward VII, Edward VIII, David Lloyd George, Emmeline Pankhurst, and Lillie Langtry were all subjects whose lives were dramatised for television.

The epithet "historical drama" does not lie solely in this predilection for the biographies of Edwardian historical personages, however. Instead, it is applicable

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[5] Lez Cooke, 10.

because of the attention to social and historical detail that is apparent in the creation of one of the most popular and influential television programmes of the era, *Upstairs, Downstairs*. The language used to describe the series by both producers is indicative of the care with which the past it dramatised was reconstructed, with social history and education being viewed as key elements. The series producer, John Hawkesworth, admitted that there "was a very educative element about *Upstairs, Downstairs*" because, as a dramatic form, it was "was a painless way of learning."[6] Somewhat ironically, it was this feature that script editor Alfred Shaughnessy initially felt would contribute to the series' (projected) failure: "I thought when we began…we would have an appalling flop. I thought the public would be so unsympathetic to the series that they'd reject it, and only a few social historians would watch it."[7] The approach taken by Hawkesworth and Shaughnessy in recreating the past was one of diligent research into the socio-political era, recreating it in popular dramatic form.

Writing shortly after the final series had been shown to US audiences, Alistair Cooke conveyed the manner in which the historical material used in *Upstairs, Downstairs* was handled, drawing it together into episodic storylines, always with a basis in fact. The scripts were underpinned by the meticulous research undertaken by Hawkesworth and the series script editor, Alfred Shaughnessy (who also wrote several episodes). Hawkesworth would scour "the period artifacts, through the microfilm file of the London *Times*, through letters, memoirs, House of Commons debates, store and fashion catalogs, weather reports, songbooks, theatre programs; noticing in passing details of contemporary slang, sporting events, deaths, reputations, best-sellers, etc."[8]

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[6] quoted in Richard Marson, *Inside Updown: The Story of Upstairs Downstairs* (Bristol: Kaleidoscope Publishing, 2001) 202.
[7] *Daily Telegraph*, "Obituary of Alfred Shaughnessy", 14 November 2005: 21.
[8] Alistair Cooke, *Masterpieces: A Decade of Classics on British Television* (London: The Bodley Head, 1982) 183.

Alfred Shaughnessy's private papers reveal other sources consulted by him during pre-production: a history of domestic service, *What the Butler Saw* by E. S. Turner; Daphne Fielding's biography of Rosa Lewis, the domestic servant who graduated to the post of cook and eventually became the owner of the Cavendish Hotel; the records of the Hunt-Regina agency, the premier agency for the employment of domestic servants of the day. As the series progressed, Hawkesworth and Shaughnessy both built up a sizeable library of reference materials devoted to the Edwardian era, and maintained contacts at the Imperial War Museum and *The Times*.[9] This varied collection helps to illustrate the wide knowledge base upon which *Upstairs, Downstairs* drew upon in the re-creation of the past. The producer and writers based the content of the series as closely as possible on historical information, interweaving fact with the fiction of their television scripts.

While information is scant, there are indications that the recreation of the material world – the "look" of the past – was one focus of this attention to historical detail in the actual production of the series. The costume designer, Sheila Jackson, referred to the fashion pages of *Punch* in constructing the costumes "for the downstairs and ordinary people".[10] For the "upstairs" characters, authentic items were apparently found and melded into the costume design. As Jackson stated,

> A lot of Rachel's [Gurney, who played Lady Marjorie Bellamy] things were
> real. We had a very nice cache that we bought of very good, beautiful

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[9] Alistair Cooke, 23-24.
[10] quoted in Marson, 142.

Edwardian evening dresses and things that had belonged to a very rich woman—I think from Manchester.[11]

Viewers also donated authentic items once the series gained in popularity, again as Jackson recounted:

Once we were going, people wrote and sent me things. Somebody sent me the most beautiful box of lace and said she so loved the *Upstairs, Downstairs* costumes, and would so like to feel she'd given something towards it. And we had a marvellous cache of real aprons that came to us…for maids of the period. So we had all these marvellous real aprons and caps.[12]

Whether this generosity was symptomatic of an overriding cultural interest in history at the time *Upstairs* was popular is unknown, but these anecdotes help to provide evidence of what was felt to be important at the time of production in the seventies, the accurate depiction of the material historical past.

From the press releases that accompanied the broadcast of *Upstairs, Downstairs* in the United States, it can also be gleaned that another production requirement was that stage properties were also historically accurate in appearance. The set designer, John Clements, apparently referred often to his "bible", as he called it, "a tattered, very rare copy of a 1907 catalog for London's famous Army and Navy department store".[13] From this and other sources, Clements was able to imbue the overall visual of the series with as accurate a picture as possible of the material world of the past *Upstairs,*

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[11] quoted in Marson, 143.
[12] Ibid.
[13] *Masterpiece Theatre* archive, WGBH Educational Foundation (WGBH-TV), Boston, Massachusetts.

Downstairs was reconstructing. Of course, with any depiction of an era other than the current one, authenticity is a slippery term. Clements (and no doubt Jackson with the costuming) had to adapt objects in order to have them correspond to the accurate visual. However, the point here is the *effort* undertaken in the quest for historical authenticity, the design equivalent of the distinction drawn above between dramatisation and adaptation.

An important detail to extrapolate from the information about *Upstairs, Downstairs* is that its historical ethos was not limited to the reconstruction of the past through its material culture. The recreation of the social mores of the eras depicted in *Upstairs* is less easily measured. It appears, however, that it was as, if not more, important than the duplication of the material world. It was this aspect of the series that likely prompted Shaughnessy to deem that the series would appeal only to social historians. One aspect of this was the accurate use of language, injecting the idioms of the past into the characters' dialogue. In crafting the storylines (and some scripts) for the fourth series of *Upstairs* which was set entirely during the first world war, Alfred Shaughnessy culled personal material in order to gauge the accuracy of his dialogue. In his father's letters to his mother, sent from the trenches on the western front, the phrase "had the blues" had leapt out at the script writer who had "assumed it was a much more modern phrase."[14] Shaughnessy's care in avoiding language that was too modern was complemented by the attention paid to forms of address. What he called "tiny refinements" were crucial to the manner in which servants would talk to the employers and *vice versa*. As he put it, "The children calling the butler Mr Hudson, the grown-ups calling him Hudson. These little conventions had to be watched."[15] As

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[14] *Masterpiece Theatre* archive.
[15] quoted in Marson, 24.

with the material world, the *effort* taken to ensure small details were observed was crucial to the overall production approach to dramatising its historical material.

This level of detail was also absorbed into the performance of the scripts themselves, as can be detected in an anecdote told by Simon Williams who played the Bellamy's son and heir, James Bellamy. Recounting the social nuances that pervaded the series in a documentary, the actor stated that

> Usually when you're doing a programme, the producers come and see the show and they say "Fabulous. Emotional content great, just really in the character." Our producer would come and say, "Simon, I think you wouldn't wear a Windsor knot like that, you'd tie your tie like this. Of course you wouldn't pick up the claret glass when you were drinking this."…The producers were really very, very keen on getting all the etiquette right and all the detail and I suppose that was one of the things that made the show great.[16]

What Williams referred to as etiquette, Alistair Cooke viewed as much more nuanced. The broadcaster and social commentator (and Edwardian-born himself) was clearly appreciative of *Upstairs, Downstairs*, stating that

> What gave [*Upstairs, Downstairs*] extraordinary distinction was the sure observation of character, the confidence and finesse with which social nuances

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[16] *The Story of the Costume Drama*, Episode 4: "Picture Perfect", ITV Productions Limited, aired ITV3, 4 December 2008.

and emotional upheavals between the two groups were explored, and the scrupulous accuracy of the period language, décor, mores, and prejudices.[17]

For Hawkesworth and Shaughnessy, the recreation of the social mores was as important to the construction of the past in *Upstairs, Downstairs* as the historical detail and re-construction of the material past. Their emphasis also carved out dramatic territory in which human behaviour was recognisable, but not contemporary; in television drama terms, a visible (and human) past had been (re)created.

The eighties version of period drama, "heritage drama" in Lez Cooke's categorization, was strikingly visual, the genesis of which Andrew Higson dates back to 1981 when *Chariots of Fire* was released in cinemas and *Brideshead Revisited* broadcast on television.[18] While there have been various attempts to define a canon of heritage drama, the description most relevant here is Andrew Higson's statement that the common element for these productions was their "carefully detailed and visually splendid period reconstructions."[19] While the historical dramas of the seventies can be seen to have been "carefully detailed" reconstructions of the past, what they cannot (or at least cannot pre-heritage drama) be said to have been is "visually splendid".

The splendour to which Higson refers is a visual aesthetic that evolved largely due to the technological advances and budgetary concerns mentioned in chapter three, which has been largely overlooked by critics who find heritage drama to have been

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[17] Alistair Cooke, 182.
[18] Andrew Higson, *English Heritage: English Cinema: Costume Drama Since 1980* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003) 15.
[19] Ibid., 1.

"ideologically complicit" with "Thatcherite Conservatism".[20] The heritage drama category is one that can be identified with the two key developments in television production: the shift to film from videotape and from studio-bound to location shooting; it was these that produced the aesthetic of visual splendour that critics most associate with the heritage drama category. In the previous chapter I touched on the impact these innovations had on the thirties imagery in period drama. In furthering my discussion of the stages of evolution in period drama over the past thirty years, I want to look at this from the perspective of industry changes and its impact on the entire genre and its presentation of the past on television.

By the early eighties, television period drama was already in the process of a metamorphosis in production. Some extant records of serials from the late seventies and early eighties indicate the shift toward opulent reconstructions of the depicted past was already well established. Location shooting on film had combined with the necessity for reconstructing the material world of the past (unfortunately, none of the records provide the same detail regarding its attention to social reconstructions, as those from *Upstairs* do). For example, the 1980 dramatisation of Nancy Mitford's *Love in a Cold Climate* was made on "a mixture of film and videotape". The serial was also shot in England and France in locations that included the home of Nancy Mitford's parents and her own residence on the Ile St. Louis in Paris. The authenticity of the series' material world was also not neglected as, according to the serial's sales brochure, "massive research has gone into reproducing the costumes of the time, outfits by Schiaparelli and Maggie Rouff, Erté and Mainbocher."[21] *LIACC* was clearly adhering to the "carefully detailed" reconstructions of the past, and with the mixing of

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[20] Claire Monk, "The British heritage-film debate revisited" in *British Historical Cinema: The history, heritage, and costume film*, ed. by Claire Monk and Amy Sargeant (London and New York: Routledge, 2002) 177.
[21] *Masterpiece Theatre* archive.

film and videotape, its visual aesthetic can be seen as one that bridged historical and heritage drama.

Although there was no mention of film in the production materials to which I had access, Thames Television's 1978 production of *Edward and Mrs Simpson* was equally opulent in its detailed reconstruction of the twenties and thirties. The production team scouted over thirty locations "all the way from Kenya, scene of a princely safari, to a South Wales coal mine, to say nothing of exterior sites like HRH's royal residence at Fort Belvedere." If the actual location was unavailable for filming, an approximation was created, as with the interiors of Fort Belvedere, Buckingham Palace and Quaglino's, which the prince had frequented during the period. These, it was claimed, "were duplicated in the studio down to the last patterned piece of wallpaper."[22] Studio-bound filming had thus become an extension of location shooting.

The *Edward and Mrs Simpson* costume department was equally diligent in its search for period authenticity, spending "six months just locating authentic fabrics and colors for the stylish outfits Mrs. Simpson was known for, and weeks and weeks combing likely sources for other clothes of the 30's." The team also elicited the services of the Prince of Wales' tailor, shirt-makers and hatters to construct the wardrobe of the actor portraying him, Edward Fox. Expensive pieces of jewellry, which the prince had "showered" on Wallis Simpson, were also duplicated as closely as possible to the originals.[23] The level of detail included in the descriptions of the re-creation of the

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[22] *Masterpiece Theatre* archive.
[23] Ibid.

material thirties worlds can be viewed as participating in the evolution of period drama as opulence gradually increased in importance to television's visual aesthetic.

My aim in using these pre-*Brideshead* dramas as examples is to highlight the fact that the shifts in period drama production were gradual. The catalyst was undoubtedly *Brideshead*, yet the financial implications of this method of production cannot be ignored. The reconstruction of the past in such detail is also, along with its aesthetic component, an economic consideration. Ultimately, *Brideshead* was both a cause and an effect of the gradual move toward an opulent visual aesthetic. In that it was the most expensive production yet undertaken by Granada Television at the time, it became synonymous with production values that produced a pleasing visual using picturesque location shooting, done exclusively on film. As noted in the previous chapter, the technological advances, culminating in *Brideshead*, resulted in the gradual melding of television production with its film counterparts in terms of visual aesthetics.

Brideshead's popularity (and thus its corresponding influence) ensured that audience expectations about what the past looked like on television had been irrevocably changed. The shift from studio-bound, videotaped methods of creating period drama to location shooting on film had been completed by the nineties (studios were not altogether dispensed with, however, but they no longer appeared aesthetically different, as they had when done on videotape). Audiences gradually came to expect that televised period drama would imitate in its visual language that provided by period depictions in the film genre. This emphasis on a programme's visual aesthetic

would have long-term consequences for period drama as film and location shooting inevitably made television drama more expensive to produce.

With the advent of authenticity in location shooting and period reconstruction, shot entirely on film, production costs rose exponentially. For example, the 1984 Granada Television serial *Jewel in the Crown* was a fifteen-hour dramatisation of Paul Scott's *The Raj Quartet*, shot partially on location in India and which took two years to film. (The full schedule was considerably longer, once pre- and post-production work is factored into the timescale.) The budget was the then-princely sum of £5.6 million.[24] A decade later, the BBC made a version of George Eliot's *Middlemarch*. This serial did not have the international location shooting or production timescale of *Jewel*, and was half its length. Although it was shorter and had not accrued the travel expenses of *Jewel*, *Middlemarch* was a more expensive programme to make. With a price tag of £6 million, it cost approximately £1 million per hour to produce in contrast with *Jewel*'s per hour costing of approximately £400,000 per hour a decade previously.[25] A further indication that the television landscape had changed drastically in intervening the decade can be observed in the fact that while Granada had been the sole funder of *Jewel*, a decade later the BBC sought co-production money from WGBH-TV/Boston in order to make up the budget shortfall.

The dual requirements of high production values (film, location shooting) combined with the necessity for foreign co-production and sales to fund programming has also had a profound effect on period drama in terms of content. By the mid-nineties, selling programmes on the international market had brought the Reithian educational

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[24] George W. Brandt, "*The Jewel in the Crown*: The literary serial; or the art of adaptation", in *British Television Drama in the 1980s*, ed. by George W. Brandt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) 199.
[25] Giddings and Selby, 89.

ethic in television production into direct conflict with other international broadcasters' emphases on entertainment. With this funding model, although the BBC, ITV and the independent television companies were ostensibly producing programmes for a *British* audience, they were compelled to consider the television environment of its targeted foreign audience as well; this was inevitable when the productions relied on co-production funding. Two major shifts occurred to accommodate this changing business climate: the number of hours per serial was reduced and a shift toward entertainment was undertaken in content terms. These pressures, I would argue, facilitated the change from the heritage to costume drama categorisations of the genre.

The most visible casualty of rising budgets and foreign sales was a contraction in the number of hours available for a single serial. For example, the BBC's 1986 *David Copperfield* was five hours while its counterpart a decade and a half later had been stripped to three-and-a-half. Other versions of classic serials were likewise pared down by several hours for twenty-first century viewers: the comparatively short 1975 *Madame Bovary* had come in at four hours but the novel had lost an hour of story-telling time in its three-hour incarnation in 2000; the differences between the two BBC productions of *Bleak House* also have a time differential, with the eight hour 1985 version reduced to six hours in a 2005 re-make. A similar pattern can be seen with the period dramas set in the inter-war years: the 1980 *Love in a Cold Climate* was an eight-hour miniseries, while the 2001 version was produced in three; *Winston Churchill: The Wilderness Years* was also an eight-hour serial, but the BBC film that covered the same subject matter, *The Gathering Storm*, had been whittled down to ninety minutes; *Edward and Mrs Simpson* was seven hours, whereas the portion of the two-hour film, *Bertie and Elizabeth*, covering the same subject matter (the

Abdication crisis) from an alternative point of view in less than twenty-five minutes. In an interview with the *Independent on Sunday* in 2003 Jane Tranter, then head of drama at the BBC, rationalized this trend in terms of cost, stating "we really have to be sure we need so many episodes to tell the story in".[26] This emphasis on budgets and co-production funding would result in long-term consequences for period drama.

As the length of period drama serials was being systematically reduced, they moved away from the Reithian principles that had been part of the fabric of television in the seventies, becoming less educationally- and more entertainment-oriented. Despite Tranter's comment regarding cost and the number of episodes, it is interesting that television professionals do not see this trend in terms of budgetary concerns shrinking the length of period drama serials. Instead, both Jane Tranter and the writer Andrew Davies view the shift in emphasis toward entertainment solely as a response to changing viewing habits. Davies, who you will recall adapted R. F. Delderfield's *To Serve Them All My Days* into a thirteen-hour serial, opined in the *Daily Express*:

> Remember, times have changed as well…There are more channels now, more things to watch and viewing habits have changed. There is also a lot of talk of a golden age − of *Jewel in the Crown*, of *Brideshead Revisited* − but if you watch them now they seem leisurely and indulgent, made for an era when people had the time and the temperament to watch these long, wordy things.[27]

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[26] James Morrison, "Whatever happened to the epic TV dramas of old?", *Independent on Sunday*, 5 October 2003: Features, 6.

[27] Mark Jagasia, "Period drama given cold shoulder as viewers go for quirky comedy", *The Express*, 20 November 2001: 3.

Davies' choice of words with "leisurely" and "indulgent" was echoed in Tranter's assessment of the evolution of period drama. She tellingly remarked, "We are used to things being a lot more fast-paced, so viewers no longer want or expect dramas to go into every tiny detail in the same way they once did."[28] It is significant that Tranter frames this as being driven by *audience* expectation and I would argue that this was a more inter-dependent process with audience expectations managed in part by television economics; the one feeding the other and *vice versa*. The practitioners' emphases on fast-paced period drama also signal the genre's realignment with entertainment, rather than in its previous incarnation as a form of social history ("historical drama" in Lez Cooke's terminology) as exemplified by *Upstairs, Downstairs*.

The focus on "fast-paced" dramas occurred in tandem with (and from which it is perhaps inseparable) what Robert Giddings and Keith Selby identified as a trend toward the modernisation of period drama. It can of course be argued that all television drama is constructed with its contemporary audience in mind, as was Andrew Davies script for *TSTAMD* as noted in chapter three. What Giddings and Selby identify as one symptom of modernisation (the insertion of exclamations of "bloody hell" and "take care" into the script of the BBC's 1997 *Ivanhoe*) can also be viewed as evidence of the shift away from the meticulous reconstruction of past social mores (i.e., a form of education) by production companies. Giddings and Selby also found practitioner evidence of this attitude in the comments of Steven Waddington, who played Wilfred of Ivanhoe in the serial. Their analysis is pertinent to my argument and is worth quoting in detail.

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[28] Morrison, *IOS*.

The critics quote a *Radio Times* interview in which Steven Waddington states,

> Personally, I think *Ivanhoe* should possibly be the last hurrah of the period pieces. The public can only take so much, although this is totally different, it's timeless. It's not just about being chivalrous and doing the right thing all the time. Even Ivanhoe has a dilemma—he's in love with two women—and he doesn't just make a decision, it's a long journey before he works out what to do. All those things are very modern.[29]

Giddings and Selby picked up on Waddington's terminology, finding it

> significant that [Waddington] doesn't say that Ivanhoe's "dilemma" is timeless. No. It's "very modern." As the decade progressed, and more and more classic novels were transformed into costume dramas, we began more frequently to hear that "so-and-so" had been dramatised "for the 1990s".[30]

The catalyst for this shift toward deliberately crafting modern pieces had apparently been the BBC's 1995 *Pride and Prejudice*, the genesis of which is instructive on this point. This version began when producer Sue Birtwistle asked its screenwriter, Andrew Davies, if he would be interested in adapting the novel for television. Birtwistle's "pitch" to Davies, like the comments from other practitioners above, is indicative of the turn these presentations of the past had taken in the nineties. Davies recalls the producer informed him,

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[29] quoted in Giddings and Selby, 140.
[30] Giddings and Selby, 140.

I know what I'd like to do: *Pride and Prejudice* and make it look like a fresh, lively story about real people. And make it clear that, though it's about many things, it's principally about sex and it's about money: those are the driving motives of the plot. Would you like to adapt it?[31]

The shift in terminology mimics the comments about period dramas being dramatised "for the nineties" and marks the evolution of the genre from an exploration of the past socially and historically to an interest that was concentrated on its outward trappings; the present was portrayed in costume, rather than as an historical reconstruction of the social mores of the era being dramatised.

In examining the implications of these shifts in the artistic policies of television period drama for Shakespearean theatre, it is worth remembering the centrality of the medium on contemporary perceptions of history. It is also worth recalling that theatrical production is based on the reuse of its past, the reception of current productions framed in part by those preceding it. As period drama is one point of reference for stage recreations (interconnected by the multiple experiences of the two genres by both practitioner and audience), the shift from a detailed re-creation of a past society of serials such as *Upstairs, Downstairs* to one in which archaic dialogue is replaced by contemporary expressions and social behaviour is crucial. Even as it has adopted contemporary attitudes in the shift from "historical" to "costume" drama, period drama has become less complex in its portrayal of the past.

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[31] Sue Birtwistle and Susie Conklin, *The Making of Pride and Prejudice* (London: Penguin, 1995) v.

This shift has also changed audience expectations, who now comprehend the past through a different lens as the historical ghosting process absorbs these alternative qualities in period drama. I want to elaborate on this point by looking at the implications through the core of any drama, its storytelling. To do this, I want to follow on from the evidence presented about the manner in which John Hawkesworth and Alfred Shaughnessy portrayed the past in *Upstairs, Downstairs*. We have seen how the producers of *Upstairs, Downstairs* approached their dramatisations of life in the early twentieth century from the perspective of social history. John Hawkesworth and his team consulted various books, newspapers, and memoirs in order to achieve as accurate a depiction of the social nuances of the past as possible. The approach used by them was thus the meticulous reconstruction of the era(s) of each series both materially and socially.

As with any attempt at reconstructing the past there are obviously flaws within their approach, similar to the issues that surround the reconstructed Globe Theatre's historicity. As Worthen notes, "the Globe can only be a complex *contemporary* undertaking, one which evinces an understanding of the working of history that is fully our own."[32] As with the Globe, period drama can only be made in the image of the current understanding of the past. However, what made *Upstairs, Downstairs* akin to social history was both the level of research undertaken in order to re-make the past, as well as the amount of time allowed to develop its social hierarchy, its stories and its characterisations. Length was a crucial factor in the long-running serial's storytelling, although not length and number of episodes but the time allotted to each scene. Not only plot but also character development and the rendering of the social

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[32] W. B. Worthen, "Reconstructing the Globe Constructing Ourselves", in *Shakespeare Survey 52* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) 34.

mores were all affected by the amount of time allocated to the scenes. This additional time equates with greater knowledge of the aspects of the era being absorbed by the audience, a factor important in historical ghosting.

The importance of the time to the develop characters and stories was noted by Fay Weldon at an event celebrating ITV's fiftieth anniversary at the BFI. When asked for her observations about the reprise of one episode of *Upstairs, Downstairs* which she had written, Weldon remarked,

> what struck me first of all was how long the scenes were. That you were allowed to write really long scenes in which you could develop something, and actually people had a chance to act. Now, the scenes are so short, really, that what people give as performances...acting is something that doesn't necessarily happen in television anymore.[33]

That length − or the ability to devote time to storytelling − had previously been seen as an asset in the construction of period drama can also be observed in remarks by Charles Sturridge in the booklet accompanying the DVD of *Brideshead Revisited*. Remarking on the fact that the original six-hour script submitted by John Mortimer had been expanded to eleven hours, Sturridge stated that the "potency of the story evaporated without the detail."[34] What the director undoubtedly meant was that with the additional five hours of airtime, the serial became multi-layered. Characterisation and plot were allowed time to expand, giving the audience a more nuanced view of

[33] "Fay Weldon and Jean Marsh discuss *Upstairs, Downstairs*", British Film Institute, <http://www.bfi.org.uk/features/interviews/weldon-marsh.html>, 13 December 2005, last accessed 16 April 2010.
[34] Charles Sturridge, "The Making of *Brideshead*: A Note from the Director", in *Brideshead Revisited: A Companion Guide*, companion booklet, *Brideshead Revisited*, directed by Charles Sturridge and Michael Lindsay-Hogg, Granada Television, 1981 (DVD box set, Acorn Media, 2002) 6.

the themes of the novel and the humanity of the characters. In short, the audience was also allowed to empathise with the people on the screen, the detail of their personalities and social worlds providing a hook to the past that went beyond its material recreation.

I want to illustrate this point about the length of a serial impacting the manner in which the past is transmitted to the audience with the example from two serials from the "historical" category of thirties-set period drama: the 1978 *Edward and Mrs Simpson* and the 2002 *Bertie and Elizabeth*. Both series have commonality in their subject matter and the fact that they were produced for and aired on the commercial network ITV. Given the difficulties inherent in trying to measure the *social* recreation of the past in drama, I want to use these two examples are evidence of their historical content.

In *Bertie and Elizabeth*, the dramatised Abdication crisis, beginning with Wallis Simpson's first appearance, comprised 25% of the one hour and forty minute telefilm. By contrast, the events of 1936 were dramatised over five of the seven episodes of *Edward and Mrs Simpson*, with Wallis Simpson having been introduced twenty-five minutes into the first episode. The events leading to the King's Abdication were thus played out during approximately 70% of the 1978 series. What is clear from the differing lengths of the programmes is the earlier series' ability to delve into its subject matter in a more nuanced manner than the later telefilm.

Structurally *Edward and Mrs Simpson* ran for seven episodes, with the first two telescoping events from the late twenties and into the thirties to establish the

relationship between King Edward VIII, then the Prince of Wales, and the American divorcée Mrs Wallis Simpson. These initial episodes offer what is essentially an introduction to characters and situations central to the serial, illustrating the contradictions between the prince's playboy lifestyle and his concern for his underprivileged subjects. The opening episodes also show Edward's predilection for married women and the introduction to and takeover by Mrs Simpson of his social set. The second episode ends in January 1936 with the death of King George V and the prince's ascendance to the throne as King Edward VIII.

Unsurprisingly in an era in which "historical drama" was paramount (and despite its title), the romantic tale which led Edward VIII to abdicate was not the primary focus of *Edward and Mrs Simpson*. Instead the serial dramatises, in often-minute detail, the events of 1936. The last five episodes contain the central story and amount to a televisual document of the constitutional crisis that ensued once Mrs Simpson had obtained her decree *nisi*. Episode four, for example, spends remarkably little time chronicling the relationship between the two title characters who are rarely seen together during its fifty minutes. Instead, the serial concentrates on describing the political, social and constitutional issues pertaining to the crisis through multiple conversations amongst various leaders of the time, including Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin, Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the press baron Lord Beaverbrook, the King's Private Secretary Major Alexander Hardinge, Queen Mary and the Duke of York. Although perhaps lacking in emotional depth, the historical causes of the abdication crisis are thoroughly explored in serious dramatic form.

Given its restrictive one hour and forty minute running time, the detail that had been present in the earlier serial was absent from *Bertie and Elizabeth*. It could, of course, be said that the first two hours of *Edward and Mrs Simpson* simplified the historical material of the twenties and early thirties in a similar fashion. However, the point I want to make is that the length of time devoted to the year 1936 within *Edward* allowed the audience to absorb a greater understanding of its historical import than that of the surface meaning presented by *Bertie*. The finer points of the constitutional crisis are missing from the latter series, and even its effect on the lead characters was glossed over in a few scenes. The Duchess of York's dislike of Wallis Simpson was displayed through a few coy remarks and a re-enactment of the Duchess' overhearing Mrs Simpson's cruel imitation of her. Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin is not introduced into the telefilm, nor is the part Monckton played in the abdication process explained. The superficiality of *Bertie and Elizabeth*'s approach to history also allowed little scope for social nuance and finer historical points to be absorbed by its twenty-first century television audience.

It is worth noting that Alistair Cooke cited the historical accuracy of Edward and Mrs Simpson in his on-air commentaries that preceded the serial's American broadcast on PBS's *Masterpiece Theatre*. He iterated that Simon Raven's screenplay had been based on the "definitive" biography of Edward VIII by Frances Donaldson, who also functioned as the serial's historical advisor. As a journalist Alistair Cooke had covered the Abdication for an American radio network and his remarks display an unease with the fictive aspects of historical biography, in both the print and televisual formats:

You know I suspect that many people must feel like me when they read, or now on television see, the dramatised biographies of famous people. The uncomfortable feeling when you hear a lot of intimate dialogue that the biographer couldn't possibly have been a fly on the wall a hundred or forty years ago or whatever…Certainly the most fortunate thing that happened to the Thames Television company when they drafted this series was the employment of Frances Donaldson as the script supervisor to assist a very, very skilled script writer, Simon Raven. Frances Donaldson has written the definitive classic biography of Edward the Eighth and she had access to state papers, to German documents, to an enormous wealth of memoirs and diaries and taped conversations with people involved in the crisis and also with frequent guests at the Fort and on the yachting cruises and both she and Simon Raven drew very carefully on these sources.[35]

For later episodes Cooke was to reiterate this claim, enhancing it by also imparting that Lady Diana Cooper had been present on the set to advise the producers on the accuracy of the scenes depicting the habits and manners of Edward VIII's inner circle. For *Bertie and Elizabeth's* American broadcast another journalist host of *Masterpiece Theatre*, *New York Times* columnist Russell Baker, did not defend its historical accuracy. Instead Baker concentrated on describing the cast of characters (the royal family) to the viewing audience.

Noticeably the approach to the reconstruction of the material past differed from that used by *Edward and Mrs Simpson*, according to the archival evidence. The art

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[35] Alistair Cooke, unpublished "Extro" to *Edward and Mrs Simpson* (Thames Television, 1978), Episode 2, broadcast on *Masterpiece Theatre* (WGBH-TV/Boston for PBS), 22 November 1981, *Masterpiece Theatre* archive.

director for *Bertie and Elizabeth*, Martyn John, stated that he had done period research on the royal family and its environs. In an interview for the *MPT* website, John referenced creating "near-perfect examples of letters and cards on Queen Mary's desk for the abdication scene". He also based the original colour of the carpet laid at Westminster Abbey for the coronation on archival footage of the event. In this, there was essentially no difference between John's approach and that of the *Edward* production team with its attention to detail in re-creating the wallpaper at Quaglino's restaurant or the interiors of Fort Belvedere.

These examples are juxtaposed, however, with Martyn John's admission that compromises in design had been made because of budgetary constraints, confining shooting primarily to a single location: Longleat House. This provided "a wealth of grand palatial spaces and furniture and paintings appropriate for our period." Inherent within these remarks is evidence of twenty-first century television's premium preference for its visual aesthetic, even when attempting to accurately reconstruct the past. The decision to film in a single location had, John stated, provided scope for the presentation of ostentatious wealth and privilege in order "to heighten the 'royal' experience, using silver, glass, flowers, and rich ornaments and memorabilia to enhance each scene."[36] While period research was obviously a factor in the recreation of the past, the *Bertie and Elizabeth* designer opted for a luxurious portrayal of the past – in part, no doubt, because of the visual provided through the by-then requisite use of film. Unlike in *Edward* where historical content was prioritised the opulent interiors, *Bertie* frequently shifting viewer focus away from the actors and the text and instead drawing attention instead to the lavish drawing rooms and staircases of

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[36] "*Bertie and Elizabeth*" Production Notes, *Masterpiece Theatre* website, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/masterpiece/bertie/notes_past.html>, last accessed 19 July 2010.

Longleat House. The trappings of wealth had become the story, rather than the historical material itself.

The overall trend from historical to costume drama is one that has been toward shorter pieces. This has had the effect of diminishing understanding of the past as a multi-layered society by its television audience. Instead of historical content the emphasis on the look of the period (costume) has taken precedence. The lack of allotted time to delve into social nuance and relationships of the past has caused the premium to be put on the visual recreation of the period through costume and scene design, with the human element of creating a period largely negated. The camera re-creates the period, rather than the actor attempting to re-live an era. This naturally reduces the points through which the televisual past could be ghosted onto its Shakespearean equivalent. Trevor Nunn's production of *All's Well* naturally reproduced a familiar material world in its recreation of fashion, but the social etiquette between classes that had been explored in series such as *Upstairs, Downstairs* provided valuable reference points for the context in which Nunn placed his work.

II. THE BARE STAGE

As historical accuracy in period drama was completing its shift from a social context to the material, Shakespearean production was also in transition. Stage production of Shakespeare has engaged with scenographic trends almost as if it were on a collective see-saw, sliding one way and then back again to its polar opposite. As J. L. Styan remarks, "The stage has moved from the elaborate decoration of Beerbohm Tree to the austerities of Peter Hall, from the illusory realism of Henry Irving to the non-

illusory statements of Peter Brook."[37] The quest for an "authentic" method of playing Shakespeare at the turn of the twentieth century begins with William Poel, who was reacting to the staging excesses of the Victorian actor-managers. As Dennis Kennedy has noted Poel "discarded scenery and used Elizabethan dress" in order to perform the plays using "Elizabethan" methods, an innovation that was to have lasting consequences for twentieth century Shakespearean production.[38] There have been excellent scholarly investigations into the modes of producing Shakespeare throughout the twentieth century. With variations on the theme, these document the influence of William Poel and his experimentation with Elizabethan staging on contemporary methods of production. For the late twentieth century professional theatre, Tyrone Guthrie is credited with the lasting effects of this movement.

The contribution of Tyrone Guthrie to twentieth century Shakespearean production is frequently discussed in relation to his influence on the post-war open stage architectural movement. Guthrie's invitation to become first advisor to, then director of, the Stratford (Ontario) Shakespeare Festival allowed him to put these ideas on staging into practical use. He convinced the Festival planners to build a stage modelled on that of the Elizabethan playhouse, the intention being that the actor-audience relationship would be paramount, with traditional scenic design rendered obsolete. After establishing the theatre in Ontario, Guthrie's advocacy of a new repertory theatre movement in the US (which was never completely achieved) presented him with another opportunity to "build a performance space on the open-stage principles" he had been advocating. His second North American theatre was founded in Minneapolis, the space being named in his honour the Guthrie Theatre.

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[37] J. L. Styan, *The Shakespeare Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977) 1.
[38] Dennis Kennedy, *Looking at Shakespeare: A Visual History of Twentieth-Century Performance*, second edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) 37.

Construction of new theatres in both Europe and North America in the sixties and seventies increasingly adopted the open stage, rather than the proscenium arch, including those in Chichester, Sheffield and the National Theatre's Olivier auditorium.[39] The RSC's Swan Theatre, opened in 1986, and its newly renovated, reopened (2010) but not renamed Royal Shakespeare Theatre are also modelled on the types of open stages advocated by Guthrie.

The increasingly popularity of the open stage (as well as what Kennedy refers to as "chamber Shakespeare", the intimate studio space) was to have profound effects on the performance of Shakespeare. As Styan notes, "Open staging radically assisted our notion of how Shakespeare imagined his plays when he wrote them."[40] Without bulky scenery to interfere with either playing or reception, the focus was on the text and the actors, with the smooth transition between scenes improving the flow. Particularly at the RSC in Stratford, however, these pared down spaces existed in tandem with its main Shakespearean repertory played in its (now defunct) proscenium arch theatre. In the seventies, the RSC had experimented with a relatively bare stage form of scenography that in some ways extolled the virtues of the open stage method on the proscenium arch. This had been largely due to budgetary issues, however, so when their finances had recovered, the eighties heralded in what Kennedy called "neo-pictorialism"; design-intensive productions existing in tandem with those on the open stage.

This tension between the Elizabethan bare stage and contemporary versions of pictorialism were accentuated by the emergence of the facsimile Globe Theatre in

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[39] Robert Shaugnessy, "Tyrone Guthrie" in *The Routledge Companion to Directors' Shakespeare*, John Russell Brown, ed. (London: Routledge, 2008) 133.
[40] Styan, *The Shakespeare Revolution*, 190.

London. The desire to experiment with Elizabethan playing methods on a re-created stage near the site of Shakespeare's original theatre has influenced other contemporary practitioners. For example, Abigail Rokison cites Tom Piper, the resident designer at the RSC, who has recognised in contemporary production "a move away from large scale, highly visually theatrical versions of Shakespeare's plays [over the past fifteen years] – perhaps in part influenced by the Swan and the Globe theatres – towards an emphasis on the power of language to excite our imagination".[41] The RSC's redevelopment plan was predicated on eliminating the proscenium arch stage aesthetic entirely from its repertoire, with their new RST built as a thrust stage. In other words, the bare stage of Elizabethan "authenticity" now dominates Shakespearean production, largely due to the impression of an "authentic" Shakespeare circulated by the new Globe's influential practices.

The larger context in which the thirties-set Shakespearean productions were performed is one in which both the television production of period drama and the staging of Shakespeare in the theatre underwent significant change. The televisual vision of the past was reduced in terms of actual content in the number of hours available. A shift in focus from "historical" to the "costume" also ensued in television, with the visual language of the past overtaking in importance drama's exploration of the social world of re-enacted eras. With less social and historical context available, the potential for ghosting the historical period for re-use in theatrical form was also curtailed. I would suggest that it is significant that the streamlining of Shakespeare on the stage occurred simultaneously with the shift to "costume drama" on television. Both of these trends began in the late nineties and cemented their respective practice

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[41] Abigail Rokison, *Shakespearean Verse Speaking: Text and Theatre Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009) 1.

in the twenty-first century. With the bare stage, Shakespearean scenography became less obtrusive with little recourse to furniture and props in providing visual meaning to productions. It is through this framework of diminishing content, both historical (television) and material (stage) that the final chapters of this thesis will engage with the performance of the thirties period analogue.

CHAPTER FIVE
CREATING THE SCENOGRAPHIC THIRTIES

I. THE THIRTIES "LOOK"

The formation of an environment that evokes an historical era is both representative of the past and simultaneously the product of its own historical and theatrical moment. As Dennis Kennedy remarks, "Visual fashions and gestural codes change swiftly, and are connected to place as well as time."[1] This means that even something that *seems* a stable concept – designing "the thirties" – is in reality more complicated. The design of a historical period is subject to contemporary fashion and practice, which inevitably colours the depiction of the past. For example, at the time of writing "Rome" looks very different in *Rome* than it did in *I, Claudius* (and the BBC Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*), although certain outward signs are stable such as the use of togas as wardrobe items. Thus theatrical (and televisual) design hovers somewhere between contemporary trends and expectations about the period's visual. I want to begin this exploration of the design element in the thirties period analogue with a brief overview of both process and signification of the decade. This will lead to the analysis of the overall evolution in the portrayal of the thirties in material terms, which is key to the manner in which the period analogue has changed in the past two decades.

When Hildegard Bechtler was invited by Trevor Nunn to design his 1999 production of *The Merchant of Venice*, she recalled thinking of his concept, "'The Thirties': it is

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[1] Dennis Kennedy, *Looking at Shakespeare: A Visual History of Twentieth-Century Performance*, second edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) 4.

very broad. What does it mean?"[2] This was not a comment about the instability of such depictions, but rather an observation regarding the amount of material that collectively forms an overall impression of the thirties. I begin with Bechtler in order to illustrate how a designer hones the available material to create a concise image of "the thirties" for a contemporary audience. Bechtler's entry point in the design process was largely dictated to her by Nunn's production concept that streamlined "the thirties" into a society in which

> it would be clear to the audience that we were looking at a time when the notion of anti-semitic utterance and anti-semitic action was becoming common, was becoming a kind of popular activity, was beginning to be part of a certain European outlook…[3]

To Nunn, this meant a Europe that "wasn't specifically Italianate, any more than it was specifically Austrian or German."[4] Nunn's placement of *Merchant* encompassed an impression of Europe as a continent, rather than a naturalistic analogue targeting a single country in the thirties. Bechtler's design thus had to evoke the location(s) in which the Holocaust had happened, as well as maintaining Shakespeare's location of the play.

Hildegard Bechtler's initial research led her into the realm of the era's "painting, photography, architecture and fashion". As is to be expected in what is essentially a visual process, her design was connected with the pictorial research into both location

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[2] Hildegard Bechtler, in conversation, March 2009.
[3] NT Platform, 18 September 2001, recording at National Theatre Archive, London.
[4] Ibid.

and era. For example, Bechtler's stage floor for *Merchant* was based on an abstract painting she had found "which had patterns and strong lines, which was almost like a swastika…[with] deliberate thirties patterning." One wall of the traverse stage's set had been "based on an actual café in Vienna". Shylock's environment was based on photographs taken of the "Jewish world" of thirties Germany. The costumes, which Bechtler felt were the primary signifiers of the thirties for the audience, were based on historical research to ensure that the characters "were dressed as close to the period as possible."[5] Bechtler's method shows the intention to accurately portray the material thirties world, her process similar to that which had been undertaken for period dramas such as *Upstairs, Downstairs* and *Edward and Mrs Simpson*.

In an example of how the process of re-creating a material past is also selective, what is perhaps most striking in Bechtler's thirties Austro-German-Italian European design is its absence of Nazi iconography. This had been a conscious decision taken by Nunn prior to rehearsals according to the production's Portia, Derbhle Crotty. She had been told at her audition that they "they wouldn't be having any of the banners, *et cetera*" by which the fascism of the era is most often signified.[6] This was a scenic omission noted by Nicholas de Jongh in his review, who questioned, "Since Twenties Italy was in Mussolini's grip there ought surely to be some signs of fascism."[7] De Jongh's mention of the exclusion is indicative of the prevalence of certain signs, and the reviewer's expectation of what should be visible because that's what thirties fascism "looks like" as theatrical design (and televisual) has been remarkably stable in this respect. Richard Eyre used banners, armbands and blackshirt uniforms to visualise

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[5] Bechtler, in conversation.
[6] Derbhle Crotty, in conversation, August 2007.
[7] *Evening Standard*, 18 June 1999.

Richard III's fascist rise to power; Tim Luscombe had his Venetians wearing blackshirt uniforms over carnivale masks as the number of "fascist uniforms and icons grew" during the course of his *Merchant*[8]; denoting Claudius's totalitarian regime, a red silk banner was "unfurl[ed] from the ceiling like a flag for Hitler's Fascism" in Stephen Jameson's *Hamlet[9]*; Steven Berkoff portrayed Coriolanus and his followers as a band of fascist thugs, in blackshirts and jackboots marching in goose-step formation. Unlike Nunn's these productions both absorbed and reinforced its "public cultural memory" (in Carlson's terminology) of the visuals of fascism, both in costume and scenic terms.[10]

Another point where expectations about the appearance of the thirties converge appears to be in feminine costuming, which is often patterned both on stage and screen from the inter-related images of Hollywood glamour and *haute couture*. The two are inextricably linked, Sarah Berry argues, through the former's tendency in the thirties to hire the creative force of the couturier in designing costumes for their films. The Hollywood publicity machine was also a factor and by the "early 1930s, it had become clear that fashion display was a significant aspect of female box office appeal" which led to Hollywood's publicity highlighting the "films' display of 'wearable' styles".[11] That *haute couture* was viewed as a "'wearable' style" also led to a "democratic leveling of social distinctions", with women aspiring to be adorned in the types of *chic* clothing Hollywood stars were wearing.[12] This likely has had an

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[8] Tim Luscombe, in conversation, July 2007.
[9] *Independent*, 10 July 2003.
[10] Marvin Carlson, *The Haunted Stage: The Theatre as Memory Machine* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2003) 78.
[11] Sarah Berry, *Screen Style: Fashion and Femininity in 1930s Hollywood* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000) 16.
[12] Ibid., xii.

impact on the manner in which the thirties are represented in re-creation, with Hollywood films providing one important type of image. The merging of *haute couture*, film costume and fashion has remained a dominant signifier of the thirties in female stage clothing, as evening gowns and stylish day dresses are frequently present in the designs for thirties-set Shakespearean analogues.

That costume design of the thirties still bears the imprint of Hollywood and *haute couture* can be seen in the research material consulted by designers of the RSC and the NT. Production stills of film stars are to be found in archival costume files, including those of Claudette Colbert and Marlene Dietrich. Editions of *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar* magazines also provided pictorial records of fashions of the era. Photographs of evening gowns by Vionnet, Alix Grés and Lucien Long are also among the *haute couture* designs used as models for some thirties costumes. That many of the costumes in the period analogue were depicting this type of stylishness can be found embedded in the language of the productions' reception. Although no detailed description of the costumes appears in the reviews (in contrast with Barry Jackson's modern dress productions), "evening dress", "chic" and "stylish" are all popular generic terms used in the descriptions of the period costume.

In another example of productions adhering to expectations about the "look" of the past, certain scenographic elements recur within the thirties-set period analogues. Two Portias, for example, were placed in environments that contained similar thirties-associated objects. Tim Luscombe's promptbook records that the set contained a record player, *chaise longue*, mirror and a box of chocolates. The reviews provide further detail of the setting with Michael Billington noting that the inhabitants of

Belmont indulged in cocktails[13] and Paul Taylor described Portia as having "wield[ed] a cigarette holder".[14] Cigarettes, cocktails and the record player (phonograph) would all reappear in a "new" incarnation of the thirties in the Trevor Nunn *Merchant* a decade later, the production designed by Hildegard Bechtler. A phonograph also appeared in Sam Mendes' *Othello* as Desdemona put on a wax disc of (what was undoubtedly titled) *The Willow Song*, humming along as it crackled its way through the song.

There are, of course, numerous variations of thirties costume and sceneography within these period analogues. What is striking about the examples of thirties recycling, however, is their relatively narrow range not just in terms of the types of objects (props in particular) that are (re)used, but in their familiarity. Gramophones, chequebooks, cocktails, champagne, a motorcycle, lighters, cigarette cases, magazines, soda siphons, radios and cameras all make (often multiple) appearances in the thirties-set productions. While some of the objects are slightly outmoded, they are all recognisable as having a late twentieth-century equivalent (walkman or iPod for gramophone, for example). They are also objects that are familiar from their appearances in period drama, which provides them with a dual existence as both modern and historical (perhaps the props version of the elision in the definition of "modern dress"). Like Barry Jackson's modern dress productions, these objects reflect our own familiar material society. Unlike Jackson's, their translation into a period equivalent presents us with an authentic-looking material past that simultaneously

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[13] *The Guardian*, 9 February 1991.
[14] *Independent*, 9 February 1991.

mimics the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries in which they were produced.

Given the patterns that are evident with the reuse of similar objects as props and the recycled nature of costume signifiers, I want to look at the design of the thirties-set period analogue in an alternate way. I want to view the design of these productions in terms of both process and overall scenographic trends. This will help to illustrate how the visual depiction of the thirties has changed during the course of the analogue production timeline.

II. PICTORIAL EVIDENCE

In the previous chapter I discussed the shift in emphasis within television dramatisations of the past from one that had foreground the historical and social era to one that portrayed a modernised past. One of the aspects I noted was the approach to the visual representation of the thirties as one that re-created the decade's material artefacts. Clothing, jewellry and even wallpaper were duplicated to provide an authentic visual aesthetic for the re-enacted time period. In the previous section, I briefly touched on the research that went into the design of the re-staged thirties in the Shakespearean period analogues. The methods of theatre and television are, thus, similar in their reproduction of a historical materiality, with research into the "look" of an era providing the raw material on which the designs were based. I want to tease out the connection between these two points – the shift in period drama and the way the past is constructed – as a preliminary to the discussion of the overall changes in the thirties-set scenography during the twenty years the analogue has been performed.

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As Barbara Hodgdon notes, "an archive does not resemble human memory or the unconscious: it takes in heterogeneous stuff, then orders, classifies and catalogues it. So reordered and remade, this stuff remains mute until someone uses it, turns it into narrative – or performance."[15] The "stuff" I want to turn into narrative is the material traces of the *process* of performance, information culled from the production records about how the thirties were visually (re)constructed. The narrative itself concerns the care with which the past is reconstructed materially, the costume and stage properties that are the exterior signs of an historical epoch.

Numerous pieces of pictorial research remain extant in the production archives of the RSC and the NT, showing both variation and a certain amount of stability. Certain pictorial resources recur within the material, such as the Sears and Roebuck catalogue, pointing to some stability in the imagery of the decade being depicted. Also noticeable is the repetition of material pertaining to the two dominant types of imagery mentioned above: fascism and Hollywood/*haute couture*. The resource material for the former is often taken from photographs of the era, as can be detected in the costume files of Edward Hall's *Julius Caesar*. In the records pertaining to Lucius' garb, for example, a photograph captioned "Italy's youth under arms to the British Prime M[inister]" is preserved. It is clear from production evidence that Lucius in the production was portrayed as a young boy, his attire evoking the fascist youth movement, the visual of which clearly stemming from this piece of pictorial research. In Hall's production supernumeraries portrayed "soldiers" and "blackshirts",

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[15] Barbara Hodgdon, "Shopping in the archives: material memories" in *Shakespeare, Memory and Performance*, Peter Holland, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) 137.

also clearly modelled on the research done into the material world by the design team. For "soldiers" a photograph that froze in time a group of Italian fascists "wearing the party uniform at a village fair" documented their existence. With the "blackshirt" uniform another still image depicted an anonymous man seated in a chair wearing the uniform to be copied, with the caption identifying him as a "Nationalsozialist", circa 1937-1938. The onstage depictions of fascism were partially, if not fully, based on the photographic research into the era done by the production team.

Inextricably linked to the popular conception of the thirties, the era's *haute couture* was also present in the pictorial research. Design records contain multiple examples of couturiers' work in photographic form. A 1939 pink silk jersey designed by Alix Grés was one source for Calphurnia's costume in Hall's *Caesar*, providing the model for her dress. Hollywood glamour can be found in the files for Lynne Parker's *Comedy of Errors* as well, showing *haute couture* through the prism of make-believe in the form of a glossy production still of Claudette Colbert's portrayal of Cleopatra in 1934. With this photograph, it is not the depiction of the Egyptian queen that was of interest but the overall Hollywood publicity look, as the director relied heavily on the imitation of the film industry for her concept. There were alternative views of women's fashions within the various costume files, although few by comparison with the depictions of a more stylish aesthetic. Rounding out the fashion iconography were drawings culled from the popular Sears and Roebuck catalogue. These were consulted several wardrobe items including overcoats for Roderigo and Emilia in Sam Mendes' *Othello*, 1931 and 1936 volumes respectively.

Given that one of the benchmarks for television period drama in the seventies and early eighties is the diligent research by which the past was re-created, it is worth noting that the design archives contain anomalies in the dates of the pictorial research material itself. If these pictorial records form a snapshot of the design process, then the dates of the material consulted is an integral part of this information. What highlights the instability of the pictorial research and its resultant thirties visual imagery is that for every photograph of Claudette Colbert in the 1930s, there is a corresponding picture of Marlene Dietrich from a film in 1944 in the records of Parker's *Comedy*. Likewise, while the visual references for costumes for the same production included "30s baggy trousers" for Aegeon and "1930s 2-tone shoes" for Angelo, Luciana's shoes were described as "40s". These examples may simply reflect an anachronistic (or eclectic) approach to period that the production's rehearsal notes draw out, which linguistically meld the thirties and forties in the description of Parker's concept as "Film Noir 1930's Hollywood, with a Casablanca feel." However, there is also evidence to suggest that these temporal anomalies were part of a larger trend in the production of period setting.

In focusing on temporal anomalies such as those present in the design material of Parker's *Comedy*, I want to draw attention to the correlation between individual productions and their place within the thirties setting timeline. As far as evidence allows comparison, there are two main points to be discussed: first, the productions produced at the earlier end of the timeline appear to contain fewer anachronisms within their pictorial research into the decade. Secondly, for the earlier productions, many of these anomalies can be explained in terms of characterisation, as with Eyre's *Richard III* and Nunn's *Merchant*.

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Relatively little overall evidence regarding design remains in the production archive for *Richard III*. One drawing that is preserved is that of a Privy Councillors' uniform circa 1937, found in the designs for the costume of Gloucester's henchman, Ratcliffe. Glimpses of the design process can also be gleaned from an interview with Bob Crowley in an industry publication. In it, the designer described Richard's uniform as having been modelled on a "British army uniform, about 1935". He added, however, that it had been "slightly tinkered with" continuing that, "To all intents and purposes, it is the British Army of the 1930s, but I've just slightly pushed everything a bit because I didn't want it to be a documentary."[16] These statements are, of course, contradictory yet speak to a fundamental fidelity to the look of the thirties inherent in his design.

Anomalies in the period research are to be found in all production records and those pertaining to Eyre's *Richard III* are no exception. Within its costume files for Queen Margaret (Susan Engel), there is a picture of a wedding dress, dated 1910. With the production's thirties setting, this is obviously an item that stemmed from twenty years prior to the era the play's action was meant to occur. Although Susan Engel's costume was not directly copied from the wedding dress, it bore some resemblance to it. Engel's costume was a long, black, relatively shapeless piece that clearly held more of the Edwardian than the neo-Georgian about it. However, as with other stagings which fall earlier in the performance timeline, there are both textual and visual reasons that can be applied to the decision of not adhering to strictly thirties-era clothing for

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16 Adam Pirani, "Royal Design: Crowley, Bechtler, and Kalman create a *Richard III* and *King Lear* for the Road", *Theatre Crafts International, November 1990 (No. 68): 13.

Queen Margaret. John Jowett notes that Margaret's "presence is both ahistorical and ghostly" within the play.[17] As such, her inclusion is a device used as a reminder of continuity from the *Henry VI* trilogy for the audience; it also denotes her separation from the immediate (and disintegrating) social world of the Yorkist dynasty in *Richard III*. By designing a costume that is modelled on the fashions one generation previous to the depicted thirties, Crowley was able to visually signal that Margaret's reality was not that of the onstage world's present-day.

The research temporal anomalies that are present in the files of Trevor Nunn's *The Merchant of Venice* can also be viewed in terms of the conscious decision to create a slight chronological dislocation in its visual language. While the majority of extant pictorial period resources strictly documented the material aspect of the thirties, there are a few items that date from the twenties. For example, a photograph of a woman in evening wear dated 1927 is preserved in the archive. There is also a photocopy of a page that contains examples of six chairs, five of which are dated between 1925-1930 with the remaining one from 1919. One chair, denoted a "Conseil" circa 1929-1930, is singled out as "Portia's chair" in the photocopy. Given that the women in the play reside in Belmont and that the chair is also Portia's, it is likely that Belmont was designed using the material culture of the twenties as a reference point, rather than the thirties which Bechtler took pains to discuss in terms of its authenticity.

Rather than carelessness on the part of the designer in respect to the accurate reproduction of period, evidence suggests that the twenties furniture for Belmont was a conscious design choice. This assumption can be corroborated from information

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[17] William Shakespeare, *Richard III*, ed. by John Jowett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) 45.

about the production gleaned from an interview with Derbhle Crotty. She stated that Portia had a "look" of "someone of playing at the twenties" (rather than the thirties of the Venetian scenes) and, as such, there was "something slightly out of its era about Belmont."[18] Belmont and its inhabitants were therefore meant to have a more old-fashioned (i.e., twenties) look to their designs.

This visual aspect also corresponds to a textual decision that had been made by the company, in which Portia's racist language was played against the text. Instead of cutting the problematic language uttered by her upon Morocco's exit (II.7), it was said by Portia as though she were choking back tears, the lines fraught with pent-up emotion, as she rushed offstage in distress. As Crotty described the rationale, they had made a

> strong decision about how much racism is part of her makeup and the journey we were interested in describing was not someone who strongly held those views or was brought up in a milieu where those views were everyday. She reverts to [the racist language] as a way to mask her true feelings about Morocco.[19]

This decision made a strong contrast between her reaction to Morocco and the Venetian characters' dealings with Shylock, which were coloured with barely disguised loathing and latent physical violence. Both the twenties scenographic motif

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[18] Crotty, in conversation.
[19] Ibid.

and her – albeit non-textual – rejection of racism marked the Portia of Nunn's production out as one who did not belong to the thirties Venetian world and its ethos.

While the anomalies found in the pictorial research for productions earlier in the thirties analogue timeline can be explained in performance terms, later productions do not follow this template. Their research strays further from the thirties in visual terms than their predecessors and without any obvious performative reason applicable. It is worth noting that this break comes after television period drama had begun its shift away from "historical drama" to "costume drama" (to use Lez Cooke's definitions), with an accurate portrayal of the material and social world less important than its visual aesthetic. *The Merchant of Venice* was produced on the cusp of this change in 1999, four years after the BBC's *Pride and Prejudice* had begun the televisual trend toward "costume drama". As the television genre shifted to an aesthetic that was concerned more with representation rather than reconstruction of the era, the level of detail in theatrical historical significations appears to have diminished as well.

One indication of this shift in theatrical representations of the thirties was the stage's apparent growing lack of interest in an "authentic" re-creation of the material past for the stage. This was exemplified by an increase in the number of anomalies found within the pictorial period research despite ostensibly having been set in the thirties. The concept of Sean Holmes' *Measure for Measure* was arguably less period specific than either *Richard III* (Eyre) or *The Merchant of Venice* (Nunn), Holmes having set his production in a nebulous inter-war milieu. However, the pictorial evidence in the archive strays from the thirties *and* twenties to include drawings and photographs that span the periods both before and after the two world wars. For example, two sketches

preserved in this archive pertaining to Elbow's costume portray both a "German officer" and a "Prussian Dragoon Officer". Both of these are dated via an umbrella caption of "Frederick Remington (1861 – 1909)", with neither of these uniforms appearing to depict those of the inter-war years. Likewise, there is a photograph that captures the images of "Prisoners of war in the French sector of Vienna 1945", according to its caption. These examples indicate that the design research was not confined to the period that was to be depicted on the stage, posing questions about the efficacy of the period setting.

Another production from which the pictorial evidence is not confined to the thirties is that of Gregory Doran's *Much Ado About Nothing*. Although the production was ostensibly set in 1936, the pictorial research available in the costume and production archives contains only one photograph that verifiably depicts the thirties. That item is preserved in information related to the Sexton's costume, but pictorial evidence drawn from other decades outnumbers this lone thirties example. The fifties and sixties seem to have been the source date of most photographs in this collection, the emphasis of which was seemingly to provide the production team with references for Sicilian local colour. One of these was a street procession with a caption that read "Piazza Armerina, 1960", another was a picture of pieces of clothing on a chair annotated "Outdoor clothing (up till 1960s)", and the third depicted musicians dated 1953. In the *Much Ado* costume research, the twenties seem to have been favoured with advertisements for corsets from 1925, a Harvey Nichols brassiere from 1923 on display and a photograph of a cleric from 1927 all preserved in the archive. At best, this can be viewed as an eclectic approach to period research that purports to be interested in the material re-construction of the mid-thirties. As we will see in the

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following chapter, Doran's focus was the Sicilian social mores rather than a strict period analogue; the anomalies here reflect both this fact and the twenty-first century's approach in loosely representing period rather than in actively seeking its re-construction.

Although it is arguable that there are always anomalies in the depiction of any period in any format of drama, the information culled from the archive on the process of design is indicative of the larger trends in drama I outlined in the previous chapter. What the files appear to show is the gradual decline in the necessity to recreate the material world of the past with strict historical fidelity. Given the dearth of evidence, however, this can only be viewed as an indication of trends in scenographic design of the period analogue. However, by looking at the way the thirties are materially depicted within the finished products on the stage, a similar tendency can be observed. I want, therefore, to turn to the overall trends in stage design within this collective view of the re-created thirties. As we will see, the correlation between stage and television I have been drawing extends from pictorial research to encompass the finished product itself. The overall trend in research corresponds to a design ethic in the earlier thirties analogue productions which creates a more naturalistic world (a social environment) in its re-construction of the thirties. As we will see, by seeming to eschew "authentic" period research the later productions do not re-create a naturalistic material world and instead use the bare stage of an "authentic" Shakespeare to overlay period signifiers.

III. NATURALISTIC THIRTIES WORLDS AND THE BARE STAGE

It will be useful to think of the scenography of these thirties-set productions in terms of both the differences already discussed between "historical drama" and "costume drama" in television and Michael Kahn's distinctions for the period analogue, as reported by Ralph Berry. For both genres, the distinction lies with a production's creation of a social environment for the characters to inhabit (the embodiment of Rutter's "'whole' world"). In the strand of period drama that Lez Cooke considered "historical", the emphasis for many productions was on the re-creation of social norms of the depicted era. This has its theatrical parallel in Berry's definition of a strand of period analogue as "concept" in which Kahn suggests the style "point[s] to a particular set of national and historical circumstances" through the depiction of an historical era.[20] Berry references the costumes as signifiers by which this is possible, although I would argue for an expansion of this definition to include the entire scenography. Period may be signified largely through the attire of the era reproduced onstage, but the social environment within which the characters operate is also important. The construction of any onstage society contains important information on the place and function of each character within the re-constructed world, of which costume is one of several period signifiers with props and furniture providing other important visual cues. This re-constructed social environment was an important aspect of period drama in the seventies and early eighties and provides a framework for the "concept" strand of Shakespearean period analogue.

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[20] Ralph Berry, *On Directing Shakespeare* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1989) 16.

By contrast "costume drama" is a category of television drama that emphasises the outward trappings of an historical era. This is combined with the modernization of the past, depicting social mores that are more contemporary without an attempt to replicate those of the depicted era. In its emphasis on the superficial re-creation of the past, "costume drama" has its period analogue parallel in Kahn's category of "*décor*". The director defines this as the use of the historical period "chosen for its visual elegance" which is "a purely cosmetic way of dressing up the text."[21] In theatrical terms, this is the absence of a social environment in which to play the action and, instead, is a largely superficial use of period signifiers.

The thirties-set Shakespearean productions that attempt to provide a social framework in their re-constructions of the decade were staged during the early portion of the thirties analogue timeline. This corresponds with the research parallels as noted above, with the productions earlier in the timeline more interested in an accurate reconstruction of the material world of the thirties. The converse is also apparent, with interest in accurately reconstructing a material world diminishing as television period drama modernised the past. Given the close relationship between dramatic formats and theatre's habit of recycling, it is likely that the two trends are interrelated. Precisely how this occurs is open to interpretation but however the two formats influence one another, the Shakespearean version is also subject to trends in theatrical production.

On the surface, all the thirties-set productions adhered to the format that I have identified as subscribing to a type of "authenticity" in Shakespearean staging.

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[21] Berry, *On Directing Shakespeare*, 16.

Although this has taken many visual forms, from a depiction of Sicily to the French Riviera and an English country house, it may be best to think of the basic scenography as a descendant of Poel's bare stage. As Styan notes, Poel's "permanent stage set which revealed the musical structure of the play…in his working towards the original rhythmical continuity of scene upon scene" is the director's major contribution to Shakespearean theatre.[22] This permanent stage set has been a feature of much Shakespearean production since Poel's early twentieth century experiments. Barry Jackson used the method in his modern dress productions of the twenties in the form of a permanent apron stage, using either curtains or stylized flats and a few pieces of additional furniture to mark the different scenographic locations.

The thirties-set productions also have a permanent stage set as an overarching visual component: Bob Crowley designed a literal black box for Richard Eyre's *Richard III*; Anthony Ward's basic set was a Venetian courtyard, with a bank of louvred windows placed against the upstage wall for Mendes' *Othello*; Blaithin Sheeran used an oval platter with multiple entrances and exits on several levels for Parker's *Comedy*; and Gregory Doran's designer, Stephen Brimson Lewis, created a *terra cotta palazzo* for Leonato to inhabit, placed within a Sicilian town square for *Much Ado*. For each of these, the basic set did not change and thus formed an omnipresent backdrop for each scene. As well as providing a consistent visual, these basic sets often supplied the signifiers of location, as with Lewis' Sicily and Ward's Venice. What the basic set itself did not represent, however, was the decade of the thirties.

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[22] J. L. Styan, *The Shakespeare Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977) 48.

In examining the designs of the thirties analogue, what I am interested in is the manner in which these productions denoted the decade. As Carol Rutter notes, "For actors, designers construct a play space that is also a work room, furnishing it with 'stuff' for performance".[23] Along with costumes, the "stuff" – furniture and props – is a key component not just of signifying the thirties, but also as a way of reflecting a recognisable social milieu. The more accoutrements introduced into the scene design, the closer the period analogue gets to being a naturalistic scenic environment, the method used by the early thirties analogue. These are also the productions that were more diligent in their period research into the material world than their later counterparts. Their proximity to the cluster of thirties-set period dramas in the eighties cannot be ruled out as a factor in the manner of their reconstruction of the decade; with more images of the thirties circulating in society, there were greater opportunities for historical recycling of those images. In demonstrating the naturalistic manner of reconstructing the thirties, I will first turn to Richard Eyre's *Richard III*.

As we have seen, Richard Eyre's intention in the use of the thirties as the period setting for *Richard III* had been to provide an "It could have happened here" parable (to use Bob Crowley's phrase). Thus, Eyre's reasons for using the thirties were specific and in order to create the illusion of history, the scenic design mimicked the naturalism of Barry Jackson's early modern dress productions. Richard Eyre described the design process for his *Richard III* as one in which they had "started with an empty

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[23] Carol Chillington Rutter, *Enter the Body: Women and representation on Shakespeare's stage* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001) 107.

model box, and put minimal elements into it".[24] What these "elements" (Rutter's "stuff") constructed were specific locations for each scene within the play. Using this basic black box, Eyre and his designer depicted no fewer than fourteen locales in the twenty-four scenes into which Shakespeare's play had been broken down.

The locations provided by Eyre and Crowley contained the historical associations of both thirties royalty and the decade's prominent politicians, their environs re-created in relative minimalism. Many of the scenes were given names by the cast and crew – now enshrined in the promptbook – and are descriptive of either the main action or the locale. The ceremonial return of the two princes to London took place in "Victoria Station" (III.1), "conjured up" as Ian McKellen puts it, "by a red carpet unrolled across the black floor of the empty stage", the aura completed by smoke rolling in from the wings and supernumeraries in ceremonial uniform lined up beside the carpet.[25] For Clarence's cell in the Tower (I.4; "In the prison"), the stage was bare except for the military-issue camp bed, a table and chairs with an interrogation lamp hovering above. For the family argument (I.3; "Dinner Party"), a long, thin table, set with three candelabra and china place settings was inserted into the bare space. The actors' costumes completed the period stage picture with the women dressed in evening gowns, the men in dinner jackets. The corridors of power were equally sparsely evoked, but with naturalistic detail. The long table of the dinner party was transformed into the Cabinet table for III.2. Its evocation of "Downing Street" signified through the iconic red despatch boxes used as props, which added further texture to the locale.

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[24] Richard Eyre, "Richard and Tyranny: Reflections", in *Richard III*, ed. by Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen (Basingstoke: Macmillan Publishers, 2008) 203.
[25] Ian McKellen, *William Shakespeare's Richard III: A screenplay written by Ian McKellen and Richard Loncraine* (London: Doubleday, 1996) 12.

Produced in the same year as the Eyre *Richard III*, the English Shakespeare Company staged *The Merchant of Venice* seemingly in the same naturalistic vein. Although the records of this production are limited to a promptbook and reviews, it is possible to detect from their combined evidence that at least one scene took place in "Shylock's office". It is clear from the promptbook that Portia's Belmont was created through the placement of several pieces of furniture and smaller props. A desk seems to have been the prominent feature of Shylock's place of work and in Belmont, Portia reclined on a *chaise longue* eating chocolates (from a "heart-shaped box", as Peter Holland noted) in a room that also contained a mirror, rug and record player (playing "blues").[26]

Anthony Ward also created semi-naturalistic environments within the shell of his basic set for *Othello*, a Venetian courtyard. The war room (Senate scene) was filled with three desks accompanied by swivel chairs placed in a triangle around the small playing space, with two placed upstage at either corner and the remaining one downstage centre. These work surfaces were cluttered with lamps, papers, in-trays, maps and telephones. Locations in Cyprus were also signified by a few pieces of furniture, as with Desdemona's boudoir, consisting of a *chaise longue* and a dressing table that held various toiletry items and a jewellry box.

What these early productions were doing was creating environments in which the action could be placed. The key component of this method was to (re)produce for each scene a location that was recognisable to the audience (probably through previous encounters with "the thirties"). Thus, drawing rooms, train stations, war

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[26] *Times Literary Supplement*, 22 February 1991.

rooms, Cabinet office, and other variations on this theme were crucial to the depiction of the various thirties social worlds. Into these physical locations were placed props that provided a further layering of signification, reinforcing that of locale. The jewellry box, gramophone, in-trays, telephones, and *chaise longue* provided the signification of activities relevant to the locales, consistent with naturalistic theatrical techniques. It was this method that dominated the thirties period analogue at the beginning of its popularity. It was near the mid-point of the production timeline that a shift away from this approach can be detected.

Trevor Nunn's *The Merchant of Venice* was produced in 1999 and in many ways it conformed to the naturalistic reconstruction of the thirties of the analogue productions that had preceded it. Hildegard Bechtler described her approach to the design of *The Merchant of Venice* as one in which she "suggested spaces", from the café to Belmont to the courtroom.[27] (Her language is not dissimilar to Eyre's use of "elements" placed into the black box set to create the thirties environment.) This was the designer's description of her methods, filling the permanent set of her traverse stage floor, in which she placed items of furniture to signify the scene's locale: roll-up shutters at one end of the traverse for Shylock's home, with a lamp copied from a photograph of a similar one hanging in a synagogue; a glass wall at the other end which provided the backdrop for both the Venetian cafés and clubs as well as Portia's Belmont; café chairs and tables dotted around the traverse to signify the café. As with Eyre's and Luscombe's naturalistic environments, each scene location was created as a specific site into which props and furniture were added to aid in the visual recreation of the onstage thirties locations.

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[27] Bechtler, in conversation.

Mixed with this naturalistic approach, however, were powerful images culled from specific film references, a theatrical shift in style reminiscent of television period drama's move toward entertainment and modernisation, which was already in progress. As mentioned above Trevor Nunn had eschewed outward signs of Nazism and there were no banners, armbands or blackshirted characters as part of the scenic design. Given that Nunn had chosen to set his production in a European thirties in order to provoke memories of the Holocaust, the undercurrent of fascism had to be staged by some method. What the director chose to do instead was to highlight that aspect of German culture by foregrounding it through direct visual references to Weimar cabaret, or more specifically to (the ghosting of) Kander and Ebb's *Cabaret*. Instead of naturalistic signifiers depicting this (armbands, *et cetera*), the visual representation of fascist Europe was therefore oblique, not overt; Nunn's production was moving toward a more symbolic representation of the past, a trend that would increase in the twenty-first century.

In interview, Hildegard Bechtler informed me that she and Nunn had been "interested in the volatility of that period, and the artistic excitement" of the era. In part, this had been because "politically you could easily show the decadence and unrest" of the period through references to Weimar cabaret culture. In designing the "club" scenes, as the promptbook denotes them, Bechtler based the "cabaret" references on photography that documented the era, in particular she mentioned August Sander's work.[28] While the scene design itself was rooted in the desire to depict the historical period accurately in visual terms, Nunn's staging was used the visual shorthand of

[28] Bechtler, in conversation.

popular entertainment to symbolise characteristics of the thirties rather than the direct material associated with fascism.

Nunn's production began in the "Club" after closing time, a space the promptbook alternately refers to as the "Café" or the "Club".[29] Antonio played a mournful tune on a baby grand piano as Salerio leaned over it. The latter's companion, Solanio, was slumped over the downstage left café table in a drunken stupor. A spotlight shone on an abandoned microphone upstage centre, the only remnant of the night's activities as even the staff had largely abandoned the three men. The café-club location recurred throughout the first half of the play and the tables and chairs were a constant presence, having been pushed to either side of the traverse stage when not in use.

The cabaret (or *Cabaret*) culture was evoked fully in II.6, with two scantily dressed "Club Girls" (as the promptbook denotes them) singing a 1933 song, *Everything I Have is Yours* (the period research clearly extending into the production's aural sphere). The last stanza ended as the "Girls" grabbed the money Salerio had offered them, returned to the upstage centre platform and lifted their skirts to reveal their knickers to the assembled company at the final musical flourish.[30] The song was ironic commentary on the relationship between Bassanio and his benefactor who had entered whilst their performance was in progress, but the extra-textual action added another dimension. The chorus girls' vulgar ending to their entertainment, as well as the dim lighting, emphasised the seediness of the club and the decadence of its patrons.

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[29] My reading of this nomenclature differential is that it was the same location, but with different uses: daytime, a café; after café closing hours, it turns into a nightclub.
[30] Video recording, Royal National Theatre archive, London.

Nunn also used the cabaret forum to emphasise the depicted society's anti-semitism through textual changes to the "Club" scenes, again showing its *Cabaret* influences. Nunn shifted Launcelot Gobbo's dialogue with his father from II.2 to this point in the action, II.6. This enabled Nunn to place Gobbo in the nightclub and make his duologue a solo stand-up comedy routine. In top hat and tails (a ghosting of the emcee from *Cabaret*) Gobbo took his place in the spotlight, with the microphone in front of him. He began with "My master's a very Jew" (II.2.99). His comedic turn was cobbled together from several of his lines, but Nunn's editing allowed fluidity and the onstage audience found its anti-semitic humour highly entertaining, cheering and clapping Gobbo on. Toward the end of his speech he reiterated, "The Jew my master" (II.2.1) as Shylock entered the club, straying into Gobbo's spotlight. Momentarily taken aback, Gobbo stood motionless for a beat, recovered and then continued his barely-begun imitation of his former master to the great delight of the assembled Venetians.

Nunn's production can be viewed as inhabiting both the semi-naturalistic depictions of society through its combination of naturalism with more symbolic representations of the decade. Later productions were to rely more often on costume and film references to provide the audience with signification of the thirties. One such example was Edward Hall who used blackshirt uniforms underneath Roman togas to signify the decade and imitated a Nazi rally in an extra-textual beginning to *Julius Caesar*; blackshirts and togas combining the visual expectations of both the "thirties" and "Rome". Hall's opening tableau, christened in the promptbook the *Anthem of the Republic*, drew on the full visual imagery of the fascist predilection for sterile military pageantry.

The *Anthem* began with a solo by Lucius, standing upstage behind the scrim, on which was emblazoned "Peace Freedom Liberty". Lucius was joined by a female figure named in the promptbook as "E19", the pair holding hands as they stood side by side. A line of drummers was added to the stage picture, standing directly behind Lucius when first revealed. As the music's volume increased, the percussionists split to flank either side of the stage as more actors came into view through the upstage fog. The intensity of the lighting plot also increased as Lucius and his companion exited through opposite wings. The line of the set became visible at this point, and the cold, white light shone on the cold, white marble stage surface. The angles of this stage picture were harsh, with the proscenium arch magnified by the lines of a straight rectangle. The angles enhanced the cinematic effect, as did the stage smoke and lighting. The stage had filled slowly and as the rally climaxed it became populated with actors singing the *Anthem of the Republic*. To the scenic design banners and large photographs of Caesar held aloft by these supernumeraries were added. The silhouette of the men's togas gradually gave way to the realisation that underneath the classical line of the outer costumes was full blackshirt uniform. As the *Anthem* crescendoed, photographs of Caesar were held high and as confetti rained down from the flies, Caesar himself appeared. He held his hands aloft, standing in the centre of the apron and revelling in the martial power of the ceremony.

The reliance on filmic imagery to carry the thirties signifiers, rather than signification being achieved through a detailed recreation of the material world in semi-naturalistic fashion, became the dominant trend for productions after Nunn's *Merchant of Venice*. With no thirties material infrastructure present due to the ascendancy of the bare

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stage, props and furniture became less important to the scenography as bare stages became *de rigueur*. Exterior scenes had of course frequently been played on a bare stage, as with both IV.1 and IV.4 in Eyre's *Richard III*. Both of those scenes took place outside the Tower walls, which for the actors facing toward the house was where the audience was located. They gazed out front and the collective imagination of those present on the stage and in the audience conjured up the image of the Tower out of a bare stage. As we have seen, however, Eyre's production also created specific naturalistic environments that provided the context for his thirties recreation; later productions in the timeline, such as Hall's *Caesar*, had moved away from the naturalistic period analogue staging style.

Edward Hall's *Julius Caesar* had, like Eyre's *Richard III*, also made extensive use of the bare stage to signify exteriors. The early discussion between Brutus, Cassius, and Casca in I.2 took place outside the venue of the Lupercalia. In Hall's production the three actors, wearing togas over their blackshirt costumes, played the scene on the bare white box stage with a projection upstage that read

PEACE

FREEDOM

LIBERTY

and an open trap door downstage right as the stage's only decorative aspect.

Although the bare stage is a device to signify outdoor venues, what distinguishes these later productions from their earlier counterparts is the overall lack of furniture

and props. It was the empty stage that dominated, rather than a series of semi-naturalistic locales supporting an onstage social environment. Hall's *Caesar* was one in which nearly every scene was played on a stage that was either bare or included only one or two large symbolic elements. The scene location breakdown in the production archive indicates that the decision had been made to place the majority of scenes in public locations: the public square recurs for five of the production's twelve scenes. The other exterior scenes also included a narrow street, Brutus' orchard and the battlefield. Few scenic elements were included in the stage picture for these scenes, although the same large rectangular pool was present in both Brutus' orchard and Caesar's bathroom. The bathroom, with its marble statue upstage, was most likely modelled on Roman baths and was also probably meant to signify an open air space rather than an interior location. The only scene denoted in Hall's *Caesar* promptbook as an interior was that which had been situated in Brutus' tent. It was also the sole locale that approached the semi-naturalistic stage designs of earlier thirties-set productions, with its props and furniture including a table, chairs, a camp bed, bottle and wine glasses used by Brutus and Cassius.

Personal props used in Hall's production were primarily those mentioned in the text: letters, daggers, book of names for execution, Caesar's will. A small number of miscellaneous props were also used, including wardrobe items for Caesar so that he could dress onstage after his bath, as well as torches, spears, and swords. Significantly, the scene in which the greatest number of props was present was the one which took place in Brutus' tent. Props that could be deployed in a naturalistic fashion were included, such as pipe lighter, washbowl and jug, guitar, candle, towel, maps and the aforementioned wine and glasses. These props were barely used and,

unlike in *Richard III* and *Othello*, did not become an integral part of the production's storytelling. Additionally none of these objects were used to signify a specific time period and, thus, the thirties were evoked via its décor of filmic imagery and the blackshirt uniforms. Without any direct reference to the placement of the production as the thirties, the use of blackshirt uniform and thirties costume was possibly meant as a simple evocation of totalitarianism, rather than a depiction of the thirties as a cohesive social world.

The set for Lynne Parker's *Comedy of Errors* also placed no "elements" (in Richard Eyre's phraseology) into the basic set to form a naturalistic thirties setting. Throughout the production, no furniture or other decorative elements were present. The extra elements that were added to the basic scene design were in the form of personal props carried by the actors. The script required many of these props although several other items had been added extra-textually, usually with the intention of heightening the play's inherent comedy with the actor's physicality. Dromio of Syracuse, for example, carried on a picnic hamper for II.2 which contained what the props list describes as "a picnic lunch": chicken leg, full beer bottle, glass tumblers, either an apple or another piece of fruit, French bread, and a salt cellar wrapped in a tablecloth. While they provided the accoutrements for a picnic and the Syracusians were indulging in naturalistic activity, the props were isolated as comic devices and also did not contribute to the production's storytelling.

Ian Brown's production of *Twelfth Night*, performed five years after *Comedy* at the West Yorkshire Playhouse, also provides evidence of a shift in scenographic approach for the thirties period analogue. Earlier small scale productions, like the ESC's

Merchant mentioned above, had tended to re-create eras in the same manner as those with larger budgets at the RSC and the NT. They used a pared-down naturalistic framework in which varied locations (environments) were created with props and furniture where the action was played, seeming to ghost thirties society as portrayed on television. Brown's production, however, conformed to the shift from naturalism to the bare stage in period analogue.

The set design for Brown's *Twelfth Night* was a dilapidated beach pavilion, gray in colour. It consisted of a circular playing space elevated above the sand that covered the rest of the Playhouse's stage space. Three small steps led up to the acting circle, with their attached handrail weather-beaten and mostly rotted away with only a few of its spikes remaining. This was mostly a symbolic space, although Brown had stated the setting was the French Riviera of the thirties; the set representative of the decadent lifestyle of the English expatriates in its outward rottenness. The thirties were signified almost exclusively through the costumes the characters wore, with Malvolio in a dark morning suit sporting a monocle and Olivia attired in a white blouse and checked trousers with a high waist. The action took place primarily on the circular beach pavilion; no furniture was used to signify different locations as had been standard practice in the naturalistic thirties analogues. Props were also largely missing, a fact that was astutely commented on by the reviewer for the *Leeds Guide* who noted that "Props are sparse, which in one sense prevents the setting from fully shining through".[31] Without props, Brown's production did not convincingly evoke Riviera society for some audience members and it is the absence of "stuff" and its

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[31] *Leeds Guide*, 5-20 October 2005.

effect on actors' performances that I will explore in more depth in my penultimate chapter.

In this chapter, I have established that the overall trend in design of the thirties analogue is one that shifts away from the naturalistic depiction of the decade. First, the reproduction of the material culture in an historically accurate manner seems to have become less important in the re-creation of the decade onstage. As this occurred, naturalistic depictions of a social environment also gradually become less crucial for the analogue. Without the naturalistic template, scenic design of the thirties became more reliant on film imagery to create the overall signification of the period. The trend was exacerbated by the general trend in Shakespearean production that privileges the bare stage model as practiced at the Globe Theatre and, imitating it, on the Courtyard Theatre stage at the Royal Shakespeare Company. As we will see in the next chapter, this gradual evolution in stage design was to have implications for the actor's contribution to the performance text.

CHAPTER SIX
PERFORMING THE ANALOGUE

I. PERFORMING THE ANALOGUE

In *The Shakespeare Trade*, Barbara Hodgdon outlines the complexity embedded in the reception of the (inter-)cultural signs presented by Robert Lepage's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. She suggests, in part, that the largely negative critical reception was the result of Lepage's inclusion of cultural symbols that were detached from the cultures the production both purported to represent and that in which it was performed. Hodgdon's work on Lepage's *Dream* illustrates the potential impact of introducing unfamiliar cultural signs, unintentionally rendering the meaning unreadable to at least a portion of its audience. This has implications for the period analogue as signification of any time period is predicated on familiar images, as we saw in the previous chapter; the reuse of certain items as props or costume was expected in the signification of fascism, for example. The familiarity of blackshirts, armbands and banners fed the audience's expectation, their presence onstage reinforcing the same thirties "look" that had been encountered previously. In the performance of the Shakespearean analogue, these expectations fall into two broad categories: those placed on what the re-created period looks like and those attached to the Shakespearean text itself and how characters and plays are expected to be presented. Before looking at the performance texts as a whole, it is worth briefly considering how expectations about the thirties were factored into the performance of the period analogue in order to gauge their importance within this context. In particular, I want to highlight vocal and historical characteristics with which the thirties are associated.

There is a particular clipped accent associated with the thirties, with rounded vowels and crisp consonants its primary features. This stems from myriad images of the decade, ranging from grainy recordings of Noel Coward as well as multiple films of the era. Its aural quality is inextricably linked to notions of class, the sounds defining the upper strata of social (im)mobility. That the associations of time (thirties) and class remain embedded in the accent's aural quality can be seen in its continued reuse in multiple dramatic forms. This accent has been imitated in numerous television series re-creating the era and revivals of plays of the inter-war years. The early nineties ITV version of *Jeeves and Wooster* is replete with Wodehousian caricature, which is inseparable from this accent. This aural denoting of class also featured in a 2010 revival of Terence Rattigan's *After the Dance*, with the actors adopting it as part of their characterisations. Given its prevalence in other forms of dramatic representation of the thirties, it has been utilised infrequently as a thirties signifier in the Shakespearean period analogue. The two exceptions are worth discussing: Richard Eyre's *Richard III* and Jonathan Miller's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Ian McKellen adopted the clipped officer-class vowels associated with the period for his role as Richard III. Not content with simply adopting the accent, there were also points when McKellen flexed the verse in ways that mimicked the era's speech idiom. For example, in Richard's soliloquy after the successful wooing of Lady Anne, he informed the audience "I'll have her, but I will not keep her long./What, I that killed her husband and his father" (I.2.215-216). The archive video shows McKellen continuing with the first word of the next line after "keep her long", changing both its ending and its meaning. The line became "I'll have her but I will not keep her long,

what?", with the actor swallowing the last word. Imitating the speech patterns of the upper classes in the inter-war years, the phrase became a rhetorical question, barked in the stereotypical upper-class idiom. Despite this rather high-profile use of the thirties-associated accent, the rest of the cast used the then-Shakespearean theatrical standard, received pronunciation.

The only other documented use of the upper-class "toff" accent in a thirties-set production was Jonathan Miller's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. This version presented the Athenians as "sexually and emotionally repressed country-house dwellers", as the production's Lysander, Angus Wright, described the quartet.[1] Although no video recording exists of the production, printed evidence shows that the cast utilised accent to underline character class. Reviewers, apparently struck by the unusual appearance of the sounds in Shakespearean theatre, warmed to this theme (as they phonetically transcribed the aural quality of Miller's production). For example, Robert Butler remarked that the Athenians "bear the lovers' 'crawse'. Their sickness is 'cetching'" and Hermia asks Lysander "to lie further 'awff'".[2] Juxtaposed with the lovers (as well as Oberon and Titania, who were also aristocrats), Puck was played as an impish butler by Jason Watkins in a cockney accent. In both *Richard III* and *Dream*, the characters' social standing was key to both their place in the setting's hierarchy. That these were the only two productions in the thirties-setting timeline to make use of the aural signification of class indicates that, on the whole, using this upper-class accent was not essential to the audience's recognition of the reproduced time period, at least in its Shakespearean format.

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[1] Angus Wright, private correspondence, April 2008.
[2] *Independent on Sunday*, 15 December 1996.

In Peter Holland's definition of the period analogue he states that "recent history" is used to "explicate" the text.[3] Unpicking how much the history of an era used in the *process* of constructing the analogue is difficult. As we have seen, the material worlds have been reproduced with varying degrees of authenticity. Shakespeare's plays are (obviously) not works from the thirties that have been revived and, therefore, not historical documents dating from that era. Thus, the period analogue does not reproduce history in the same manner as historical drama is able to, as did *Edward and Mrs Simpson* for example.

As we have seen, research into the material elements of the decade was an important aspect in the creation of the onstage visual environment. However, for the practitioners I interviewed historical research was generally felt to be less important in the playing of the Shakespearean text. The actors I spoke with about their productions had differing levels of engagement with the reconstructed period as a method for mediating Shakespeare's text in performance. For some actors, such as Angus Wright, the limited rehearsal period meant that the cast "didn't spend time on research."[4] For differing reasons than Wright Derhble Crotty also spent little time researching the socio-political history of the thirties, as she had already "read a lot about the era" prior to her being cast as Portia in Trevor Nunn's *Merchant*. Having become "fascinated" with the era, Crotty was able to tap into her previously acquired knowledge of the decade for her understanding of the milieu.[5] Playing Emilia in Sam Mendes' *Othello*, Maureen Beattie stated that she had done "a little research" into the history of the

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[3] Peter Holland, *English Shakespeares: Shakespeare on the English Stage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) 95.
[4] Wright, personal correspondence.
[5] Derhble Crotty, in conversation, August 2007.

thirties. However, she also felt that "the decision [to set the play in that era] had been made for very good reasons" and research was not necessary. This was largely because the actor's job was "to tell the story [through] the characters in the play."[6]

Beattie's remarks are important to understanding one perspective on the process of appearing in a period analogue and helps to illustrate one important theme which ran through my conversations with practitioners. Instead of emphasising research into the inter-war years, some actors indicated that the setting was often a secondary consideration to the text itself. As Claire Price informed me, she feels that a period setting "doesn't really affect the playing of the play. You tend to play what's given to you on the page. All Marlowe and Shakespeare ask is that you stand there and say it."[7] Paul Jesson, who played Toby Belch in two productions of *Twelfth Night*, proffered a similar observation. For Jesson's two period settings – one eclectic encompassing the early twentieth century, the other Elizabethan – he felt "didn't really alter the way the relationships are negotiated in the play."[8] This was a sentiment that was repeated in several conversations: that the performance was of the *play* itself and the setting was secondary. The characters and their interpersonal relationships were the paramount concern of the actors, not the historical implications attached to the analogue.

Another topic that recurred in multiple interviews with performers about the production setting was how physical movement can be shaped by the period costumes worn. In speaking about his various Shakespearean roles, Paul Jesson explained that

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[6] Maureen Beattie, in conversation, January 2008.
[7] Claire Price, in conversation, November 2006.
[8] Paul Jesson, in conversation, October 2007.

To play [Shakespeare] in Elizabethan costume is very difficult because you have to hold yourself and move in a completely different way [than in more contemporary clothing]. You have to walk differently. You can't turn your head, you have to turn your whole body.

Jesson reiterated that although his physical movement had to some extent been dictated by the costuming, in "how you play the moments" the setting itself (and the costume style) had had little effect in the crafting of his *performance*, even though his attire had affected his movement.[9]

Maureen Beattie also found that costume had influenced her onstage movement, although for her the result seemed more complicated than Jesson's experience. Beattie's costume had been designed to enhance an impression of Emilia as an obedient wife: a dowdy floral print dress, worn under an apron for many of the domestic Cypriot scenes (this was juxtaposed with Desdemona's costume plot, which contained silk evening gowns, silk blouses and smart trousers). Beattie's character's place in that society was enhanced by the costume, the movement of the actor possibly dictated by the social structure within the production as well as what she was wearing. She observed that, for her, the "way you hold yourself, the way you cross your legs at the ankle, the way you sit with your back straight, the way you keep your eyes down when you're not wanted" had been largely in response to Emilia's attire.[10] In many ways, the clothing had dictated Beattie's movement in the same way that

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[9] Jesson, in conversation.
[10] Beattie, in conversation.

Jesson had found that he had had to "walk differently" in facsimile Elizabethan clothing. Perhaps due to the class implications inherent in her dress, however, Beattie's movement also conformed to the *expectation* of how a thirties housewife would move.

These contradictory experiences of actors in relation to both their engagement with history and the influence of period costume in their performances highlights the individual ways a practitioner responds to the analogue. This poses questions about how historical information is used in the crafting of a period analogue, given that there is clearly no single template from which to work. In attempting to unpick the analogue's performance text, I want to take my cue from Maureen Beattie's and Paul Jesson's experiences with costume and movement. In particular, I want to explore how an actor's relationship with her/his onstage environment (the design) can affect both performance and reception.

In the previous chapter, I discussed the broad sweep of design through the distinctions between Lez Cooke's "historical" and "costume" drama categories as a way of explaining the Kahn/Berry distinctions in period analogue, "concept" and "*décor*". In an attempt to further expand on these definitions, I want to linguistically combine them and refer to the variants as "concept/historical" and "*décor*/costume" in the pages that follow. In this chapter, I want to broaden the Kahn/Berry description of these styles and look at them in the context of naturalism and its absence. Within this framework, the more naturalistic representations of the thirties fall under the "concept/historical" definition, while scenographical images of the thirties that privilege the bare stage are akin to "*décor*/costume". What I will explore in the

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following pages are the distinctions inherent in the two styles, which in physical acting terms can be vast.

II. NATURALISTIC SCENOGRAPHY AND PERFORMANCE

The modern dress productions of the twenties and thirties had adapted Shakespeare's text into the visual idiom of their contemporary world. The perception was that Shakespeare's characters had become, in the words of Barry Jackson, "flesh and blood to-day."[11] The strategy that was deployed in achieving this was to meld the Shakespearean text with naturalistic theatrical techniques. To that end, social environments were created largely through representation of specific locations with furniture and props. This allowed Shakespeare's early modern characters to inhabit locales as they engaged in activities that were familiar to the audience. These naturalistic-based strategies were to recur in Shakespearean period analogues, providing the characters with the social environment of an historical era. It is with this set of period analogues I would like to begin, as they fall at the early stages in the development of the thirties period analogue. In scenic terms these were crafted with permanent stage sets into which furniture and props were placed to signify specific locations, such as the dining room in Eyre's *Richard III*. In the previous chapter, I mapped out examples of this scenic process and I now want to add into the design a crucial element of the performance text: the actor.

In order to consider the actor's contribution to the analogue performance texts, I want to frame the discussion through the acting techniques involved. Particularly for the

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[11] *Daily Express*, 10 April 1923.

naturalistic productions with which I will begin it will be helpful to reiterate John Barton's precepts on technique. In both the television and monograph versions of *Playing Shakespeare*, the director discusses Shakespearean acting as a marrying of "two traditions": early modern theatre (text) and naturalism (contemporary acting style). Of the latter Barton states, "Our tradition is based more than we are usually conscious of on various modern influences like Freud and television and the cinema and, above all, the teachings of the director and actor, Stanislavski."[12] Barton also reiterated this view in his pertinent definition of "naturalistic". The director defines the concept as "the acting style and the kind of text which is the norm in the theatre and film and television today. The deliberate attempt to make everything as natural and lifelike as possible."[13] This point about television and cinema influencing contemporary theatrical practice is one that has recurred throughout this thesis. In his statements Barton points to the symbiosis between theatre and television acting, which is crucial to an understanding of how the early thirties period analogues were acted.

Three further points – disparate, yet intersecting – culled from the remarks made by television and stage practitioners and academics provide further framework for the performance analysis in the pages that follow. First, in her monograph *Shakespearean Verse Speaking* Abigail Rokison identifies two key factors in the evolution of Shakespearean acting. Both the demise of the repertory theatre system and the fact that "today young actors are more likely to have served an apprenticeship in television

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[12] John Barton, *Playing Shakespeare* (London: Methuen, 1984) 8.
[13] Barton, 11.

drama before tackling Shakespearean texts."[14] This fact has reduced the contact actors have with Shakespeare in a professional capacity. Second are television director Simon Langton's observations regarding contemporary period drama on television. In describing the benefits of location shooting he remarked,

> I think actors, personally, perform better in the real place and they feel better and you actually can do a shot and you look through the window and you see the gardens outside and you can get character and depth into whatever you're doing…"[15]

An actor's perspective on performing the Shakespearean text provides the third point. Citing the influence of television as a factor, Oliver Ford Davies states that acting in that medium

> …has got actors into bad habits, because the static camera doesn't like too much movement and gesture, and close-ups can so easily disguise any bodily awkwardness. One of the most difficult things for television-bred actors, their hands used to pockets and props, is to stand still on stage [when performing Shakespeare], relaxed, with the arms by the side.[16]

Where these three comments converge is in the space filled by the actor's physicality.

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[14] Abigail Rokison, *Shakespearean Verse Speaking: Text and Theatre Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009) 9-10.
[15] Robert Giddings and Keith Selby, *The Classic Serial on Television and Radio* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001) 106.
[16] Oliver Ford Davies, *Performing Shakespeare* (London: Nick Hern Books, 2007) 97.

Although a film set is distinctly unreal – whether filmed on location or not – what is key is Langton's emphasis on how actors "perform better" in "a real place". The implication is that when actors are engaged with their environment they are physically more comfortable. This translates into more confidence in what they are doing with character, eliminating the "bodily awkwardness" that Davies mentions. That Davies (the actor) continues to discuss this in terms of "television-bred actors" highlights Rokison's observation that the on-the-job learning of the craft by practitioners is mediated through television first, with the Shakespearean stage (or any stage experience) being secondary to the process. This connection between television and Shakespearean acting techniques is most evident when the "two traditions" are united through the naturalistic scenic design. Although an examination of isolated moments in production cannot do justice to the accumulation of impressions through which the onstage world is absorbed both by actor and audience, they can provide a useful illustration of technique if not of the complete effect. Two scenes in Richard Eyre's *Richard III*, with its combination of actor's body with scenography in the delivery of text, will help to illustrate these points about naturalistic technique in period analogue.

The scenography for the (rather ironically named) "Dinner Party" was simple, comprising only a long dining room table and matching chairs placed into Bob Crowley's permanent black box set. As McKellen's Richard marched off stage in military fashion upon the conclusion of his soliloquy at the end of I.2, from upstage the glow of several candelabra became visible as the dining table glided downstage to its place near the front of the apron. The signification of a formal dinner was completed through props as, along with the candelabra, flowers (an arrangement of Yorkist white roses) were placed at the centre of the table; each place had been laid

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for the first course. Soup bowls, cutlery, and crystal glasses for both wine and water were present at each seat, as well as salt and pepper cellars. The time of day was signalled by the characters' attire, with the men in long coats and tails and Queen Elizabeth wearing an evening gown. The characters' class was demonstrated both by their formal attire and the scene's supernumeraries, playing the parts of servants. Location, time of day and class signification was accomplished as the Queen entered the dining room at the beginning of I.3, followed by her brother and sons. The initial blocking placed these four actors downstage of the table while simultaneously a butler checked the seating placements upstage as a maid waited silently for instructions.

This detailed stage picture provided the information the audience needed to decode the (as Kennedy phrases it) "where and when, class and circumstance" of the setting.[17] Historical recycling from other media undoubtedly played its part as well, as the familiarity of the onstage occasion was imitative of numerous televisual images of the decade. Thus, without any word being spoken, it was possible to deduce it was a formal dinner in a wealthy household in the thirties. The setting provided the context in which the actors could make clear to the audience their interpersonal relationships, as the "Dinner Party" deteriorated into a tense family gathering. As Roberta Barker observes, "In Stanislavski's 'System', choices about subtext are inseparable from decisions about the 'given circumstances'" (setting) which in turn guide "spectators' potential understandings" of characters' interior monologues.[18] For the naturalistic period analogue, the circumstance in which the Yorkists were placed (dinner party) guided the manner in which the scene was played (tense family gathering). The

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[17] Dennis Kennedy, *Looking at Shakespeare: A Visual History of Twentieth-Century Performance*, second edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) 13.
[18] Roberta Barker, "Inner Monologues: Realist Acting and/as Shakespearian Performance Text", in *Shakespeare Survey 62* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009) 258.

rancour within the York household was enacted in ways that merged text, environment and subtext into the naturalistic performance of Shakespeare's scene.

At the "Dinner Party", the other participants in the scene were taking their places at the table as Richard arrived, bursting in on "They do me wrong and I will not endure it" (I.3.42). Gloucester moved to the only empty place, usurping the spot meant for Hastings; he had clearly not been expected for dinner. Elizabeth's motion for the assembled personages to sit occurred as Richard uttered "That wrens make prey where eagles dare not perch" (71); the timing of her (non-verbal) order and his line provided a visual rebuke to Elizabeth Woodville and her family about their usurpation of royal privilege. Richard had usurped Hastings' place at the table and upon realising this he shifted his seating arrangement. In what was a physical act of rebellion directed at Elizabeth, Richard's solution was to motion Hastings back to his rightful spot as he vacated it, moving to the empty head of the table. Richard, the uninvited guest (or pesky, omnipresent relative), whipped off the protective red brocade that was covering the empty king's chair and seated himself on the opposite end of the long table from the Queen. The servants bustled quickly around laying the extra place Richard had just commandeered, as Queen Elizabeth fidgeted in her chair at the other end of the table, saying tetchily in response, "Come, come, we know your meaning brother Gloucester" (74).

The row escalated between Elizabeth and Richard, with the latter finally pushing too hard on "what, marry may she? Why Marry with a King". The Woodville family rose from their chairs in a collective physical embodiment of displeasure with Richard. The rest of the party (the Queen's subjects) followed out of etiquette and stood as

Elizabeth, in fury, chastised Richard, "My lord of Gloucester…". During their heated exchange, servants entered bearing white wine and a soup tureen to begin the dinner service that, out of decorum, forced the family to be seated once again (in a "not in front of the servants" moment). The layering of the physical actions simultaneously with text, with both read through the scenography, had created an emotional complexity that provided several levels of meaning for the audience.

The "early morning Downing Street" (III.2) scene was similarly multi-faceted, with set design complementing – and probably influencing – actors' physical movement within the scene. The long dining table was reused, this time not obscured by a white linen tablecloth but instead with its polished veneer visible. This piece of furniture and its chairs were the only large material manifestations of Downing Street. The table was set this time with official papers at each empty place, the signification of governmental business attained by the simple action of Hastings entering carrying an iconic red despatch box. The characters' morning suits supplied the visual clue denoting the time of day. As with the "Dinner Party" the physical location provided the context for the action of the text.

With Whitehall's corridors of power clearly evoked in scenographic terms, non-verbal gestures provided the audience with the scene's emotional temperature. Hastings (the Prime Minister) was in jovial mood at the moment Stanley entered, seating himself next to the Prime Minister near the centre of the table. As Stanley positioned his body in the chair, he pulled out a pen from his inside jacket pocket. Hastings leaned over to tell him conspiratorially, "Today the lords you talked of are beheaded" (87). Stanley had by this time unscrewed the pen's cap and placed it together with its base, readying

it for use on the papers in front of him. Through the use of the prop, Stanley signalled

his shock by the simple action of arresting his movement and sitting with his hands –

and the pen – motionless for a few beats. The gesture is subtle, but it is important

because it was one that was, in director Annabel Arden's terms, "integrated with the

text and shared with the audience".[19] Stanley's movement was both in response to

Hastings' line and a physical foreshadowing of his response, which verbally told of

his disagreement with the execution of Rivers, Vaughan and Grey. I would, however,

take Arden's statement further and suggest that the gesture was also integrated with

the *environment* in which the director, designer and actors were playing the text. By

setting the scene in the Cabinet Room in Downing Street, not only was the political

situation within the play was visualised, but the individual reaction of Hastings to it

was enabled through a stage property. In this context, the movement was also

associated with actions the audience would expect to see within the scene locale.

Stanley's physical reaction to the events around him later in III.4 also provides further

evidence of the various levels on which the naturalistic period analogue can work.

When Richard arrived in Downing Street an entourage of two army squaddies

accompanied him. These soldiers placed themselves upstage of the Cabinet table,

flanking Hastings and Stanley. As Richard exited past them to consult with

Buckingham about Hastings' adamant stance on the succession, the squaddies

stamped on the ground and then fell "at ease" as Richard exited upstage. The initial

stamp on the ground made Stanley jump in his seat, startled, the sound forcing him to

look behind. Stanley made a lengthy appraisal of the squaddie furthest from him, after

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[19] Annabel Arden, Margo Hendricks, and Lynette Hunter, "Gesture, Language and the Body" in *Shakespeare, Language and the Stage: the Fifth Wall: approaches to Shakespeare from criticism, performance and theatre studies*, ed. by Peter Lichtenfels and Lynette Hunter (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2005) 67.

which he then twisted his body round so he could observe the other one who standing directly behind. Stanley then turned uncomfortably to face forward again, adjusting his starched collar. His physical action signalling his discomfort and anxiety that his own neck was imperiled. Although the movements were extra-textual they provided the atmosphere in which the scene was played, the scene location driving the actions leading up to Richard's *coup d'état*.

As well as layers of complexity that signalled characters' emotional states and relationships to each other, their portrayals influenced by the naturalistic settings, another important aspect of naturalistic scenography should be noted. In this naturalistic style of acting, props are often used in conjunction with the actor's physicality and help to illuminate passages of text and communicate them to the audience both verbally and physically. I want to provide an example of this method from Sam Mendes' *Othello*, using Desdemona's arrival on Cyprus (II.1) to illustrate the point. The scene was decorated with soldiers in khaki uniform, numerous pieces of luggage and a Desdemona wearing trousers. Perhaps in relief at being safely on land again, Desdemona embraced Cassio on her arrival, the physicality foreshadowing the later accusations Iago plants against them. Iago had entered a beat after Desdemona, carrying his leather suitcase and, walking downstage right, placed it beside the camp chair set there, over which he also draped his overcoat. The stage picture provided once again time, place and circumstance for the audience.

Within the scene, an exchange takes place between Desdemona and Iago which is part of a duologue that M. R. Ridley described as "one of the most unsatisfactory passages

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in Shakespeare."[20] Honigman defends the playwright in his own edition, stating that their conversation shows "how Iago wins an ascendency over others" through his verbal play and "that Desdemona understands sexual innuendo."[21] The editorial squabbling highlights the problems within this passage, as it does not drive the action in part because it pauses the plot in favour of wordplay. In the context of Mendes' scene, the performance text treated it as brittle wit in a pseudo-screwball comedy vein. The combination of props and physicality provided a performative answer to the difficulties inherent in the passage.

When Desdemona asked Iago, "Come, how wouldst thou praise me" (127) he answered by pulling his suitcase out, placing it on the floor beside him and searching through his valise as he spoke. He pulled a book out of his case and continued: "But [*flourishing the volume*] my muse labours" (130) [*looking through the book, he walked down stage left and, with his back still to Desdemona, found the passage and paused for a beat or two*] "and thus she is delivered." (131) [*he turned to face Desdemona and read*] "'If she be fair and wise, fairness and wit,/The one's for use, the other useth it.'" (132-133) Iago continues to respond to each of Desdemona's questions by consulting with his "muse". During the exchange, he moved to the portable table placed centre stage left, and sat in one of the chairs that surrounded it. On "These are old fond paradoxes" (140), Desdemona took the book out of Iago's hand and placed it on the table in front of him. She sat on the chair adjacent to his and raised her feet to his lap, using him as a footrest.

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[20] M. R. Ridley, ed., *Othello* (London: Methuen, 1958) 54fn.
[21] E. A. J. Honigman, ed., *Othello* (Walton-on-Thames: Thomas A. Nelson and Sons, 1997) 170fn.

In the performance text of Mendes' *Othello*, "muse" and "old fond paradoxes" were clarified as a specific object, essentially "book" and "old fables". The clarity of the connection between prop and text provided the audience with *a* meaning (even if not *the* meaning) for the passage. This technique of marrying physicality, prop and setting also enabled the illustration of an underlying flirtatiousness (or "innuendo" as Honigman phrased it) in Desdemona's character. The use of prop thus enhanced both *a* meaning of Shakespeare's words with a physical representation of an aspect of Desdemona's nature. Once again, the attributes of actor, prop and scenography had provided a multi-layered performance text, allowing meanings to be developed from the period analogue.

Also worth noting about these examples (and what is difficult to comprehend through written descriptions) is how comfortable the actors' bodies appeared within these naturalistic locations. At no point was there an indication of bodily awkwardness, both when delivering the text and when listening to each other's dialogue. The fluid movement of Lord Stanley with his pen, for example, illustrates the actor's engagement with his environment through an ability to use stage properties to convey emotion to his audience. Likewise, a similar physical engagement with the setting allowed Simon Russell Beale and Claire Skinner to convey the content of their exchange in a manner that illuminated both text and character. For the thirties-set productions that were produced in the early part of the timeline, the thirties signification therefore worked on at least two levels: the complexity of the semi-naturalistic environments created by the designer in which the story is played out and the effect the choices have on the manner in which the actors communicate the text.

What I want to explore in the next section is the effect the *lack* of a naturalistic environment has on the performance of the thirties period analogue.

III. PERIOD SETTING AND THE BARE STAGE

I want to now turn to productions at the latter end of the period analogue timeline in order to explore the effect of the shift toward the bare stage on the actor within a non-naturalistic environment. As we have seen, this group consists of productions that are staged in a primarily empty space largely devoid of furniture or properties. I do not, however, intend this analysis as a pronouncement that naturalistic acting does not exist on the modern Shakespearean bare stage, a casualty of the demise of the naturalistic period analogue. Roberta Barker amply demonstrates that naturalistic acting remains a feature of contemporary theatre in her article *Inner Monologues*. Her descriptions of various moments from the 2008 Cheek by Jowl *Troilus and Cressida* reveal that the multi-layered approach to the text as noted above in Eyre's *Richard III* can occur without the aid of naturalistic properties. The sets are not required to be highly decorated in order for the production to performance text to function as "natural and lifelike" (to reuse Barton's phraseology). In charting the differences between productions at either end of the timeline, it will be helpful to begin by exploring the actor's body as an integral part of the performance text. In particular I want to demonstrate two types of physicality within performance, which I shall refer to as "engaged" and (borrowing from Oliver Ford Davies) "awkward".

Perhaps the most extreme type of physical engagement is that epitomised by Antony Sher in his early RSC work particularly in his performance as Richard III in Bill

Alexander's 1984 production, which he famously performed on crutches. Carol Rutter notes that "Critics and spectators were staggered by the sheer physical commitment of this actor and thrilled by the danger he built into the body of his performance."[22] His body was active, engaged, in part through his use of crutches; an actor completely at one with his environment, his crutches, the performance built around a prop. We have seen this same physical engagement with environment (props), played in a lower physical register, in the examples taken from Eyre's *Richard III* and Mendes' *Othello* above. Using this type of engagement as a benchmark, I want to explore the idea that the removal of props from the onstage picture also removes tools that can help an actor to express emotion, provide a physical manifestation of the text and signify social relationships within the period analogue. In physical terms, this shift from the naturalistic to the bare stage can result in performers who are unsure what to do with their bodies. When standing still on a bare stage, performers who are not comfortable are prone to what Oliver Ford Davies described as "bodily awkwardness".

In exploring these issues I want to use Lynne Parker's *Comedy of Errors* as my primary example for two reasons. First, in design terms the concept was executed not in naturalistic terms but instead the action took place on a bare stage with a minimalist set, virtually furniture-free and utilised comparatively few props. Secondly, the production contains examples of both physical engagement with the text and environment by actors, and its bodily awkward opposite. In signifying the thirties, Parker's production relied heavily on recycling filmic images in order to create an atmosphere (as opposed to a naturalistic social environment for the characters). Her

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[22] Carol Rutter, "'Her first remembrance from the Moor': actors and the materials of memory", in *Shakespeare, Memory and Performance*, ed. by Peter Holland (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) 174.

concept was achieved through the imitation of Hollywood films, purported in the production materials to have been those of the thirties but what in reality had evolved into a combination of styles from the thirties and forties.

One advantage of *Comedy*'s imitation of Hollywood styles for the production pertains to its physical embodiment within the whole performance text. Where this was most evident in Parker's version was when slapstick was chosen as a vehicle for the play. The play's farcical nature translates well into the comedic style, a physical form of comedy in which an actor's (or comedian's) body must of necessity be actively engaged in both movement and text. In this way, a material framework for the thirties was not necessary to convey the production's use of the thirties. The thirties were evoked by imitative methods rather than substantially concerned with providing an evocation of society in the thirties. Therefore, much of the production's energy stemmed from manic and exaggerated physical movement.

Blaithin Sheerin's bare stage allowed for what, in a naturalistic production, would have been excessive movement. For example as David Tennant (Antipholus of Syracuse) prepared to exit at the end of I.2, he worked himself into a frenzy as his soliloquy climaxed. Eerie sound effects accompanied both the text's references to the supernatural and the character's slow retreat upstage, as the pace of Tennant's speech increased exponentially. At the beginning of his last line, he sprinted off on "I greatly fear my money". The line was left hanging unfinished for a split second until he re-entered and sprinted across the stage, uttering "is not safe" (105) with his face turned to the house as he fled into opposite wing. Despite this manic aspect to the

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production, the contrast between the active body and the inactive body can be seen in the interaction between Tennant and two of his colleagues.

The Syracusian duo of David Tennant and Ian Hughes (Dromio of Syracuse) entered into the vaudevillian style with complete physical engagement, to the undeniable delight of the audience (at least on the night the archive video was recorded). Hughes was clearly entertaining those in the house the night the production was filmed for posterity, as the laughter that erupted when he told Tennant "She is spherical" indicates.

A series of repetitions followed of "She is spherical, like a globe. I could find out countries in her" (116-117) after which they waited for the audience to stop laughing, which only increased their mirth. Dromio repeated the line, and again they paused to "milk" the laughter. Hughes looked at his watch as laughter continued. He again repeated "She is spherical like a globe, I could find out countries in her", with the same result. Tennant interjects with an extra-textual "Got that?" and the audience clapped and wolf-whistled their agreement. Once that has subsided, Tennant riposted with, "Calm down there's loads more to get through", bringing the house down once again. While they waited for the audience to "calm down", Tennant and Hughes sat briefly on the centre stage fountain. Then they returned to their poses and Hughes repeated the line and, having pushed it as far as they could, Hughes says "I'm not saying it again". In both examples from Tennant and Hughes, their bodies were completely engaged physically, moving naturally and animatedly whether they were playing with the text or simply amusing the audience with vaudeville. Their complete

engagement meant that the bare stage and lack of naturalistic environment was not detrimental to their physical performances.

By contrast, other actors were not physically able to engage with either the style or the text in the manner of Tennant and Hughes. Instead, actors' bodies were sometimes immobile on the bare stage, detaching text (speech) and physical movement. In these cases, what was visible was the "bodily awkwardness" that Davies mentioned in television-trained actors who were used to using props to disguise discomfort due to the technical nature of the work. For example, Hughes' onstage twin in Dromio of Ephesus displayed none of the physical prowess of Hughes and Tennant. Instead, an inability to organically meld the thirties stylisation with the spoken text was apparent in his analysis of his master turned "horn mad" (II.1.56). Tom Smith's gestures frequently over-emphasised the text, as with "he asked me for a thousand marks in gold" (60) when he held his hands to his own chest to indicate he was talking about himself. He held that pose for the full line and then paused before continuing with the next line. On "'Tis dinner time,' quoth I. 'My gold,' quoth he" (61), he extended his right arm fully and again held that pose for the full line. He proceeded to break up his speech in this manner, with one exaggerated gesture for emphasis per line and a pause before beginning the next one. As the speech progressed, he became more and more agitated with a louder and more guttural delivery of the repetitions of "My gold quoth he". Compounding the physical awkwardness was Smith's choice to adopt an exaggerated Italian accent, which no other main character was using. The actor's physical and vocal patterns were formal, seemingly constrained by the verse structure and the laughs on the videotape were muted.

Given that an actor can be physically engaged with the text even with an environment that is non-naturalistic, it is difficult to draw firm conclusions about the period setting's bare stage and its influence on acting technique. Within Parker's *Comedy*, there are clear indications that some actors were physically and vocally comfortable imitating the style of Hollywood films. There are also indications that some had difficulty in relating to the text physically, perhaps because it was a *style* being imitated rather than the enabling of character through physical environment. In order to explore these differentials further, I want to turn to two other thirties-set productions in order to illustrate how a constructed social environment can shape onstage behaviour even when the setting is not overtly naturalistic.

IV. THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR AND SICILY

I want to conclude this chapter by looking at two productions that occur toward the middle of the timeline, Michael Boyd's *Troilus and Cressida* and Gregory Doran's *Much Ado About Nothing*. Both productions chose particular social milieu for their settings, in contrast with Parker's staging of the thirties which simply imitated film styles. Boyd's "design reference" for the production was the Spanish Civil War, according to the early rehearsal notes, while Doran placed his Shakespeare in the Sicily of 1936. Both productions were thus ostensibly set in the same year, although Boyd's production records are sparse and do not record any further details regarding the setting. In terms of actors' use of design through physical engagement with it, however, the contrast between the two productions is instructive and will provide further detail beyond the simple use of period signifiers in the form of props or pure physical movement to convey meaning.

In scenographic terms, both the Boyd and Doran productions utilised a design that was constructed around a basic set. For *Troilus*, Tom Piper built a permanent stage of whitewashed floorboards on the thrust stage. The area furthest upstage was frequently obscured by a theatrical curtain which, when open, revealed a door upstage left. Adjacent to this was a small alcove in which stood a statue of the Virgin Mary and various votive objects surrounding her, underneath a round, glass window. The walls were not pristine, but dingy and pockmarked by previous shelling that evoked the battle scars sustained by property in a war zone. For *Much Ado* Stephen Brimson Lewis designed a Sicilian square, bathed in sunlight and dominated by the frontispiece of Leonato's *palazzo*. Religious iconography was also injected into the scenography for the church scene, with a statue of the Madonna and a series of wooden chairs strategically placed to evoke pews and a nave.

What differentiates these productions in contrast to the naturalistic approach of Eyre's *Richard III*, for example, was their sparse use of stage properties. Where props in the more naturalistic renditions of the thirties were extensions of the text, in both *Much Ado* and *Troilus* they were used neither for the explication of text or character in performance. This is not to say that props were not present with the *intention* of defining character, but the actors were not physically engaged with them as their counterparts had been in the naturalistic productions. The flashbulb camera that Thersites clutched, for example, *defined* him as a war correspondent yet its use was erratic. The bulbs flashed more often to elicit a laugh from the audience rather than as a counterpoint to either the action or Shakespeare's lines (in contrast with Iago's "muse"/book in *Othello*).

The flower that Pandarus handed Troilus before the latter's wooing of Cressida performed an even lesser function than Thersites' camera. Ostensibly presented as a gift to give to Cressida, Troilus clutched it throughout the scene until he handed it to her just as she uttered "Will you walk in my lord?" (III.2.96). Rather than helping to define character or illuminate text, the flora seemed present merely to keep William Houston's hands under control in what could be considered a solution to the television-bred actor's bodily awkwardness when *sans* props onstage.

A similar props void was apparent in Doran's *Much Ado*, where they were either used by actors without reference to text or deployed in obtaining the laughing approbation of the audience. None of the props in act three were used in ways that helped the actors to express emotion or communicate the text to the audience, as had Stanley's pen and physical movement had in Eyre's *Richard III*. However, props scattered around the stage in III.4 helped to establish that it was the morning of Hero's wedding day, as her attendants assisted in dressing her for the ceremony. In the next scene, Leonato and Antonio were also shown in the process of preparing to leave for the church. The only prop handled by either character was a top hat that was presented to Leonato by a maid as the final touch to his outfit. In both these scenes, the function of the props was that of *décor*, only signifying time and place as they did not lend any texture to either the scene's emotion or actor characterisation.

Doran's cast sometimes used props in order to incite laughter from the audience, as they had earlier in act three. In III.1, a watering can had been used by Ursula and Hero to drench Beatrice, who was hiding in the shrubbery stage left during her gulling.

While the prop and action provided an amusing piece of comic business, the lines were literally drowned by the physical act of exaggerated rhythmic pumping of the old-fashioned device by Ursula. Unlike the relationship between lines and action in *Othello* providing physical and vocal texture, the action (and prop) did not suit the word for *Much Ado*.

The props in both Boyd's *Troilus* and Doran's *Much Ado* were largely decorative, rather than used as an expressive tool by (and for) the actors (and audience). I want to view this method in the light of the "*décor*/costume" category of constructing a period setting. The issues raised by both the comparative lack of props in the non-naturalistic period setting played on a largely bare stage are twofold. First, this approach presents the audience with fewer opportunities to decode the setting signifiers. With minimal props and a basic bare stage, the types of activities the characters are able to engage in limits what Kennedy describes as the signifiers of the production's "where and when, class and circumstance, attitude and attribution".[23] Secondly, it leaves the actor with fewer tools through which to communicate the early modern text to its contemporary audience. This is particularly true of period setting, but applies equally to the overall Shakespearean theatrical performance. With minimal tools, the actor becomes more reliant on his/her physicality to communicate the text. If the actor is unused to – in Oliver Ford Davies' description – "stand[ing] still on stage, relaxed", the result can sometimes be "bodily awkwardness" with the actor "acting from the neck upwards" with the result of sometimes making Shakespearean productions "either static or full of self-conscious posturing."[24] This in turn can translate into an actor's physical

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[23] Dennis Kennedy, *Looking at Shakespeare*, second edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) 13.
[24] Davies, 97.

*dis*engagement with their environment, as can best be explored here through the physical movement in Michael Boyd's *Troilus*.

I want to first think about Boyd's Spanish Civil War setting in terms of signifiers. One point that caused confusion in their decoding was the divide between the visual images and aural cues of time and place. Although the "design reference" had clearly been stated as the Spanish Civil War in the early rehearsal note, the cast used a combination of received pronunciation as well as regional English and Irish accents. This separation of visual and aural was commented upon in much of the reception. Alastair Macaulay's rhetorical questions were typical of the criticism when he stated,

> There is an uneasy tension between the Mediterranean locale and the actors employing accents from all over the British Isles. These prove distracting: why do most Trojans use Irish accents but not Troilus? Why is Thersites the only Greek with an Irish accent?[25]

The obvious answer is that William Houston's received pronunciation and Lloyd Hutchinson's Northern Irish dialects are their natural accents, however *Troilus* was also part of a touring double bill. As well as the Shakespeare play the cast was also performing a Brian Friel translation of Turgenev's *A Month in the Country*, an Irish "take" on the Russian play possibly requiring the multitude of Irish accents. With the "Troubles" still fresh and the Northern Irish peace process just coming to fruition, the aural references frequently led to Boyd's setting being read as Irish rather than Spanish Civil War.

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[25] *Financial Times*, 10 November 1998.

I established earlier that Boyd's production was spare, played on a permanent stage set and utilising relatively few props. Another feature of this sparse evocation of its "design reference", the Spanish Civil War, was its lack of signifying precise locales. Tom Piper's spare re-construction of the time period can be contrasted with the naturalistic period settings that were produced earlier in the decade. Where Eyre's *Richard III*, for example, provided precise locations for many of the scenes, Piper's lacked specificity. The promptbook is indicative of this change in approach in that the scene breakdowns refer not to locations, but to the action contained within each section. The set decoration does not lend itself to defining locales through furniture and props, with the first two scenes dominated by the back wall and its representation of the Virgin Mary and a stained glass window. The only other piece of furniture was a plain wooden chair, which was used by Pandarus in I.1 and then Cressida in I.2. That the scenography remained unchanged lends itself to an interpretation that the scenes took place in identical locations. Again, unlike the thirties analogue productions earlier in the decade, this first visual location (a church) provided no information about the class or circumstances of the characters. The range of action was also limited to actors moving around the empty space, with no identifiable thirties activities taking place within the scene.

This lack of signifiers in Boyd's *Troilus* can be most easily discussed in terms of contrast. In Richard Eyre's "Dinner Party" scene (I.3), costume, scenic design and actor movements provided the audience with the signification to decode social relationships. This level of detail was missing from a similar scene in Boyd's production of *Troilus*. The location choice for the Trojans' debate on Helen's presence

in Troy at II.2 was – like Eyre's – a family meal. This took place around a long wooden dining table, with the remnants of their meal on the table. Extra-textually present from the beginning were Andromache and Cassandra as well as the scripted Trojan lords.

In Boyd's staging of a dinner party there can be observed the elements of what could be defined in Oliver Ford Davies' terms as a static scene in which self-conscious movement occurred. The scene began with Priam standing relatively inert at the head of the table stage left. His movement was restricted to the brandishing of a prop – a piece of paper – holding it up to make clear to his audience that it was given by "Nestor from the Greeks" (II.2.2). With Priam's action combining prop, text and physical movement, the similarities with the production's naturalistic counterpart began and ended.

In Eyre's dinner party there had been a variety of movement around the table, with characters being seated, rising in anger and seating arrangements being altered for example. What is striking about Boyd's scene – particularly in contrast with Eyre's staging – is how little movement occurred in its performing. Priam sat on "Hector what say you to it" (7), giving the floor to his son sitting to his right. Alistair Petrie's Hector remained seated, his arms clasped as though in prayer with his elbows resting on the table. He looked about him as he spoke but that was the only movement of his body.

This stasis was broken by Paris on Hector's "Let Helen go" (16), when the former petulantly rose from his chair. However, the *dis*engagement with the text and

environment was made apparent by the movement's purpose being to demonstrate emotion, rather than fully committing to it. When Paris stood up, his irritation was signalled by his chair being ricocheted to the floor behind him. This movement was accompanied by the actor striding toward and – crucially – stopping at the upstage door without exiting. Paris then stood upstage by the exit, with his back to the audience making no further movement to either complete his exit or to return to the table. On one level, the combination of reaction to and movement on "Let Helen go" provided the audience with adequate information about Paris' attitude to the suggestion. However, in executing the movements in this manner the actor was uncommitted to his exit, which made the sequence seem planned rather than natural.

Although deconstructing Paris' action as a planned event may seem counterintuitive given that the rehearsal process lays down the blueprint of performance rendering all actions onstage planned, the subtle differences between organic and inorganic movement are key here (however difficult they are to describe without the aid of an accompanying visual). In the moment under discussion, the key is the fact that Paris' body did not seem engaged with either the text or the setting. The actor's lack of commitment was signalled not through his initial move away from the table, but in the abrupt cessation of the action as he reached the upstage exit door. This spoke not of an actor committed to portraying the emotion but one whose blocking had been set by others, a fact that made his body language as he failed to exit one of awkwardness rather than engagement. It was an action designed to illustrate the text, without fully engaging with it. Meaning of character could be read *into* the movement, but the execution was unconvincing. The movement's inorganic nature was also visible by the lack of reaction to Paris' movement by the other characters who remained physically

static and seemingly emotionally unmoved, their bodies un-reactive and *dis*engaged from the text and their environment. Whereas in *Richard III* the dinner party was a tool used to depict familial relationships, the motionless (and admittedly textually) mute Trojans gave no clue to the audience about the power struggle within their family unit which this scene depicts.

The playing of this dinner scene, in contrast to Eyre's thirties version, was problematic both in signification of the era and its social structure. This lack of framework impacted some actors' physicality and the dinner scene was not an isolated example of theatrical stasis. Specifically, the physical presence of several performances gave the impression of what Oliver Ford Davies termed "awkwardness", as with Jayne Ashbourne's Cressida. For her early dialogue with Pandarus, she was rooted to a spot upstage left. When she moved when she spoke her lines, it was not with her entire body but only her torso – the physical embodiment of Davies' assertion that actors used to television are not comfortable when they have to stand still with nothing in their hands. Her gestures were simplistic, raising her arm to point toward the spot from which Andromache had exited, for example. Her cross from centre stage to sitting on the chair was also awkward, with the action happening suddenly and seemingly without motivation. Instead the move on "Then she's a merry Greek indeed" (I.2.105) seemed motivated by the fact that she had been standing in a similar position on the stage for three or four minutes of the scene and movement was required to keep the audience (if not the actor) awake.

In contrast with Michael Boyd's Spanish Civil War, Gregory Doran clearly established the specific social mores of his chosen Sicilian milieu for *Much Ado*. As

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Harriet Walter imparted, Gregory Doran's rationale for using Shakespeare's Sicily had been to place the action in a "hot-blooded, Catholic community where males and females were segregated [and] male honour and marriage were very sacred."[26] These were obviously issues Doran wished to explore in his use of Sicily, the intention reinforced by the focus of the social research undertaken by the cast. Preserved in the production archive are an array of research materials, much of which privileges the Sicilian patriarchy's attitude to both honour and women. In particular, the place of women in Sicilian society was explored through documents that highlight attitudes derived through Catholicism about female chastity. This information was used to create a social environment in which the analogue could help to explicate the early modern text. This was manifested not through the use of signifiers such as props, but primarily through the actors' physical engagement with their surroundings and the attitudes of the society they were portraying.

Doran's *Much Ado* began with an elaborate pre-show which started a full six minutes before the first line of Shakespeare's text was spoken, helping to establish the social dynamics within his re-created Sicily. The key to the pre-show – and its subsequent impact on Shakespeare's play – was the early establishment of behavioural norms within the onstage society. The pre-show established the gender segregation that permeated the production's blocking, portraying the men at leisure as the women cleaned. The women aired the household linen, swept the *palazzo* courtyard and accepted food deliveries as the men smoked and drank. None of the women interacted with the men, at least as far as the archive video reveals. Doran also established within the pre-show the signifiers of a predominantly Catholic community, as

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[26] Harriet Walter, in conversation, August 2006.

Leonato's chaste daughter Hero entered accompanied by Friar Francis, presumably after an afternoon stroll.

Instead of the images used to denote Sicilian society, however, I want to further explore issues of the actor's physical engagement with her/his social environment. Although the gender segregation was important to Doran's overall framework, there were also other patriarchal attitudes inherent in Sicilian society. These will be worth exploring in my discussion of the actor's physical engagement in performance. In particular, the attitudes circulating around honour, female chastity and revenge are relevant to my discussion. As Anton Blok has made clear, in Mediterranean societies "honour is at stake whenever property rights are violated"; first on Blok's list of potential stolen items is female chastity.[27] If "property rights" are infringed the theft is redressed by *sfregio*, a term which "literally means the disfigurement or mutilation of someone's face by cutting his cheek with a knife so as to leave a long, visible scar as a lasting mark of dishonour."[28]

Echoing Anton Blok's view of female chastity in Mediterranean societies as male property rights, John Hopkins (Doran's Claudio) stated that his character's rage at Hero's alleged defilement was "the anger of lost property, the anger of a man having a crime perpetrated against him, a crime of theft".[29] Blok's academic view of latent violence in Mediterranean societies is also present in popular culture images of Sicilian society. Films were used as a research tool by Doran's cast including the

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[27]Anton Blok, "Rams and Billy-Goats: A Key to the Mediterranean Code of Honour", *Man* New Series, Vol. 16, No. 3 (Sept. 1981) 433.
[28] Ibid.
[29] John Hopkins, in conversation, July 2006.

Godfather films, a resource John Hopkins consulted during the rehearsal period.[30] While the films construct their own version of Sicily, the undertow of violence present in them was referenced in the actor's physicality. Hopkins' Claudio's latent aggression can be detected in the manner in which the character reacted physically to the news of Hero's (allegedly) unchaste behaviour as well as his treatment of Hero at the altar.

The scene between Claudio, Don John and Don Pedro (III.2) took place in the garden at Leonato's *palazzo*, the men seated around an outdoor table. Hopkins' Claudio responded to Don John's assertion that "the lady is disloyal" (94) by quietly saying, "Who, Hero?" (95) as Hopkins rubbed his thigh. Claudio's agitation grew, expressed by Hopkins' physicality as he echoed "Disloyal?" (98) and punched his leg in frustration. As Don John continued with "think you of a worse title [than disloyal], and I will fit her to it" (99-100) the violent undercurrent present in the production exploded as Claudio suddenly moved to attack Don John. Claudio's chair was catapulted violently halfway across the stage as he lunged for Don John, chasing him stage left. Claudio had to be physically restrained by Don Pedro who put his body between the youth and Don John.

Claudio's final response to his tormentor was a slow and deliberate cross to Don John, Hopkins' deliberate movement carrying the weight of menace. Standing literally face to face with him, Claudio slowly said "If I see <u>anything</u> tonight why I should not marry her" [*enunciating each syllable, emphasising "anything"*] "tomorrow in the congregation, where I should wed, there will I shame her" (113-115). Hopkins'

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[30] Hopkins, in conversation.

engagement with his (re)created social environment showed in his physicality, a contrast with that of Boyd's Paris and his movement on "Let Helen go". The two actors' use of their chairs to signify their emotion was similar, however Hopkins' movement was not stilted but instead the actor followed through with his initial action. The chair in *Much Ado* was used as the physical manifestation of Claudio's rage and Hopkins' commitment to this was clear through the continued use of similar actions throughout the rest of the scene.

The playing of the church scene in Doran's *Much Ado* provides further examples of the actors' physical engagement with the social codes the production was constructing. It was here that the themes of honour, revenge and female chastity were fully explored, with an omnipresent statue of the Virgin Mary providing a powerful visual signifier of the latter concept. Within this context, Hopkins' Claudio's rejection of Hero at the altar was brutal in its intensity, a continuation of the violence with which he had confronted Don John in the earlier scene. The actor's physicality once again embodied his anger at the defilement of his "property" as his actions were calculated to inflict maximum damage to Leonato's reputation via the public humiliation of his daughter.

Claudio physically attacked Hero, literally pushing her back to her father – as defiled goods – on "There, Leonato, take her back again" (IV.1.31). The force he used in this movement sent Hero reeling into her father's arms several paces downstage. The ferocity of the Count's anger was ignited again a few lines later when he pulled the stunned Hero out of her father's grasp and forced her upstage toward the Madonna statue. Claudio tore off her veil on "But she is none" (40) and threw the symbol of

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virginity contemptuously to the floor. His actions also included spitting at her feet and grabbing her face with his hand, squeezing it into temporary disfigurement and leaving her prostrate on the ground.

As Claudio and his companions exited, an echo of the pre-show's gender segregation was maintained in the physical separation of Leonato from the supine Hero and her attendants. As Leonato sat in his pew chair with the Friar hovering near him, the women were clustered stage right. Leonato's extra-textual actions during Claudio's tirade reinforced the gender inequalities within this society. During Claudio's accusations, the promptbook records that Leonato had crossed upstage to the statue of the Virgin Mary on "Is my lord well, that he doth speak so wide?" (62). The movement highlighted the disparity between the chaste ideal of womanhood embodied by the statue and the realities of sexuality. Seeming to contemplate how far his daughter had (allegedly) fallen from this ideal of purity, Leonato returned to his pew.

What was striking about Gary Waldhorn's performance at this juncture was the absolute authority he maintained with very little movement. In part this was achieved through the picture painted by his isolation from the women. It was also accomplished, however, by his melding of the social mores, his physical engagement with this environment and Shakespeare's text. Waldhorn's response to Beatrice's pleading for "Help, uncle" (113) was symptomatic of the manner in which the actor was physically engaged in this scene. Tellingly, in response to Beatrice's subservience the authoritarian Leonato made no move to comfort his daughter, but instead told her "Death is the fairest cover for her shame" (116). Speaking neither too softly nor

loudly, Leonato's tone was one in which its normalcy was at odds with the momentousness of his pronouncement. Leonato also answered the Friar's "Yea, wherefore should she not [look up]?" (120) quietly, saying the first seven lines of his speech softly. Without leaving his chair, he rejected his daughter by turning his body away from the women on "Myself would, on the rearward of reproaches" (127), as though he could not bear the sight of his "defiled" daughter. On "Strike at thy life" (128), Leonato shifted in his seat to face the women again, shouting the words at Hero with venom. The moment encapsulated the repressed violence of Sicilian society; the words and actions his outlet to the wound to his honour had suffered at the hands of his daughter, his "property".

Waldhorn continued to modulate his speech throughout the scene, only hitting key lines to make his brutal point, as on "Confirmed, confirmed" (151) when he grew hoarse with anger. As that five-line speech reached its climax, he lunged at Hero on "Hence from us let her die" (155). The promptbook linguistically records the moment's violence: "[Leonato crosses] to [the] women, pushes [Beatrice] & [Ursula] away from [Hero]. [Benedick] intercedes, pulls [Leonato] off and moves him away S[tage] L[eft] back to chair". The Friar intervened in the *mêlèe* and Leonato retreated to his chair, petulantly turning his back on the cleric. Leonato turned to face Friar Francis once again in order to rebuke him on

> Friar, it cannot be.
>
> Thou seest that all the grace that she hath left
>
> Is that she will not add to her damnation

A sin of perjury.

(172-175)

Leonato then shouted the next four words "She not denies it" (175) at the Friar. The playing of the rest of the speech in a lower register had given those four words more power. Like Hopkins' Claudio, the choices Gary Waldhorn made as Leonato reflected the image of Sicily to which Gregory Doran's research emphases had guided his cast. Both performances fully embedded Sicilian masculine attitudes to women, predicated on the relationship between female chastity, male honour and retribution.

In illustrating the impact on the acting choices that Doran's use of the Sicilian milieu had, I have concentrated primarily on the actions of Doran's Claudio and Leonato. However, in terms of the discussion on how the physical and verbal engagement with a (re)constructed social environment can impact behaviour, I want to conclude by comparing the performances of Trevor Martin in two disparate productions of *Much Ado*. Martin played Antonio in both Doran's Sicilian-infused production and, twelve years previously, in Bill Alexander's 1990 version. The earlier production had been set in an Elizabethan knot garden in décor fashion, which makes an interesting contrast with Doran's Sicilian patriarchy.

Hedges that encircled the stage perimeter dominated the scenography of Alexander's production. At the beginning of V.1, Antonio was discovered in an upstage gap between the shrubbery as the lights went up. His opening line, "If you go on thus, you will kill yourself" (1), was delivered to Leonato's back, as Paul Webster stood downstage leaning weakly on the centre stage garden bench. Martin's Antonio slowly

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walked downstage, opulently dressed in full Elizabethan ruffed garb. By contrast Leonato was unkempt with his shirt hanging loose from his breeches, signalling his fragile state. The effect of this on one theatregoer prompted a light mocking of the scene, describing Leonato as "wander[ing] melodramatically around his garden, dishevelled and distraught, whilst his brother observed him with improbable coolness, ludicrously dressed in a high ruff and long black cloak."[31] The "improbable coolness" of Martin's Antonio fed into his delivery of "Make those that do offend you suffer too" (40), which read as sage advice from one patriarch to another. No threat was inherent in this interpretation and the line was delivered as silkily as the luxurious fabrics the character wore. Adding to this impression of detachedness was Martin's corresponding physicality as he patted his brother reassuringly on the back with one hand, holding Leonato's with his other one.

Trevor Martin's Sicilian Antonio, by contrast, fully inhabited the world of *sfregio* where dishonour is dealt with by violence. In Doran's production, the scene opened with Leonato sitting on the bench in front of his *palazzo*, holding Hero's wedding veil in his hands. A beat later Antonio entered and joined his brother. On "For there was never yet philosopher" (35), Leonato rose and crossed downstage centre right, with Antonio following him. Antonio placed himself directly behind Leonato for his dialogue, speaking quietly which enhanced the conspiratorial impression. Martin imbued "Make those that do offend you suffer too" with the menace of a man who was thirsting to enact revenge on Claudio.

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[31] Jonathan Eagles, *Watching Shakespeare: A Theatregoer's Review of the RSC 1982-1995* (London: Minerva Press, 1997) 81.

This threatening air continued as Don Pedro and Claudio entered, the archive video showing Antonio upstage near the bottom doors at that point. In that position, he was out of the main thrust of the action and at first was acting as an observer as Leonato confronted the Prince and Count. When Antonio next spoke, on "If he could right himself with quarrelling,/Some of us would lie low" (51-52), he delivered the line as a threat. Martin's Sicilian Antonio quickly proved he was dangerous when his family had been dishonoured. The promptbook records that Antonio came "between [Claudio] and [Leonato]" after the latter's "If though kills't me, boy, thou shalt kill a man" (79). On "Come, follow me, boy" (83), Antonio reached into his jacket pocket and pulled out a switchblade knife, brandishing it as he closed in on Claudio, swiping at the Count on "Nay, as I am a gentleman, I will" (85). Claudio instinctively jumped out of range and backed out of view on the video, however the promptbook records that "[Antonio] circles [Claudio] anti-clockwise, [cross]ing d[own]/s[tage]…". Antonio continued to threaten Claudio with the knife and did not put the weapon back in his pocket until Don Pedro intervened.

Again, the difference between the 2002 Sicilian-infused Antonio and Martin's first performance is marked. In 1990 Antonio did not use a weapon and instead of moving into Claudio's physical space threateningly, Antonio backed away. In reading the lines "Come boy, follow me sir boy" it can be inferred that Antonio is beckoning Claudio to follow him. However, the move into Claudio's personal space was a much stronger choice, implying a serious threat where backing away does not. Coupled with that, in 1990 John McAndrew's Claudio stood still whereas John Hopkins' character shifted to allay the danger he was obviously in. With the performance evidence, the indications

are that Trevor Martin's performance had changed radically as Antonio in 2002 simply by physically responding to Doran's interpretation of Sicily.

What these disparate productions indicate is that naturalistic stage environments provide actors with more tools with which to communicate Shakespeare's language, particularly the difficult passages. The more visual clues there are available as to time of day, social standing, character activity and location the more likely a multilayered performance text will be produced. With multiple facets, the audience can read the visual clues more easily and make judgments about the setting, characters and the production's overall interpretation. What also seems likely is that the establishment of a particular social environment by primarily mental (rather than physicalised through props) methods of research and absorption of simple tenets (as in Doran's patriarchal *Much Ado*) has a similar onstage result as the full naturalistic environment. Without that social framework, however, some actors (through inexperience perhaps) will be prone to "bodily awkwardness". The text will therefore not be transmitted organically by the actor's complete physical engagement with script and environment, but instead it will be signalled through movement with motion imitating the text rather than evolving from it. The effect scenography has on the depth of a period analogue and the performances of those who enact it will be the primary subject of the final chapter, a case study of two productions of *Two Gentlemen of Verona*.

CHAPTER SEVEN:
CASE STUDY: *THE TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA*

I. TWO *TWO GENTLEMEN*

I want to conclude this examination of the thirties period analogue with a case study of one play and two productions. Sitting near either end of the thirties setting timeline are two productions of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. David Thacker's 1991 version is – along with Richard Eyre's *Richard III* – arguably one of the most influential uses of the thirties setting. William Carroll calls it "One of the most successful twentieth-century productions", an opinion held by many reviewers.[1] The production's success seemed to lie in its ability to have, as one reviewer remarked, brought "back a neglected play from near obscurity" having fashioned it into "an evening of delightful entertainment."[2]

Fiona Buffini revived the play in 2004 in what seemed to Michael Dobson "at best a lacklustre show and at worst a derivative and vulgar one."[3] Whether Buffini meant her production to be viewed as an imitation of Thacker's cannot be determined. Regardless, comparison was one prism through which the later version was obliquely judged, the ghosting within the reception apparent in comments such as "those with memories of earlier productions might have seen it all before."[4] The Buffini production was not a carbon copy of Thacker's, however, and the differences are as illuminating as the similarities in their translation of a thirties milieu to the stage.

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[1] William C. Carroll, ed. *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (London: Thomson Learning, 2004) 89.
[2] *The Scotsman*, 3 March 1994.
[3] Michael Dobson, "Shakespeare Performances in England, 2005", in *Shakespeare Survey 59* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) 299.
[4] *Morning Star*, 28 October 2004.

What follows is a critical assessment of the two productions undertaken for the purpose of further exploring the issues raised in previous chapters.

The similarities begin with the theatrical space in which the two *Two Gentlemen* were performed: at the RSC in the Swan Theatre's thrust auditorium, although both also occupied other venues.[5] Of the productions in the thirties setting timeline, the Thacker and Buffini productions are the sole examples of the same play that was conceived for performance in the same venue. The productions' respective appearances near to either end of the timeline also provides the opportunity to explore the historical and performance observations noted in earlier chapters in greater depth. An archive video also exists for both productions, which has made a detailed examination of performance possible. That the recordings are of a single performance prevents any examination of how the productions evolved through their respective runs. They can, however, be viewed as an overall template for the work of Thacker, Buffini and their casts, even though not all movements described necessarily remained identical throughout the runs of the productions.

Given the earlier emphasis placed on the text as the raw material for the activities of both scholars and practitioners, it seems appropriate to begin with a brief look at directorial attitudes to the language and themes of *Two Gentlemen*. Although disagreeing about the play's exact date of composition critics place the writing of *Two Gentlemen* during the early stages of Shakespeare's career, with the Oxford Shakespeare positing the notion that it was Shakespeare's first play. As Kurt Schleuter

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[5] Thacker's production transferred first to the Barbican Theatre, then toured to proscenium arch venues nationwide before closing at the Theatre Royal, Haymarket after its West End transfer; Buffini's was part of the RSC's regional mobile touring project, its staging based on the thrust stage model and although it had a run in the Swan it more often played in non-traditional venues.

points out, this view of the play has led to its perhaps being underappreciated in its own right. Critics, he stated, have "too often based [their opinions] on the assumption" that Shakespeare had intended to write one of his more mature comedies but "had not known how to achieve this and had therefore failed."[6] David Thacker also spoke of the perceived drawbacks of the play in terms of comparison with the playwright's later works. In interview, Thacker observed that "A lot of [the play] is written in a way that doesn't have the sophistication or the psychological or emotional complexity as the late, great works, or even *Romeo and Juliet*."[7] Fiona Buffini was more blunt in her assessment of the play's perceived shortcomings, stating, "it's not a complicated piece. In the writing there is one plot and hardly any subplot."[8] The directors' individual statements are worth noting, while Thacker concentrated on character in speaking about the emotion of the piece with Buffini apparently concerned with what she perceived as a lack of basic narrative.

Although often perceived as an inferior work, critics frame discussion of the play around one of two themes. This is reflected in Schlueter's overview of its stage history, noting that, "An essential part of the comicality of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* is created by the necessary conflict between highly stylised concepts of love and friendship."[9] In his Arden 3 edition of the text, William Carroll devotes a section to discussion of the early modern view of male friendship. Carroll also observes that "the great agent of transformation in *Two Gentlemen*" is love.[10] It is this concept that Schlueter emphasises, rather than friendship, reasoning that, "Attempts at

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[6] Kurt Schlueter, ed. *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) 2.
[7] David Thacker, in conversation, February 2009.
[8] Fiona Buffini, http://www.rsc.org.uk/verona/company/director.html, last accessed 30 June 2007.
[9] Schlueter, 17.
[10] Carroll, 55.

romanticising love have had a more lasting cultural success than attempts to romanticise friendship."[11]

Love was the theme that figured most prominently in both Buffini's and Thacker's remarks about *Two Gentlemen*, suggesting that romantic love rather than friendship was the major theme for their respective productions. Speaking to *The Guardian* in 1991, Thacker stated that it is "a passionate play about being in love, about [its] pain and anguish and joy and happiness".[12] This was a perception of the play the director had retained, as it was reiterated to me in 2009. Nearly fifteen years after it had opened, Thacker informed me that he felt it was a "young person's play", written from the experience of "being young and in love."[13] Fiona Buffini also framed the play in terms of romantic love, stating that because "love triumphs" in the play, "you have to give the play a setting where that is possible."[14] This dominant impression about *Two Gentlemen* also seemed to be a factor in their respective decisions to place the play in the thirties milieu.

While the directors' perceptions of the play were predicated on an optimistic view of romantic love, their choice of the thirties as a setting came from differing exposures to the decade. Asked how she had settled on her concept Buffini replied,

> To me one of the most romantic eras of all time is the 1930s. There were so many things going on in the world, but there were also all these wonderful Hollywood films about people coming to the big city. It's all about future and

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[11] Schlueter, 17.
[12] *The Guardian*, 8 April 1991.
[13] Thacker, in conversation.
[14] Buffini, http://www.rsc.org.uk/verona/company/director.html.

possibility and romance. I look at those 1930s films, and I buy the happy ending, because I've suspended my modern disbelief in those things, because it happened then.[15]

Buffini's remarks about the setting are mediated through images generated by film. As we will see, Buffini created a storyline with Shakespeare's text that mirrors her impression of Hollywood depictions of the era.

David Thacker's choice to use the thirties for his production concept originated not with film, but from a verbatim theatre piece he had directed a decade previously. Staged at the Duke's Playhouse Theatre in Lancaster *The Rose Between Two Thorns* documented "what life was like between the two world wars." It had been crafted from "tape recorded interviews" which, according to Thacker, leaned toward accounts of "dancing and the dance halls, rather than the General Strike and poverty, for example, which is what I expected." The impression given, therefore, was that the interviewees' "early life was infused with love and romance". This had led the director to intersperse the play's action with music of the period.[16] This is a detail corroborated by a notation in the play's manuscript indicating the first half ended with Warren and Dubin's 1934 song *I Only Have Eyes For You*.[17] According to Thacker, it was while working on *Rose* that he "got keen on the music of that period." When he came to direct Shakespeare's play, the inspiration to place the production in the thirties was formed by the initial thought "Why don't we use that music?" which had been a

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[15] Fiona Buffini, http://www.rsc.org.uk/verona/company/director.html.
[16] Thacker, in conversation.
[17] Unpublished manuscript, British Library, London, Theatre Archive Project.

feature of his verbatim piece in Lancaster.[18] The era's popular music was to feature extensively in Thacker's production of *Two Gentlemen* providing him with his framework for Shakespeare's text.

What these directorial statements highlight are the popular culture references that provided some (although undoubtedly not all) of the foundational thinking behind their chosen period analogue. Present in the directors' stated intentions is the fact that each had absorbed the images of the decade, mediated through aspects of that past. In practical terms, the films (Buffini) and music (Thacker) of the era provided a familiar reference point from which they would craft their respective thirties worlds, one visual and one aural. In theoretical terms, in crafting their versions of the thirties, both directors were participants in what Marvin Carlson refers to as "the continued recirculation of cultural memory."[19] Their respective emphases therefore were reinforcing dominant images of the thirties.

Another complex layer of historical recycling can also potentially be viewed within these two productions of *Two Gentlemen*, where there are clear parallels between the productions and contemporary period drama depictions of the thirties. Where the directors' accounts highlight a clear relationship with the popular culture of the thirties, our own contemporaneity is as likely to be a site for their re-use of historical images. As with some examples discussed previously, the Thacker and Buffini productions both contain within them images that reflected then-dominant modes of visualising the thirties in period drama.

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[18] Thacker, in conversation.
[19] Marvin Carlson, *The Haunted Stage: The Theatre as Memory Machine* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2003) 8.

In tracing potential influences which have led to the emergence of the thirties setting in Shakespearean theatre, I have demonstrated that by the early nineties period drama's visual language of the thirties had become dominated by depictions of wealth and glamour. I suggested in chapter three that this had already occurred by the time David Thacker's production of *Two Gentlemen* was staged in 1991, and that the production had adopted this prevailing imagery. In order to more fully explore this point, it should be reiterated here that four serials broadcast in 1991 depicted the thirties. Collectively, they did so in terms of a refined and elegant nostalgic vision of the thirties, with lavish locations and costumes.

One of these television serials was an adaptation of P. G. Wodehouse's *Jeeves and Wooster* stories, with Stephen Fry and Hugh Laurie in the title roles. David Thacker's production of *Two Gentlemen* opened in proximity with the second series of ITV's successful *Jeeves and Wooster*, starring Stephen Fry and Hugh Laurie. Its first series had aired in April 1990, giving it time to seep into the public consciousness as a visual for the thirties; the second series began its run on ITV on 14 April 1991, three days before Thacker's press night on April 17. Given *Jeeves*' popularity and corresponding high profile, it is not surprising that the television programme would be used in the reception of pieces set in the thirties. For example, John Peter described Hugh Bonneville's characterisation of Valentine as "likeably Bertie Wooster-ish".[20] That *Jeeves* was referred to in critiques of Thacker's version of *Two Gentlemen* infers that the two were visually closely linked in the minds of some reviewers, if not an active visual reference point for the stage production.

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[20] *Sunday Times*, 21 April 1991.

Perhaps the most telling example comes from Paul Nelson's review of David Thacker's *Two Gentlemen* in *Shakespeare Bulletin*, which indicates how closely linked television and theatre were in the (re)construction of the thirties. Clearly targeted at an American audience Nelson makes reference to the umbrella programme most associated with period drama in the US, the one on which *Jeeves and Wooster* was broadcast beginning in 1990. Nelson observed that Thacker's "transposition [of *Two Gentlemen*] to the fashionable age of Noel Coward…and P. G. Wodehouse…facilitates audience grasp of character relationships and convoluted plot by framing them in a world as familiar as *Masterpiece Theatre*."[21] For Nelson at least (and probably other members of the audience), the onstage world created by Thacker had been made familiar by the ghosting of images seen in period drama portrayals of the thirties.

Fiona Buffini's production had been created within a different cultural climate. As previously noted, by 2004 period drama had become a less frequent feature in the broadcasting schedules and the thirties had virtually disappeared from television screens. Film, however, continued to produce occasional works that depicted the thirties. While most of them reproduced images of the decade that portrayed it as site for nostalgia inhabited by a leisured and wealthy elite, Stephen Fry's *Bright Young Things* could be viewed as an exception. Fry's film was an adaptation of Evelyn Waugh's *Vile Bodies*, his 1930 satire about the set collectively known as the "bright young people." This was a group described by D. J. Taylor as young men and women who indulged in "a compound of cocktails, jazz, licence, abandon and flagrantly

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[21] Paul Nelson, "The Two Gentlemen of Verona", in *Shakespeare Bulletin*, Volume 9, Number 4 (Fall 1991) 15.

improper behaviour."[22] The film version translated this social world into a visual language, with the *Evening Standard* reviewer describing the "frenzy of opening scenes in which young, wealthy and wilfully irresponsible folk make merry into the wee hours".[23]

Waugh's novel is set in the twenties, while Buffini's *Two Gentlemen* was placed in the thirties. However, Buffini's visual language melded the two decades with costumes that referred to the thirties but action which imitated the lifestyle depicted in Fry's film. Although reviewers of the Shakespearean comedy do not directly reference *Bright Young Things*, the language they use mimics that used by both D. J. Taylor and the *Evening Standard*'s film critic. Comments such as "At the slightest excuse, the stage becomes a dance-floor packed with grinning, hand-waving bright young things doing the charleston or similar"[24] and "the champagne, dancing and party games continue virtually non-stop"[25] are typical examples; the worlds of novel, film and stage play were interrelated through their common verbal and visual languages.

In the discussion of these two productions of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* that follows, these separate strands of language, character, and historical reuse of images will, like images of history, return. The directors' divergent impressions of the play can be seen to seep into the productions; Thacker's interest in character will be contrasted with Buffini's apparent lack of engagement with anything but its surface narrative. These contrasts will be seen to impact the two approaches to the theme of the play they both seem to favour, the romantic relationships as played out through

[22] D. J Taylor, *Bright Young People: The Rise and Fall of a Generation: 1918-1940* (London: Vintage Books, 2008) 4.
[23] *Evening Standard*, 2 October 2003.
[24] *Daily Telegraph*, 22 October 2004.
[25] *The Times*, 22 October 2004.

the four central characters. The two disparate re-created thirties versions will be shown to have been influenced, whether consciously or not, by the dominant images of other re-created thirties from the period drama genre; the impact on the reception of the characters coloured by the ghosts of these other "thirties".

In discussion of these two linked, but disparate, images of the thirties on the Shakespearean stage, the performance texts themselves will be negotiated through another prism. In paraphrasing Michael Kahn, Ralph Berry provides a linguistic distinction within his definition of the period analogue. For the director (and the critic) there are gradations in the use of history as concept on the Shakespearean stage. The first is "*décor*", by which Berry explains, the director "means a period style that is chosen for its visual elegance and offers a purely cosmetic way of dressing up the text." The second Kahn calls "concept" in which the setting is utilised as a method of "pointing to a particular set of national and historical circumstances via the costumes".[26] In his text, Berry proceeds to offer various production examples in order to illustrate Kahn's categorisation of the period analogue. In examining the Buffini and Thacker productions, my aim is to offer more detailed production examples of "concept" and "*décor*" in order to establish a method of refining the Kahn/Berry distinctions between types of analogue. In doing so, I also want to think of this in terms of the distinctions between the "historical" and "costume" television categories laid out by Lez Cooke. With the differentiation in those also connected with the difference between depth and surface appearance, I want to combine the terms in my discussion into "concept/historical" and "*décor*/costume". As I will illustrate, the former provides layers of meaning which combine to provide a nuanced social and

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[26] Ralph Berry, *On Directing Shakespeare: Interviews with Contemporary Directors* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1989) 16.

emotional environment, whereas the latter depicts the recreated period more superficially, providing the illusion of a society rather than its reality (in so far as the stage can be "real"). This framework will help to further illuminate these ideas through the examination of the two *Two Gentlemen*.

II. FRAMING THE ACTION, OR MUSIC AND ROMANCE

Roger Warren notes that "Shakespeare uses music to make points about the characters and their relationships."[27] In *Two Gentlemen*, Shakespeare's text requires music only once, occurring deep into the action in act four with Proteus' attempts to woo Silvia. The idealised lyrics of Proteus' serenade are juxtaposed with Silvia's direct and Julia's indirect reactions to them, highlighting Proteus' inconstancy. The music heightens the emotional content of the dialogue as each character betrays their state of mind to the audience, if not to each other. In their thirties-set productions, both David Thacker and Fiona Buffini expanded on Shakespeare's character commentary through the use of an aural soundscape of music. As reviewers commented on this aspect of both productions, and given music's prominence in Thacker's production, it is worth looking at the two performance texts first through the disparate uses to which music was put in them.

As already mentioned, David Thacker used thirties popular music as a framing device. Thacker and the production's composer, Guy Woolfenden, researched the thirties popular song canon, eventually deciding on thirteen of the popular tunes to include.[28] Following well-established musical theatre conventions the song titles were printed in

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[27] Roger Warren, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) 44.
[28] Thacker, in conversation.

the souvenir programme in the order of performance. A seven-piece band and chanteuse, present upstage throughout the evening played the music. The songs' running order had been "extremely carefully chosen to support the play" in order to comment on the action.[29] The music was thus integrated into the production via *entr'acte* performance during scene changes. On one level this choice of placement provided the audience with entertainment while sets were being struck and replaced. Simultaneously, however, the music was also being used to provide another layer of meaning. The songs' functions were either to counterpoint the emotion of scenes or were used as ironic commentary on the action, an aural accompaniment to enhance the play's emotional content. They were performed during what would otherwise have like been a blackout and – importantly – the songs did not interrupt the flow of Shakespeare's text, as two examples will illustrate.

Julia's first entrance was accompanied by the optimistic *Love in Bloom*, matching what Roger Warren describes as the "light and witty" mood of the scene.[30] The cheerful lyrics introduced Clare Holman's Julia, a young woman ecstatically in love with Proteus. The music finished as Holman and Josette Bushell-Mingo's Lucetta began Shakespeare's dialogue. At the other end of love's spectrum, *Heartaches* was chosen to reflect the emotional timbre after III.1. Matching the heightened language of Valentine's banishment, the lyrics reminded the audience of the pain of separation as Valentine's heart ached for Silvia. Throughout the production, the thirties music was interspersed with Shakespeare's scenes in this manner.

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[29] *Classical Music*, 20 April 1991.
[30] Warren, 39.

While most of the music permeating Thacker's production was used *entr'acte*, the production also hinted at film by using two songs to underscore scenes: *In the Still of the Night* and *What'll I Do?* As with that performed during set changes, the music did not interrupt the text and the songs reflected the emotional register of the scenes. *In the Still of the Night* dominated the second half, with chanteuse Hilary Cromie singing a portion of the lyrics during each set change with an instrumental version playing underneath some dialogue. *In the Still of the Night* thus began in the transition between acts four and five, but the lyrics went unfinished until the play's climax. After Silvia had said, despairingly, "O Valentine, this I endure for thee!" (V.3.14), Porter's *In the Still of the Night* hit its crescendo as Cromie began where she had left off with the question that had permeated Thacker's production: "*Do you love me as I love you*?" From this high point, the song began its descent into calm, its strains fading as the final scene began. The overall effect of its usage had been to enhance the building tension in act five as the characters fled into the forest, one after the other.

The second use of cinematic underscoring took place in the first half with Irving Berlin's *What'll I Do?* which was used to punctuate the twenty-line scene that dramatises the parting of Proteus and Julia, II.2. Shakespeare's stagecraft here does not give the contemporary actor time to flesh out character in a naturalistic fashion. The scene is sandwiched between the first onstage encounter between Valentine and Silvia and a comic monologue by Launce (and Crab), with its register noticeably less comic than those surrounding. In its length it is filmic, its brevity stifling development and providing little time in which to depict its emotional content. For Thacker and his cast, the solution was to incorporate the thirties songs *into* the scene, layering the poignancy of Berlin's lyrics onto Shakespeare's text.

In the Thacker promptbook, the scene is dubbed the "*Brief Encounter*" scene, its moniker denoting its method of playing by this ensemble. As the reference to the film indicates the scene as acted here was full of repressed emotion, ghosting its style into the performances. Berlin's mournful strains began during the set change, with two stanzas completed before the couple spoke. The lyrics highlighted the enforced parting, mirroring the content of the scene with its despairing refrain *What'll I do when you are far away*. Throughout the dialogue, the band continued to play an instrumental version of the piece. On Proteus' departure after his "Alas, this parting strikes poor lovers dumb" (20), *What'll I Do?* crescendoed as Cromie repeated the second stanza, once again enhancing the emotional content of the scene. Throughout Thacker's version the music provided additional textual material, producing a performance text that fully integrated its aural component with the written word. The songs did not intrude on the action, but instead provided additional layering through which Shakespeare's text was encountered in performance.

Where Thacker's use of music provided texture to the emotion without interrupting the flow of Shakespeare's text, Buffini's production frequently interrupted scenes with musical interludes. Ghosting (intentionally or not) Fry's *Bright Young People*, the core imagery of Buffini's Milan was of a "Party [at] The Palace", as the promptbook defined those scenes. This separates the first party sequence into three sections marked "Lindyhop", "Rumba" and "Lindy2", the delineation linked to the dances performed by the cast during II.4. This scene began with extra-textual action as lithe bodies quickly filled the stage to dance the Lindyhop. This scene change activity effectively provided the social context for Silvia and her bright young set. The other

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two insertions of music within II.4 also provided signifiers for this milieu, reinforcing Silvia's position in the class satirised by the Waugh novel.

Unlike in Thacker's production, however, the music and dancing broke the flow of the text. Valentine and Thurio's tetchy exchange was interrupted once again when the stage was overrun by the bright young people rushing on to dance the rumba. During the dance, the power politics between the rivals was played out physically ("halfway thru rumba Th[urio] tries to cut in", as it states in the promptbook). The dancing ended only when Silvia noticed her father had entered, at which point she stopped the dance on "No more, gentlemen, no more! Here comes my father" (45-46). The dance provided a bridge between sections, but the flow of the *verbal* argument between the rivals had been stifled vocally. Although it continued as a comic physicalisation, Silvia's line was essentially changed; textually, she interrupts her suitors on her father's entrance but in Buffini's she interrupted her own indulgent pleasure by stopping the dancing in progress. It is a subtle difference, but played out in the wider context of Buffini's production it was an example of the disconnect between the social context being created and a lack of connection with the dialogue.

The difference in the handling of the music by both directors was symptomatic of the overall approaches to period. Thacker's use of music was constructed in an imitation of musical theatre conventions, as it was organically integrated with the action. The choice of songs complemented the emotion of the text as played, becoming an integral part of Thacker's performance text. Buffini's choice to interject dancing was also borrowed from musical theatre, but her execution distracted from the text. The dances ("numbers") were literally showstoppers as the flow of Shakespeare's play was

interrupted. Instead of reflecting the emotion of the text, the dancing distracted the audience with spectacle. As we will see, these "concept/historical" (Thacker) versus "*décor*/costume" (Buffini) approaches to the music were also paralleled in several other aspects of these two disparate thirties recreations.

III. TWO DESIGNS

I want to turn now to the traditional method of period signification, the design. It was through this that in both productions the visual languages of the directorial concepts were constructed. The approaches of Buffini and Thacker to their designs were similar in how the play's two social worlds were delineated into two separate locales. In the early rehearsal notes for David Thacker's 1991 production, his vision was laid out for the production staff: "The play is to be set in the late 1920s early 1930s in England (Verona) and the South of France (Milan)." The equivalent document in Buffini's production records is less specific, stating only that "This production is set in the 1930s." While the sentence lacks detail Alex Avery, who played Valentine, confirmed that Buffini's production locales were meant to represent a decaying England (Verona) and a newborn America (Milan).[31]

As with the other productions included in this study, both versions of *Two Gentlemen* were played on a permanent stage set. Sheelagh Keegan created a stage floor of southern yellow pine for the 1991 production, on which eight of its scenes were played on the bare boards. In keeping with the prominence of music in the production, the dominant scenic feature was the orchestra seated upstage. Wooden trellises

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[31] Alex Avery, in conversation, June 2007.

provided the rest of its basic scenery, placed above the orchestra area and at the sides of the stage and decorated in cherry blossom trees. Documentation is sparse by comparison for Buffini's production and records of the materials used are not preserved in the archive. However, as with Thacker's production the stage itself was not changed, only the elements added into it were transitory. The architecture of the thrust stage allowed for little decoration and Liz Ascroft's permanent set was less picturesque than Keegan's cherry blossom. The stage floor was of a darker hue than Keegan's and a series of panels disguised the upstage discovery space, the opening of them signified the Milanese locale. These two basic sets provided atmosphere rather than any visual evocation of the thirties.

In previous chapters, I have been suggesting a relationship between the attitude of television period drama to its recreated history and its stage equivalent. The patterns are those of the shifts I have outlined previously: that television period drama in the seventies and early eighties was interested in the re-creation of historical social and material worlds, yet a shift occurred in the nineties and the dramas became progressively more "modern" in its approach to recreating the past. In chapter five, I suggested one parallel between the two dramatic genres was that in its attention to period detail, Shakespearean theatre has followed television's pattern in terms of historical re-creation. Scenographically, productions at the beginning of the thirties analogues appear to have been diligent in the accurate reproduction of the thirties material world, whereas those toward the end place less emphasis on the re-creation of period detail. The effort undertaken by Thacker's production team in pictorial research terms appears to follow this pattern.

David Thacker's production team was actively engaged in researching the material world of the thirties, as the archive reveals. Pictorial research was clearly supplemented with active enquiry in a series of letters sent to various organisations from the stage management team. The costume files show photographic evidence of the thirties from a variety of sources, including *Vogue*, *Hollywood Portrait Photographs* and the Sears and Roebuck catalogue. Annotations to the costume sketches indicate that evidence from these sources likely formed the basis for the costumes of Proteus, Julia, and Lucetta. The archive also retains correspondence pertaining to the research undertaken in the acquisition of props used in the production. It is in these that the extent of the historical research undertaken by the production team can be seen, as several examples will help to illustrate. The jeweller Cartier was contacted in the search for an original thirties-era watch, who sent the production a "dummy" version to use. The Passport Office provided a loan of a passport that provided an accurate visual for the era, again through correspondence with stage management. The archivist of Coutts and Company (the exclusive bank, catering to the wealthy) provided a detailed photocopy of both cheque and chequebook to the production team. A corresponding RSC memorandum states that a "Cheque book will need mocking up from a picture reference. Pre-written cheque pulled out of book every night." Each of these items was used as personal stage properties within the production. The correspondence used to acquire items reveals the level of detail that went into depicting the thirties as historically accurate in visual terms. As far as this evidence shows, the research did not stray from the thirties as the visual basis for its material reconstructions.

Unlike those available for the Thacker production, documents involving the (re)construction of a thirties material world by Buffini and Ascroft are few in the RSC archive. Pictorial evidence related to the period, including photocopies from the Sears and Roebuck catalogue, can be found in the costume files. However, other information about the construction of set and props was not preserved and no correspondence is retained. The rehearsal notes for the production indicate that period items were desired, ranging from a copy of *Jane Eyre*, text books, popcorn boxes and cinema brochures dating from the era.

There is no corresponding pictorial research in Buffini's production archive to indicate whether eras other than the thirties were considered as visually appropriate. That there was a level of conscientiousness about the reconstruction of the material world can be found in one piece of evidence, however. A note requesting sellotape also asks if such an item existed in the thirties, while explaining it was needed to reassemble the letter torn by Julia in II.1 for its appearance during the latter part of the play. Unfortunately, the small volume of documentation that exists does not allow comparisons with the Thacker production on this level. In discussing the two productions' constructions of the thirties environments as "concept/historical" or "*décor*/costume", discussion of props from an alternate perspective will prove more instructive.

As William Carroll notes, dramaturgically *Two Gentlemen* requires few props and for act one, a coin that passes between Proteus and Speed and the two letters exchanged between Julia and Proteus are the only textual necessities.[32] By contrast both Thacker and Buffini included non-textually-required props in their stagings, although their

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[32] Carroll, 80.

quantity in each differed greatly. The list of properties used in the first scene of Thacker's version (including a trunk, suitcases, fold-out map, camera, hip flask, cigarette case, shoe horn and a gentlemen's toilet set) is more robust than its equivalent in Buffini's. In fact for Buffini's act one in its entirety, only fourteen props appear on the list preserved in the archive; Thacker's first scene contained twenty-eight. Although there may have been budgetary issues regarding the disparity, in this Buffini's production parallels the spare manner in which the later productions in the timeline used props, as with Edward Hall's *Julius Caesar* discussed in chapter five. Although a scene-by-scene breakdown of stage properties will not be possible here, a comparison of some this aspect of the scenography will be a useful barometer to the method by which each *Two Gentlemen* constructed their material worlds.

In their opening scenes, both productions signalled Valentine's imminent departure through the presence of luggage. For Alex Avery in 2004, it was a single, brown valise, over which was draped an overcoat and hat. These items were pre-set and formed part of the stage picture with which the audience was presented as they took their seats. Avery's only interaction with his luggage was on his exit when he picked the items up and carried them off with him. By contrast, the thrust stage floor was empty as David Thacker's production began. Upstage on the gazebo the chanteuse and band provided the aural soundscape with *Love is the Sweetest Thing*. During the song's second stanza, the lights came up on the playing space as Speed wheeled on a steamer trunk and exited. Valentine's servant re-entered twice more, each time carrying additional pieces of luggage and placing them on the stage and exiting just prior to the entrance of his master and Proteus. Before a line had been spoken, the props and movement had established not only that a journey would take place but also

that Valentine possessed a servant. The fact that Valentine had appeared already wearing his overcoat and carrying his hat further signalled his travel. To complete the signification, Valentine opened his luggage, retrieved his passport and wallet, and then placed them in his inside jacket pocket. The interaction with props reinforced the visual provided by the luggage, supplying *actions* associated with a voyage. Although the messages sent by the props and costumes in the two productions were similar, their effect in each production was different. In Thacker's version, the items and clothing were used in ways that underscored their meaning through the character's interaction with them; Buffini's production barely engaged with the suitcase and its meaning remained inanimate. In the former, meaning was multi-layered in its creation of a social world; in the latter, the meaning lay solely with the signifier itself.

Scenic economy may have contributed to the small number of props in Buffini's production (although that had no bearing on how they were used). Although the production's existence as part of the regional tour most likely reduced props and furniture to a manageable number, this had a negative effect on location signifiers. For the second scene which introduced Julia and Lucetta, the production design recycled the furniture from Proteus' bedroom (I.1) and used it to signify Julia's private space (I.2). In both scenes, the set comprised a *chaise longue* and a folding screen behind it on the otherwise bare stage. The main visual difference between the two was the placement of the screen, which was further upstage in the first scene but had been moved to nearer the *chaise* to signify Julia's room. Personal effects also differed, as Proteus' shoes were removed from the floor and replaced by Julia's along with a few articles of clothing strewn on the floor. A copy of *Jane Eyre* was placed beside Julia

on the *chaise*. These were small details, however, and the failure to change the furniture caused a blurring of the location signifiers between the first two scenes.

There was no such blurring in scenic terms between Thacker's first and second scenes. At the end of I.1 Speed removed the luggage he had brought on at the beginning, leaving the stage bare. With the tune of *Love in Bloom* accompanying the change, the stage crew brought on a garden bench and two potted plants to flank it (perhaps a visual representation of the song). The place denoted was Julia's garden and the time of day indicated by the actresses' costumes, with both women in full evening attire. The text requires a letter that Julia destroys in a fit of pique, although the only other prop in the scene was a dance card attached to Julia's wrist. With music, ball gowns, the giggling of their entrances, and the reference to the dance card, the location was clearly outdoors, evening, with the characters attending a formal ball.

The second Julia scene in both productions also provides an interesting contrast. In both, the same scenography was retained with Buffini's character placed in her bedroom and Thacker's once again in the garden. Buffini's Verona seemed perpetually to exist only in a fairly dim interior during daylight hours (although that may have been accentuated by the quality of the archive video), giving the impression that the characters had been temporally frozen between scenes. Thacker was more precise in his choices, as Julia's garden had gone from night to day between the first and second scenes. As the lights went up on Thacker's II.7, Lucetta was sprawled stomach-down on a tartan rug, idly swinging her legs behind her and perusing a magazine; Julia stood barefoot near the bench. Julia was picking at the straw hat she was holding in her hand, as she said her first lines. Lucetta was wearing a trouser ensemble and Julia

a cream and blue floral summer dress; both their shoes had been discarded. The bright lights, the leisure activities, the rug and the lack of footwear denoted a hot summer day. The contrast between these signifiers and those from the earlier evening scene also helped to reinforce the picture of an upper-class, leisured lifestyle.

David Thacker's attention to time and place was not isolated to these early scenes with Julia, Lucetta, Proteus and Valentine. Throughout the production, his characters inhabited a world that had become familiar through television depictions of the thirties, populated by servants and masters. For example, Panthino was a Jeeves-type servant, anticipating his master's wishes and performing the valet's duties of shaving and dressing his employer, activities familiar from numerous programmes including *Jeeves and Wooster*. The lifestyle in this version of the thirties was varied with characters dressing for dinner and whiling away their afternoons playing tennis.

That no scene was signified in an identical manner in Thacker's production can be illustrated by the changing activities on the stage set that represented the Duke's study. In Milan, Valentine and Proteus indulged in the Duke's hospitality in a variety of ways: the former was dressed in coat and tails, drinking cocktails, as he waited in the Duke's study for both Silvia (also dressed for dinner in a floor-length gown) and supper (II.1); the latter was drinking the Duke's whisky in an after-dinner indulgence that had clearly gone on too long (V.2). Valentine also engaged in a game of tennis with Silvia, while indulging in some after-sport banter with his rival, Thurio. Valentine's banishment was staged in an outdoor environment as the Duke prepared what was probably his signature lobster salad. These variation in scenic locales and times of day provided Thacker's audience with multiple images reinforcing its

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signification of the social environment, which combined to provide a multi-faceted view of the characters' lifestyles.

The images used by Buffini were also selected to depict a leisured existence, particularly through the signification of Milan (Manhattan). These were also familiar images and, as noted above, they appeared imitative of the impressions of the era depicted in Stephen Fry's film *Bright Young People*. With relatively few pieces of furniture or props, only an art deco fountain and a small table and chairs decorated the Court scenes that dominated Buffini's Milan. Costume provided the most overt visual sign of the thirties, with evening gowns and dinner jackets worn by Shakespeare's characters. However, unlike in Thacker's production there was almost no variety in costume, with Buffini's Silvia wearing the same red evening dress for the majority of her appearances.

If Buffini's Verona was perpetually dim daylight, Buffini's Milan was always under the bright nightlights of the city. The activities within the scenes also provided little contrast between them. Silvia and her set remained engaged in a constant round of either dancing or playing bright young people-type games, such as that which the promptbook calls the "handbag game". This took place in a series of extra-textual vignettes, which had the group stalking one of their members in an attempt to steal her bag. The deed accomplished, their victim chased them around the stage *en masse* at two different points until she had regained her property. The uniform sameness of the events depicted in Buffini's leisured lifestyle provided contrast with each other. Buffini's thirties were a fixed point in which characters seemed to repeat the same activities with frequency, giving the impression of stasis.

Each of these scenographic facets I have been discussing provides a glimpse of how these two thirties worlds were constructed. The research into the material world of the decade undertaken by Thacker's production is consistent with several other thirties-set productions that were staged at a similar point in the timeline. Those versions of the thirties (like Eyre's *Richard III*) presented their pasts through (sometimes highly detailed) (re)constructions. They were creating social environments using naturalistic theatre techniques that had been made viable by Barry Jackson's original modern dress productions. Thacker's production placed its thirties within just such environments, ghosting a thirties that had been made familiar through televisual adaptations. The scenography and costumes were varied and this enabled the production to create what Carol Rutter refers to as a "'whole' world".[33]

By contrast, Fiona Buffini's scenography provided what could be referred to as a half-world. While the production cannot be compared with Thacker's in terms of its historical research, Buffini's relative lack of props and a streamlined selection of locales were the antithesis of Rutter's assessment of the period setting, describing "one of the great satisfactions of period design" being "its attention to detail."[34] It is this attention to detail (and its lack) that I will explore in more depth in the next section by looking at the strategies used in communicating the text to the audience through scenography.

IV. THE PROP AND THE TEXT

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[33] Rutter, *Enter the Body*, 106.
[34] Ibid.

Following on from my observation that the Thacker and Buffini productions differed in the quantity of props and the manner by which each design signified time and place, I want to return to Carol Rutter's reflection that bodies bear the brunt of performance. In one of the examples in the previous section, I highlighted the ways in which the two productions signalled Valentine's voyage. This was accomplished first by the presence of objects (luggage) that represented the activity (travelling) and secondarily their physical use within the scene.

Thacker's Valentine, Richard Bonneville, interacted with his stage objects in a naturalistic fashion, making them *physically* part of his character's life. For the Valentine in Buffini's production, Alex Avery, his single prop (suitcase) was unused until his exit and his physical connection with the object was minimal. The difference was that Avery's prop was symbolic rather than integrated. This is a fine distinction and subject to individual interpretation, but one worth exploring here because the manner(s) in which props have been utilised within these thirties-set productions has a bearing on how meaning is created. Props, as Andrew Sofer argues, "seduce our attention in the playhouse as they become drawn into the stage action and absorb complex and sometimes conflicting meanings."[35] I want to examine the strategies, used primarily in Thacker's naturalistic production, which combined prop and the actor's physicality in order to communicate the text to the audience.

In framing my discussion of the body's connection with props, I want to recall two practitioner comments from the previous chapter. Both director Simon Langton and actor Oliver Ford Davies have commented on acting, the former on television and the

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[35] Andrew Sofer, *The Stage Life of Props* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2003) 2.

latter in Shakespearean drama. Discussing the contemporary period drama and its reliance on location shooting, Langton stated his opinion that actors "perform better in a real place" where you can get "character and depth into whatever you're doing."[36] Davies' remarks hinged on the opinion that television naturalistic acting "has got actors into bad habits" when doing Shakespeare because "their hands [are] used to pockets and props" which makes it difficult for them "to stand still on stage, relaxed, with [their] arms by the side."[37] These two points of view are discussing what is, in effect, technique, with the differences hovering between natural body posture (Langton) and awkward use of physicality (Davies). What I want to propose here is that the naturalistic setting used by Thacker in denoting his thirties environment enabled his actors to communicate the text more efficiently than Buffini's spare, more symbolic thirties world. In distinguishing between the two separate acting strategies, I also want to suggest another measure by which to define the category of period analogue, the depth of the actors' physical connection to their environment providing the distinction between "historical/concept" and "*décor*/costume" styles.

In the integration of props and actors' bodies as a tool used in communicating the text, David Thacker's production adheres to the pattern of the early productions in the thirties setting timeline. As we have seen, Sheelagh Keegan's design for the 1991 *Two Gentlemen* provided a highly detailed, naturalistic environment for Shakespeare's characters to inhabit that was replete with stage properties. As we saw earlier in the examples from *Richard III* and *Othello*, stage properties were an extra-textual method of communicating Shakespeare's words to audiences. I want to explore here the ways

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[36] Robert Giddings and Keith Selby, *The Classic Serial on Television and Radio* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001) 106.
[37] Oliver Ford Davies, *Performing Shakespeare* (London: Nick Hern Books, 2007) 97.

in which actors employed props to provide meaning and signify the period setting. In doing so, I will consider examples of the use of props both required by Shakespeare's text and those made possible by the period setting, including those mentioned in my chronicling of the productions' historical research.

The chequebook "mocked up" from the Coutts bank facsimile for David Thacker's version of the play was employed during the exchange between Antonio, Proteus and Panthino in I.3. Insisting that his son should visit Valentine in Milan, Antonio beckoned to his Jeeves-like gentleman's gentleman on

> What maintenance he from his friends receives,
>
> Like exhibition thou shalt have from me.
>
> (I.3.68-9)

Panthino took three paces forward, placed his hand in his jacket pocket and brought out the chequebook. The manservant detached a pre-written cheque from its bundle and handed it to Proteus. In this simple movement, Shakespeare's text was visually explained in terms of both filial relationship and class in the context of this thirties world. The use of the manservant as intermediary in financial matters troped a perceived lack of overt affection within upper class families, ghosting those depicted in dramatic form in period drama (the relationship between Lady Marchmain and her children in *Brideshead*, for example). The portrayal of Panthio as a (*Jeeves*esque) valet also reinforced the class-based reading of Proteus' household. The moment with the chequebook thus added texture to the period setting and provided the audience with a visual representation of "maintenance".

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I noted above that the stage for the first Julia and Lucetta scene was sparsely dressed, with the set consisting of a garden bench and two potted plants. The only prop used in this scene was another extra-textual addition to the period setting, a dance card that hung from Julia's wrist by a ribbon. As she spoke "But say, Lucetta, now we are alone" (1), Julia divested herself first of gloves, then her shoes. She placed the pumps gingerly on the bench beside her, and then asked Lucetta out of the gentlemen in her opinion which "is worthiest love" (6). Lucetta answered "Please you repeat their names" (7), at which point Julia began consulting the dance card. She looked at the list and began, "What thinkst thou [*slight pause as she considered the name with which to begin*] of the fair Sir Fabian?"[38] (9). This gestural connection with the prop continued as Julia went through her list of dance partners. As with the cheque, the prop was used to denote period as well as providing contextual meaning to the lines. Balls and dance cards are both part of the courting ritual for the upper class, made familiar from literature and in visual form from period adaptations, including *Love in a Cold Climate*. The prop was also employed to add texture to the costumes' signification, showing that Julia and Lucetta were attending a ball and not simply dressed for dinner. As with Valentine's luggage in the previous scene, the dance card integrated into the text also provided a physical action that helped to differentiate Julia's suitors during delivery.

In Thacker's production, props were also deployed in order to illustrate emotional subtext, as with a soda siphon in V.2. The scene was set in the Duke's study in the early hours of the morning at 4am (according to production records). Julia, in the

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[38] At this line, the name Eglamour was replaced with the name Fabian, in order to prevent confusion when the Sir Eglamour in Milan was introduced.

woollen suit she had donned as Sebastian, was polishing Proteus' shoes. Proteus was imbibing a whiskey and soda, with the siphon and decanter placed within reach on the floor in front of him. He had taken off his tailcoat and was sprawled on the sofa wearing a silk dressing gown. Thurio remained in his evening attire and, of the three, was still formally dressed although the dinner hour had clearly passed.

As the music of the scene change (*In the Still of the Night*) faded and the lights came up, Thurio put his whiskey glass down on the desk with an audible thud and said, clearly irritated, "Sir Proteus what says Silvia to my suit?" (1). Receiving an unsatisfactory answer, the testy Thurio's next line was heavy with sarcasm: "What? Is my leg too long?" (4). (Guy Henry being a tall, gangly actor there was a deeper vein of humour to this line as performed than would appear on the page). Throughout the exchange, Proteus continued to top up his whiskey, his intoxication making him surly and uncooperative. There was a long pause after Thurio's line "What says she of my birth?" (22) and in the silence that followed, the soda siphon was expressively used by Proteus. A long, steady stream of soda was transferred into Proteus's whiskey glass articulating his feelings about both Thurio and his line of questioning. It was only after the pause that Proteus replied, "That you are well derived" (23). This is an innocuous enough response on the page, but Lynch's pause in delivery combined with the interaction with the prop fleshed out the subtextual relationship between the two characters, playing effectively with Shakespeare's text.

Leaving aside the props included as thirties signifiers for now, I want to illustrate that this naturalistic method of using props permeated Thacker's production through the example of one of Shakespeare's few required items: a coin. The dialogue between

Proteus and Speed in I.1 includes language that indicates remuneration is exchanged, which both the Oxford and Arden editions place at Proteus' "Well, sir, here is for your pains" at line 125. In Thacker's production, the currency appeared significantly earlier as a solution to communicate one of the play's "laborious witticisms", as Roger Warren describes it.[39] The passage I would like to explicate consists of lines 76-93, although it should be noted that in the Thacker version, lines 79-83 were excised in performance, which is reflected here:

SPEED: You conclude that my master is a shepherd then,   76

    and I a sheep?

PROTEUS: I do.

SPEED: Nay, that I can deny by a circumstance.   84

PROTEUS: I'll prove it by another.

SPEED: The shepherd seeks the sheep, and not the sheep

    the shepherd; but I seek my master, and my master

    seeks not me. Therefore I am no sheep.

PROTEUS: The sheep for fodder follows the shepherd; the

    shepherd for food follows not the sheep. Thou for   90

    wages followest thy master, thy master for wages follows

    not thee. Therefore thou art a sheep.

SPEED: Such another proof will make me cry, 'baa'.

In this passage, the word play builds on repetitions of "circumstance", "sheep" and "shepherd", the latter two probably needing no clarification to a modern audience.

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[39] Warren, 49.

The word that Warren, Sanders, Carroll and Schlueter all footnoted in their editions was "circumstance", which they collectively defined as either "argument" or "detailed argument". The performance choice made by Thacker's Proteus (Barry Lynch) and Speed (Sean Murray) was to marry the word "circumstance" with the textually required prop, using the interaction with the physical object to provide a definition of the word in the process. Thus, the "circumstance" became a coin, which appeared at line 76.

Pulling the coin out of his trouser pocket, Speed flourished it by tossing it up in the air before placing it on the ground as collateral for a wager on "circumstance". The extended movement from pocket to stage floor allowed the audience extra seconds to digest the meaning of the lines. With "I'll prove it by another", Proteus placed his own "circumstance" on the floor beside Speed's (Shakespeare's single required prop thus doubling in performance). At the conclusion of Speed's rationale, the servant confidently bent to retrieve his winnings. Simultaneously, Proteus lunged at the twin coins as his foot covered them. Through wordplay he proved that Speed was indeed a sheep, pausing as he picked up the wager to savour "Therefore thou art a sheep", holding up both coins in triumph. While the action did not communicate the precise meaning of the word, it translated the passage into a theatrical idiom that allowed the audience to *hear* and digest the argument.

If in its use of props, Thacker's production provides a theatrical definition of the "concept/historical" method of merging text, prop, actor and (frequently) period context in fluid action, Buffini's use of props provides its antithesis. Again using the Kahn/Berry definitions, the use of stage properties in Buffini's production provides a

physical and material performance model for their "*décor*/costume" category of the period setting. Props in Buffini's *Two Gentlemen* appeared as either symbolic or used to prop up (so to speak) characterisation. Props were imposed to decorate, rather than integrated into the setting naturalistically. In Buffini's production, these tools of performance were therefore used in a different manner to the material objects in Thacker's production, as two examples will help to illustrate.

For the scene between Antonio and Panthino (I.3), Buffini's props lists contains six items: a bath chair, a blanket, bones and fossils, a small brush, a magnifying glass and a flask of whiskey and a tumbler. With this collection of items, Buffini symbolised her representation of England (Verona) as a place of decay. Antonio and Panthino were again depicted as servant and master, with Panthino dressed in a long coat and tails pushing his decrepit master in the bathchair. In a physical representation of England's decay, this Antonio was literally "dying" (as Avery described Buffini's concept) with his snowy white hair unkempt and protruding at all angles from his head. The blanket was placed over Antonio's legs to further signify the character's frailty.

Into this physical signification of decrepitude was injected a symbolic stage prop: a tray of fossils placed over Antonio's lap. During his dialogue with Panthino, Antonio continually examined his fossils through his magnifying glass. Unlike Thacker's production, these actions were not done in conjunction with the text, but placed on top as Antonio's gestures were not integrated with Shakespeare's lines. The only point at which line and text met was in a physical gesture as Antonio said, "Whereon this month I have been hammering." On the last word, Antonio pounded (hammered) the

side of his head vigorously. This action dislodged a cloud of white dandruff from his pate, which Panthino flicked from the older gentleman's shoulders with the small brush. Although the action illustrated "hammering" effectively, neither this movement nor the props provided anything but *décor* in communication of the text itself to the audience.

That Buffini's props did not operate on the dual levels of period signification and communication of the text can be illustrated in a further example from her production. One of the three props to appear as part of the scenography in "Julia's bedroom" for I.2 was the "pre-1930s copy of *Jane Eyre*" requested in the production's early rehearsal notes. The book was placed on the stage right side of the settee as the scene opened, with Julia lounging against its stage left arm "wistfully moping" (as the promptbook describes it). As Lucetta entered, Julia lunged across the *chaise*, grabbed the book, sat upright and began to "read". An observant maid, Lucetta began to tidy up Julia's clothing, with a suspicious eye on the younger woman. Humming *Someone to Watch Over Me* (the Gershwin tune written in 1926, providing an aural signifier of the inter-war years) Lucetta calmly reached around Julia, took the book and replaced it into Julia's hands the correct way up. This was a move redolent of the television sitcom (complete with live audience laugh track). Ostensibly the inclusion of the book was meant to provide the audience a visual clue in reading this Julia's character. Again, however, it was decorative rather than substantive, particularly noticeable when Lucetta righted the book in Julia's hands. This was meant to elicit (and obviously got) what is known as a "cheap laugh" from the audience. In this context, its cheapness the result of the move's (and the prop's) lack of a grounded connection

with Shakespeare's text. The book was simply *décor*, rather than something integral to the action.

Where Julia's reading of *Jane Eyre* did little to further the audience's (or the actor's) connection with the text, the use of a prop book in Thacker's production had been integrated into the action. This will provide a useful contrast through which to judge the Buffini production's attitude towards its material world. An ornately bound book was carried on in his first entrance (I.1) by Barry Lynch's Proteus, the object nestled in the pocket of his cardigan. It is its use within the passage spanning lines 19-24 which concerns me here, the dialogue as follows:

VALENTINE: And on a love-book pray for my success?

PROTEUS: Upon some book I love I'll pray for thee.

VALENTINE: That's on some shallow story of a deep love:

                   How young Leander crossed the Hellespont.

PROTEUS: That's a deep story of a deeper love,

                   For he was more than over-shoes in love.

On Valentine's first line in this sequence, Richard Bonneville yanked the book out of Lynch's pocket, speaking with heavy irony. Bonneville began leafing through *Hero and Leander* as Proteus responded. His attention taken by his action, he emphasised the juxtaposition of "shallow" and "deep", again with mockery. The next line was used, with a small shake of the book by Valentine, to signify the story held within those pages was that of the lover referenced within the text, Leander and his Hero.

That slight flourish of the book also reinforced Valentine's ironic reading of "shallow" and "deeper", using the motion as an exhibit of Proteus' folly in being in "love".

Through these examples of props and the uses to which they were put within the performance texts of these two *Two Gentlemen*, the difference between approaches becomes discernible. The more in-depth "historical/concept" approach (Thacker) utilised stage properties in a way that accentuated the text, combining actor's body and other signifiers to provide a multi-layered image that was part of a wider social environment. The superficial "*décor*/costume" approach (Buffini), by contrast, places meaning over the text through props (clothing the mannequin) without simultaneously engaging with either Shakespeare's dialogue or allowing the object to contribute to the signification of a multi-layered social environment.

What I want to investigate in the remainder of this section is how the naturalistic environment can impact an actor's comfort level with the text, in the way that director Simon Langton and actor Oliver Ford Davies imply. One method by which it may be possible to view this is by using Annabel Arden's definitions of gesture. The *Théâtre de Complicité* director outlined this as two broad categories where movement is either "integrated with the text and shared with the audience" or those which "underline the text" in some way.[40] We have already seen examples of this, with Thacker's production integrating gestures with props and Buffini's underlining of the text with her material objects. I want to introduce Arden's explanation of movement at this point, however, because this differentiation will be useful in looking at gestures that

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[40] Annabel Arden, Margo Hendricks, and Lynette Hunter, "Gesture, Language and the Body" in *Shakespeare, Language and the Stage: The Fifth Wall: Approaches to Shakespeare from Criticism, Performance and Theatre Studies*, ed. by Lynette Hunter and Peter Licthenfels (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2005) 67.

go beyond the interaction with a prop (period or otherwise). I want to also consider Arden as a corollary with the assertions of Davies and Langton, as their points are rooted in the not easily measurable realm of actor comfort within his/her surroundings.

I want to suggest that physical comfort with props (Thacker) carries over into other gestural levels producing physical comfort with the world as a whole, making it easier for the actor to communicate the text with her/his entire body. The converse of this is a lack of physical integration with prop and text (Buffini), which correspondingly manifests itself in a disconnect between text spoken and physical movement (or "bodily awkwardness" as Davies succinctly phrased it). In drawing these distinctions I want to concentrate on the playing of Julia's soliloquy (I.2.105-130), comparing movement and gesture (with and without Shakespeare's required prop) by Clare Holman (Thacker) and Vanessa Ackerman (Buffini).

In the study of gestural movement in its theatrical usage, it is relatively simple to measure the melding of text, physicality and prop as a strategy for communicating the text. It is more complicated to distinguish between an actor's physical comfort in a role or a deliberate character choice. An actor who appears uncomfortable could, in fact, be deliberately using body language to denote this state of being; it could also be a sign that she/he *is* uncomfortable with their performance and not entirely physically engaged. These two ways of reading "bodily awkwardness" (or its opposite) are interchangeable, as anything that occurs onstage can be seen to be a deliberate choice and read as such. Thus it is as true to observe that an actor who *is* uncomfortable with (or unsure of) their performance is, in fact, fully in character as it is to draw the

opposite conclusion: that the discomfort signalled interferes with the state of being in character. Without speaking to the persons involved, the distinctions remain subject to interpretation.

Looking at the overall technique of Holman and Ackerman through their physicality in delivering Julia's soliloquy, what is immediately evident is the contrast between them in audience awareness. Ackerman began her speech upright before quickly sinking to the floor ("such sweet honey"), with the pieces of the letter scattered in front of her. She remained primarily in one of two positions (kneeling or on her back) for the remainder of the speech. In kneeling, Ackerman addressed her lines to the papers, rarely looking up and out at the audience. Buffini's Julia thus remained relatively stationery and did not include those watching with her body. Clare Holman also began the speech standing and sank to the floor to engage with the letter's pieces. Crucially however, Holman spent a greater proportion of her speech addressing the audience rather than hiding from those watching by staring at the floor. This audience engagement *versus* disengagement speaks to the comfort levels of the actors with their text. As we will see, Holman was able to play with the text both vocally *and* physically, while Ackerman shied away from the words as she buried them into the floor.

In attempting to compare the actors' levels of physical comfort, what is perhaps most striking is the ease with which Holman shifted levels, rising from the stage and then returning to her knees. She sank to the floor at roughly the same point as Ackerman ("injurious wasps"), but rose again to her full height as she threw her name "against the bruising stones". She rejoined the other pieces of the letter, returning to the floor,

on "And here is writ". This change in position shows that the actor's physical engagement with the text is with the entire body, not simply a portion of it. This shift in levels also speaks to Holman's level of comfort with the text in performance.

Clare Holman's use of gestures and pausing was also indicative of her security in her character, which enabled her to vary both. Her "hateful hands" were rubbed; she kissed "each paper for amends" by picking each piece up to cosset them one by one; she "trampled contemptuously" literally by pounding her foot onto the paper with her name she had thrown to one side. She paused to sneak a guilty look upstage, making sure Lucetta would not reappear at that moment, as she peeked at one of the papers to find "here is writ kind Julia". Holman paused again to wonder at what she was reading, before she rapturously shared with the audience, "here is writ 'Love-wounded Proteus'". She then lovingly "search[ed] it with a sovereign kiss" before placing it inside her evening gown, next to her bosom. Realising that Proteus was "twice or thrice" "written down", she then looked out and above her, pleading with the wind to "blow not a word away". What is important here is that each of these actions were performed in a way that gave time and weight to each phrase. In that way, Holman both appeared to be new-minting the speech which, in turn, heightened her physical engagement with the text. Each move grew out of the line, building to its climax.

In Buffini's promptbook, adjacent to the "circumstance" exchange between Speed and Proteus, is pencilled an annotation that reads "fast fast". That this remark was taken literally is apparent with the statistic that although Buffini's actors spoke five *more* lines than Thacker's, Buffini's cast spoke it in approximately five *fewer* seconds than had Thacker's. Although "fast fast" did not appear beside Julia's soliloquy, the level of

pausing in Holman's compared with Ackerman's can be illustrated through timing as well. Where Holman took approximately two minutes to perform the soliloquy, Ackerman raced through it in one minute and thirty-four seconds. This is symptomatic of the latter's lack of both using the pause as a tool and the lack of differentiating gestures. Ackerman paused noticeably only twice, both times to kiss one "paper". This lack of pausing caused her to perform the lines in run-on form, perceptibly not shifting gear as the character goes from one thought to another, as with "that I'll tear away./And yet I will not".

Perhaps crucially is Ackerman's comparative lack of a complete physical performance, which became noticeable as her Julia was poised to "throw my name". Characteristically Ackerman was kneeling on the floor and prior to that line, she lifted her arm above her head, clutching the paper she would throw. The "throw" was less of a throw and more of a drop, as only her arm moved as she let the paper fall from her hand with a half-hearted attempt at throwing. Only her arm was engaged in the action; the rest of her body remained motionless. Holman's complete commitment was evident at that moment, as she rose from her kneeling position to throw the paper, using her whole body expressively. Holman's gesture was integrated with the text; Ackerman's gesture was, in Annabel Arden's phrase, simply "the reproduction of a code"; Ackerman's body was going through the motion of throwing, without actually being physically convincing with her action.[41]

I have thus far established the difference in the methods by which the two casts engaged with their onstage environments through looking at how actors utilised their

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[41] Arden, et al., 67.

props in communicating Shakespeare's text. I suggested that David Thacker's cast had used stage properties to provide nuance to the thirties setting and to help communicate the text. Fiona Buffini's cast had fewer props to choose from which inhibited this multi-layered signification of the period analogue; for those props they did possess, they were included mainly for their symbolic value as with Antonio's fossils. A direct correlation is difficult to trace but it is possible that the use of naturalistic props led to Thacker's actors being more physically engaged throughout, the one feeding into the other; Buffini's actors, by comparison, were unable to completely engage with their surroundings physically, manifesting itself in awkward body movements as with Ackerman.

There is also one other potential physical by-product of the influence of a naturalistic setting on the actors: their ability (and inability) to move in ways that are accepted as being "period movement". Period stage properties, like the Coutts chequebook, are rarely authentic items from the past; likewise, actors are not physically divorced from their own eras and their movement onstage stems from their own personal environment. Certain factors (such as costuming) can change the way the body moves, as Paul Jesson and Maureen Beattie noted in the previous chapter. However, I would suggest that costumes are not the sole cause facilitating a change in movement. Instead, both the onstage environment and shifting qualities in television period drama can also be viewed as factors contributing to actor movements within the Shakespearean period analogue. That the naturalistic environment is a key factor stems from the idea of the total physical engagement with both props and text in Thacker's production. His actors' integration of prop, body and text was likely a factor

in their apparent absorption of movement that seemed to adhere to perceived ideas of the thirties.

The lack of a naturalistic environment perhaps inhibited the same total physical assimilation of the decade for Buffini's actors. However, it is also worth remembering that by 2004 television period drama had undergone noticeable modernisation. It is the shift that relates directly to the portrayals of sexuality in period drama, which has become steadily more explicit, that is pertinent here. While there had been brief episodes of nudity, post-coital cuddling, and, in the case of *Brideshead*, copulation, the serials were not overtly sexualised. That began to change with the Andrew Davies-scripted *Pride and Prejudice*, broadcast on the BBC in 1995. As you will recall, producer Sue Birtwistle's "pitch" to Davies had been predicated on emphasising that the novel was primarily about sex and money. While sexualising *Pride and Prejudice* through the now-iconic wet tee-shirt image of Colin Firth's Mr Darcy's seems tame in the twenty-first century media climate, it was the genesis of a trend that foregrounds sex in some adaptations of period novels. Audience expectations about historical re-enactments in dramatic form had thus changed, which in turn likely allowed the shift to occur on the Shakespearean stage.

In order to illustrate this point, it will be useful to return to the performance of Julia's soliloquy in the two contrasting productions. With respect to movement, Clare Holman's performance ghosted the more decorous movements found in dramatisations of the thirties in television drama around the time of Thacker's production; Ackerman's physicalisation, by contrast, is distinctly twenty-first century. This is an aspect of movement that comes out most distinctly through comparison of

the final portion of the speech as performed in both productions. Coupling the names Julia and Proteus together at the end of the soliloquy, Holman slowed the words down as she folded them (in the paper she was caressing) "one upon another." She cajoled the pieces together, having risen and perched herself on her knees, seductively saying to them "Now kiss, embrace, contend, do what you will", lost in reverie until startled by Lucetta's re-entrance and "Madam". This could be considered in keeping with representations of the thirties in period drama that only hinted at sexuality, "coy" perhaps being the operative word.

Where Holman was coy (or at worst slightly risqué), Vanessa Ackerman was lewd. She concluded the identical speech on her back and, with her hand holding the pieces of the letter with her's and Proteus' names coupled, she placed it sexually between her legs. This crudity was the recurrence of an impulse Ackerman had had to lie on her back just after depositing Proteus's name next to her bosom. This aspect of the performances helps to illustrate a connection between the evocation of period through an actor's physicality and the performative emphases in television period drama that occurred in tandem with the performance timeline.

Julia's masturbatory moment in Buffini's *Two Gentlemen* was not an isolated episode of the production's overtly sexualised depiction of the period. The parting of Julia and Proteus a few scenes later also provided the director and her actor with another opportunity to "underline" or "telephone" (in Annabel Arden's terms) the scene's subtext.[42] Roger Warren notes that this short, twenty-line scene plays with the contrast

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[42] Arden, et al., 67.

"between speech and silence when communicating love".[43] The actions that occur in this silence are most illuminative of my point about Buffini's production and its absorption of contemporary period drama aesthetics.

Buffini's directorial choice was to place this scene in the private space of Julia's room, dominated by the *chaise* and folding screen. In a concession to her period depiction Buffini added a (nearly) silent Lucetta to the stage picture, obviously meant to provide the visual of a chaperone for the couple. The scene began with a brief dumbshow clearly necessitated by the technical requirements of a scene change, a prelude that non-verbally encapsulated (underlining again) the twenty lines of the parting. Julia ran onstage with Proteus following after, carrying a suitcase. They stood at opposite corners of the stage and after a beat, she swivelled and moved toward him. They stood staring at one another until she collapsed at his feet in a (dumb)show of despair. Julia eventually maneuvered herself onto the *chaise* with a helpful cue from Proteus, whose touch she shrank away from onto her only piece of furniture. She sat with her head down and hands stiffly resting on its upholstery. The rest of their movements during the scene revolved around the *chaise*.

When the tokens were exchanged Proteus was standing upstage of the *chaise* as Julia moved toward him and handed him her ring. The lovers moved onto the sole piece of furniture, both kneeling on it as Proteus pulled his own off his finger to reciprocate. As Proteus placed the band on Julia's finger, she shifted forward with her décolletage thrust forward seductively and propositioned, "And seal the bargain with a holy kiss" (7). A beat ensued as she slowly and suggestively leaned closer to him. She

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[43] Warren, 40.

capitalised on the initiative, kissing him as he remained as motionless as an awkward teenager. What is interesting about this moment is that, although scrawled in the margin of the promptbook is an annotation "Julia is only just 18", Julia was far more sexually aware (and aggressive) than Proteus.

It was at this point in the action that the parting became the "big snog" (as the promptbook terms it), as Proteus found his manhood and left adolescence behind. After a beat, with his arms, which had been hanging listlessly at his side, he enthusiastically grabbed her and returned her kiss. Enraptured, she fell backward onto the arm of the chaise with him on top, the voyeuristic Lucetta standing upstage of the chaise. In an expression of Julia's earlier fantasising with the letter and the lovers' names, ("Thus will I fold them, one upon another;/Now kiss, embrace, contend, do what you will") they rolled literally one upon another. In unison, the couple moved off the chaise in a well-choreographed move. Still kissing, they each placed one hand on the stage floor in order to facilitate their roll onto the stage floor. Julia landed on top of Proteus, but he quickly rotated them so that he dominated in missionary position. Throughout these moves they continued to kiss without pausing. Looking disapprovingly over the action, this monumental lack of decorum was finally interrupted by Lucetta clearing her throat loudly and pointedly. The lovers scrambled off each other and Proteus continued with the dialogue, without any seeming embarrassment. It was in this overtly sexualised manner that Buffini's production filled the silence that accompanies the expression of love in this scene.

David Thacker's method of filling the silence was more emotionally subtle, resisting as it did the method by which movement and gesture can "underline" the text. As

noted earlier, this scene enhanced the emotion of the text by using thirties music to underscore the action (Irving Berlin's *What'll I Do?*). Rather than the indoor venue that Buffini had chosen, the bare stage of Thacker's milieu represented an outdoor location. Both Proteus and Julia appeared in outerwear: Proteus in a brown overcoat, Julia wearing a lilac wool crepe dress and cape topped with a matching felt toque hat. The two characters' emotions were underplayed, in part because the lyrics provided the back-story. When they reached centre stage they stood directly facing each other, in silhouette to the audience, with hands clasped together at chest level. They played this scene standing together in this manner, any extraneous movement around the stage eschewed for these moments of stillness.

The couple embraced on "seal the bargain with a holy kiss" (7) and shortly afterwards, the video records the footsteps of Panthino (barely discernible in shadowy silhouette on the video) which triggered Proteus' "My father stays my coming. Answer not./The tide is now" (13-14). The lovers' imposed separation was keenly felt by Julia, who sobbed into Proteus' arms and quickly ran off as Proteus clutched at her hand as it slipped from his grasp. He movingly addressed the audience on "What gone without a word" (16), dismayed at her exit. As his last words, "Alas, this parting strikes poor lovers dumb" (20) were uttered onstage, the music crescendoed and the spotlight faded on him and the darkness reverberated with a repeat of the "*What'll I do with just a photograph*" verse, continuing through to end with "*When I'm alone/with only/dreams of you/that won't/come true/What'll I do?*" until it slowly faded; the impression left by this rendition of II.7 was much more in keeping with Buffini's perception of a "romantic thirties" than her own staging accomplished.

V. CONCLUSION

With the amassed evidence pertaining to the two productions of *Two Gentlemen*, a pattern has emerged in terms of the "historical/concept" and "*décor*/costume" types of period analogue. What was presented by Thacker's production could be defined in terms of the former and formed a distinct social world, which the characters inhabited. This environment comprised distinct locations with activities appropriate to the locales signified through both actions (frequently with props) and in costuming. These naturalistic details allowed the actors to connect with Shakespeare's text through the material world created for them by the designer. The relationships between the characters were also often defined by the fact that they inhabited a social world, redolent in this case with perceived notions of class in the thirties. Inhabiting these distinct locations may well have also contributed to Thacker's actors feeling comfortable enough with the text to engage their whole bodies in the communication of the text to the audience. Thacker's framing device, his use of thirties popular music, was also integrated into the text in order to provide the play with a deeper emotional resonance in performance.

In terms of defining the "*décor*/costume" type of period analogue, Buffini's depiction of a social reality depended on impositions on the text. She decorated her thirties with extra-textual characters, created to illuminate Shakespeare's plot (a plot Buffini herself had declared was "not a complicated piece"). The props used in Buffini's production were also decorative, used symbolically rather than as tools for the actor to inhabit a social world and communicate the text. This lack of a social reality was likely a factor in actors discomfort with the text, apparently seen as a thing to be sped

through as quickly as possible. Their bodies reflected this, with voice and body becoming disengaged in parts. The fact that actor, period setting and text were three disparate items, not fully integrated with each other speaks to the concept of the thirties being primarily decorative, the opposite of Thacker's in-depth approach to his period setting. When viewed together, these disparate factors help to illustrate productions that engage with their period setting (Thacker's) and those that use historical period to decorate the stage and costume its actors (Buffini's).

CONCLUSION

I began this thesis with a quotation from Nicholas Hytner who states, "the period a Shakespearean production is set in is the first question you ask". While this may be a basic question asked at the beginning of the production process, the period analogue itself is a complex mixture of performance trends, audience expectation and the construction of various levels of signification.

The late twentieth century period analogue emerged out of specific performance trends, both theatrical and mediated forms. In the first section of this thesis, I identified Barry Jackson, Michael MacOwan and Tyrone Guthrie as three practitioners whose production styles were instrumental to the emergence of the analogue. In their use of naturalism and interpretation in Shakespearean performances in the twentieth century, they influenced numerous productions that came after them. The period analogue in the late twentieth century had its foundations in these theatrical precedents, but it appeared to flourish when television period drama became a popular staple.

This thesis has demonstrated that the Shakespearean period analogue is also inextricably linked to its televisual counterpart. Television period drama has been used in the reception of the theatrical event for at least forty years, as the example of Miller's *Merchant* being read through the lens of *The Forsyte Saga* has shown. Not only do the images of the historical past presented by period drama provide both the tools necessary to decode the social mores of an era, the televisually re-constructed society can also be ghosted onto a Shakespearean framework. The use to which

Trevor Nunn's production of *All's Well That Ends Well* put television's depictions of the pre-first world war was apparent not only its reception, but also in the actor's characterisations and the historical locales in which it was placed.

The televisual images of the past contributed to the emergence of the Shakespearean period analogue for precise theatrical reasons. The analogue, as a production tool, can be used as a visual shorthand employed by directors for specific reasons. Trevor Nunn's interest in the Edwardian era for *All's Well* was through a complex encoding of class and gender relations, which had recently been explored in period drama. *All's Well*'s television counterparts had dissected various facets of these issues over multiple programmes, embedding those cultural codes into audience consciousness. Audience expectations of the era were likely coloured by the era's portrayal in drama. It was these expectations that enabled Nunn to use the era as a tool to provide the Shakespearean performance text with its meaning. Through this televisual-historical ghosting, Nunn was able to emphasise the themes of class and gender relations present in the play.

The thirties period analogue became prominent for similar reasons, however its primary themes reflected the society in which they were performed. Television was again key to this process, as the thirties were presented as a visually pleasing and elegantly wealthy world. The initial productions in the thirties analogue timeline either reflected this social fantasy or, as with Richard Eyre's *Richard III*, explored the decade's social parallels. Again, as with Nunn's *All's Well*, the era's prominence on television provided viewers with expectations of what the thirties looked like and how characters would interact with one another in that social environment.

Despite its seeming coherence as a directorial method of making the text accessible through familiar images of the past, the (re)construction of the thirties is formed through a variety of influences. The prevalence of televisual representations of the thirties and theatrical conventions appeared to merge at the time when the thirties analogue emerged with David Thacker's *Two Gentlemen of Verona* and Richard Eyre's *Richard III*. The two Shakespearean productions painstakingly constructed a naturalistic social environment in which the plays' action could take place. In imitating the visual language of television's depictions of the thirties, this naturalism provided depth to the productions' themes. As the thirties gradually faded as an area of interest for television drama producers, the visual language used in (re)creating an onstage thirties became less complex. This happened simultaneously as the bare stage became the dominant method of staging Shakespeare's plays.

The different methods of executing the period analogue also affect the manner in which the plays were performed by actors. The early period analogues appeared to be successful in part because the scenography constructed highly detailed naturalistic worlds in which the action took place. Scene locations were chosen in order to provide a familiar context for the events as Shakespeare's characters were placed in dining rooms, drawing rooms, and a railway station, for example. The imagery both imitated then-current televisual evocations of the thirties, but also had their contemporary equivalents. In their representations of the past, these productions' historicity was never far removed from their contemporaneity.

By contrast with these naturalistic productions, the thirties analogues that were performed on a primarily bare stage used their scenography of the decade symbolically. In part this may have been due to the lack of familiarity with dramatic representations of the era, given its general absence from television since the late nineties. Without the ability to (re)view the thirties in other forms, audiences would likely have few concrete expectations about the era and its social context. Without naturalistic environments, actors and audiences seem to lack an ability to think about the past in terms of it as a social world. The non-naturalistic productions provided a symbolic representation of the era, rather than what Carol Rutter calls the construction of a "'whole' world" in all its period detail.

Importantly for discussion of the thirties analogue as a performance text, these two basic types of analogue created very different performances. In the naturalistic, familiar environment actors appeared relaxed and engaged with their environments. Bodies were active as props became extensions of both actor and text, with the technique helping the audience to engage with the text's meaning. In the sparsely decorated versions of the thirties, actors seemed stilted physically and props were often not tools, but hindrances that obscured any meaning the actors were trying to communicate. In effect, these two disparate methods of presenting an analogue can be considered as templates for the Kahn/Berry categories of "concept" and "*décor*".

What this thesis has shown is that the period analogue is essentially a hybrid dramatic form. Its reading of history is interlinked to the images of the depicted period that are in cultural circulation at the time of its production. Familiarity with multiple images of the past is an important part of the analogue's reception, as social mores of the

depicted eras are decoded by the Shakespearean audience; the "past's" meaning inextricably linked to the manner in which that past is represented elsewhere. The construction of an onstage social environment appears to be the key to a successful period analogue, but that success is reliant on these external dramatic influences.

The naturalistic thirties analogue productions emerged at a time when the thirties had been a site of interest for social introspection, with historical parallels much in evidence. At the time of writing, the decade has once again become a source of contemporary introspection as the fallout of the "credit crunch" and the deepest recession since the eighties has much of the western world in its grip. The banking crisis and the high levels of unemployment have also brought with them numerous introspective articles dissecting these events through the lens of the historical thirties.

Theatre companies have unearthed forgotten classics of the age, as interest in the thirties has risen. Terence Rattigan's *After the Dance* has been one of the more glamourous depictions of the decade to be performed in 2010. With a Mayfair setting, luxurious costumes and its depiction of decadent wealth, it visually imitated the impressions of the era that had come to prominence with *Brideshead Revisited*. It was, however, a bitter look at a failed generation who, as one disillusioned character observes, "It's the bright young people over again, only they never were bright and now they're not even young."[1]

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[1] Terence Rattigan, *After the Dance* (London: Nick Hern Books, 1995) 55.

The antithesis of the wealthy imagery has been seen in revivals of thirties plays in London and Bolton, with Ena Lamont Stewart's depiction of life in a Glasgow tenement, *Men Should Weep*, having a successful run at the National Theatre. Near simultaneous productions at Bolton's Octagon Theatre and the Finborough Theatre in London of Walter Greenwood's *Love on the Dole* presented their respective audiences with the hardships of a Salford slum.

Television period drama is also showing signs of a revival of interest in the thirties with *Upstairs, Downstairs* and a dramatisation of Winifred Holtby's *South Riding* recently broadcast. This renewed attraction to the thirties has yet to be translated into a revival of the thirties period analogue on the Shakespearean stage. If it does, however, this thesis has provided a framework for further investigation for not only the thirties analogue, but the Shakespearean period setting genre as a whole.

APPENDIX

THIRTIES ANALOGUE TIMELINE

Date	Play; Key personnel	Company/Theatre
1983	*Twelfth Night*; Denise Coffey (dir);	Young Vic Theatre
1988	*Twelfth Night*; Jeff Teare (dir);	Theatre Royal, Stratford East
1988	*Romeo and Juliet*; Teddy Kiendl (dir)	Albany Empire, Deptford
1990	*Twelfth Night*; Peter Benedict (dir)	Oracle Productions, Holland Park Theatre
1990	*Measure for Measure*; John Retallack (dir)	Oxford Stage Company
1990	*Richard III*; Richard Eyre (dir); Ian McKellen (Richard III)	Royal National Theatre
1990	*Midsummer Night's Dream*; Alistair Palmer (dir)	Factotum Theatre Company
1990	*Merchant of Venice*; Ian Dickens (dir)	D. P. Productions, Theatre Royal Nottingham
1990-1991	*Merchant of Venice*; Tim Luscombe (dir); John Woodvine (Shylock)	English Shakespeare Company
1991	*Two Gentlemen of Verona*; David Thacker (dir); Richard Bonneville (Valentine); Barry Lynch (Proteus)	Royal Shakespeare Company
1991	*Tempest*; John Retallack (dir)	Oxford Stage Company
1991	*Taming of the Shrew*; Dee Hart (dir)	New End Theatre, Hampstead
1991	*Othello*; Pat Trueman (dir); David Harewood (Othello)	Swan Theatre, Worcester
1992	*As You Like It*; Maria Aitken (dir)	Open Air Theatre
1993	*Romeo and Juliet*; Warren Hooper (dir)	Oldham Coliseum

1994	*The Tempest*; Simon Blake (dir)	Battersea Arts Centre
1994	*As You Like It*; Tom Scott (dir)	Eye Theatre
1995	*A Midsummer Night's Dream*; Michael Cabot (dir)	New End Theatre
1995	*Coriolanus*; Steven Berkoff (dir)	West Yorkshire Playhouse
1996	*Merchant of Venice*; Andy Arnold (dir)	Arches Theatre, Glasgow
1996	*Taming of the Shrew*; Tom Scott (dir)	Eye Theatre
1996	*Taming of the Shrew*; Gregory Thompson (dir)	AandBC Company
1996	*Macbeth*; Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones (dir)	Sherman Theatre, Cardiff
1996	*A Midsummer Night's Dream*; Jonathan Miller (dir)	Almeida Theatre
1997	*Othello*; Sam Mendes (dir)	Royal National Theatre
1997	*Julius Caesar*; Anthony Clark (dir)	Birmingham Repertory Theatre
1998	*Troilus and Cressida*; Michael Boyd (dir)	Royal Shakespeare Company
1999	*Merchant of Venice*; Trevor Nunn (dir)	Royal National Theatre
2000	*Comedy of Errors*; Lynne Parker (dir)	Royal Shakespeare Company
2000	*Julius Caesar*; Craig Giovanelli (dir)	Upstairs at the Gatehouse
2001	*Twelfth Night*; Lisa Kendall (dir)	Upstairs at the Gatehouse
2001	*Julius Caesar*; Edward Hall (dir)	Royal Shakespeare Company

2002	*Much Ado About Nothing*; Gregory Doran (dir)	Royal Shakespeare Company
2002	*Measure for Measure Malaya*; Phil Willmott (dir)	Riverside Studios
2003	*Hamlet*; Stephen Jameson (dir)	Upstairs at the Gatehouse
2003	*Henry V*; Scott Palmer (dir)	Glasgow Botanic Gardens
2004	*The Two Gentlemen of Verona*; Fiona Buffini (dir)	Royal Shakespeare Company
2004	*Romeo and Juliet*; Bob Carlton (dir)	Queen's Theatre, Hornchurch
2004	*Othello*; Mark Thomson (dir)	Royal Lyceum, Edinburgh
2005	*The Tempest*; Tom Wright (dir)	Southwark Playhouse
2005	*Twelfth Night*; Ian Brown (dir)	West Yorkshire Playhouse, Leeds
2007	*Much Ado About Nothing*; Andrew Hilton (dir)	Shakespeare at the Tobacco Factory, Bristol

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