

SHAKESPEARE PRODUCTIONS IN ENGLAND
1909 – 1932
AND
THE VISUAL ARTS:
THE WORK OF RICKETTS, WILKINSON,
LOVAT FRASER AND SHELVING

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis considers the contribution made to seminal productions of Shakespeare by the stage designers Charles Ricketts, Norman Wilkinson, Claud Lovat Fraser and Paul Shelving between the years 1909-1932. It examines how each responded to the visual arts as a means of developing an individual and distinctive style in sympathy with elements of the New Stagecraft and how this in turn influenced their interpretation of scenic designs and costumes.

This study foregrounds archival research as a means of understanding the ideas which informed these designers and the visual impact of their work.

The Introduction discusses the extent to which the Shakespearean work of these four designers has already been given consideration.

Each designer is then assessed in a separate chapter. These outline the cultural background from which they drew their inspiration and offer an analysis of their work for Shakespeare productions within this context. The productions are considered in chronological order. This facilitates an evaluation of the development of Ricketts, Wilkinson, Shelving and Lovat Fraser as stage designers and gives a perspective on their achievements and failures.

The Conclusion identifies the significance of the role of the stage designer to Shakespearean productions by 1932. It comments on the legacy of these designers and the continuing importance of the visual arts in relation to the interpretation of Shakespeare on the stage.

DEDICATION

To
Kevin

‘The kindest man,
The best-condition’d and unwearied spirit
In doing courtesies.’

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ABBREVIATIONS

BAGM	Bradford Art Gallery and Museum
BCL	Birmingham Central Library
BL	British Library
BMAG	Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery
BMSC	Bryn Mawr Special Collections, Philadelphia
CMAG	Cheltenham Museum and Art Gallery
JHL	James Hardiman Library Archives, National University of Ireland
MMTC	Mander and Mitchenson Theatre Collection; Jerwood Library, Trinity College
MT	Maddermarket Theatre Trust Ltd., Norwich
NMGM	National Museums and Galleries, Merseyside
NWB	Norman Wilkinson Bequest, 1938; University of London, Courtauld Institute of Art
SCL	Shakespeare Centre Library
SMT	Shakespeare Memorial Theatre
UBTC	University of Bristol Theatre Collection
UM	University of Michigan
VATC	V&A Theatre Collections
VAPD	V&A Prints and Drawings
WGM	Whitworth Art Gallery, The University of Manchester
WL	Witt Library, University of London, Courtauld Institute of Art.

GENERAL NOTES

Note 1

All quotations from the plays of William Shakespeare are from *The Complete Works* (Compact Edition), edited by Stanley Wells, Gary Taylor, John Jowett and William Montgomery (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988).

In the case of *King Lear* quotations are from *The Tragedy of King Lear* from *The Complete Works*.

Note 2

The fundamental changes in the staging and design of Shakespearean productions between 1909 -1932 was marked by the emergence of two important roles; that of the producer, and that of the scenic and costume designer. At the time there was some uncertainty as to how to identify their contribution. This is especially noticeable on theatre programmes. In the interests of clarity the terms producer and designer are used throughout this thesis.

INTRODUCTION

1. Establishing a Framework

This thesis aims to achieve a detailed understanding of the contribution to Shakespeare design by Charles Ricketts (1866-1931), Norman Wilkinson (1882-1934), Claud Lovat Fraser (1890-1921) and Paul Shelving (1888-1968) and to assess the extent to which the visual arts informed their realisation of productions. The thesis is organised into four chapters each of which examines in chronological order, major Shakespearean productions designed by these men. This allows a sustained analysis of each designer's development in terms of his interpretation of Shakespeare and response to the influence of the changing visual arts before and during this period. A chronological list of these productions, given in Appendix A, shows the concurrent nature of much of their work.

The years 1909-1932 provide the framework for the focus of this thesis. They reflect a period when a fundamental change in the staging, playing and visual realisation of Shakespeare was marked by seminal productions. A response to innovations in the visual arts became a vital and integral element in the contribution of scenic and costume designers to this new interpretation of Shakespeare in England. These designers emerged from the disciplines and preoccupations of the late nineteenth century world of art and theatre. They invigorated Shakespeare production with a diversity of influences drawn from ideas that reflected the visual arts of the new century, or interpretations that were informed by an enlightened response to their knowledge of the visual arts. The intention of this study is not to offer an exhaustive analysis of Shakespeare design work between these dates but to

examine the effects, influences and achievements of four designers whose work was associated with significant Shakespeare productions.

This thesis intends to establish how each responded to the debate and experiment concerning a new, simpler staging for Shakespeare's plays that was initiated at the beginning of the century and was demonstrated in their work until the 1930's. In *Early Twentieth Century Britain* (1992) Wilfrid Mellers and Rupert Hildyard argue that: 'the war [1914-1918] was quite simply a four year gap which separated the war generation and its successors from traditions which reached down to the Edwardian age. The nature and severity of this break varied from art to art.'¹ A similar view is expressed by Gary Jay Williams in *Our Moonlight Revels: A Midsummer Night's Dream in the Theatre* (1997). 'Modernism's first bright dreams were left in shreds by the horrors of mechanised warfare.'² A study of the work of these designers will refute this assumption. It will demonstrate that innovative design in Shakespeare production after 1918 was derived from a basis that was established prior to 1914 and that its inspiration continued to be a response to the vitality, colour and vibrancy that had informed the complexity of visual arts before the outbreak of war. The thesis seeks to investigate the wealth and variety of the stylistic interpretation adopted by Ricketts, Wilkinson, Lovat Fraser and Shelving and to make a detailed exploration of how each integrated a response to the visual arts into the process of design. It will demonstrate that, although these designers displayed an awareness of the European contribution to scenic design and the ideas of Edward Gordon Craig, they evolved and sustained a strongly decorative approach that defined a particularly English response to innovative Shakespearean design.

The choice of Ricketts, nearly a generation older than the other three designers and Wilkinson allows a perspective on the impact of the visual arts on Shakespearean

productions in England before 1914. Both designed for Shakespeare prior to this date and continued to do so until their deaths in the early 1930's. A consideration of their later work demonstrates both a continuance and development of their approaches and illustrates that the nature of stage design for Shakespeare had evolved. Lovat Fraser and Shelving both sought theatrical experience with Herbert Beerbohm Tree prior to 1914 but effectively developed their theatrical design careers after 1918. Lovat Fraser's only Shakespearean work was *As You Like It* (Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, 1919) for Nigel Playfair. Shelving's most innovative Shakespearean work was achieved in the 1920's and demonstrated a vital response to the visual arts. However, during his life-time commitment to the Birmingham Repertory Theatre, he designed numerous Shakespearean productions until 1960.

The importance of these designers' contribution to the visual interpretation of Shakespeare lay in their attempts to effect a unity and to establish and sustain the mood of the play. Identified as a major element of the New Stagecraft, this resulted in a rich, vivid and diverse co-existence of influential approaches to Shakespearean design dating from 1909 and continuing between the inter-war years. Ricketts's work marked a move away from the realism and pictorial styles that were prevalent at the beginning of the twentieth century. The ground-breaking designs of Wilkinson, Lovat Fraser and Shelving evolved a style that accommodated a rapidity of staging with costumes that reinforced the freshness and immediacy of a fast paced production. Shelving's modern dress Shakespeare developed these aspects to allow a fuller examination of the emotional and psychological mood of the plays. The choice of these designers allows a study of Shakespearean productions where the visual interpretation and sense of unity was sought through the realisation of both costumes and scenic design. It allows the focus of analysis to be almost entirely centred on

realised productions of Shakespeare and therefore examines the achievements and contribution of Ricketts, Wilkinson, Lovat Fraser and Shelving within the practicalities and pragmatism of working theatre.

2. Assessing Previous Scholarship

The degree to which the stage work of these four individuals and in particular their designs for Shakespeare productions has attracted critical analysis, gives an interesting insight into the transient nature of this art and their subsequent reputations. Aspects of their work have featured in various scholarly accounts of theatre history, but a detailed examination of the response to the visual arts by these designers has evaded scholarly study. This has occurred because the artistic inspiration of the theatrical designer is not a central concern of theatre history. The construct of methodologies has given an uneven focus to certain aspects of their Shakespeare work and the contemporaneous nature of their careers as designers of Shakespeare is seldom apparent. To a certain extent this is the inevitable consequence of studies in theatre history, where an account of a production can demand a consideration of the entire creative process. The intention of such approaches is not to assess the artistic inspiration and detail of an individual stage designer's work. Other studies of the visual aspects of Shakespeare have been directed successfully towards an overview of its global nature, while works that examine the development of stage and costume design are not exclusive to the production of Shakespeare.

The influence of the director has been a central concern of many studies of the development of Shakespeare production during the twentieth century. These have served to raise the profile of certain designers and give a perspective on both their

Shakespearean and other work for the theatre. Other areas of scholarly work offer useful insights on designers but have not attempted an overall consideration of their artistic inspiration. Biography can give a personal and historical context to a designer's work but there is an inevitable irony in that such works are largely dependent on the existence of written evidence. Useful insights also occur in theatrical memoirs but these are often brief and sometimes anecdotal in nature. It is interesting to note that, although the work of these designers was acknowledged in artistic journals at the time, there are few allusions to their theatrical designs in studies that embrace the visual arts of the period.

This section will approach an assessment of existing scholarship and other written evidence concerning Ricketts, Wilkinson, Lovat Fraser and Shelving in three ways. The first will consider the extent to which the work of these designers was recognised within the context of contemporary publications. These considered the fundamental changes to stage design which had occurred in Europe, Russia, America and England during the early years of the twentieth century. The second categorises the nature of more recent studies of theatre history in relation to their approach to theatre design and the work of these particular designers. The third will offer a consideration of publications that give an insight into the individual life and work of the designers. Together these present a variable but disparate body of evidence concerning their work on Shakespearean productions. It will be shown that none of these studies give a cohesive view of the innovative contribution that these designers brought to Shakespeare production in England between 1909 and 1932 or offer an extended analysis of their response to the visual arts.

2.1 Responding to Innovation

Publications in the early years of the twentieth century focused on the impact of contemporary European stage design and designers and the work of Edward Gordon Craig. As such they identify the numerous impulses that inspired the New Stagecraft and some of the influences that informed the work of these four designers. Two writers, in particular, attempted to give an account of this activity. In his aptly titled *The New Spirit in Drama and Art* (1912), Huntly Carter gives an outline survey of ‘Continental influences in drama and art that are beginning to make themselves felt in this country [USA].’³ His brief tour of cities in Germany and Poland and visit to Moscow provides ample evidence of the development of artistic and theatrical innovation abroad. In his chapter on London, Carter makes reference to Edward Gordon Craig’s commercial Ibsen production, *The Vikings at Helgeland* (Imperial, 1903) and Shakespearean production *Much Ado About Nothing* (Imperial, 1903). He also mentions Craig’s *Dido and Aeneas* (Hampstead Conservatoire, 1900). He makes no reference to other experimental stage design work that was being carried out by such as Ricketts with the Literary Theatre. Carter also identifies William Poel as a pioneer but makes no mention of Harley Granville Barker’s sustained efforts to produce modern plays and Greek drama, or to establish a repertory system. Although not entirely approving of Max Reinhardt’s effects as a producer, Carter concurs that on the whole, ‘their application marks a great advance on the London notion of artistic stagecraft.’⁴ Later, Carter made Reinhardt’s work more widely known to a public outside Europe in his informed and comprehensive survey *The Theatre of Max Reinhardt* (1914).⁵ In his ‘Preface’ Carter is anxious to emphasise that Reinhardt’s work transcends mere spectacle to become a search for an expression of the dramatic spirit.

Sheldon Cheney's *The New Movement in the Theatre* (1914), a collection of rewritten essays, offers an overview of innovative developments in the theatre. In the chapter 'The New Stagecraft', Cheney makes a short, simplistic and misinformed reference to 'Granville Barker [...] who has produced two Shakespearean plays in settings by Albert Rothenstein and Norman Wilkinson, following more or less closely the new German standards – which indeed, were derived from the work of the Englishman, Gordon Craig.'⁶ Cheney also reproduces two photographs of Wilkinson's designs for Barker's production of *Twelfth Night* (Savoy, 1912). Wilkinson is unacknowledged as the designer and his realisation of Olivia's garden is given only qualified approval, being described as an 'excellent setting, and in accord with the newest ideas of stage-craft. [...] cover the two trees with pieces of paper, and then note how decoratively the figures stand out'.⁷ The second photograph shows a simple exterior used for 5.1. The text incorrectly attributes the design to Wilkinson and Rothenstein. Even so, Cheney considers it to be 'representative of the best staging being done in England'.⁸ The comments are limited but at least they show an awareness of Barker and his designers, and recognise their work as an aspect of the new movement.

The interval between the date of these publications and those that appeared after the end of the First World War marks an inevitable hiatus in concerns over stage innovation. These later studies reflect a confidence in the authority and variety of innovative stage design and theatre practice in Europe and Moscow and the effect of its growing influence in America. As such, they offer a wider context in which to place the work of Ricketts, Wilkinson, Lovat Fraser and Shelving. At the time, these publications would have disseminated a wider understanding of experiment in the theatre. Oliver Sayler's *Max Reinhardt and His Theatre* (1924) was published to

coincide with Reinhardt's entry into the American theatre. In his 'Preface', Sayler makes an illuminating reference to the state of American theatre. 'Not so long ago, it was a luxury, a pastime an industry. Today, it is the most provocative of the arts.'⁹ A year later Sayler's *Inside the Moscow Arts Theatre* (1925), presented an account of the diverse ideas of such exponents of innovative theatre as Vsevolod Meyerhold and Constantin Stanislavski.¹⁰ Again this offered a further insight into their theatrical approaches after Stanislavski's visit to America in 1923.

In contrast to these considerations of contemporary theatrical practitioners, Allardyce Nicoll's *The Development of the Theatre: A Study of Theatrical Art from the Beginnings to the Present Day* (1927), offers a scholarly and measured overview of the development of stages, scenic design and costume. Nicoll writes that 'unless we have a knowledge of past theatrical effort we can barely form an opinion concerning the more recent developments in scenic artistry.'¹¹ This survey provides the essential information to gain such an understanding. In doing so it offers a timely perspective on the ever-changing and evolutionary nature of theatre, whilst providing important evidence for a continuity of tradition. In his chapter 'The Theatres of the Modern Period', Nicoll offers a succinct and well illustrated assessment of much of the period covered by this thesis. His concern is to present a general survey, but in doing so he refers to many of the ideas that influenced Ricketts, Wilkinson, Lovat Fraser and Shelving in their interpretation of Shakespeare productions. In his brief reference to English designers Nicoll includes the names of Wilkinson, Lovat Fraser and Shelving. His description of them as designers, who are 'constantly striving to break from the imitative methods of the past,'¹² affirms their pre-eminence in England at the time and their importance to English stage design.

The most comprehensive survey of modern stage design *Twentieth Century Stage Decoration* by Walter René Fuerst and S.J. Hume was published in 1929.¹³ This ambitious two volume publication gives an impressive account of the development of stage design during the first three decades of the twentieth century. It is of particular significance that the authors were themselves practising stage designers and the work reflects their informed judgements and opinions. Fuerst and Hume correlate the text of volume I and the illustrations in volume II. There is an emphasis on design work from Germany, and other European countries, Russia and America although several English designers are included. The centrality of the work of Reinhardt and his designers, Adolphe Appia and Craig is emphasised in separate chapters, even though Craig declined to provide illustrations. Other chapter headings such as ‘Architectural Stages and Permanent Settings’, ‘The Evolution of the Modern Setting’ and ‘The Picture Stage and the Painted Setting’, recognise the variety of solutions generated by stage designers. The extent to which Shakespeare productions were part of an international impulse towards new staging methods is evident. They are featured in most chapters and had been realised by designers such as Appia, Fritz Erler, Emil Orlik, Ernst Stern, Emil Pirchan, Lee Simonson and Norman Bel Geddes. Designs by Wilkinson, Lovat Fraser and Shelving are included. Plates number 140 and 141 feature two photographs of Wilkinson’s designs for Barker’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (Savoy, 1914) in ‘Towards a Stage without Scenery’, a sub-section of the chapter ‘The New Ideas and the New Men’. A stylised design of a wood by Shelving for Broughton’s *The Immortal Hour* (Regent, 1922), plate 226, appears in the section ‘The Picture Stage and the Painted Setting’. Lovat Fraser is represented by the first of seven designs to be produced in colour. This projected drawing for *King Henry IV* shows a figure clad in a brilliant scarlet medieval robe against stylised, beamed

buildings that resonate with the designer's use of joyful colours. It appears as a frontispiece, (plate i) possibly as a tribute after his early death. Ricketts is not included, although he deserves inclusion in the first chapter, 'Clearing the Ground'. This omission is a little surprising as his name is included by Fuerst and Hume in their list of stage decorators.¹⁴

Fuerst's and Hume's prime consideration was the achievements of the stage designer. However, their chapter 'Costumes and Masks' gives a useful insight into the concerns of the modern costume designer and some observations on the process of stylisation. Their statement that 'plastic unity and unity of colour must be dominated by a unity in the whole decorative conception' identifies a central tenet of the work of Ricketts, Wilkinson, Lovat Fraser and Shelving.¹⁵ This places their work at the centre of innovative stagecraft, for the achievement of unity was of crucial importance to their interpretation of Shakespeare.

Theodore Komisarjevsky's *The Costume of the Theatre* (1931), offers an informed understanding of the role of costume in theatre productions.¹⁶ This includes a lively chapter entitled 'In the Time of Shakespeare'. However, the concern of this thesis is his final chapter 'The Twentieth Century'. Here he elaborates on many points made by Fuerst and Hume, giving particular consideration to instances where, in his opinion, costume design had failed or succeeded. Much of the value of this chapter lies in the fact that he writes from the point of view of a 'producing director' with experience in Russia, Europe, America and England. He identifies many of the European influences that informed the work of designers. Most pertinent to this thesis, are his thoughts on the Ballets Russes and its designers and his theories on the development of stylisation in costumes. Komisarjevsky considers that painters have been the prime influence on twentieth century costume design, but makes no mention

of the fact that stage designers clearly drew on all the visual arts. His thoughts look to the influence of Cubism and Constructivism. As such, much of the later part of this chapter is of especial interest in the context of his production of *The Merchant of Venice* (Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, 1932) and the even more controversial *Macbeth* (Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, 1933).

2.2 Evaluating the Past

The importance of the visual nature of Shakespearean production has become an increasing concern of scholarship over the last thirty years. The scope and perspective of such studies inevitably has precluded a detailed analysis of the work of individual designers. Dennis Kennedy's *Looking at Shakespeare: A Visual History of Twentieth-Century Performance* (1993) achieves an erudite and comprehensive survey of global design approaches to Shakespeare in the twentieth century, by an objective focus on his terms of reference and choice of productions.¹⁷ Recognition of the contribution of the designer is evident throughout, but the author acknowledges that it 'is not a book about designers.' He points to the collaborative nature of theatre for a conscious expediency: 'If I occasionally suggest that the director is responsible for the visual elements of a production, it is simply because in the twentieth century the director has normally held more aesthetic authority than the designer'.¹⁸ Kennedy identifies important aspects of the visual arts that influenced the work of Wilkinson in the section 'Granville Barker and Wilkinson'. He describes a number of the most striking images and effects in their Shakespeare productions but the onus of Kennedy's discussion is centred on Barker.¹⁹ Some aspects of Wilkinson's later work for William Bridges- Adams are mentioned.²⁰ The scope of Kennedy's work

precludes the inclusion of Ricketts and Shelving, while Lovat Fraser's designs receive a brief acknowledgement.

Sybil Rosenfeld provides a useful survey of the development of theatrical design in *A Short History of Scene Design in Great Britain* (1973).²¹ This places the work of these designers in an historical perspective, and addresses their Shakespeare productions within the context of their other theatrical work. The exclusion of costume designs, limits a fuller understanding of their methods and achievements. Wilkinson and Ricketts are included in a chapter on 'The New Stagecraft' that gives a useful account of the latter's work for Granville Barker's non-Shakespeare productions, while acknowledging the nature of the designer's Shakespeare work.²² Rosenfeld's chapter divisions place the work of Lovat Fraser and Shelving in 'The Last Half Century'. This recognises that their important work was staged after 1918 but tends to suggest an artificial division in the concurrent nature of the theatrical careers of these four designers. She does, however, point to Shelving's absorption of a range of artistic styles, and in particular to the expressionist nature of his scenic designs for Georg Kaiser's *Gas* (Birmingham Repertory Theatre, 1923), but makes no references to his Shakespeare work.²³

Scholars have adopted different approaches in their consideration of the process of change in Shakespeare production. In his introduction to *Shakespeare Refashioned: Elizabethan Plays on Edwardian Stages* (1980), Cary M. Mazer argues against a concept that defines the development of Shakespeare production, during the Edwardian period, as solely the 'contributions of individual theatrical innovators.'²⁴ His work examines stagecraft and scenic design in terms of the traditional and modern crosscurrents that existed in Shakespearean productions. He considers aspects of Ricketts's and Wilkinson's scenic work within this context, demonstrating

that both designers drew on stage practices that were evident in the early part of the century. Mazer points to the fact that Ricketts's scenic work was transitional and that he was 'enhancing and supplementing an established theatrical method'.²⁵ He also acknowledges that 'Ricketts's art represented the several directions of the New Stagecraft'.²⁶ Wilkinson's work is seen as a close interpretation of Barker's intentions, in terms of both scenic and costume design. Mazer identifies their indebtedness to previous stage practices and considers Barker's innovations in stage direction. He gives some thoughtful insights into the realisation of the fairies for the Savoy *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Mazer's analysis of the development of Shakespearean production offers a different approach to that of J.L. Styan in *The Shakespeare Revolution: Criticism and Performance in the Twentieth Century* (1977).²⁷ Styan's discussion of the process of change is centred on chapters that identify aspects of innovation with the vision of a particular individual, as well as a consideration of the influence of Shakespearean criticism until 1970. Accordingly, his chapters 'Barker at the Savoy', 'Stylised Shakespeare and Nigel Playfair' and 'Barry Jackson and dizzy modernity' include comments on the impact of the work of Wilkinson, Lovat Fraser and Shelving; although Shelving's name is not mentioned in connection with Jackson's modern dress Shakespeare. Ricketts's Shakespeare work has a passing, uncomplimentary mention in connection with Lewis Casson's production of *Macbeth* (1926).²⁸ Styan offers a strong sense of the context of the productions he discusses, and conveys a sense of their visual realisation. He also considers the impact of innovation and captures the theatrical moment. These are supported by an apt and helpful choice of quotations, from theatre reviewers and critics. On occasion, Styan's concern with the centrality of the producer's role leaves the impression that they were solely

responsible for the visual achievements. For instance, when discussing the golden fairies in Barker's *Midsummer Night's Dream* Styan writes, 'Barker strove to create immortals who surpassed anyone's conception and were completely liberating. He dressed and painted them in shimmering gold from toe to toe.'²⁹

Wilkinson and Shelving achieved the majority of their design work in collaboration with individual stage directors. It is the scholarly studies of Barker and Jackson that respectively offer the most consistent appraisal and record of the work of these two designers. Kennedy in *Granville Barker and the Dream of Theatre* (1985) gives an insightful account of the theatrical milieu that informed the most productive part of Wilkinson's career and some of Ricketts's work as a stage designer.³⁰ Kennedy's apposite use of contemporary sources captures much of the essence of the visual impact of their work, and places this within the context of Barker's directorial accomplishment. His penultimate chapter, 'Opening the Stage', considers the eclectic nature of Barker's later work in England and America between 1913 and 1915. The producer's relationship with his designers is considered within this context: 'and the director, in Barker's view, must recognise the limits to his authority and know when his stylistic control should be loosened. Once he determined the mode of a play, Barker picked the artist "best qualified to decorate it" and left the details to him.'³¹ Kennedy's remit is firmly centred on Barker and does not intend a detailed examination of the influences brought to the design process for his productions.

Claire Cochrane creates an impressive framework of reference for Shelving's work in *Shakespeare and the Birmingham Repertory Theatre 1913-1929* (1993).³² This includes two chapters on the modern dress Shakespeare productions. These are placed in the context of Barry Jackson's commitment to innovative Shakespeare and the ethos of his Repertory Theatre. Cochrane supplies important information

concerning both staging and costume combined with an assessment of acting and textual approaches, and this conveys the spirit and context of these productions. A sense of the collaborative nature of the modern-dress Shakespeare is evident, although Cochrane's initial purpose is to examine the process through Jackson. The detail of Shelving's talents as a designer and astute use of the visual arts as a means to achieve the realisation of these productions has not been examined, nor has his debt to the methods of other contemporary designers.

This thesis is concerned with designers who made an important visual contribution to influential Shakespeare productions. Such productions merit attention in studies that are concerned with performance histories. This approach gives a valuable insight into the plays in terms that explore the means of its realisation within the context of its cultural, textual and acting history. A consideration of the changing attitudes to the visual realisation of the play is an element of such studies. It can point to historical precedents for artistic inspiration, or acknowledge the designer's influence on later productions. Williams offers an interesting perspective on Wilkinson's realisation of two productions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in *Our Moonlight Revels: 'A Midsummer Nights Dream' in the Theatre* (1997).³³ The chapter 'The "New Hieroglyphic Language of Scenery" and the theology of the text' is centred on Barker's 1914 Savoy production and Bridges-Adams's 1932 interpretation of the play at the newly built Stratford Memorial Theatre. The thrust of Williams's argument is that Barker's intention of being true to Shakespeare's text was limited by scenic design that carried its own value-laden message. In support of this view, he offers a description of the visual effects of the scenes and discusses the appearance of the fairies. He cites many of the sources suggested by reviewers as inspiration for the fairies, such as the Diaghilev ballets *Le Dieu Bleu*, *Petrouchka*,

The Firebird and *Scheherazade* as an indication of the production's cultural indebtedness. His aim, however, is to demonstrate that Barker's work has been 'idealised and dehistoricized'³⁴ and his selective discussion of the visual is salient to this purpose. His consideration of Bridges-Adams's 1932 production is less detailed. He limits his identification of influences to that of Harcourt Williams's 'Elizabethan' staging of the play in 1929 at the Old Vic. Wilkinson is acknowledged as the designer of the production at the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre and Williams gives brief visual descriptions of the wood and palace settings, the fairy costumes and those of the court. Such information can only be partial, within the context of a performance history, and apart from the assertion that: 'the fairies were descendants of the Barker-Wilkinson creations of 1914, somewhat tempered'³⁵ there are no other references to Wilkinson's artistic influences.

The aim of the series *Shakespeare in Production* is to provide a 'comprehensive dossier of materials [...] from which to construct an understanding of the many meanings that the plays have carried down the ages and across the world.'³⁶ Its framework of an introduction and annotated performance commentary accommodates references to the visual aspects of productions. Most titles in the series draw passing attention to productions designed by Ricketts, Lovat Fraser and Shelving in their introductions, although the designer is not always named. Trevor R. Griffiths offers a consideration of Wilkinson's 1914 work for *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and gives a brief but illustrated outline of the 1932 production. Wilkinson is named as the designer of the Savoy production, but the effect of his work is summarised in terms of its influence on contemporary critical response to Barker's approach to the text. Wilkinson's 1932 designs are placed within an assessment of Bridges-Adams's Stratford productions of the play. An example of the constraints of

a performance history, in terms of an examination of the visual influences, can be seen in both Williams and Griffiths. Both identify Harcourt Williams's Elizabethan production as the sole precursor of Wilkinson's designs. This thesis is able to demonstrate that Wilkinson's realisation of the 1932 *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was characteristic of the designer's development and a response to a complexity of visual, artistic and critical influences.

2.3 Individual Recognition

The work that Ricketts, Lovat Fraser, Shelving and - given his erratic career - even Wilkinson produced for Shakespeare plays was a comparatively small element of their output as designers and artists. An understanding of aspects of their careers, and the relationship of areas of their other work to that of Shakespearean design, is integral to this thesis. Each designer has attracted a widely different level of interest and this is reflected in the nature and number of publications concerning their work. It would appear that this has been influenced by the diversity of their careers, the transience of theatre design and elements of their personal lives. The following section gives a summary of publications and other sources that provide a wider view of the designer and his work, and a brief indication of their relevance in the study of each individual.

2.3.1 Charles Ricketts

Ricketts's varied and productive career as a painter, illustrator, theatre designer, art critic and art collector has attracted an abundance of published material. His journals, diaries, correspondence and publications have provided a considerable amount of literary evidence to support the study of his artistic achievements. His stage designs

for Shakespeare represented a small part of his overall career, and evidence regarding his approach is often incidental to a more generalised appraisal of his theatrical career. This aspect of his work engaged some informed opinion in terms of publication during his lifetime, but scholarly interest gained momentum in the later part of the 1960's. A fuller understanding of his life and work has been established by subsequent research. However, only limited attention has been given to the context of Ricketts's Shakespeare work in terms of the visual arts, or its relationship to the milieu in which he worked.

Ricketts's published comments on stage design are limited to a chapter in his book *Pages on Art*. Written in 1913, and 'based on my experience in the production of some eight plays', 'The Art of Stage Decoration' shows Ricketts to be deeply conversant with continental stage innovation.³⁷ His discussion, couched in terms of the poetic and lyric stage, concludes 'the aim of the decorator must vary with each play, no single method being equal to all contingencies.'³⁸ His thoughts on the presentation of Shakespeare give a general outline of the approach that he later brought to his three major productions. It is evident that such ideas were not part of a radical programme to reform stage design but were informed by a belief that a sensitive and creative designer could effect change.

An article by Herbert Furst, 'Charles Ricketts, A.R.A., and his Stage Work' (1925), provides a thoughtful summary of much of Ricketts's theatrical work.³⁹ It gives an indication of how Ricketts applied his ideas to differing plays and productions. Furst makes a clear-sighted contemporary assessment of the designer's contribution to scenic design. 'Though Ricketts has clung to the pictorial rather than the architectural and plastic conception of the scene, he will rank the pioneers of the new art of the theatre, because he has steadfastly concentrated his attention upon the

aesthetic unity.’⁴⁰ This article also provides useful information concerning Ricketts’s approach to colour as well as further incidental evidence of the designer’s insistence on the need for a different artistic interpretation of each production. There is a passing mention of Ricketts’s work for *King Lear* (Haymarket, 1909) and the designs he produced in 1918 for Lena Ashwell’s Shakespeare productions for the British Army in France. James Laver’s, ‘The Scenic Designs of Charles Ricketts’ (1931) also emphasises that Ricketts contributed to a new approach to theatre design: ‘Ricketts was already, in 1906, a pioneer in the protest against literal realism.’⁴¹ This idea is not explored in any detail. The article is essentially an obituary and gives a short, straightforward account of aspects of Ricketts’s theatrical work by offering brief comments on the effect of some of his designs.

After Ricketts’s death, his life and artistic work was marked by his friends in four publications. Gordon Bottomley conveys the scope of Ricketts’s theatrical career in ‘Charles Ricketts R.A.’ (1932). He points to Ricketts’s ingenious solutions to the problems of staging in some productions and to the vibrancy of his costumes. He argues that, ‘the theatre which attracted him, and for which he came to work with devotion, was the proscenium-theatre which he knew, and not the theatre of innovation.’⁴² Bottomley’s later article in the *Durham University Journal*, ‘Charles Ricketts (1866-1931)’ (1940), gives further informed comments concerning Ricketts’s theatrical work but the main intention is to offer a general and personal assessment of the full range of his artistic career.⁴³ T. Sturge Moore’s personal memoir, written in the introduction to *Charles Ricketts, R.A. Sixty-Five Illustrations* (1933), conveys a strong sense of Ricketts’s personality and his dedication to whichever aspect of his artistic work was at hand.⁴⁴ It deals mainly with Ricketts’s non-theatrical work and gives an indication of the breadth of artistic influences

embraced by Ricketts. Reference is made to his work as a stage designer and an assessment given of his approach. Some later appraisals of Ricketts's contribution to the stage are informed by a consideration of the more conservative elements of his work. This inevitably detracts from a fuller understanding of the innovative nature of his achievements.

The most wide-ranging information concerning Ricketts, however, was made available through the publication of an extensive collection of his letters and journals. *Self Portrait: taken from the letters and journals of Charles Ricketts R.A.* (1939) produced in collaboration by Sturge Moore and Cecil Lewis has provided an invaluable initial source of reference for scholarly papers and publications.⁴⁵ Given the demands of collecting and editing the extensive writings of an admired friend with multi-faceted artistic talents, this book offers an informed insight into Ricketts's character, his world, work and network of personal and artistic connections. It provides a record of many of his thoughts concerning the theatre; responses to the requirements of productions and the results of his endeavours.

A revival of interest in Ricketts was marked in the mid 1960's by the publication of two articles. Denys Sutton's 'A Neglected Virtuoso: Charles Ricketts and his Achievements' (1966), offers a succinct overview of the range of Ricketts's artistic activities with some reference to the artist's tastes and aesthetic attitudes. Sutton's brief outline of Ricketts's theatrical career is preceded by an apposite comment on its status at this point in time. 'Ricketts most lasting work was probably what he did for the stage [...]. However, his contribution to stage design has not perhaps been sufficiently recognized.'⁴⁶ The reasons why Ricketts 'should apparently have left so small a mark upon the theatrical movements of his time and ours' are raised by Ifan Kyrle Fletcher in 'Charles Ricketts and the Theatre' (1967).⁴⁷ This presents a

perspective on Ricketts's theatrical career and considers his work in relation to that of Craig. Fletcher also draws attention to the significance of the designer's long association with George Bernard Shaw and Barker. 'Twelve of the thirty-six productions he had designed from 1906 to 1921 had been produced by Barker.'⁴⁸ Fletcher makes frequent use of references from *Self Portrait: taken from the Letters and Journals of Charles Ricketts R.A.* and the memoir *Myself and My Friends* (1933), written by Lillah McCarthy.⁴⁹ The latter contains testimony concerning the personal and professional friendship between the actress and the designer and anecdotal evidence concerning Ricketts's approach to the creation of productions and individual costumes. Fletcher places Ricketts's designs for Shakespeare's *Henry VIII* (Empire, 1925) and *Macbeth* (Prince's, 1926) amongst 'four great productions, all of which brought together the artistic control, which he had so often revealed in the past.'⁵⁰ He gives minimal detail concerning their realisation.

Studies of Ricketts present various facets of his work at different levels of accessibility. Stephen Calloway's *Charles Ricketts Subtle and Fantastic Decorator* (1979), is essentially a visual survey of Ricketts's career. It provides over one hundred and thirty illustrations of his work that attest to the diversity of his talent.⁵¹ These are mainly in monochrome but the scope of Ricketts's theatrical designs is well represented. There is an introductory outline of Ricketts's life and career but Calloway offers only a few brief comments concerning the theatrical aspect of the artist's work concluding that: 'theatre design is a transient art form, and Ricketts' contribution is difficult to evaluate.'⁵²

Joseph Darracott was the first to offer an extended study of Ricketts's major areas of artistic commitment. Each chapter of *The World of Charles Ricketts* (1980) is structured around a different aspect of his art and is extensively illustrated.⁵³ The

greater part of the book is centred on Ricketts's achievements as an artist, illustrator, writer, collector and connoisseur and in these areas the author's authority is illuminating. The author makes a particularly impressive appraisal of the artists most admired by Ricketts in the chapter entitled 'Artistic Tempers'. The following chapter 'Collecting' provides a knowledgeable and well-argued insight into the impetus that informed the eclectic art collection amassed by Ricketts and Shannon. In discussing Ricketts's stage work Darracott appears to be on less familiar ground. His concluding chapter 'The Stage' provides an array of illustrations that convey something of Ricketts's range as a stage designer. However, there is no attempt to assess his work within the context of the development of stage design. His comments concerning Ricketts's technique in costume design are valuable as they are informed by the author's own discipline: 'The costume drawings in particular express a fluency that is much in contrast with his hesitations as a painter.'⁵⁴ Darracott, however, relies on a number of familiar and lengthy quotations to explain Ricketts's involvement with the stage. This results in the least effective chapter in a book that otherwise provides a sound understanding of the other areas of Ricketts's artistic achievement.

The most recent publication concerning Ricketts appeared in 1990. J.G.P Delaney's exhaustive and meticulously researched *Charles Ricketts: A Biography* (1990) is scrupulous in its reliance on primary sources.⁵⁵ The author demonstrates a vivid and intense understanding of his subject providing a detailed, mainly chronological, overview of the extraordinary diligence of Ricketts's life. It places his Shakespeare productions and other theatrical work within the context of the designer's complex artistic career. The scope of Delaney's research affords an authoritative account of the artist's preoccupations and opinions, including those concerning art and the theatre. The chapter 'The Theatre Designer' places Ricketts

early theatrical work within the milieu of this professional and personal world. Some effects of his work are described, and many of Ricketts's own thoughts and reactions concerning productions are recorded: 'However Norman Mckinnel's *Lear* was 'one of the most thoughtful and beautiful yet seen on the English stage', and 'far to [sic] good for London.'⁵⁶ Ensuing chapters deal with Ricketts's growing theatrical commitments and his response to such influences as the Ballets Russes. Delaney gives an anecdotal account of the designer's personal involvement in the realisation of *Henry VIII*. 'On The last day Ricketts made a pomander, a rosary, two jewels, and a mask, as well as being involved in the rehearsals.'⁵⁷ His description of Ricketts's involvement in *Macbeth* offers comments on some of the technical difficulties he encountered and evidence of Ricketts's reservations concerning the production. They convey a sense of Ricketts's response to the vicissitudes and rewards of theatrical work but it is not Delaney's purpose to investigate the sources of the designer's inspiration.

As this summary shows, Ricketts's theatrical work, especially his staging of Shakespeare, has received limited attention in terms of inclusion in studies of stage history, especially in comparison with those of Wilkinson, Lovat Fraser and Shelving. The converse applies in terms of his artistic career. A similar situation exists concerning the degree of scholarly attention that has been shown in Ricketts's theatrical career. He is the only one of the four designers whose theatrical work has attracted academic interest in terms of achievement as an individual. These works inevitably have been selective as Ricketts was involved in many productions over twenty-five years and produced speculative designs for numerous other projects. These studies provide wide-ranging points of reference for this present consideration

of his work. That said, only one gives detailed consideration of his approach to Shakespeare.

The Theatrical Designs of Charles Ricketts (1984) by Eric Binnie is a revision of the author's thesis.⁵⁸ He considers the varied nature and development of Ricketts's theatrical work with an analysis of productions that encompass his interest in poetic drama, his contribution to small non-commercial projects and his success in the West End theatre. Each chapter considers a play or group of plays organised in chronological order of production, starting with Oscar Wilde's *Salome* (King's Hall, 1906) and concluding with George Bernard Shaw's *Saint Joan* (New, 1924). The other chapters entitled 'The Death of Tintagiles (1912)' 'The Irish Plays (1908-1915)' and 'The Judith Plays (1916 and 1919)', give a telling indication of Ricketts's connections with the avant-garde of the literary and theatre world. Binnie creates a detailed context for the designer's approach to each of these groups of plays by considering the nature and demands of the play and the venue and circumstances of its intended performance. He gives an outline of the careers and interests of the actors, producers and writers involved with the project and conveys, with a breadth of references, their thoughts and attitudes towards Ricketts's work and the production. The location of Ricketts's original scenic and costume designs is meticulously recorded. Binnie's description of costume designs is especially informative and supported by a careful selection of illustrations. Where possible he compares original designs with production photographs, or other photographic evidence. He suggests how they contribute to the conception of the character and gives practical reasons for changes in the conception and realisation of the costume. 'The *Tatler* photograph shows the complete dress as a faithful execution of the design, [for a 1916 *Judith* costume design in the collection of Carl Woodring] with

one difference that the materials used have a stiffness which Ricketts probably did not intend, presumably brought about by considerations of economy.’⁵⁹ On occasions he formulates a clear argument from existing evidence to identify a costume design with a particular character. Scenic designs are identified and described with a similar attention to detail but here Binnie concentrates on how they provide an effective solution to the demands of the play. In his chapter on *St. Joan* for instance, Binnie notes, ‘both the act drop and the various scenes which it reveals in quick succession must have gone some considerable way to creating the stylised medieval atmosphere Shaw desired.’⁶⁰ Binnie also makes passing reference to Ricketts’s probable sources of inspiration. ‘No stage-designer of the period was a greater expert on the arts and decoration of the ancient Near East.’⁶¹ This is a valuable insight, but it is not developed further.

Binnie offers a lucid and full account of the productions that he considers. He demonstrates Ricketts’s sympathetic and innovative response to a varied number of plays and evaluates the designer’s achievements in terms of their theatrical effectiveness. He sustains a convincing argument for Ricketts’s ‘overwhelming sense of artistic control.’⁶² This idea was central to the interpretive design of seminal Shakespeare productions in England but Ricketts’s Shakespearean work has not been considered as part of Binnie’s study. The productions are given a passing mention – *King Lear* as characterising ‘an exploratory sense of colour symbolism in his designs’ and *Henry VIII* and *Macbeth* as extensions of Ricketts’s ideas for *St. Joan*. Any realistic study of Ricketts’s extensive theatrical career has to be undertaken within a framework. Binnie’s analysis of his choice of productions provides evidence of Ricketts’s consummate skill as a stage designer. His conclusions justify the inclusion of Ricketts’s Shakespearean work in this thesis.

In 1981 Sybil Rosenfeld published a short paper containing a list of over a hundred of Ricketts's stage designs that had been purchased shortly after his death by the National Art Collections Fund.⁶³ These had been dispersed to over fifty British Museums and Art Galleries. The intention, laudable at the time, appears to have been to put an example of Ricketts's work in as many archives as possible. Rosenfeld points out that even with the inclusion of holdings of Ricketts's work at the Victoria and Albert Museum her list was far from inclusive. Her comment that 'a good deal more research is needed to discover whether these [designs for other productions] survive'⁶⁴ outlines an area of neglect that was addressed in some detail by Binnie. His Appendix B provides a detailed finding list of Ricketts's designs. This excludes photographs of designs and production photographs but does much to redress the situation noted by Rosenfeld. This and the extended range of research encompassed by Michael Barclay in his doctoral thesis *The Theatrical Designs of Charles Ricketts (R.A)* (1996) have ensured that the location of the majority of Ricketts's work has been identified.⁶⁵ This is because the main body of Barclay's work is a Catalogue Raisonné in which he identifies the whereabouts of many of Ricketts's original theatrical designs and records where they have been reproduced. This provides a useful resource for the detailed study of Ricketts's Shakespearean productions undertaken in this present thesis. Barclay's interest in Ricketts was marked initially with an article 'The Scenic Designs of Charles Ricketts' (1985) which provides a well-illustrated summary of some aspects of his design work and the sources of his inspiration.⁶⁶ Barclay's thesis provides an account of Ricketts's early artistic career and a discussion on the nature of Ricketts's theatre work. A brief survey of some of the salient features of his productions draws attention to many of the designer's techniques and relates them to the work of Craig and Appia. Barclay's intention is to

offer a necessary overview for a Catalogue Raisonné. These inform his detailed reconstructions of two albums of designs. ‘Theatrical Sketched [sic] and Scrawls 1096 [sic] to 1928’ and ‘Costume and Set Designs for Elizabeth of England’. These and other previously unknown sets of designs identified by Barclay, such as those for *Philip the King* and *Elektra*, provide further evidence of the vigour and inventiveness that Ricketts brought to his theatrical work.

In his monograph *Charles Ricketts’ Stage Designs* (1987) Richard Allen Cave provides a detailed and informed consideration of many of Ricketts’s productions.⁶⁷ These are supported by slides showing numerous reproductions of original designs and photographs. They are a crucial aid to Cave’s close analysis of Ricketts’s intentions and the theatrical effects he achieved. The productions are considered chronologically and Cave uses this structure to offer pertinent observations concerning other aspects of Ricketts’s career as a stage designer. For instance, his section on a possible set design for the 1929 production of ‘The Bride of Dionysus’ in Edinburgh includes such information as, ‘Ricketts gave many hours to making sketches of costume and scenery for [Vladimir] Rosing (one set for *Pagliacci* survives at Newcastle-on-Tyne); but, when the planned season finally materialised in July 1921, the producer was Karmisarjevsky and there is no record that any of the designs were by Ricketts’.⁶⁸ Cave’s consideration of all three of Ricketts’s realised productions of Shakespeare, *King Lear* (Haymarket, 1909), *Henry VIII* (Empire 1925) and *Macbeth* (Prince’s, 1926) has provided an invaluable source for the chapter on Charles Ricketts in this thesis.

2.3.2 Norman Wilkinson

There has been no attempt to evaluate the body of Wilkinson's work as an artist, illustrator and designer. His output was limited and he would have sunk into obscurity if his reputation as a stage designer has not been ensured by his connection with Barker. Apart from the impact of his work for the Savoy Shakespeare, Wilkinson's work attracted only limited consideration in publications during his lifetime, except for newspaper interviews and articles connected with the productions he had designed. He is mentioned in the *Studio* in 1905 where a reproduction of an early work appears in an article entitled 'The Tempera Exhibition'.⁶⁹ A second painting is featured in a 1907 edition.⁷⁰ The *Studio* also produced a fulsome article to accompany a well-illustrated assessment of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in 1914.⁷¹ He merited an obituary in *The Times* but there was no posthumous exhibition or appraisal of his work.⁷² A single article published in the *Birmingham Post* over thirty-five years after his death, remains the sole acknowledgement from his place of birth.⁷³ This article relies heavily on an interview with the artist Max Armfield and inevitably offers a one-sided view. Armfield also provided the entry for Wilkinson in the 1931-1940 edition of the *Dictionary of National Biography*.⁷⁴ The entry for Wilkinson in the most recent *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004) relies heavily on this information although it supplies a few other details concerning his personal background.⁷⁵ Despite extensive efforts on the part of members of his family and my own research little other information concerning Wilkinson's career has come to light.

2.3.3 Claud Lovat Fraser

A combination of factors has ensured that Lovat Fraser's work has attracted more attention than that of Wilkinson or Shelving. His reputation as a stage designer was secured with sets and costumes for Nigel Playfair's *The Beggar's Opera* (Lyric Theatre, 1921) by John Gay. This was shortly before the designer's early death at the age of thirty-one. A prolific worker, in addition to his stage-work, he produced illustrations for approximately twenty books and numerous bookplates, items of stationery and greetings cards as well as commercial advertisements through the Curwen press. This provided his friends with a wide range of illustrative material for two publications. In an introductory personal note Haldane Macfall describes *The Book of Lovat* (1923) as 'various appreciations that I have written upon him from time to time.'⁷⁶ The text, although tending at times to eulogy, gives a detailed account of Lovat Fraser's career, milieu and friends particularly at the period when he collaborated with the author. The book includes numerous reed pen illustrations which had originally appeared in *The Splendid Wayfaring* (1913).⁷⁷ These and ten designs, five in colour, illustrating Lovat Fraser's work for Macfall's un-staged play *The Three Students* offer evidence of the designer's early stage designs. Albert Rutherston provides a further consideration of Lovat Fraser's varied artistic career in his 'Foreword' to *The Art of Claud Lovat Fraser* (1923). John Drinkwater provides a personal memoir.⁷⁸ Their approach offers an insight into Lovat Fraser's working life and identifies artistic and personal influences, while expressing an appreciative but tempered view of his achievements. Rutherston, for instance, observes: 'For this reason his work in the theatre as seen in *As You Like It* could not be called entirely successful. There were mistakes of scene construction, and the decoration throughout was overdone.'⁷⁹ The thirty-nine plates provide evidence of Lovat Fraser's versatility

and interpretative skills in the various decorative mediums in which he worked. Rutherford also points to some speculative theatre designs as an indication of an unrealised range of vision that was developing towards the end of Lovat Fraser's life. Other than this, the authors make no attempt to offer an analysis of Lovat Fraser's work but allow the illustrations to bear witness to an unfulfilled artistic talent.

Two other perspectives include biographical details and anecdotal views on Lovat Fraser's theatrical endeavours. Nigel Playfair in *The Story of the Lyric Theatre Hammersmith* (1925) discusses and defends elements of Lovat Fraser's contribution to *As You Like It*.⁸⁰ He examines aspects of the designer's other work for the Lyric Theatre and shows an understanding of the particular talents that he brought to this area of his career. Much of this information is supported and amplified from the point of view of Grace Lovat Fraser in *The Days of My Youth* (1970). Written towards the end of her life, this chronicles her unusual upbringing and her singing and theatrical career prior to her meeting and marriage to Lovat Fraser. It concludes at his death. Her support for her husband and involvement in his work is evident throughout the account of their five years together. Domestic arrangements and friendships are described but Lovat Fraser's work is central to this account. Her description of their home-based efforts to dye, print, cut out and sew the materials for the costumes for *As You Like It* and comments on the vicissitudes of the rehearsals at the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, provide an unusually personal source of information on this production: 'It was a sunny day so I sat on the banks of the Avon where I sewed [a costume] desperately the whole day.'⁸¹ Each of these publications offer a strong sense of the designer's work and personality but the emphasis is essentially personal. They remain however the most substantial commentaries concerning Lovat Fraser's theatrical work.

The style of Lovat Fraser's illustrative work has clear connections with that of his theatrical work. His memorial exhibition at the Leicester Galleries in 1921 included some examples of his theatrical work but contributors to the accompanying catalogue, such as Craig and Walter de la Mare, couched their comments in eulogistic rather than analytical terms. A second exhibition at the St. Georges Gallery, London followed in 1923 but after this there was a decline of interest in Lovat Fraser's work. This revived in 1968 with two exhibitions – one at the Victoria and Albert Museum, and the other at the Ashmolean. Both catalogues offer biographical detail rather than an analysis of his art.

Seymour Adelman's extensive collection of Lovat Fraser's works formed the basis of the designer's first retrospective exhibition to be held in the United States of America in the winter of 1972. Adelman offers the following perspective in his introduction to *The Art of Claud Lovat Fraser: Book Illustrator, Theatrical Designer and Commercial Artist (1971)*: 'because Fraser's heart and soul belonged to the 18th century, it is too often forgotten that intellectually he was receptive to every avant-garde current of his own day. [...] Fraser's closest friend was Paul Nash, a leader in every rebellion against traditional British painting. And it might not be amiss to note here that Henri Gaudier-Brzeska received his first important commission from Fraser.'⁸² Written fifty years after Lovat Fraser's death it is a rare reference to his connections with modern artists. It points to another aspect of the visual arts that formed a basis of inspiration for his work. Later exhibitions in England such as *Claud Lovat Fraser: An Exhibition of His Illustrations* at Manchester Polytechnic Library in the Autumn of 1984 have concentrated on aspects of his non-theatrical work. As such, they represent aspects of his work that can most often be found in English archives. The catalogue which accompanied the *Claud Lovat Fraser*

exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1969, contains an introduction in which Grace Lovat Fraser, gives a summary of her husband's life and career. Most of the exhibits, were then in the possession of Grace Lovat Fraser. She bequeathed them to Bryn Mawr Special Collections, Philadelphia.

2.3.4 Paul Shelving

An exhibition of Shelving's work held in 1986 at The Birmingham City Museum and Art Gallery, rescued his work from almost complete neglect. During the designer's lifetime publications concerning Barry Jackson and the Birmingham Repertory Theatre, and Jackson's own writing acknowledged Shelving's work. Bache Matthews in *A History of the Birmingham Repertory Theatre* (1924) gives the most useful account of the vitality and effect of some of Shelving's early designs for this theatre.⁸³ It conveys both the variety and volume of design work generated by the Repertory system at the theatre, and gives a succinct indication of how Shelving achieved his effects. This includes an effective but brief summary of the modern-dress *Cymbeline* (Birmingham Repertory Theatre, 1923), placing it within the context of the range of other productions undertaken during that season. Jackson gives full credit to Shelving's versatility as a designer in *The Robes of Thespis: Costume Designs by Modern Artists* (1928) but his comments are restricted to a few paragraphs.⁸⁴ The text and illustrations of an article by Robert Swann 'Paul Shelving: Repertory Stagecraftsman' in the *Studio* (1927) featured Shelving's work and again emphasised his versatility but regarded it as a cause for concern: 'Versatility is a talent to admire, and to regret. A stage-craftsman is at the mercy of his producer, of his stage, of his playwright. [...] one can lament his having little time to develop his art to serve his own personality.' Swann not only betrays a

complete misunderstanding of Shelving's fundamental skill as a designer but also implies that a real artist would aspire above the theatre. 'May not the theatre prove itself once again the training ground for a great artist?'⁸⁵

There was no written record of the last thirty years of Shelving's career, although his contribution to the Birmingham Rep. was featured in a souvenir brochure published to celebrate the first fifty-seven years of the theatre in 1971.⁸⁶ Its authors note that he died, 'forgotten, it would seem, by the theatre that nurtured him and from which neither mourner nor flower followed him to his grave.'⁸⁷ The catalogue edited by Tessa Sidey and published to accompany the exhibition *Paul Shelving (1888-1968) - Stage Designer* (1986) provides the only published documentation of his life and career. It supplies a biography and chronological list of his productions.⁸⁸ Sidey and a number of informed contributors, such as David Ayliff, J.C. Trewin, Russell Jackson, Graham Barlow and Claire Cochrane, convey the importance, context and range of his work. Jackson gives an effective account of the nature of the Birmingham Rep and the conditions in which Shelving worked. Cochrane provides a detailed appraisal of Shelving's approach to each of the modern-dress productions, while Barlow discusses the designer's techniques and sources of inspiration. Seven colour plates give a limited but useful indication of Shelving's various techniques and use of colour in costume design. The catalogue conveys a wealth of information concerning each exhibit and records an exhibition that redressed the neglect of Shelving's work. It conveys a comprehensive understanding of the scope and versatility of this designer and remains the only published record of his work.

3. Archives

The use of the designers' original scenic and costume designs is an essential element of this thesis. Not only do they give an insight into their initial intentions but they provide an understanding of the designers' schematic response to colour at a time when it informed innovative staging of Shakespeare. Given the dates of these productions, other visual sources are almost invariably only available in monochrome. However, newspaper photographs, production photographs, occasional studio photographs and reproductions in books have proved vital to a fuller understanding of the designers' achievements. Newspaper reviews have provided further evidence concerning the realisation of productions. Previously unpublished letters, diaries and journals have been of value. Information concerning the visual arts has been sourced from art galleries, books and visits to art exhibitions. As this thesis considers four stage designers, different archives or areas of a particular archive are relevant to each individual. In the interests of clarity the most significant of these will be considered on the basis of each chapter.

As already stated, Ricketts's theatrical design work is scattered throughout numerous archives. Research by Rosenfeld, Binnie and Barclay has meant that the majority of these have now been identified and catalogued. These archives provide sporadic evidence of his Shakespeare productions particularly in terms of costume. However, the use of newspaper reproductions of his designs, production photographs, and posed photographs, in conjunction with the original designs, has enabled this thesis to examine his three Shakespeare productions of *King Lear*, *Henry VIII* and *Macbeth* in much greater detail than has previously been attempted. The majority of these newspaper illustrations are available in the relevant production folders held in the V&A Theatre collections. The Charles Ricketts and Charles

Shannon materials held at the British Library amount to thirty-four volumes.⁸⁹ Using the dates of the productions as a starting point, a selective study of Ricketts's diaries and correspondence has revealed much useful unpublished information. This has proved invaluable in understanding the impact of his productions. The exhibition *Holbein in England* (Tate, 2006-2007) provided vital insights into the work of this artist. This has resulted in a study of Ricketts's realisation of *Henry VIII* that goes beyond the mere acceptance of the iconoclastic image of the monarch.

Norman Wilkinson left his work to the Courtauld Institute of Art.⁹⁰ This archive, (University of London, Norman Wilkinson Bequest, 1938) contains numerous examples of his early paintings and illustrative work as well as the known surviving designs for Baker's Savoy productions of *Twelfth Night* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Bridges-Adams's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. It has not previously been used as a source for academic study. Indeed, except for the purposes of cataloguing, its existence has gone unnoticed. It offers new insight into Wilkinson's career prior to his work as a stage designer. His vibrant and meticulous costume designs for Shakespeare productions impart information concerning his skilful use of colour to obtain his effects. It has been possible to trace members of Wilkinson's family. His nieces Norma Wilkinson and Kate Jemmett, gave access to some examples of Wilkinson's art and a number of his effects remaining in the family's possession. These and their recollections of family history helped to give a fuller picture of this sensitive and enigmatic man. The Flower Family papers and Minutes of the Executive Committee of the Governors of the Memorial Theatre held at the Shakespeare Centre Library, revealed new information concerning Wilkinson's involvement as a Governor and the circumstances in which he completed his designs for the 1932 *Midsummer Night's Dream*. Information and photographs from the

Maddermarket Theatre Trust, Norwich gave visual confirmation of Paul Smyth's designs for Nugent Monck's 1923 production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. An exhibition of *Victorian Fairy Painting* (Royal Academy of Arts, 1998) provided a starting point for this thesis with reference to Wilkinson's visual re-interpretation of the fairies in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Bryn Mawr College, Philadelphia holds a comprehensive archive of Lovat Fraser's work. (Claud Lovat Fraser and Grace Crawford Lovat Fraser Collection. Special Collection Department, Bryn Mawr College Library). Collected by Seymour Aldeman over many years, it comprises the largest collection of Lovat Fraser's illustrative work, commercial enterprises and numerous stage designs, including those for *As You Like*. His wife Grace Lovat Fraser kept all his correspondence, diaries, family photographs and scrapbooks of newspaper cuttings and bequeathed these and his artistic work in her possession to Bryn Mawr. This large archive has not previously been used as a basis for scholarly study and has been the main source of information for Chapter 3. As such, it has provided much new visual evidence concerning Lovat Fraser's realisation of *As You Like It* and a wealth of information concerning his life and career. Its value extends beyond the concerns of this thesis. The documents are of immense interest in terms of social history, as are his sketch books kept during his time at the front during the 1914-1918 war. Several of Lovat Fraser's diaries, kept while he was stationed in the Army Records Office, Hounslow, were written in cipher. 'I resolve to keep my diary in cipher again (as there is no knowing what the clerks may see in my absence).'⁹¹ This includes the one most relevant to this thesis, that for 20 January - 23 June 1919. He used English/Greek transliteration and where there was no equivalent he devised his own letters and abbreviations to create personal shorthand. This diary contains a personal record of

Lovat Fraser's realisation of *As You Like It* and the events surrounding the production. In order to access its contents, the author of this thesis has transcribed Lovat Fraser's code into English.

Paul Shelving's surviving theatrical designs are available on microfiche at Birmingham Central Library (Paul Shelving: Birmingham Repertory Theatre Archive). This thesis considers in detail his realisation of three modern-dress Shakespeare productions for Barry Jackson's Birmingham Repertory Theatre. Unfortunately there are no examples of his original work for *Cymbeline* (Birmingham Repertory Theatre, 1923), *Hamlet* (Kingsway, 1925) and *Macbeth* (Court, 1928). This is to be regretted, but numerous production photographs exist, especially of the two London productions. These, relevant press clippings and production folders are held at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre Archive, Birmingham Central Library and the V&A Theatre Collections. Shelving's other known work, and personal items including letters, press and magazine cuttings form the Paul Shelving Archive (Mander and Mitchenson Collection), Jerwood Library, Trinity College of Music.

3.1. Illustrations

The use of illustrations is a vital element of this thesis. They support the text with the use of production photographs and examples of the designers' non-theatrical work, stage and costume designs. Illustrations have also been included in order to demonstrate the influence of the visual arts. It has not always been possible to reproduce original designs but in some cases a monochrome version has been available. The selection has also been limited by copyright. However, the intention

has been wherever practicable to produce illustrations that have not been frequently used or have not appeared elsewhere.

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- ¹ *Early Twentieth Century Britain*, ed. by Boris Ford (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) p. 19.
- ² Gary Jay Williams, *Our Moonlight Revels: 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' in the Theatre* (Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 1997) p. 143.
- ³ Huntly Carter, 'Preface' in *The New Spirit in Drama and Art* (London: Palmer, 1912), pp.v-vi (p.v).
- ⁴ Carter, p. 18.
- ⁵ Huntly Carter, *The Theatre of Max Reinhardt* (New York: Blom, 1914; repr. 1964).
- ⁶ Sheldon Cheney, *The New Movement in the Theatre* (New York: Kennerley, 1914), p. 147.
- ⁷ Cheney, text and illustration between pages 32 and 33.
- ⁸ Cheney, text and illustration between pages 140 and 141.
- ⁹ Oliver Sayler, 'Preface', in *Max Reinhardt and His Theatre*, ed. by Martin Sayler, trans. by Mariele S. Gudernatsch (New York: Brentano's, 1924; repr. New York: Blom, 1968), (pp.vii-xi) p. viii
- ¹⁰ Oliver Sayler, *Inside the Moscow Arts Theatre* (New York: Brentano's, 1925; repr. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood, 1970).
- ¹¹ Allardyce Nicoll, 'Preface' in *The Development of the Theatre: A Study of Theatrical Art from the Beginnings to the Present Day* 3rd rev edn (London: Harrap, 1927, 1937, 1948), pp. 3-4 (p. 3).
- ¹² Nicoll, p. 209.
- ¹³ Walter René Fuerst and Samuel.J.Hume, *Twentieth-Century Stage Decoration*, 2 vols (New York: Knopf, 1929; repr. New York: Dover, 1967).
- ¹⁴ Fuerst and Hume, Vol. 1, pp. 132-166, (p. 157).
- ¹⁵ Fuerst and Hume, Vol. 1, p. 83.
- ¹⁶ Theodore Komisarjevsky, *The Costume of the Theatre* (London: Bles, 1931; repr. New York: Blom, 1968).
- ¹⁷ Dennis Kennedy, *Looking at Shakespeare: A Visual History of Twentieth-Century Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993; repr. 2001).
- ¹⁸ Kennedy, p. 11.
- ¹⁹ Kennedy, pp. 68-79
- ²⁰ Kennedy, pp. 124-176.

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- ²¹ Sybil Rosenfeld, *A Short History of Scene Design in Great Britain* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1973).
- ²² Rosenfeld, pp. 157-164.
- ²³ Rosenfeld, pp. 171-172.
- ²⁴ Cary M. Mazer, *Shakespeare Refashioned: Elizabethan Plays on Edwardian Stages* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1980), p. 2.
- ²⁵ Mazer, p.111.
- ²⁶ Mazer, p.109.
- ²⁷ J.L.Styan, *The Shakespeare Revolution: Criticism and Performance in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).
- ²⁸ Styan, pp. 134-135.
- ²⁹ Styan, p. 99.
- ³⁰ Dennis Kennedy, *Granville Barker and the Dream of Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).
- ³¹ Kennedy, p. 186.
- ³² Claire Cochrane, *Shakespeare and the Birmingham Repertory Theatre 1913-1929* (London: The Society for Theatre Research, 1993).
- ³³ Gary Jay Williams, *Our Moonlight Revels: 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' in the Theatre* (Iowa City, University of Iowa Press, 1997).
- ³⁴ Williams, p. 143.
- ³⁵ Williams, p. 159.
- ³⁶ J. S. Bratton and Julie Hankey, 'Series Editors' Preface', in *Shakespeare in Production: A Midsummer Night's Dream*, ed. by Trevor R. Griffiths (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. ix-x, (p. ix).
- ³⁷ Charles Ricketts, *Pages on Art* (London: Constable, 1913), p. 231.
- ³⁸ Ricketts, p. 230.
- ³⁹ Herbert Furst, 'Charles Ricketts, A.R.A., and His Stage Work', *Apollo* 1 (1925), 329-354.
- ⁴⁰ Furst, p. 334.
- ⁴¹ James Laver, 'The Scenic Designs of Charles Ricketts', *Drama*, 10 (1931), 34-36 (p. 34).

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- ⁴² Gordon Bottomley, 'Charles Ricketts R.A', *Theatre Arts Monthly*, 16 (1932), 377-395 (p. 379).
- ⁴³ Gordon Bottomley, 'Charles Ricketts (1866-1931)', *Durham University Journal* (1940), 169-184.
- ⁴⁴ Charles Ricketts R.A., *Sixty-Five Illustrations*, intro. by T. Sturge Moore (London: Cassell, 1933).
- ⁴⁵ Charles Ricketts, *Self Portrait: Taken from the Letters and Journals of Charles Ricketts R.A.*, ed. by Cecil Lewis, collected and comp. by T. Sturge Moore (London: Davies, 1939).
- ⁴⁶ Denys Sutton, 'A Neglected Virtuoso' *Apollo* (1966), 138-147, (p.146).
- ⁴⁷ Ifan Kyrle Fletcher, 'Charles Ricketts and the Theatre', *Theatre Notebook*, xxii, (1967), 6-23.
- ⁴⁸ Fletcher, p. 21.
- ⁴⁹ Lillah McCarthy, *Myself and My Friends* (London: Butterworth, 1933).
- ⁵⁰ Fletcher, p. 19.
- ⁵¹ Stephen Calloway, *Charles Ricketts Subtle and Fantastic Decorator* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1979).
- ⁵² Calloway, p. 23.
- ⁵³ Joseph Darracott, *The World of Charles Ricketts* (New York: Methuen, 1980).
- ⁵⁴ Darracott, p.193.
- ⁵⁵ J.G.P. Delaney, *Charles Ricketts: A Biography* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990).
- ⁵⁶ Delaney, p. 237.
- ⁵⁷ Delaney, p. 347.
- ⁵⁸ Eric Binnie, *The Theatrical Designs of Charles Ricketts* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1984).
- ⁵⁹ Binnie, p. 93.
- ⁶⁰ Binnie, p. 119.
- ⁶¹ Binnie, p. 41.
- ⁶² Binnie, p. 137.
- ⁶³ Sybil Rosenfeld, 'Charles Ricketts's Designs for the Theatre', *Theatre Notebook*, xxxv (1981), 12-17

⁶⁴ Rosenfeld, p. 12.

⁶⁵ Michael Barclay, 'The Theatrical Designs of Charles Ricketts (R.A)' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of London, Royal Holloway and Bedford New College, 1996).

⁶⁶ Michael Barclay, 'The Scenic Designs of Charles Ricketts', *Apollo*, (1985), 184-188.

⁶⁷ Richard Allen Cave, *Charles Ricketts' Stage Designs* (Cambridge: Chadwyck-Healey, 1987).

⁶⁸ Cave, p. 85.

⁶⁹ Aymer Vallance, 'The Tempera Exhibition at the Carfax Gallery', *Studio*, 35 (1905), 289-296.

⁷⁰ Norman Wilkinson, *Richard II holding the Red Rose of Lancaster*, *Studio*, 39 (1907), n.p.

⁷¹ T. Martin Wood, 'Norman Wilkinson's Decoration of "A Midsummer Night's Dream" at the Savoy Theatre', *Studio*, 61 (1914), 301-307.

⁷² *The Times*, 16 February, 1934.

⁷³ Anthony Everitt, 'Norman Wilkinson: A Second Rater of the First Order', *Birmingham Post*, 14 February 1970.

⁷⁴ Maxwell Armfield, 'Norman Wilkinson (1882-1934)', in *Dictionary of National Biography*, 1931-1941 ed. L.G. Wickham Legg (London: Oxford University Press, 1949), pp. 909-910.

⁷⁵ Maxwell Armfield, Mark Pottle rev., 'Norman Wilkinson (1882-1934)' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* ed. by H.C.G Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 1020-1021.

⁷⁶ Haldane Macfall, *The Book of Lovat* (London: Dent, 1923), n.p.

⁷⁷ Haldane Macfall, *The Splendid Wayfaring* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, 1913).

⁷⁸ John Drinkwater, and Albert Rutherston, *Claud Lovat Fraser* (London: Heinemann, 1923).

⁷⁹ John Drinkwater and Albert Rutherston, 'Foreword', in *Claud Lovat Fraser*, pp. 1-38 (p.35).

⁸⁰ Nigel Playfair, *The Story of the Lyric Theatre Hammersmith* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1925).

⁸¹ Grace Lovat Fraser, *In the Days of My Youth* (London: Cassell, 1970), p. 257.

⁸² Seymour Adelman, 'Introduction and a personal note', in *The Art of Claud Lovat Fraser: Book Illustrator, Theatrical Designer and Commercial Artist*, descriptive catalogue by Clive E. Driver (Philadelphia: Rosenbach, 1971), pp. 3-8 (p. 7).

⁸³ Bache Matthews, *A History of the Birmingham Repertory Theatre* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1924).

⁸⁴ Sir Barry Jackson, 'Costume,' in *The Robes of Thespis: Costume Designs by Modern Artists*, ed. for Rupert Mason by George Sheringham and R. Boyd Morrison (London, Benn, 1928), pp. 65-70.

⁸⁵ Robert Swann, 'Paul Shelving: Repertory Stagecraftsman', *Studio*, 93 (1927), 262-264.

⁸⁶ Raymond Mander and Joe Mitchenson, 'Paul Shelving', in *Birmingham Repertory Theatre 1913- 1971*, comp. and designed by Roger Southern (Birmingham: Birmingham Repertory Theatre, 1971), pp. 22-24.

⁸⁷ Mander and Mitchenson, p. 24.

⁸⁸ Tessa Sidey, 'Paul Shelving – A Life in the Theatre', in *Paul Shelving (1888-1968) Stage Designer*, ed. by Tessa Sidey (Birmingham: Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery, 1986).

⁸⁹ Charles Ricketts and Charles Shannon materials, British Library Acquisitions, (BL.58085-58118)

⁹⁰ In addition to his artistic work Norman Wilkinson bequeathed the Courtauld Institute of Art £70,000.

⁹¹ Claud Lovat Fraser, diary 22 May 1918, (BMSC).

CHAPTER 1

CHARLES RICKETTS

‘His connoisseurship had made him something of an eclectic, but that did not intervene in the profoundly personal nature of his work.’

Gordon Bottomley. 1932.¹

Setting the Scene

Charles Ricketts’s scenic and costume designs for *King Lear* (Haymarket, 1909) for Herbert Trench, *Henry VIII* (Empire, 1925) and *Macbeth* (Prince’s, 1926) for Lewis Casson, comprise a very small element of his work as a stage designer. Yet they give a crucial insight into ideas that informed and inspired the New Stagecraft and one man’s endeavours to use the visual arts to enlighten and re-examine Shakespearean production. His three productions were all designed for the commercial London theatre and were staged within the convention of the proscenium arch. As such they embraced the traditional space of the Edwardian theatre. Cary M. Mazer in *Shakespeare Refashioned: Elizabethan Plays on Edwardian Stages* (1981) suggests that this effectively separated Ricketts’s design work and that of Edward Gordon Craig from other practitioners of the New Stagecraft who adopted ‘a new approach to the use of space, one which redefined the relation of acting space to scenic space and of stage to auditorium.’² This provides a convenient division but disregards the common purpose that existed among all the stage designers who sought to use their art to bring elements of simplicity and continuity to Shakespeare productions. Neither Ricketts nor any of the other designers considered in this thesis had control over the stage space for which they designed. The value of their work lay in the fact

that each was able to bring an enlightened approach to a given space and interpret their designs accordingly. Of the ten productions discussed in detail in this thesis, five, Ricketts's *King Lear*, *Henry VIII* and *Macbeth*, Claud Lovat Fraser's *As You Like It* (1919) staged at the original Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, and Norman Wilkinson's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1932) produced at the new Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, were designed for the proscenium stage Wilkinson's other two Shakespeare productions, *Twelfth Night* (1912) and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1914), were designed for Harley Granville Barker's innovative arrangement of the stage at the Savoy. Barry Jackson used similar staging for his Shakespeare productions and Paul Shelving's designs for *Cymbeline* (Birmingham Repertory Theatre, 1923), *Hamlet* (Kingsway, 1925) and *Macbeth* (Court, 1928) were realised for this stage arrangement.

Artistic Endeavours

Ricketts differs from the other designers in this thesis in that he did not intend to be a stage designer but was gradually drawn into what Ifan Kyrle Fletcher describes as 'the fourth of [Ricketts's] artistic careers.'³ Fletcher determines Ricketts's other careers as book illustrator and creator of the Vale Press, painter in oils and connoisseur and collector. This oversimplifies the diverse and complex nature of this versatile artist's activities but does identify the areas of his artistic work that are important to this study. These require attention as they embody many of the ideas and influences from the visual arts that informed his stage work.

Having been apprenticed as a wood-engraver at the City and Guilds Technical Art School, Lambeth, Ricketts commenced his career as a commercial illustrator for magazines such as *Magazine of Art* and *Black and White*. This work enabled him to

support himself and his life-long friend Charles Shannon who they had agreed would concentrate on developing his talents as a painter. Their first joint venture, a periodical with illustrations and literary content known as *The Dial*, appeared in 1889. This was followed at irregular intervals by four more issues until 1897. His association with Oscar Wilde was instigated by the author's interest in *The Dial*. The author afforded Ricketts the opportunity to concentrate as a designer and illustrator of individual books. In 1891 he produced bindings for four of Wilde's books. The influence of Dante Gabriel Rossetti is evident in Ricketts's binding and illustrations for Wilde's *A House of Pomegranates* (1891) and Lord de Tabley's *Poems Dramatic and Lyrical* (1893), (illustration 1 and 2). Yet his interpretive empathy for the text is apparent in the simple decorative stylisation of the former and the highly wrought realisation of the illustrations in the latter. His very different approach to Wilde's *The Sphinx* (1894), marks the emergence of a sense of lyrical stylisation that owes much to symbolism, something to Japanese and Greek art and the organic nature of Art Nouveau. Elements that later feature in his scenic work are apparent in the framing of the drama against simplified scenic features that are placed on a low horizon and plain background, (illustration 3).

It is evident that his association with Wilde informed the artist's thinking on stage and costume design. Ricketts refers to a discussion between himself and Wilde concerning the stage presentation of Wilde's *Salome* in *Pages On Art* (1913).⁴ The extract has been quoted frequently, perhaps because it captures the engagement of their rapid minds and the nature of this creative relationship. Their mutual concern with use of simplicity in scenic design and the need to relate scenic design and costume to character and text shows that they shared ideas that were central to the development of the New Stagecraft.

The sky was to be a rich turquoise blue, cut across by the perpendicular fall of strips of gilt matting, which should not touch the ground, and so form a sort of aerial tent above the terrace. Did Wilde actually suggest the division of the actors into separate masses of colour, today the idea seems mine! [...]. Over the dress of Salome the discussions were endless: should she be black “like the night”? silver “like the moon”? or – here the suggestion is Wilde’s – “green like a curious poisonous lizard”? I desired that the moonlight should fall upon the ground, the source not being seen; Wilde himself hugged the idea of some ‘strange dim pattern in the sky.’⁵

In 1896 Ricketts was able to further his individual artistic control of book-building with the establishment of a private press. Known as the Vale Press, this was inspired by William Morris’s Kelmscott Press but unlike Morris, whose subject matter was influenced by medieval romances, Ricketts chose to produce English classic texts that were intended to meet a need. The first of these, *The Early Poems of John Milton* (1896), was followed by editions that included the works of John Suckling, Michael Drayton, Thomas Campion, Sir Phillip Sidney, William Blake, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Robert and Elizabeth Browning, Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Dante Gabriel Rossetti. Ricketts designed three founts: the Vale, a smaller version of the Vale known as the Avon and the King’s Fount which was based on an experimental alphabet. Stephen Calloway in *Charles Ricketts : Subtle and Fantastic Decorator* (1979) identifies an important distinction between the designs of Morris and Ricketts. ‘The principal difference from Morris is that the ornamentation and design of the book is varied to suit the text. Thus some [...] have a dainty and almost whimsical feeling, whilst others [...] have the robust sombre quality of the Renaissance borders in sixteenth-century Italian and German books.’⁶ The frontispiece depicting Oberon, King of the Fairies, from *Nymphidia and the Muses Elizium* (1896) by Drayton shows how Ricketts captured the mood of the poem. Here, entwined honeysuckle suggests the diminutive nature of the figure and provides an intricate setting. Oberon’s abundant locks are crowned with a wreath of

tiny flowers and his form is framed by a flowing material that appears as light as gossamer. In his right hand he holds a leaf in the manner of a sword while in his left a flower petal serves as a hunting horn, (illustration 4). Given Ricketts's consistent approach to adopting an individual interpretation for each text, it is unsurprising that he later extended this to his ideas on stage design and the belief that each stage production should be treated as a separate entity and not constrained by a particular doctrine.

During the ten years of the Vale's existence, Ricketts - at times in collaboration with Shannon, Sturge Moore, and Lucien Pissarro - produced eighty-eight books. Thirty-nine of these were a complete edition of Shakespeare, produced after a fire in 1899 destroyed most of Ricketts's engraved blocks of initial letters and borders. As a consequence of this the typography of the Shakespeare editions became paramount and Ricketts attained an elegant simplicity in their design. He aimed to make a Vale book 'a living corporate whole, the quality of beauty therein is all-pervading; [...]. Unity, harmony, such are the essentials of fine book building.'⁷ Such ideas were to characterise his stage work. The production of these editions places him in a unique position amongst stage designers. None can claim a similar involvement with the text. Later, he was one of several successful English stage designers to be invited to illustrate Barker's *Players' Shakespeare*. His work for *The Tragedie of Macbeth* (1923) shows sensitivity to both text and the possibilities of staging the play.⁸ His only other book concerning Shakespeare was *Shakespeare's Heroines* (1926) produced by the British Broadcasting Company to raise funds towards the rebuilding of the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre.⁹ Here his speculative designs – especially those for *Othello*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Hamlet* and *Anthony and Cleopatra* - show the individuality of his style and the power of his interpretive sense of drama.

Perhaps because he found the mastery of painting techniques both elusive and demanding, oil painting was never an exclusive pursuit. He began working in this medium in about 1902 and continued to create paintings for the rest of his life. At times he also produced small bronzes, experimented with lithography, and on a personal level designed jewellery for friends and created embroidery designs for May Morris. In addition he completed his three books of art criticism: *The Prado and its Masterpieces* (1903), *Titian* (1910) and *Pages on Art* (1913). The major dichotomy in his artistic work lies between his traditional approach to painting and his willingness to promote change and challenge conformity in terms of stage design. He believed that painting should be based on the traditional values of the European masters. It was on these foundations that he built his philosophy. 'Art is the evidence of man's opposition to mere necessity and chance and the nearest approximation to a sense of immortality.'¹⁰ His paintings were figurative and executed in a dark key. His subjects were usually epic, mythical, or, although he was an atheist, taken from the life of Christ. Other recurring themes were incidents from the lives of Don Juan and Montezuma. All Ricketts's paintings are imbued with a strong sense of drama that is achieved by the arrangement of the figures and in the quality of the atmospheric effect. Whereas he strove to express this atmosphere through painting techniques, Ricketts often sought to evoke the mood of a scene on stage with the use of a dominant colour. The background in his paintings is negligible or as in the case of *The Death of Montezuma* (private collection, 1905) an architectural form is intrinsic to the composition, (illustration 5). Here as in many of his theatre designs an architectural feature is represented as a suggestive element.

His paintings, influenced by an eclectic mix of such artists as Velázquez, Titian, Delacroix and the symbolists Puvis de Chavannes and Gustave Moreau, had little in

common with the emerging preoccupations of his contemporaries. Whereas he attempted to preserve the European traditions, twentieth-century movements in art were seeking inspiration elsewhere. According to Thomas Sturge Moore, Ricketts 'had canvassed the work of Gauguin, Van Gogh, [and] Cézanne [...] before those who wrote them up in this country had heard of them.'¹¹ However, altogether not entirely disparaging of Gauguin, he saw no merit in either of the other two artists. By 1914 he had come to see modern art as a harbinger of 'decivilizing change, latent about us, which expresses itself especially in uncouth sabotage, Suffragette and post Impressionism, Cubist and Futurist tendencies.'¹² Ricketts, the eldest of the four designers considered in this thesis, did not respond intellectually or emotionally to the influences of modern art. It will be seen that although all four drew on some common visual influences, Wilkinson, Lovat Fraser and Shelving were undoubtedly influenced by the impact of two seminal exhibitions. *Manet and the Post Impressionists* (1910) introduced the work of such artists as Cézanne, Gauguin, Van Gogh, Seurat, Matisse and Derain to London. This was followed by the *Second Post Impressionist Exhibition* (1912) that included works by modern European and Russian artists. Apart from his references to contemporary developments in the theatre that appear in *Pages On Art*, Ricketts preferred to derive his inspiration for theatre design from his eclectic and profound knowledge of the visual arts of earlier centuries.

This was not only drawn from his experience as an artist but also from his knowledge as a collector and connoisseur. His collection, formed over a lifetime with Shannon, was a discerning reflection of their personal taste and enthusiasms. It included old master drawings by Titian, Tintoretto, Rubens, Van Dyck, Rembrandt and Watteau. The nineteenth-century was represented by drawings by Delacroix,

Millet, Rossetti, Burne-Jones and a particular favourite of the two collectors, Puvis de Chavannes. There were also Greek lekythoi, tanagra figures, Persian miniatures, drawings by Hokusai, and Japanese prints. This expertise was a constant source of inspiration for his stage work and it is evident in his Shakespeare productions. Yet his designs are never pedantic or literal. His purpose was always to be interpretive of the text in terms of mood and atmosphere and to create costumes that enhanced character. Gordon Bottomley in *Charles Ricketts R.A.* (1932) aptly ascribes Ricketts's talents to 'an innate, searching understanding of the qualities and possibilities of the chosen medium.'¹³ It is these qualities that distinguish him as a stage designer and make his theatrical work important to this study.

Moving Towards the Theatre

Ricketts reputation as a stage designer culminated in his designs for the commercial theatre during the last ten years of his life. These included his collaboration with Barker for Maurice Maeterlinck's *The Bethrothal* (Gaiety, 1921) and Casson for George Bernard Shaw's *Saint Joan* (New, 1924), *Henry VIII* and *Macbeth*. He also designed new sets and costumes for two Gilbert and Sullivan productions at the Savoy; *The Mikado* (1926) and *The Gondoliers* (1929). It is worth noting that, despite these successes, he did not confine his work to the proscenium stage. He took on the challenge of a very different venue when he designed the décor and costumes for John Masefield's *The Coming of Christ* (1928). This was staged on a large flight of steps in front of the choir in Canterbury Cathedral.

His practical involvement in the theatre began on a very different basis to that of the commercial theatre, when in 1906 he financed the foundation of the Literary Theatre Society in association with his friends Sturge Moore and Laurence Binyon.

This was one of several small theatre societies formed around the turn of the century with the aim of staging of what can be termed new, poetic, or serious drama. Using halls such as the King's Hall, Covent Garden for brief runs these projects were of little threat to the commercial theatre but did attract the attention of a discerning public. The Literary Theatre Society offered Ricketts free rein to experiment and express his ideas albeit within the limitations of small budgets. The venture survived until 1907 and during this time he realised the first of his complete stage and costume designs. These included Sturge Moore's *Aphrodite Against Artemis* (1906), Oscar Wilde's *Salome* (1906) and *A Florentine Tragedy* (1906), Barker's *A Miracle* (1907) and *The Persians* (1907) by Aeschylus. Herbert Furst's brief description of Ricketts's work for these productions in *Charles Ricketts A.R.A and his stage work* (1925), shows that from the outset of his stage career the designer developed an assured and individual approach that combined simplicity of design and a controlled use of colour to achieve his effects. 'All these were curtain settings combined with solid columns and distinguished by uniform colour-schemes. *Salomé* [sic] was "blue" *A Miracle* all "green," Sturge Moore's play "yellow" and *The Persians* "dull gold."¹⁴

These ideas are similar to those he had discussed with Wilde but they had been clarified over a number of years. Ricketts's journal indicates that he and Sturge Moore had considered the possibilities of forming a Theatre society as early as 1901. They envisaged 'a Theatre society for Romantic Drama, etc., [...] in which the scenery would be done on a new decorative, almost symbolic principle.' He adds that, 'I have half a mind to write a pamphlet on this subject which has haunted me for years.'¹⁵ His subsequent article 'The Art of Stage Decoration', first published in the *Contemporary Review* (1901), places him at the forefront of innovative stage design in England although it preceded his practical participation in stage design by five

years. It was republished with slight changes and additions to include ‘my experience in the production of some eight plays’ in *Pages on Art*.¹⁶ This provides a telling indication of the fundamental influences that informed his thinking. His criticism of prevailing theatre practices is centred on the opinion that ‘the labour of production has been increased by the accumulation of lavish and quite speculative habits of expenditure; by insincerity of aim, and a confusion of standards in some vague sense of what the public wants’.¹⁷ It is likely that he had in mind Herbert Beerbohm Tree’s elaborate productions of Shakespeare at His Majesty’s or the many extravagantly staged operettas such as Franz Lehár’s *The Merry Widow* (Daly’s, 1907) and *The Count of Luxembourg* (Daly’s, 1911). Showy musical comedies such as Paul Rubens’ *Three Little Maids* (Apollo, 1902) and *The Arcadians* (Shaftesbury, 1909) produced by Robert Courtneidge were also familiar fare in the London theatres. Ricketts no doubt believed the scenic engineering of Bruce Smith who created the spectacular effects for hugely popular disaster dramas such as *The Whip* (Drury Lane 1909) and *Sealed Orders* (Drury Lane, 1913), (illustration 6), beneath his artistic consideration. Although Ricketts eschewed the mainstream he was an avid theatre-goer. His choice reflected an eclectic mind with a taste for serious drama and opera, symbolist plays and the oriental. For instance in 1900 he saw Sado Yacco and her Japanese company at the Coronet Theatre and in the following year Gabriella Réjane in *La Course au Flambeau* (1901), Mrs Patrick Campbell in Maeterlinck’s *Pelléas and Mélisande* (1901) and Björnstjerne Björnson’s *Beyond Human Power* (1901). He heard Gluck’s *Alceste* (1904), and saw Sarah Bernhardt in Racine’s *Phèdre* (1905) and Rostand’s *L’Aiglon* (1907). His journal shows he read Shakespeare for pleasure: ‘Spent part of evening in reading the *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, with my old delight

in this exquisite young man's comedy.'¹⁸ However, there is no evidence that he attended performances of Shakespeare at this time.

Ricketts identified Richard Wagner's practical and enlightened approach to the construction of the Bayreuth Festspielhaus as the most single important advance for the development of scenic design. Its construction allowed the whole audience to see and hear from any part of the theatre but most importantly to Ricketts the depth of the stage allowed the scenery 'to begin where it usually has to end, namely, twenty or twenty-five feet away from the proscenium.'¹⁹ At first sight it would appear that he was arguing that English theatres should allow for the better accommodation of traditional scenery. Indeed he writes 'if scenery is to be retained, and I for one hope that it will.'²⁰ He was however critical of Wagner's use of literal pictorial scenery and alert to the possibilities of Adolphe Appia's approach to scenic design. 'The simplifying of the scenery, both in subject matter and execution, opens up a large field of endeavour; the method can vary infinitely.'²¹ This he believed would enable the designer to interpret the mood and action of the play. He had high regard for the stage settings of the Ballets Russes but discriminated between the individuality of the designer and the nature of this achievement in terms of innovation. 'Bakst's enchanting stage decorations, for instance, are but the highly and very temperamental re-handling of conditions which are newer in result than in aim; in their non-realism alone can they be said to belong to the new art of stage decoration.'²² Ricketts was also conversant with the work of Max Reinhardt and praised his simple staging of *Oedipus Rex* (1912). The designer was responsible for the costume worn by Lillah McCarthy who played Jocasta but was critical of the insensitive lighting used by Reinhardt in this production and in *The Miracle* (1912). Fletcher points out that Ricketts reiterates one particular thought in *The Art of Stage Decoration*, 'He comes

back several times to his belief that there is *no* golden rule governing the success of a production but “only a deliberate use of certain conditions which depend upon the taste, judgement and right emphasis by the right man.”²³ It will be seen that this was a central tenet of his design work for Shakespearean productions. As such these designs not only expressed his artistic personality but made an important contribution towards a new approach to the visual reinterpretation of Shakespeare in England in the first part of the twentieth century.

A Cogent Response: *King Lear* (Haymarket, 1909)

Ricketts's designs for *King Lear* were not a radical rejection of the established stage practices of the early twentieth-century commercial theatre, but an attempt to create scenic designs and costumes that enhanced the dramatic mood of a Shakespeare play within such conventions. Nevertheless this inaugural production of Herbert Trench's management at the Haymarket (1909-1911) was intended to challenge Beerbohm Tree's staging of Shakespeare at His Majesty's. Trench's views on scenic design were published in the *Saturday Review*, no doubt with the aim of creating interest in his new management. He decried 'the familiar glitter of stage-crowds, betinselled cavalcades, "built-up" palaces and chapels; of coronations modelled upon fancy balls' and argued that in its place 'the scene land should be symbolic, and its painted cloths merely fragmentary and suggestive: the latter style aiming not at deceiving you by completeness of representation.'²⁴ To a certain extent these thoughts concur with the ideas of Appia as expressed by Ricketts in *Pages On Art*. 'M. Appia will seize upon some feature, such as a cavern-like porch or a cluster of dim pillars; [...] his trees will be little more than trunks and broad masses of colour; [...] a rocky landscape will form into hill-like sweeps of tone with monolithic forms'.²⁵ It is possible to identify his source as he refers to Appia's *Die Musik und die Inszenierung* (1899) in which the Swiss designer outlines his earliest ideas for scenic reform.²⁶ Richard C. Beacham in *Adolphe Appia : Artist and Visionary of the Modern Theatre* (1994) considers that these settings show '[Appia's] astonishing ability to integrate all the elements of production *dramaturgically* into a unified work of theatrical art.'²⁷ Ricketts's scenic designs for *King Lear* have a very different quality, they are more emphatic and closely connected to the mood of the play in

terms of imagery and symbolism, yet in essence they achieve a similar strong sense of unity.

In his review of *King Lear* for *The Times* J.T Grein observed that the play ‘has in our generation infrequently been produced and rarely succeeded.’²⁸ The unfamiliarity of *King Lear* to London audiences may have been an attraction for Trench. Tree had not included it in his Shakespeare Festivals and Henry Irving’s production at the Lyceum in 1892 with elaborate scenes inspired by sketches by Ford Madox Brown had proved a failure.²⁹ A successful revival of the play produced with an enlightened approach to scenic design and inventive costumes would have been an auspicious start to Trench’s new management. By 1909 Ricketts had secured a reputation as an imaginative and interpretive designer of plays amongst those concerned with stage reform. Notably he had draped the stage of the Court Theatre in black velvet and modelled the costumes on Velasquez for a production of Shaw’s *Don Juan in Hell* - a scene from *Man and Superman* (1907). In the same year his work had been seen briefly when Laurence Binyon’s play *Attila* (His Majesty’s, 1907) produced by Oscar Asche had a two week run. According to Ricketts he had employed ‘masterful colours for the barbaric palaces’ and the costumes had displayed a ‘savage grandeur’.³⁰ All this would have recommended him to Trench but as Mazer points out Lord Howard de Walden, who had had a financial interest in both *Attila* and the Haymarket venture, may well have been instrumental in the employment of Ricketts. Craig, who had encountered difficulties in realising his innovative scenic designs for *Much Ado About Nothing* (Imperial, 1903) was sufficiently interested in this new Shakespearean production to offer his opinion as to the appropriate approach to scenic design for Shakespeare. ‘Shakespeare is distinctly Romantic; often vulgar in colour, breaking all laws; and I hold that when we produce

him on the stage we should try to match his Romance and his lawlessness as well we can'.³¹ Other than such opinions, Ricketts had no contemporary precedent on which to base his realisation of the play. Aspects of his designs embodied ideas that looked to the New Stagecraft but essentially he achieved a strong personal response that reflected a visual interpretation of the dramatic tensions of *King Lear*.

In 1932 Ricketts's friend Gordon Bottomley wrote that '[Ricketts] looked upon [*King Lear*] as his most complete achievement in the theatre' [and that Ricketts] presented his principal scene designs for it to the Victoria and Albert Museum.'³² The V&A, however, possesses only two set designs for this production, these being described as Lear's Palace (E.1145-1926) and a design for a stage setting of *King Lear* Act II, probably for the production at the Haymarket, 1909 (E.950-1933). The Witt Library has a copy of a set design for 'an interior in Albany's Castle'. A costume design at the V&A for Goneril (E.949-1933) is also attributed to this production but although initialled by the artist it is undated. Only one other original design exists. This is a costume design for the Fool at Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museum. Other evidence for Ricketts's realisation of the production is limited to newspaper illustrations. Nevertheless there is sufficient to establish an understanding of his use of scenic design and to ascertain the extent to which this was innovative and a response to the visual arts. There is even less information concerning the costumes but it is possible to draw some useful conclusions from the available evidence.

The designer created a single visual unity for the production by suggesting the interior and exterior settings of *King Lear* with towering, stylised megalithic, rough hewn pillars. These trilithons are an assured reinterpretation of the image of Stonehenge that had long been associated with the barbaric setting of the play in both

painting and stage production. Although his designs were essentially three dimensional the backdrops were executed in the traditional manner by the scenic artist Joseph Harker who failed to understand Ricketts's concept as he 'did not trouble to count the objects included in the sketches, or to keep the proportion of the separate parts.'³³ This is unsurprising as the designs show that he conceived an uncompromising, mythological, pagan world for *King Lear* that had nothing in common with the historicism of nineteenth century productions of the play.

Ricketts was deeply conscious of the symbolic composition of his paintings. This also is evident in the surviving scenic designs for *King Lear* where he used the determinedly geometric trilithons to create an integral motif for the tensions of the play. They are an apt illustration of his ability to interpret a design for his purpose. In appearance these trilithons have similarities to those he used for *The Sphinx* (see illustration 3) but whereas his line drawings in *The Sphinx* convey a sense of insubstantial mystery, his realisation of the pillars in *King Lear* initially expresses a sense of power and stability which can be seen to disintegrate and disappear as Lear descends into despair and madness.

In 1.1, the interior of Lear's palace reflects the absolute certainties of his world. These are embraced in the repetition of three intricate concentric semi-circles. The outer circle consists of perpendicular openings seemingly carved from the stone to form windows. The inner two circles of stylised, conjoined trilithons convey the sense of a large important space. Their simple starkness establishes a feeling of universality. A trilithon stands alone to the front of the centre of the inner circle. This provides an entrance as do the individual trilithons to the left and right of the proscenium, (illustration 7). Draped hangings gathered to the pillars indicate that this is an interior space and that its scale is intended for ritual and not domesticity. The

symmetry of the three semi-circles and three trilithons resonates with Lear's decision. 'Know that we have divided / In three our kingdom' (1.1.37-38). The individual trilithons represent the equal status of Goneril, Regan and Cordelia until Lear's will is thwarted by his youngest daughter. This initiates the process of destabilising Lear's sense of self and his concept of his place in his world. As Richard Allen Cave in *Charles Ricketts' Stage Designs* (1987) points out: 'as a consequence of his folly, we are never to see [Lear] in that setting again.'³⁴

The programme for this production of *King Lear* differentiates between the setting for 1.2 designated as 'Gloucester's Castle', and that used for 2.1 and 2.3. Both these scenes are described as taking place 'Before Gloucester's Castle'. In a production with fourteen scene changes, it would be reasonable to assume that Ricketts used a simple device such as a curtain for 1.2. in order to facilitate the change of scene to the interior of Albany's castle for 1.3. This involved the mounting of a set with trilithons similar to those used in Lear's palace but arranged as three sides of a square. The change in the configuration of the trilithons indicates a world that has shifted as here their uncompromising geometry reflects Goneril's attempts to confine Lear's behaviour and to reduce his authority.

Ricketts's design for the exterior of Gloucester's castle shows the extent to which the designer was intent on creating suggestive rather than pictorial scenery. The scale is immense yet improbable. A lofty trilithon dominates stage left and affords a high narrow entrance to a gabled-roofed out-building that is outlined behind. The familiarity of the configuration of the trilithon offers Lear the reassurance that on his entry to the castle the status quo will be restored. The strong diagonal, here created by the castle rampart, is a marked characteristic of Ricketts's stage work. He also used it to effect in his paintings at this time as can be seen in the *The Plague* (Musée

d'Orsay, 1911). In this production the diagonal dissects the stage and separates the castle from a low, wide entranced trilithon placed on a diagonal stage right, (illustration 8). Lear, denied the status of his followers by Goneril and Regan cannot effect a return to his former significance by entry to the castle. 'Shut up your doors, my lord. 'Tis a wild night.' (2.2.480). The unfamiliar structure of the low, wide trilithon affords him recourse to the heath and the turmoil of the storm. Given his ability to convey various meanings within the symbolism of his paintings, it is likely that Ricketts intended further implications in the contrasting dimensions of the trilithons. The legitimate Edgar who will inherit all from Gloucester is symbolised by the castle entrance while the base outsider Edmond - 'Why 'bastard'? Wherefore 'base', / When my dimensions are as well compact, / My mind as generous, and my shape as true / As honest madam's issue?' (1.2.6-9) - is represented by the lower trilithon that stands apart from the main structure. In this case the diagonal stone wall of the castle presents visual confirmation of the unnatural divisions that have been observed by Gloucester: 'Love cools, / friendship falls off, brothers divide; [...] and the bond cracked / twixt son and father.' (1.2.104-107).

He sustained the symbolism of the trilithons in the backdrop used for 3.2.³⁵ Here one trilithon is placed stage left almost at a right angle to the stage. It stands on a precarious slant as if ready to fall and is surrounded by the remnants of other broken trilithons. Two pillars, once part of a trilithon but now forming a crux decussate, rest against each other stage left. They are the last semblances of Lear's former world as he faces the elements now 'A poor, infirm, weak and despised old man,' (3. 2. 20) it is entirely possible that Ricketts also intended the unstable, leaning trilithon to symbolise Lear and the crux decussate to suggest martyrdom. Ricketts's concept was ill served by the lighting and the audience were denied the opportunity to respond to

the subtlety of this scenic design. Max Beerbohm, the dramatic critic of the *Saturday Review*, commented that ‘I cannot praise his storm-swept heath, because I did not see it. Lear raved in inky darkness, which the streaks of lightning strove vainly to illumine.’³⁶ This was one of the several occasions throughout his stage career where the limitations of stage lighting or a lack of skill in its operation prevented the full realisation of the designer’s ideas.

Ricketts maintained a sense of visual unity between his architectural and natural settings by the repetition of a strong vertical emphasis. This is evident in the cliff scene near Dover in the improbable, towering sheer sides of the cliffs which reach an apex in the centre of the backdrop and are framed in the foreground by dark, craggy outcrops of rock to the left and right. The sea swells against a lower group of rocks which run horizontally between the outcrops. Its movement is reflected in the troubled stormy sky.³⁷ The effect is created by painterly techniques but Ricketts achieves an interpretation that is both elemental and spacious. These verticals are reiterated in the camp before Dover where the stockade is formed by uneven planes of wood that point aggressively skywards.³⁸ There is no surviving evidence of Ricketts’s realisation of ‘a wood’ which was used in act 2 and for the final scene of the play. The designer may well have been influenced by Appia’s scene design for the sacred forest of *Parsifal* (1896), (illustration 9). However, given Ricketts’s approach to *King Lear* it is likely that his interpretation would have been a little more representational. Comments in an unidentified newspaper clipping indicate that he used the stark trunks of trees in order to suggest ‘the forest, in which the snow-clad trunks of the bare trees break the light of the winter’s day.’³⁹ This emphasis on the vertical would have been consistent with his overall concept for the scenic designs.

Evidence for Ricketts's use of colour for these scenic designs is limited as most are only available as monochrome reproductions. Even his original design for the interior of Lear's palace is a simple, single grey wash and line drawing. However, the colour washes for the courtyard of Gloucester's castle suggest a palette of sombre greys, whites and blues. This would have sustained the idea of a winter setting, which is substantiated by the reference to snow-clad tree trunks in the forest scene. Furst states that the tent scene 'was all blue with Lear in white, on a white fur, in order to give it a half-dream-like quality.'⁴⁰ As has already been noted Ricketts favoured the idea of adopting a colour range consistent with his concept of the mood of the play. This was developed in terms of the commercial theatre in 1909 when he used strong colours to evoke the barbarity of Binyon's *Attila*. In one scene, for instance, the designer used red for both the scenic designs and costumes with the exception of the queen who wore gold and the murderers who were clothed in black. It is, therefore, entirely possible that the tent scene in *King Lear* is a continuation of his thematic use of a blue palette that had been adopted for the rest of this play. An illustration of this scene by Wal Paget gives something of the effect, (illustration 10). Here the central figures of Cordelia and Lear, wearing the symbolic white of innocence, are framed by two diagonal posts which help to support the draped fabric of the aerial tent. Cave usefully draws attention to the contrast between this scene with Lear's tactile white fur bed and the soft lines of the curtains and Ricketts's harsh geometrical conception of Lear's former world: 'the soft curving lines and warm colour immediately created the effect of an emotional heaven.'⁴¹ Ricketts may have chosen a richer blue for the tent than those he used elsewhere in the production but blue is not a warm colour. It is therefore more likely that he aimed to achieve the mystical atmosphere mentioned by Furst. It is also possible that he intended the blue

billowing curtains to prefigure heaven and Lear's and Cordelia's white costumes are an allusion to the themes of redemption and forgiveness that permeate this scene.

In *Pages on Art* Ricketts refers to his use of Hubert Herkomer's expanding and contracting proscenium for *King Lear*, citing its effective use at Bayreuth to counter, 'the ludicrous effect of a rigid proscenium of equal size given to, shall we say, a cathedral, or the sitting-room of a shoemaker'.⁴² He was clearly seeking a method of distinguishing between the intimate scenes in the play and those that were of a public or universal nature. Cave suggests that the change in shape and proportion between the designs for Albany's Palace and Before Gloucester's Castle could indicate 'that the interior used a lower and somewhat wide-angled frame, while the exterior created a narrower but higher image'.⁴³ Ricketts himself was concerned that 'the hovel won't be the size of Albany's palace'.⁴⁴ It is therefore likely that this method of creating varying dimensions for the stage picture would have been used at the very least for 3.4 and 4.6. The designer's decision to utilise this piece of stage machinery underlines some of his thoughts on theatrical design at this point in his career. Clearly he was concerned with some of the limitations presented by the proscenium arch. That he adopted a solution devised by a painter who believed that 'the scenic-artist by the aid of this contracting proscenium could, with the collaboration of the stage – and acting-manager carry out all the laws that govern pictorial composition in art',⁴⁵ indicates that he retained the idea of creating a stage picture. It also provides further evidence that he was prepared to consider an eclectic range of ideas taken from many sources in order to achieve a particular effect in a production.

The costumes for *King Lear* mark an important shift in the visual realisation of Shakespeare. There is sufficient evidence to demonstrate that Ricketts eschewed historicism and instead created a cogent response to his interpretation of the play and

understanding of character. As such this would have been the first commercial production to achieve such cohesion. The costumes are a marked contrast to the sketches by Ford Madox Brown that informed the 1892 Lyceum production. These set the play unequivocally in the early fourteenth century and evoked an atmosphere of romance and fairy-tale at odds with the elemental power of *King Lear*. Craig had applied his own scenic theories to *Much Ado About Nothing* (1903) at the Imperial, but time and financial constraints meant that he had not used his own costume designs but those devised by his sister Edith Craig. Reviews of *King Lear* convey approval for the costumes but give little detail. J.T Grein commented in the *Observer* that they were ‘of costly material and sumptuous design’⁴⁶ and the *Daily Mail* expressed the opinion that they were ‘in every respect historically and theatrically interesting’.⁴⁷ It is evident from such comments that these designs were not seen as a radical challenge to accepted practice and that much of Ricketts’s subtle interpretation went unnoticed amid the overall effect.

In style the costumes were suggestive of early Saxon Britain but Ricketts invested them with a sense of tribal splendour that disintegrated during the course of the play. Paget’s drawing (illustration 10) gives a useful indication of the overall style of the costumes. A man in the background, possibly Kent in disguise, wears a belted knee length tunic with a loose cowl around his shoulders. A woman holding a lyre wears a loose, long tunic with a cloak. A circlet holds a heavy veil which is draped around her head. A white bearded man can just be seen on the left apparently attired in a hooded, long loose robe. Cordelia wears a long fitted gown with a girdle hanging; a full white cloak hangs from her shoulders. Lear is freshly attired in a plain flowing robe. All convey a sense of the distant past but it is evident that the designer was

concerned with the dramatic and symbolic effect of Lear's and Cordelia's white costumes rather than historical exactitude.

Ricketts's design for the Fool's first costume, (illustration 11), shows how the designer adapted the basic tunic, cowl and bound leggings to define this character. Instead of using the traditional medieval motley that sets the Fool apart, he chooses to integrate the character into the court. The matching emerald green of the cowl and leggings suggest the finery of a privileged servant whose role allows him to speak the truth. Cave considers that the bold mustard and yellow rectangular pattern on the Fool's tunic 'is Ricketts' clever suggestion of the patchwork of the traditional fool's garb'.⁴⁸ This is possible but it is just as likely that this pattern was intended as a livery and it was repeated in some other form on the costumes of Lear's followers. The Fool's office is simply suggested by a red cane surmounted with a small animal head. Ricketts clearly thought that this prop was sufficient to visually define the role. Max Beerbohm considered that H.R. Hignett who played the Fool was physically unsuitable for the role 'for the right effect of the clown's juxtaposition to Lear, it is a pity that Mr Hignett is not a smaller and more agile man.'⁴⁹ Ricketts may well have taken into account the size of the actor when he created this dignified costume for the role.

From the outset of his stage career Ricketts adopted Wilde's suggestion of distinguishing different groups on the stage with the use of colour. In *The Theatrical Designs of Charles Ricketts* (1985), Eric Binnie's careful analysis of Ricketts's staging of *Salome*, shows that the designer had extended this idea to include a controlled use of pattern to differentiate between members of a group. 'In the same design [...] stand two soldiers, very similar to one another, yet just different enough to provide interest. The costume is black with a square pattern of gold, an ankle-

length tubular skirt which may or may not be worn with a simple square top, buckled at the shoulders.⁵⁰ The use of such bold patterns is characteristic of this designer and anticipates those used by Bakst by several years. In *Salome* Ricketts uses them adroitly to identify a cohesive group and to define individuality. Given this evidence, it seems almost certain that in *King Lear* where the retention of his followers is crucial to Lear's identity, the designer would have identified groups with distinctive costumes. A partially shown figure on the right of illustration 10 indicates for instance, that one of Cordelia's followers was costumed in a patterned knee length tunic, with a fitted plain breastplate and full length cloak covered in a regular diamond pattern. Here the design is influenced by Ricketts's interest in the oriental rather than the medieval references that are evident in the other costumes in this drawing. Unfortunately it is not possible to ascertain the full extent to which the designer assimilated an oriental influence into the production.

There is a possibility that he integrated a Japanese influence into the costume designs. That for Goneril has something in common with the costume design for the Fool, inasmuch as the rectangular patterns of her heavy, sumptuous outer robe echo those in his tunic. In contrast to this, a sharp regular pattern of triangles can be seen on her under-gown. Both characters sport a single impressive feather in their headdress. A palette of green and grey is apparent in both designs while the blues in Goneril's costumes are in keeping with those Ricketts's used for the scenic designs in *King Lear*. Grein may well have had Goneril's and Regan's costumes in mind when he wrote that '[Cordelia] was the only one of the three sisters who escaped the reproach of modernity.'⁵¹ However, in 1911 Ricketts also designed the scenery and costumes for the first production of *King Lear* in Japanese, in Tokyo. Bottomley writes that, '[the] latter showed an evidently profound knowledge of Japanese

theatre-prints'.⁵² Goneril's pose in the V&A design is reminiscent of women in the Japanese prints of such artists as Utamaro and Kiyonaya that were collected by Ricketts and Shannon. There is a similarity in the sweep and motion of her stance and the folds of her costume have a similar fluidity and full train. His drawing suggests aspects of Goneril's personality in the partial concealment of her face and the determined nature of her posture. He stated that his intention for the Tokyo production was to 'make it at once very strange, and in part familiar, by a hint of prehistoric Japan crossed with Celtic elements.'⁵³ Given this, it could be that this costume design was in fact intended for the later Tokyo production.

Lear's costume for the opening scene of the Haymarket *King Lear* is a further example of how Ricketts's costume designs responded to both the character and the mood of the play. A photograph of Norman McKinnell as Lear shows him as he would have first appeared.⁵⁴ The costume reflects the ritual and ceremonial elements of the first scene. The exact design of Lear's robe is unclear other than that the sleeves and a panel above his chest are of a very pale colour and are a contrast to the rest of the garment. His authority is designated, not by a crown, but by numerous heavy chains and beads hanging around his neck; one consists of rectangular metal plates chained together which reach towards the ground. A vast white fur cloak embellished with a single rectangular pattern at the bottom, front, right hand corner is placed around his shoulders. This pattern could well be similar to that on the Fool's costume and therefore repeated elsewhere on the costumes in Lear's court. The two enormous bosses placed on either side of the front of his cloak beneath Lear's shoulders are ornamental. The effect is sumptuous and regal. McKinnell appears as a chieftain whose adornments reflect the wealth and sophistication of the society over which he rules. It is a marked contrast to his costume in the reconciliation scene

where his symbols of office are replaced by a white robe and fabric cloak which falls easily from his shoulders. Ricketts's subtle use of symbolism is again evident.

Whereas a white fur cloak, resting heavily on his shoulders, once represented Lear's authority, white fur now provides a restful bed for his recovery. There is pictorial evidence of one other costume worn by Lear.⁵⁵ It shows that Ricketts designed the costumes to reflect the King's loss of identity and authority through the course of the play. Lear wears breeches and a short, long-sleeved tunic over which he has a sleeveless, buttoned jerkin. His boots are bound with strips of material. There is a dagger at his hip hanging from a wrought metal belt. The costume is serviceable but worn and lacks any reference to his kingship. According to Grein this reinforced the tragedy of Lear's situation. 'We beheld the crestfallen king, still every inch a king, yet broken, shabby of attire, unkempt, with mingled sorrow and wildness in his eyes, and again we felt the tragic note.'⁵⁶

The evidence for Ricketts's costume designs for *King Lear* is partial, and indeed fragmentary in terms of colour. Nevertheless there is sufficient to show that the designer brought to the costumes an innovative flair that was sensitive to the text and interpretive of character. Bottomley writes that '[Ricketts's] painted backcloths were not pictures until the players were present before them: his costumes were not completed in drawings, they needed to be made, and the colours did not produce the effect he intended until they were in front of the backcloths.'⁵⁷ This in itself brought a new cogency to Shakespeare production by insisting on a single vision that did not rely on notions of historical exactitude. Ricketts's fusion of pattern and colour with a style of costume that was suggestive of a barbaric but sophisticated society does much to remove the play from the confines of a particular period and to establish a sense of universality. These figures were placed against scenic designs which he had

realised with sensitivity to the text and an interpretation of the forces of nature inherent in the play. A comment in the *Times* review points to the fact that these designs exemplified a central tenet of the New Stagecraft. They were seen to be ‘bold masses [that] satisfy the eye without distracting the attention’⁵⁸ Grein described the designer’s effects as ‘a wonderful combination of mystic imagination and rugged impressionism’.⁵⁹ The *Daily Mail* regarded the scenery as ‘severely simple and artistic.’⁶⁰ It is unsurprising that none saw beyond this to the detailed subtlety and symbolism of Ricketts’s designs. This was not his intention as it was his practice to include detail only as a means of realising the overall effect.

The prime purpose of Ricketts’s designs was not to create a more effective space for the production or to enhance its speed but to contribute to the mood and interpretation of the play. By the standards of the time fourteen scene changes were an enlightened development in the movement towards a new visual interpretation of Shakespeare on the stage. Several reviewers considered that the play presented challenges to a modern audience. Beerbohm thought that ‘*King Lear* is especially one of the plays that are cumbered by their origin. There is too much in it that is merely silly or merely brutal – too much that Shakespeare did not transmute in the crucible of his brain.’⁶¹ The *Times* was impressed because ‘your anticipated boredom never recurred’ and considered that ‘the melody, the atmosphere of the whole thing gets a hold of you till you feel you can bear it no longer.’⁶² That the Haymarket production overcame such objections shows that Ricketts’s designs not only created a sense of unity but also gave it a continuity that illuminated its meaning.

The production was not an unqualified success. Grein succinctly summed up some of its limitations:

The absence of superior stage direction, which is of greater importance than all of the actors together, was keenly felt. The modifications of the context were rarely applied by a practised hand, for often the curtain descended on anti-climax. The stage manager made errors of unskilful grouping, clumsy manoeuvres, of working vociferating crowds on antiquated principles.⁶³

Clearly many stage-practices were firmly rooted in the traditions of the Victorian stage. Neither Trench nor Mckinnel, who was the general stage director, were capable of bringing a reappraisal to the play in terms of acting, delivery of speech and rapidity of movement. Opinion was divided over Mckinnell's *Lear*. Ricketts considered that it was 'one of the most thoughtful and beautiful yet seen on the English stage.'⁶⁴ Grein wrote that the performance was flawed. 'And in the ascent to this towering height of human misery Mr. Norman Mckinnel suddenly stood still. His features, his voice were no longer able to make for climax.'⁶⁵ The *Daily Mail* found his performance 'too quiet, too slow, too monotonous.'⁶⁶ Cave asks whether 'one is inclined to wonder in retrospect whether the performers' limitations were cruelly exposed by Ricketts' chosen visual idiom.'⁶⁷ The difficulties of this production existed at a more fundamental level. The designer had used his experience to fuse a range of theatrical and visual influences to create costumes and scenic designs that offered an insightful interpretation of *King Lear*. Such ideas could only be integral to a production if they could be developed alongside new approaches to the Shakespeare in terms of acting, speaking and the use of space. Ricketts's subsequent work with such producers as Barker and George Bernard Shaw afforded him the opportunity to develop his own sense of stagecraft. It will be shown that when he designed *Henry VIII* his costumes and scenic designs were sympathetic to the play and an able collaboration with Lewis Casson's approach to the production of Shakespeare.

Holbein Revisited: *Henry VIII* (Empire, 1925)

The success of Casson's production of George Bernard Shaw's *Saint Joan* (New, 1924) with Sybil Thorndike in the title role afforded Casson the opportunity to produce Shakespeare in the commercial London theatre. His continued partnership with the theatre manager Bronson Albery enabled him to mount a production *Henry VIII*. Diana Devlin in *A Speaking Part: Lewis Casson and the Theatre of His Time* (1982) writes that it was Casson's intention to find 'a way of making Shakespeare popular'.⁶⁸ At first sight the notion appears surprising for numerous Shakespeare productions could be seen in London at this time. Norman Marshall in *The Other Theatre* (1947) recalls that 'it was a wonderful season [1925-1926] for a young man gluttonously eager to see fine plays' and that he had seen 'thirteen plays of Shakespeare'.⁶⁹ Two vastly different productions of *Hamlet* bore witness to innovation in the staging and interpretation of Shakespeare. Robert Edmund Jones created simple and starkly effective scenic designs for John Barrymore's *Hamlet* (Haymarket, 1925) but retained an air of romanticism with traditional costume designs.⁷⁰ Barry Jackson's Birmingham Repertory Company's modern dress *Hamlet* (Kingsway, 1925), produced by H.K. Aylliff and designed by Paul Shelving, defied all previous preconceptions of the play.⁷¹ The Old Vic, under the management of Lillian Baylis, offered six Shakespeare productions, all produced by Andrew Leigh and designed by John Garside. Four of these - *Richard III*, (1925), *The Merchant of Venice* (1925), *Measure for Measure* (1925) and *Antony and Cleopatra* (1925) - featured the combined talents of Balliol Holloway and Edith Evans. None of these productions, however, had the cachet of West End management and it was this void that Casson was hoping to fill. His production of *Henry VIII* was the first to be presented in the West End since Tree's at His Majesty's in 1910. Clearly Casson was

not intending to replicate Tree's annual Shakespeare Festivals or indeed his extravagant and pictorial interpretation of the play but Casson's experience in Shakespeare production had led him to understand that a popular, accessible and profitable production in the West End required certain qualities.

Casson's theatrical career embraced much that was innovative and sometimes controversial in the first two decades of the twentieth century. From this evolved his attempts to create a theatre that could both enlighten and entertain. He had a firm commitment to the ideal of repertory and strove to work whenever possible with an ensemble company. He encountered the work of William Poel and Barker early in his acting career and assimilated many of their ideas which he later adopted as a producer of Shakespeare, but these were tempered with his own innovations. His first professional engagement was as Don Pedro in Poel's production of *Much Ado About Nothing* (1904) which was staged in various London town halls for London School Board's Evening Continuation Schools. Later that year Barker cast him as Sir Eglamour and the First Outlaw in his production of *Two Gentlemen of Verona* (Court, 1904). Barker had agreed to this production on the understanding that he could present some matinées of Shaw's *Candida* (Court, 1904) and it was at these rehearsals that Casson first saw the playwright at work. Later, Shaw invited him to create the part of Octavius Robinson in *Man and Superman* (Court, 1905), originally intended for the Stage Society but in the event taken over by the Verdenne-Barker management. It was this milieu that introduced Casson to Ricketts's work as a designer when he played Jokanaan in Oscar Wilde's *Salome* (King's Hall, Covent Garden, 1906) for the Literary Theatre Society. Their first and only collaboration prior to *St Joan* was when Casson produced Aeschylus's *The Persians* (Terry's, 1907) for the Literary Theatre Society with costumes and scenic designs by Ricketts.

The common interest of Shaw, Casson and Ricketts in the pre-war theatre societies with their opportunities for the staging of new or unexplored drama and scenic experiment found its commercial fruition in *St Joan*. This in its turn had some influence on Ricketts's and Casson's approach to their production of *Henry VIII* and to a lesser extent *Macbeth*.

Casson's skills as a producer were honed during the two years he spent in charge of the Gaiety Repertory Theatre, Manchester for Miss Horniman. This in itself was an innovative enterprise being the first Repertory theatre in England. Between 1911 and 1913 he endeavoured to introduce a repertory schedule that was intended 'to win over the more intelligent portion of the community; to entertain; and to make it pay'⁷² To this end, influenced by Barker methods, he created an ensemble acting company able to adapt to a diverse repertoire that addressed the expectations of his audience. Plays for his first full year as producer included a balance of both popular and new drama; Galsworthy's *The Silver Box* (1912), St. John Hankin's *The Charity That Began at Home* (1912), (both which had been performed at the Court) Shaw's *The Devil's Disciple* (1912) and Sheridan's *The Rivals* (1912). When possible he was willing to embrace new plays and took the opportunity to produce the controversial and commercially successful *Hindle Wakes* (1912) by Stanley Houghton, firstly for the Stage Society at the Aldwych and subsequently for Miss Horniman at the Playhouse.

His career at the Gaiety effectively began and ended with a Shakespeare production. The first, *Twelfth Night* (1911) preceded Baker's seminal productions of *The Winter's Tale* (1912), *Twelfth Night* (1912) and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1914) at the Savoy. As such the set was an interesting compromise. Designed by Hugh Freemantle with Casson's help it used both decorative curtains and full settings

with an elaborate realisation of Olivia's garden. The influence of Poel and simple scenic methods adapted from Theatre Society productions is evident here as is Casson's instinct to assimilate more traditional elements in his productions. This was also the case with his production of *Julius Caesar* (1913) where he devised an ingenious method of staging in his attempts to unify some of the simplicity of Poel's work with the scenic locations of Tree. Barker's influence can be detected in Casson's use of the full text, continuity of staging and unforced speaking. Max Reinhardt's dramatic use of crowds was emulated as a volatile mass of citizens passed through the auditorium for the Forum scene. Using an apron stage and an arrangement of drapery in connection with scenes played on the apron, and one built set behind which were panorama curtains, Casson established each location with a change in position of the main set which was mounted on castors. Ricketts used a similar idea to move various parts of the set in *Henry VIII* and *Macbeth*. Because there is no evidence that he employed this device in earlier productions it seems likely that in this case it was Ricketts who incorporated Casson's concept into his work. *Julius Caesar* was on the whole well received and the set designs were of sufficient merit to be featured in *The Stage Year Book* (1914).⁷³ Notwithstanding, audiences for *Julius Caesar* were small and Miss Horniman was horrified with Casson's innovations. It is a measure of the impact of such new interpretations of Shakespeare and the entrenched feelings that it aroused that compromise was impossible and Casson resigned from the Gaiety.

After the war Casson extended his experience and that of his wife with eight Grand Guignol seasons at the Little between 1920 and 1922. Again, he built an ensemble company to present the undeniably commercial programme of comedy, tragedy, fantasy, farce and horror. It was, however after the successful staging of

Shelley's controversial *The Cenci* (New, 1922) that he went into partnership with Albery. It was as part of a provincial tour that Casson produced his third Shakespeare play, *Cymbeline* (Prince of Wales, 1923), in Birmingham with Sybil Thorndike as Imogen and Robert Farquharson as Iachimo. The production was an innovative departure with costumes and scenery by Bruce Winston. A simplified, boldly-patterned curtain set allowed continuity of action while the fantastic, vibrant costumes responded to the implausible mood of the play. Such stylisation and colouring were influenced by the pre-war theatre work of Leon Bakst, and the staging of the Ballets Russes. It was evident in Norman Wilkinson's and Albert Rutherston's designs for Barker's Savoy productions, but its use in 1923 still received a mixed response from the critics.⁷⁴ The production only survived three weeks in London at the New. Casson needed to find another approach if he was to find the key to a successful production of Shakespeare in the West End.

His choice of *Henry VIII* was in turn both pragmatic and inspired. Despite disputes concerning the respective contribution of William Shakespeare and John Fletcher to its authorship, *Henry VIII*, with its opportunities for pomp, splendour and processional magnificence, had enduring popularity with audiences. Successive generations of actor – managers including Charles Kemble, Edmund Kean, Henry Irving and Tree had exploited the visual theatricality of the play to great success. Casson was familiar with this appeal. Indeed the first play he had seen in London as a young man was Irving's *Henry VIII* (Lyceum, 1892) with Ellen Terry as Queen Katherine, Johnston Forbes-Robertson as the Duke of Buckingham and William Terriss playing Henry VIII. The play afforded Thorndike the opportunity to add to her growing reputation as a tragedienne, albeit in a very different role to that of Joan. She would be following in the footsteps of Sarah Siddons, Fanny Kemble and more

recently Ellen Terry and Violet Vanbrugh. Ricketts's skill in suggesting a lavish historical setting with the use of simple staging and striking costumes for *St. Joan* made him the obvious choice to design *Henry VIII*. To some extent both Casson and Ricketts were working on familiar ground, for the producer had been able to create an ensemble company from those who had been involved in *St. Joan*. Apart from several actors this also included Bruce Winston (La Trémouille in *St. Joan*) who made the costumes and took the minor role of third gentleman in *Henry VIII*, John Foulds who arranged the music and the dance arranger Penelope Spencer.

In *St. Joan* Ricketts had succeeded in interpreting the mood of a modern play set in a distinct historical period. This had been achieved with a split stage, a mixture of stylised sets, simple backcloths and sweeping curtains. An emphasis on the perpendicular caught the historical moment while an uncluttered stage allowed the intense emotional simplicity of Joan's story to unfold. By absorbing such ideas into his interpretation of *Henry VIII* he was able to address the conflicting demands of creating a fresh, simple effective staging of a Shakespeare play within an historical framework. His work eschewed pedantic historicism and outright realism to underline the dynastic and emblematic themes of the play. Yet the range of his designs enhanced the personal plight of individuals destroyed in the course of these events. Reviewers commented briefly on his designs, and most underestimated the nature of his achievement. The *Stage* went so far as to state that 'the scenic design is admirably coherent in its own way' and that as Ricketts had designed the scenery, dresses and furnishings 'a certain unity [had] been secured.' This however was qualified by the opinion that 'a work so made up of episodes wants the varied play of actuality.'⁷⁵ Francis Burrell writing in the *Nation and the Athenaeum* disparaged the scenic designs as 'in the archaeological manner dear to Mr Ricketts.'⁷⁶ James Agate

regarded the effect as that of 'the early sixteenth century seen through the eyes of the late nineteenth.'⁷⁷ Such reactions express a confusion of expectations concerning an appropriate visual interpretation of a Shakespeare history play. Yet Ricketts used innovative ideas for the staging that were cohesive and interpretive. As in *King Lear* much of its subtlety and ingenuity went unnoticed.

Henry VIII presented Ricketts with especial challenges, for the iconic paintings of Hans Holbein the Younger had created images of Henry VIII and his court that, given the nineteenth century's search for verisimilitude, were inevitably associated with the play. Alice Comyns Carr and Seymour Lucas based the costumes for Irving's production on Holbein and Percy Macquoid designed over one hundred detailed costumes for Tree's 1910 production using Holbein as his source.

Identifiable locations justified the need for historical exactitude. The architecture of the Palace of Westminster in Charles Kemble's production (Covent Garden, 1831), designed by the Grieve family and A.W.N. Pugin, was historically accurate.

However, Ann Boleyn's coronation was staged with a diorama based on Wenceslaus Hollar's *Prospect of London* (1674). Such latitude no doubt went unnoticed as while it unwound, actors mimed rowing a boat to the *Royal George*, Henry VIII's ship anchored on the river Thames. Following such tradition Tree claimed that 'not the least important mission of the modern theatre is to give to the public representations of history which shall be at once an education and a delight. To do this, the manager should avail himself of the archaeological artistic help'.⁷⁸ In seeking this end he had achieved undeniable success. Casson was aiming to give his audience a fuller experience of Shakespeare and less of a history lesson but also needed a commercial success in the West End. No English designer in the twentieth century had addressed the problem of designing a Shakespeare history play with these criteria in mind.

Ricketts considered that he need look no further than Holbein for his inspiration. In October 1925 he wrote to Sydney Cockerell that ‘I have to stage *Henry VIII* for Xmas and intend putting Holbein on the stage.’⁷⁹ His knowledge of Holbein was already informed by a long standing interest in his work. ‘Shannon and I are more and more convinced that the medallion in carved wood [...] is a design from Holbein.’⁸⁰ Indeed, it would appear that he had attempted to include work by Holbein in his own collection. ‘You have perhaps heard that Salting has bought the Holbein drawing – of course if the purchase had fallen through.’⁸¹ He would have been well aware that the work Holbein carried out as a painter and designer for Henry VIII reflected a court where the visual was an essential tool in the dissemination of propaganda. It was an atmosphere where even the imagery of a cap badge could imply allegiance; allegory or symbolism and moral subjects were used to substantiate political and personal beliefs. With Holbein’s ability to design and paint wall paintings and altarpieces as well as portraits and to design patterns for woodcuts, metalwork and stained glass, his work embraced both the public and private commissions for the King and his subjects. On a public scale, Holbein’s life-size wall painting for the Privy Chamber of Whitehall Place (1537) asserted the triumph of the Tudor dynasty, (illustration 12). Showing the figures of Henry VII and Elizabeth of York and Henry VIII and his third wife, Jane Seymour, part of the central tablet declares; ‘The arrogance of the Popes has yielded to unerring virtue, and while Henry VIII holds the sceptre in his hand religion is restored’.⁸² The painting was an elaborate affirmation of Henry VIII’s destiny which ignored the inconvenient truths of his father’s dubious claim to the throne and Henry’s own chequered matrimonial career in his quest to father a legitimate male heir. A portrait of the baby Prince Edward (Kunstmuseum, Basel, 1538) drawn on a five centimetre

roundel, is of a more personal nature although the significance of the child is marked in the decoration.⁸³ The central image is surrounded by oak leaves and acorns - a symbol of renewal which emphasises the child's importance in the continuance of the Tudor line. A political allegory representing *Solomon and the Queen of Sheba* (The Royal Collection, The Royal Library, Windsor, c.1534) is evident in a miniature executed in pen and brush in bistre and grey wash on vellum.⁸⁴ The imagery refers to Henry's break with Rome in that year. Solomon who is enthroned on raised steps between two pillars has some resemblance to Henry who was compared to Solomon by his propagandists. Kneeling below him, the Queen of Sheba symbolises the church that had submitted to Henry in 1532. It was this highly charged atmosphere of religious, political and personal turmoil, fuelled by personal ambition and tragedy that Ricketts intended to capture, rather than an authentic visual recreation of the period.

Interestingly, Casson had considered building an apron stage for the production. This idea would have embraced the methods of Poel and Tree, for an apron stage had been built over the orchestra pit of His Majesty's for Poel's production of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (1910). Later, Tree had used this stage for his production of *Henry VIII* (1912). In the event, the cost of repeating this experiment at the Empire proved prohibitive, but this does suggest that Ricketts would have been prepared to take on the challenge of designing for such a stage. Instead, using the proscenium stage as a black box in which to create acting spaces of different shapes, *Henry VIII* was staged in thirteen scenes with three intervals; one of five minutes after 2.1., Buckingham's farewell, one of twelve minutes after Katherine's appearance at Blackfriars 2.4. and another one of five minutes after 3.2, the fall of Cardinal Wolsey. This indicates that the speed of the production was not a prime concern but

that Casson's intention was to centre his interpretation of the play on the fall of each of these characters. It is also evident that both the producer and designer were intent on capturing the elements of pomp and circumstance demanded by the stage directions. Devlin quotes from the prompt-book to illustrate Wolsey's banquet.

Food procession starts here in following order: 1st servant enters R. with oysters and places them in front of Vaux for inspection. 2nd servt enters L. 3rd servt enters R. and they meet C. holding Brown cake and Peacock in front of Wolsey. Then exit L. and R. respectively. 4th and 5th servt enter R. with iced cakes to tops of both tables.⁸⁵

Unfortunately the whereabouts of such a valuable resource is no longer known.⁸⁶

Ricketts's attention to detail in this scene was noted by Gordon Bottomley. 'I enjoyed finding your touch in the detail everywhere – [...] the cloisonné bowls at Wolsey's banquet'.⁸⁷ It is testament to his skill as a stage designer that he achieved a balance between the simplicity of his stage designs for *Henry VIII*, the complex symbolism of the imagery, and the choices he made in the use of detail.

His scenic designs for *King Lear* intimated a subtle and consistent interpretation of the action. In *Henry VIII* Ricketts used an entirely different vocabulary to emphasise the personal and political tensions of the play. Only a few designs survive but these and the numerous press photographs taken of the production provide evidence that the designer's employment of emblematic devices was integral to the scenic unity of *Henry VIII*. It is unlikely that he expected the audience to understand or analyse his attention to such detail although he must have been puzzled and bitterly disappointed by the comment made in the *Spectator* 'at dull moments we can distract ourselves by searching for the plump and benevolent white rabbits in the grass or by observing the structure of the hurdles that confine the subdued but obviously noble stag'.⁸⁸ He used the symbolic commentary to construct an effective visual coherence. It is sustained in his use of personal devices and shields to reflect

the ever shifting political status quo. In contrast the symbolism in the tapestries offers an ambiguous interpretation of the complex personal and emotional relationships that drive the momentum of the play.

A tapestry design of *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* acted as a constant reminder of the destructive turmoil of the play's events (illustration 13). This was executed in muted tones of blue and grey and was originally intended to be used for both the fall of Buckingham and Wolsey. Instead it became the central image of the production being used for the Prologue and as a drop curtain and at each interval. Its sombre, cold colours and subject matter would have provided a telling contrast to the rich black and red palette which dominated most of Ricketts's other scenic designs. His vigorous design for this tapestry contains elements of both fifteenth century Italian and Flemish art but depicts the stylised figures in the fashions of Henry VIII's court. A prelate, bishop, lords and ladies lie under Death's scythe at the base of the tapestry. Clearly the imagery foreshadows not only the fall of Buckingham and Wolsey but that of Katherine and Anne Boleyn. Its use for the Prologue establishes an air of foreboding and gives a focus to the production.

Think ye see
The very persons of our noble story
As they were living; think you see them great,
And followed with the general throng and sweat
Of thousand friends; then, in a moment see
How soon this mightiness meets misery. (1.1.25-30).

The simplicity of his design for 1.2., the Council Chamber, is a marked contrast to his elaborate realisation of the *Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*. Here two curtains embellished at regular intervals with the motif of the Tudor rose meet at diagonals at the centre of the stage, giving a focus to the dramatic action. The emblem of the rose is a constant reminder of the dynastic implications of the play. Above the stage right curtain, a single window relieves the darkness of the black box which contains the

scene. A central hanging candelabrum draws the eye downwards to the stage.⁸⁹ As already noted, Ricketts's use of the diagonal in his painting and stage work was a familiar technique and he made extensive use of curtain sets in *St. Joan*. Yet the equal diagonal of these curtains is unique to *Henry VIII* and shows that he was intent on establishing a distinctive atmosphere for this production. The *Stage* offered the criticism that the scenic designs tended 'to be heavy and cramped. They lack a spacious air. They are very little alive.'⁹⁰ Indeed this scene and that of the Hall in Blackfriars do suggest an enclosed and claustrophobic atmosphere but this effect was no doubt intentional on Ricketts's part as it reinforces a mood of unease where betrayal, falsehood and self-seeking are the currency of the court. Henry VIII is seated stage left on a raised dais. His power and authority are symbolised by his high-backed, canopied throne which extends above the height of the diagonal curtain. The shield on the back of the throne shows the arms of England and Spain – a point that was of importance to Ricketts who 'two hours before the performance [...] was adding the arms of England to a half of the Spanish shield' as the scene painter in question, Crosbie Frazer, had departed 'leaving Henry to sit under the arms of his wife.'⁹¹ The shield represents Henry's long standing political alliance through his marriage to Katherine – a contrast to the empty ostentation between France and England at the Field of the Cloth of Gold described in 1.1. At the outset of the play the unity of England and Spain is reflected in the close relationship between Katherine and Henry.

Half your suit
 Never name to us. You have half our power,
 The other moiety ere you ask is given.
 Repeat your will and take it. (1.2.10-14).

This status quo is rapidly undercut by ensuing events.

Ricketts designed three other tapestries for *Henry VIII*. He referred to two of these as Gothic but did not specify their subject matter or for which scenes they were intended. He identified the fourth as “‘David and Bathsheba’ in the most roly-poly Romano-van-Orley style’.”⁹² There is no record of his design for this tapestry but its subject matter and style would have made it a fitting backdrop to Wolsey’s banquet. The use of a tapestry curtain would have afforded Casson full use of the Empire’s large stage to establish Wolsey’s wealth and magnificence. A newspaper photograph, taken at the dress rehearsal, shows Henry sweeping Anne Boleyn in his arms in front of a decorated curtain.⁹³ Unfortunately its features are indistinct. However, the Old Testament story of David’s first sight of Bathsheba and his adultery resonates with the mood of Henry’s first meeting with Anne Boleyn. Although at first sight Henry’s subsequent situation appears to be different to that of David’s. The designer’s choice of subject offers further subtle allusions. David, shown in the Bible as a righteous king but not without fault, attempts to conceal his responsibility for Bathsheba’s pregnancy by ordering her husband Uriah the Hittite to return from battle to his wife. As a loyal, fighting soldier Uriah returns but refuses to spend time with his wife. Faced with this, David orders his battle commander Joab to position Uriah in the heat of battle where he is killed. In a similar manner, Katherine, the impediment to Henry’s desires to secure his dynasty, thwarts his intentions at Blackfriars. She argues her duty as a loyal wife and subject to Henry who then uses Wolsey as his advocate to secure a divorce. Broken, Katherine dies. Both Katherine and Uriah are innocent victims who are condemned by their sense of duty and loyalty. Ricketts’s description of the tapestry as being Romano-van-Orley in style is likely to be a conflation of the names of the Italian artist Giulio Romano and the Flemish painter Bonaert van Orley who were both contemporaries of Holbein. Ricketts’s design

would have displayed an informed response to the aesthetics of the Renaissance so conveying the ostentatious wealth of Wolsey's palace. It is tempting to consider the idea that the designer chose to unite the styles of the two painters as a commentary on the dual authorship of the text of *Henry VIII* but in all probability his thoughts were intent on his interpretation of the action.

Buckingham's farewell is a marked contrast in mood to the previous scene but the setting amid a street of timbered beamed houses seems at odds with the designer's simple evocation of location in the rest of the play. Ricketts's design for 2.1 described as 'A street in Westminster' in the programme demonstrates little of his usual flair for interpretation. He had used pictorial settings in *St. Joan* notably for scene 3 when Dunois and his page wait for the wind change so that he and his forces can lay siege to Orléans. However the expanse of sky over a low horizon showing a distant city amid fields had little of the actuality of this street scene. A *Daily Mail* photograph of Buckingham's farewell, taken during a performance, shows a cramped arrangement of flats.⁹⁴ The buildings are a little stylised but the effect is cumbersome and uncharacteristic of Ricketts's style. In fact it is one of the few scenic designs that are not immediately recognizable as his work. It appears that in terms of this scene the designer considered that the visual distinction between the Court and streets of Westminster was a sufficient comment on Buckingham's status. 'My state now will but mock me. / When I came hither I was Lord High Constable / And Duke of Buckingham; now, poor Edward Bohun.' (2.1.103-104). Buckingham stands centre stage on a three step dais, with a small group of people kneeling to either side. The scene is cramped but Bottomley who saw Casson take the role of Buckingham at the Liverpool Theatre in October 1926 was impressed by the effect. 'Lewis made such a tender, touching, moving thing of Buckingham's death procession. [...] . Your scene

was right in everything, and the lighting was perfect: the cold twilight of dawn seemed to come into the theatre and to touch Buckingham's voice as he began. [...] Lewis held the house quite still to the end by the beauty of his voice'⁹⁵ Clearly Casson's lighting enhanced the pictorial nature of Ricketts's design and as an actor his performance was attuned to the atmosphere of this scene. Such traditional staging is a measure of the compromise the designer and producer were making between accessible, commercial Shakespeare and enlightened staging.

Ricketts achieved a striking and effective balance between simplicity of staging and emblematic allusions in his designs for 2.4 when Queen Katherine appears before the King and Cardinals at Blackfriars. The stage directions invite a solemn processional splendour, very different in key to that of Wolsey's banquet. This scene undoubtedly belongs to Katherine as she stands alone against the panoply of State and Ricketts's scenic design was clearly intended to give prominence to Thorndike's performance. In defending the need for realistic scenery Tree drew particular attention to the stage directions for this scene. 'To attempt to present *Henry VIII* in other than a realistic manner would be to ensure absolute failure. Let us take an instance from the text. By what symbolism can Shakespeare's stage directions in the Trial Scene be represented on the stage?'⁹⁶ Casson would have no doubt opened the scene with a dignified procession that included at least all those seen on stage in illustration 14. However, there is an absence of the symbols of power such as a cardinal's hat, a silver mace, and two great silver pillars specified in the stage directions. Instead of encumbering the stage with such items, Ricketts integrated a wealth of symbolism into the scenic design that reflects the personal, political and religious significance of the trial. Although he eschewed historical realism, his sense of historical verisimilitude added to the effect of his work. The tracery and window

glass of the vast stained glass window that fills the back of this scene was based on King's College Chapel, Cambridge. His intention was to suggest the age and importance of Blackfriars. The late medieval figures represent the Old Testament story of Esther and Ahasuerus - a dramatic conflict between the Jewish Queen Esther, the Persian King Ahasuerus and his first minister Haman who intends to destroy the Queen and her people. The analogy is apt in that it reflects Katherine's appeal to Henry in 1.2 concerning Wolsey's intention to levy a tax on the people but has an even greater significance in this scene. Katherine opens her defence by referring to her isolation as a foreigner 'I am a most poor woman, and a stranger, / Born out of your dominions'. (2. 4.13-14). Similarly, as a Jew, Esther was vulnerable in the Persian court. Given these connotations it is a little surprising to note that Holbein included the subject in an elaborate decorative design for a chimney-piece that was built in Henry VIII's Privy Chamber at Whitehall Palace (British Museum, c.1538-40).⁹⁷

The elaborate design of the window was balanced by the simple screens that ensured that Casson could emphasise the intense drama of the scene. Henry's throne, used in the Council Chamber with the same Cloth of State is positioned stage left and Wolsey is seated below the dais at the side of his King. Katherine is placed at the centre of the scene on raised steps in front of a plain panel over which is positioned a crucifix. It is a sign of her steadfast adherence to her principals and religious beliefs which are in marked contrast to the shifting opportunism of Wolsey and Henry's compromises to secure his dynasty. Thus placed, Thorndike rose to the demands of the scene. 'Anything more noble, more dignified, more womanly, or more truly heroical than this Katherine it would be impossible to conceive'.⁹⁸ The political dynamics of the scene were further emphasised by the emblems on the screens. At

this point Henry was still seated under the combined arms of England and Spain, but the identical shields one on either side of the panels intimate the growing power of England with the cross of St. George supported on either side by angels. The repeated pattern of the smaller shields is indistinct but appears to be the crossed keys of St. Peter. As such, this Catholic imagery acts as a constant reminder of the religious cross currents implicit in the drama. Ricketts's achievement can be judged against Charles Kemble's realisation of the same scene in his production of *Henry VIII* at Covent Garden theatre. Ninety-five years separates the photograph of Ricketts's interpretation of the scene, (illustration 14) and Henry Andrews's painting of *The Trial of Queen Katherine* (Royal Shakespeare Company Collection, 1831), (illustration 15). Both show Henry sitting under the canopy of state in the late medieval hall of Blackfriars. Kemble's stage is lavish and littered with individuals holding the symbols of religion and state demanded by the stage directions. Katherine and Wolsey stand as adversaries in front of the scribe who sits at a table beneath the centrally placed King. In order to create a sense of occasion this pictorial scene is crammed with two tiers of observers. The clergy and lawyers sit at diagonals on the stage whilst above a crowd of splendidly costumed observers are seated in galleries. Ricketts's stage achieves a similar atmosphere by simpler means that characterises the mood of the scene without distracting from the dramatic tensions. As such it is a clear statement of his ethos and an excellent illustration of his ability to visually re-interpret this play.

Information concerning Ricketts's realisation of 4.1, Anne Boleyn's coronation, is limited but that available is worth consideration as it further demonstrates how the designer sustained his ideas to create a sense of unity. Both designer and producer clearly exploited the scene's potential for pageantry. Devine, giving detail from the

prompt book writes of ‘its brilliant heraldic flags, its intricate procession (forty-three actors involved), and its battery of drums, trumpets and bells. After the hymn “All Nations Bow” [a] sound cue to mark Queen Anne’s entrance: “All spare Thunder sheets, Cannons, Tanks, Stage-hands and other impedimenta to be used as noises off on this cue.”’⁹⁹ Nevertheless Ricketts did not lose sight of the significance of the moment. His inclusion of Anglican imagery into his design for Westminster Abbey marks the play’s inexorable journey to Protestantism. Fraser, the scene painter, apparently felt that the idea required further emphasis as Ricketts wrote that ‘the Westminster Abbey made me cry with vexation, he [Fraser] has introduced Anglican statuary of his own!!!’¹⁰⁰ The personal and dynastic importance of the scene was underscored by a large flag that bore Anne Boleyn’s device quartered with that of Henry’s. Ricketts further emphasised the idea of the passing of an old order by replacing the rich claret, blue and black hues of the former scenes with a palette of white and green. Bottomley wrote enthusiastically about the atmosphere ‘there was light and air and gaiety among the dignity of the coronation procession.’¹⁰¹ Given his response it must be assumed that Casson sustained this optimistic mood for the christening of the infant Elizabeth. Despite the numbers used in the coronation procession Ricketts created the effect of an even larger crowd by the simple measure of placing a white and green barrier across the front of the stage for the procession to pass behind. The *Stage* dismissed this effective technique as ‘no more than a coup d’oeil.’¹⁰² Bottomley understood the nature of Ricketts’s achievement. ‘Tree would have had to use four times as many people.’¹⁰³

The setting for Katherine’s death 4.2 required the designer to create a mood that resonated with the unity of his designs for the play in terms of emblem and allusion but allowed for the intimate and mystic nature of this scene. That this was achieved

owes much to his innate sense of theatre and creativity. In such works as Henry Fuseli's *The Vision of Queen Katherine* (Fylde Borough Council, Lytham St Annes 1781) and William Blake's *The Vision of Queen Katherine* (Fitzwilliam Museum, c.1790-93), Katherine's vision is evoked with airborne nude figures (illustration 16 and illustration 17). These works clearly differ in their execution but their dream-like quality owes much to their muted tones and the rhythmic elegance and distortion of the figures. Ricketts achieved a practicable fusion of the images in his scenic design and those that appeared on stage to create an inspired expression of the trance-like and personal nature of Katherine's vision. The programme for *Henry VIII* specifically places this scene at Kimbolton Abbey suggesting that her death occurred at a religious house. A photograph of this scene indicates that the stage was sparsely furnished but the walls of the room are hung with a fine tapestry depicting the stylised figures of musician angels in the manner of the Early Renaissance.¹⁰⁴ Such imagery is in keeping with the past and the Catholic faith of the former Queen. The setting is entirely in keeping with her mood 'Good Griffith, / Cause the musicians play me that sad note / I named my knell, whilst I sit meditating / On that celestial harmony I go to.' (4.2.77-80). In appearance, the six angels who represent the dying Queen's vision replicate those of the tapestry. One carries a palm branch, a familiar symbol of death in early paintings of the annunciation of the death of the Virgin. Another bears a crown made of lilies and ears of wheat symbolising purity and resurrection. Ricketts's juxtaposition of the images on the tapestry and their physical embodiment conjured the strange half-world of a vision that was personal to Katherine but also of the world she inhabited. No doubt Casson's expertise in lighting did much to enhance this dream-like atmosphere. Although Ricketts's use of symbolism is self-explanatory, his exploration of the possibilities of this scene must

be considered in the light of his long-held interest in the symbolist painters Gustave Moreau and Puvis de Chavannes, for here the dream image of the soul is seen to have its origins in the actuality of the tapestries. As such the designer interrogates the nature of this vision.

The final scene of *Henry VIII*, the baptism of the infant Elizabeth, 5.4., afforded Ricketts the opportunity to conclude his scenic expression of the play's journey towards Protestantism. He had intended a Protestant fresco for this scene but this was replaced by an architectural design that featured Henry VIII as the central allegorical figure in a lunette which dominated the upper portion of the wall.¹⁰⁵ Here Henry carrying a sceptre and dressed in a classical robe is seated between two female figures. The kneeling figure supports a cross on her shoulder and holds a book, presumably an English translation of the Bible, towards the King's outstretched hand. As such she must represent Protestantism. The other must symbolise England, as she sits with her left hand raised in supplication towards Henry. It is a final visual affirmation of the religious changes that have occurred. This production, however, concluded with a strong emphasis on the personal and dynastic outcomes. No doubt Casson and Ricketts, invited by the stage directions, exploited the panoply of the baptism but the designer ensured that the infant Elizabeth held the dramatic attention. The doll dressed as the baby princess wore a cap and shirt of Tudor embroidery and silver swaddling clothes with jewels of pearl, coral and crystal. It was not used until the dress rehearsal when the ladies of the court crowded around to see its effect. The appearance of the doll continued to aid performance for Bottomley observed 'the girl who carried the baby at the christening was beginning to be impressed by the exquisiteness of her burden too.'¹⁰⁶

None of Ricketts's costume designs for *Henry VIII* survive. That there is such limited information concerning his use of costume and colour in a production of such magnificence is of particular regret as there can be little doubt that his approach would have involved a masterly use of richness of tone. The *Stage* writes that 'here and there [there was] a jarring note in the colour scheme, especially in the noble bevy in the Hall of the Cardinal's Palace'.¹⁰⁷ Here it is obvious that he used colour as a comment on the destabilising nature of Henry's meeting with Ann. It is likely that he used colour to a similar purpose elsewhere in the play. Monochrome newspaper and production photographs show that his costumes were as ever sensitive to needs of character and the theatrical moment. The strong, square silhouette of fifteenth century court costume is inextricably linked with Holbein's portraits and paintings, yet despite his declared intention of 'putting Holbein on the stage' Ricketts's costumes were interpretive and did not strive for exact historical accuracy.¹⁰⁸ In this he created a precedent for the realisation of costume for Shakespeare's history plays. The costumes for *Henry VIII* were made of rich velvets, silks and brocade with the effective use of fur in places. They capture the wealth of the nobles and the pageantry of the court but in essence they are simplified versions of their historical counterparts. At first sight illustration 18, the photograph of Norman V. Norman as Henry, follows illustration 19, the copy of Henry VIII's portrait by the workshop or associate of Holbein (Walker Art Gallery, c.1540-5). Yet this is not a painstaking recreation of the original, for Ricketts has caught the essence of the period by careful attention to certain details while omitting others. The shape of Henry's costume, his shoes and hat capture the style of the fifteenth century, as does the dagger and his chain of office. The costume is, however, simplified and is a broad interpretation that lacks the intricate detail of embroidery, and the embellishment of jewellery. There is

an element of jauntiness that is in keeping with Ivor Brown's comments on Norman's realisation of the character. 'He waddles, jerkily petulant, from one beastliness to another, every inch a commoner. There is a complete breach here with the beautified tradition. The make-up is good Tudor; the manner has a modern satiric tartness.'¹⁰⁹ A press photograph of Buckingham and Lord Abergavenny indicates that their costumes were conceived on the same principles as that of Henry. Buckingham, however, wears a more elaborate outfit than Abergavenny, as befits a character of higher status.¹¹⁰

Katherine's costumes were an interesting response to Holbein and theatrical tradition but were also deeply sensitive to the theatrical moment and the demands of the role. A photograph in the *Sketch* showing Katherine kneeling to Henry in the Council Chamber 1.2 gives little detail of her costume.¹¹¹ It is however sufficient to indicate that its silhouette was that of the fifteenth century, it was of a heavy rich material and that her status was suggested by her long train that was trimmed with white fur and culminated in a deep border of ermine. Its effect was no doubt intended to be very different to that of her costume for the trial. A painting by George Henry Harlow of *The Trial of Queen Katherine* (Royal Shakespeare Company Collection, 1817)¹¹² shows Sarah Siddons in the role in the first decade of the nineteenth century. Her royal status is evident in her crown and she wears a simple yet rich robe of black velvet with wide sleeves lined with ermine. Illustration 15 shows that twenty years later her niece Fanny Kemble continued this tradition. The costume effectively draws attention to Katherine's isolation as she defends herself against the assembled might of English politics and the church. Ellen Terry broke with this tradition and appeared in a costume which despite its supposed Holbein credentials had much of late Victorian elaboration in its luxuriant detail. Ricketts understood the impact of

simplicity and produced a design that was not dissimilar to that used in the Kemble productions. As shown in illustration 16, Thorndike stood central stage on a raised dais against a plain panel for most of this scene. She wears a dark, square necked robe trimmed at the hem with ermine with large hanging sleeves of the same fur. A half length portrait of *Katherine of Aragon* by an unknown artist in the National Portrait Gallery, London shows her wearing a heavy gabled hood. Ricketts uses this in place of a crown. Katherine's royalty and dignity are embodied in the costume but her defence of her marriage becomes that of a woman first and then a Queen. St. John Ervine saw this in Thorndike's performance. 'This Katherine made us realise how solitary of a sudden she had become [...] and filled us with compassion for her'.¹¹³

Thorndike's appearance for Katherine's vision was that of an ageing and suffering woman. It was in harsh contrast to the beauty of the vision and a departure from earlier productions that had romanticised her image in this scene. Here, Ricketts's design of a loose fitting shapeless gown made Katherine appear gaunt and wasted. Her over-robe of pale, rich brocade, with large puffed sleeves to the elbow exaggerates the effect while her last vestige of royalty is evident in its ermine trimming. Katherine's drawn face is defined by an unbecoming tight-fitting cap that is tied under her chin and under which her hair is concealed.¹¹⁴ Such a realistic effect was uncharacteristic of Ricketts although the sight of Katherine's mortality clearly added to the impact of the scene. Casson and Thorndike could both have encouraged this approach but there is another possibility. A line etching after Holbein in the National Portrait Gallery depicts Katherine as worn and anxious. She wears a close-fitting cap that conceals her hair. It is an unfamiliar image showing her without the accoutrements of her royal portraits. This work is probably eighteenth century and

was not given to the National Portrait Gallery until 1931. Nevertheless Ricketts had an extensive knowledge of Holbein and may well have been aware of a similar portrait.

Casson achieved his purpose with this production of *Henry VIII*. Its three month run was exceptional for the time and its commercial success included a tour. Ricketts had employed the idea of Holbein in an innovative and fresh manner to capture the atmosphere and mood of the Court. His use of emblems and allegory as a background to key moments enhanced the theatrical moment with a sensitive richness that did not detract from the action of the play. The costumes were integral to the scenic design and as such contributed to the play's inherent pomp and processional splendour. Ricketts's ultimate achievement was that his concept was interpretive of the play and that these ends were achieved by a balance of simple settings that suggested the historical period but embraced the personal, political and dynastic momentum of *Henry VIII*. Thorndike triumphed in a tragic Shakespearean role. 'Miss Thorndike may be said to have touched the sublime.'¹¹⁵ 'Katherine was a queerly- beautiful queen: remote yet very near to our sympathy.'¹¹⁶ It was an interpretation that owed much to Ricketts's sensitive staging and costumes. Norman V. Norman was also singled out for praise, although Arthur Wontner as Buckingham and Lyall Swete as Cardinal Wolsey were found lacking in their performances. The idea of the ensemble company had informed much of Casson's work but this was not one of the strengths of the production. He had not worked previously with his company on Shakespeare and the acting limitations were evident.

The modern stage has lost most of its Shakespearean tradition: and here are many manners jostling together, the modern predominating. The verse, too, is variously given, with and without rhythm, with and without colour and distinction.¹¹⁷

On this occasion Ricketts's designs, Casson's exploitation of the visual magnificence of the play and Thorndike's acting had triumphed over such shortcomings.

An Excess of Barbaric Splendour: *Macbeth* (Prince's, 1926)

Thorndike claimed that the choice of *Macbeth* for Casson's second attempt to produce commercially successful Shakespeare was inspired by public demand.

'There have been hundreds and hundreds of letters about it; and as one is a public servant one likes to respond to them'.¹¹⁸ Altruistic motives aside, the play afforded her another opportunity to play a tragic Shakespearean role and Casson to build on his success as the producer of viable Shakespeare in the West End. Ivor Brown, writing in the *Saturday Review*, identified Casson's need to stage a lavish production in order to attract an audience. 'The public, rightly or wrongly, is not going to spend its half-guineas on four black curtains and a passion. [...]. If it is not to be ruin the producer must cry, "Book, book, ye lower middle-classes."' ¹¹⁹

Ricketts was given a budget of £7,000 for the scenic designs which indicates that from the outset the production was conceived in elaborate terms. Many of his ideas were frustrated by the limitations of the Prince's Theatre's small, shallow stage and the concrete floor which meant there were no traps. In his consideration of Ricketts's scenic designs for *Macbeth*, Cave gives the designer full credit for his ingenuity in solving these technical problems in his handling of space and the evocative qualities of his designs.¹²⁰ Nevertheless Casson and Ricketts whose collaboration was close - 'Casson was down here on Friday with models for *Macbeth*'¹²¹ - concluded that the production required twenty-two scenes. This may have been considered necessary because the producer decided to use an uncut text with the exception of Hecate and some of the Porter's lines. However, this involved seven more scenes than had been used by Tree in his production of *Macbeth* (His Majesty's, 1911). Casson must have been aware, that however able his scenic designer, these demands would limit the speed and tragic momentum of the play. Clearly, he considered that the production

could withstand the use of the curtain between each scene although the audience was ‘respectfully requested not to interrupt the action of the Play by applause at the entrances and exits of the artists.’¹²² Ricketts’s integrity and diligence as a designer is evident in the care and imagination he applied to the realisation of each scene. The limited information available as to his use of colour suggests that it reflected the sombre mood of the play with the exception of the banquet scene and the final scene after Malcolm’s victory. Yet his interpretation lacks the cohesive vision that is so evident in *King Lear* and *Henry VIII*. It is here that the designer fails Shakespeare in terms of fluent staging in the early twentieth century.

It is possible that his concept of *Macbeth* was always at odds with the simple and suggestive impulses of twentieth century staging. His decision in 1911 to decline Barker’s offer to design this play was taken after much consideration although he admitted that ‘of all the plays in the world, it is the one that I would soonest stage.’¹²³ He understood Barker’s work and designed three of his productions, *The Death of Tintagiles* (St.James’s, 1912) by Maeterlinck, *Philip the King* (Covent Garden, 1914) by John Masefield, and *The Dynasts* (Kingsway, 1914) by Thomas Hardy. Ricketts considered that ‘horizons and immensities [were] required to stage *Macbeth*.’¹²⁴ His illustrations for Barker’s *Players’ Shakespeare* edition of *The Tragedie of Macbeth* offer an eclectic range of visual possibilities for the play. Invariably they relate closely to the text printed on the opposite page but the illustrations vary in style and execution. Given the consistency of his illustrations for other books this approach is uncharacteristic and suggests that he had not yet devised a homogeneous approach to the play. The designs range from a fully realised, coloured costume design for Lady Macbeth (opposite page 46) to a monochrome wash of an interior for Macbeth’s castle (opposite page 34). A line drawing of an exterior entrance (opposite page 16)

is in the style of the monolithic blocks used for *King Lear*, while the witches are shown against a sombre jagged curtain of a pale green and brown / black wash (opposite page 54). Where costume is shown, Ricketts employs a uniform colour scheme of scarlet, purple yellow, magenta and light emerald, with contrasts of brown and black. Some of these ideas, such as the interior for Macbeth's castle, are in keeping with his previous approach to scenic design and Barker's demands for the play. Others, such as that for the interior of Macduff's castle, appear unwieldy and much closer to a pictorial depiction of the setting. The stylised but fully realised exterior settings do not fulfil Barker's austere vision for the staging of the play.

The barbaric splendour of Macbeth's court! That is the dangerous sort of phrase that slips out into the mind when Shakespeare sets one's imagination free. The practical danger will lie, of course, in any attempt to capitalize this imagination in such extrinsic things as scenery and clothes, lights and music. We make for safety by confining our-selves to use of these things as Shakespeare himself had. If this appears an ignoble timidity, we must then at least see that they do not conflict with things intrinsic to the play. This principle will not be disputed perhaps, but pitfalls in practice are many and unexpected.¹²⁵

Ricketts's attempts to create viable solutions to every scene, for Casson's production, by suggesting vast interior and exterior spaces and to represent a splendid court resulted in the pitfalls envisaged by Barker. In a letter to Bottomley, Ricketts referred to the limitations of the shallow stage at the Prince's 'which has made me have to scrap many first-rate ideas'. He also commented that 'something, however, is bound to come through, as it is too packed with thought for nothing to happen.'¹²⁶ Here he unconsciously identifies the main flaw in his designs. His attempt to frame the production with a sense of barbaric and epic grandeur diminished the essence of the play. His twenty-two scene designs, which drew on a variety of influences and styles, overwhelmed the production.

This is not to say that his designs were unsympathetic to Casson's interpretation of the action. 'Duncan's is the old paternal aristocratic rule, that strove always with the chaos typified by the Norwegian lord [...]. In Shakespeare's time was born again the idea of a conquering empire based on blood and conquest. [...] Macduff stands for something better.'¹²⁷ In *Macbeth and the Players* (1978), Dennis Bartholomeusz refers to a conversation with Sybil Thorndike in which she described Macbeth and Lady Macbeth as 'rather like 'big capitalists' in a tragic partnership.' He suggests that this indicates 'an emotional attitude to the characters'.¹²⁸ As such it is in keeping with twentieth century interpretations of the roles. Casson's casting of Henry Ainley in the title role, a handsome actor with a cultured voice, would indicate that he was looking for introspection rather than a warrior who 'Disdaining fortune, with his brandished steel / Which smoked with bloody execution, / Like valour's minion / Carved out his passage till he faced the slave,' (1.2.17-20). Reviews confirm this approach. St. John Ervine described Macbeth 'as a man of unquiet imagination, whose remorse eats away at his courage'.¹²⁹ 'The mental stress is the most impressive thing about his Macbeth, especially before the murder and also at the banquet.'¹³⁰ Ricketts's response to these ideas culminated with an interpretation of the banquet scene that resonated with the producer's vision of the play, (illustration 20). It was achieved by the familiar use of diagonals and colour to underline the mood. Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, having reached the pinnacle of their ambition, share a high double seated throne mounted on a narrowing set of stairs. The lack of symmetry in the diagonals between the throne and the two vast pillars, between which it is placed, indicates an unease which is reinforced by the diagonal of the banqueting table. It suggests an upheaval in a society that is at odds with itself. The rich red of the throne and the pillars indicates the magnificence of Macbeth's power

but is a reminder of his bloody deeds. Photographs of the production show that the shallow stage forced Ricketts to modify the use of the diagonals but that the dislocation between appearance and reality at this banquet is reinforced by the inclusion of a Christ-like figure painted on the back of the throne.¹³¹ The image is indistinct and could represent Duncan but it looms like a conscience over the two figures. The double throne is a potent symbol of their ambition and reiterates their emotional unity. This too is destroyed by the end of the scene as '[Lady Macbeth] sits in the failing light by the side of her anguished consort [...]. The woman's regality droops and withers; she cannot even comfort her husband; and so, with despair harshly growing in their hearts, they huddle together in the dusk'.¹³² Ricketts's scenic design was integral to the impact of such a moment.

Few of his other designs for *Macbeth* have survived, but the success of *St Joan* and *Henry VIII* ensured that newspapers gave publicity to the production. This extensive coverage included reproductions of a range of Ricketts's costume and scenic designs as well as photographs of the production. They give a clear indication of his approach to *Macbeth* and some of the solutions he adopted. They are all monochrome and unfortunately the reviews make almost no reference to his use of colour.

There were eight scene changes before the first interval which was at the end of 3.1. According to the *Illustrated London News* this meant that 'the early acts are so telescoped that the pause in the action after Duncan's murder, the knocking on the door, and the porter's soliloquy miss not a little of their effect'.¹³³ Difficulty with scene changes meant that the first night performance was nearly four hours in length. Even so Ervine considered that 'the production is swift and majestic; the scenes run together with ease and a rare beauty'.¹³⁴ It is evident that Ricketts's designs were

intended to accommodate the action but that inevitably this was limited by the number of scene changes. His design for the opening scene of the play was an inventive extension of his use of diagonals to frame the action. 'The curtain was withdrawn sufficiently to disclose a central space in an inverted V shape, [...] and in that frame the characters were grouped and said their lines almost without movement.'¹³⁵ Clearly this arrangement helped facilitate a quick scene change to Duncan's tent for 1.2. It is uncertain whether this staging struck a note of foreboding and unrest or gave credence to the witches. This method of staging was also used towards the end of the play. The Scottish thanes are shown in a tableau for 5.2., (illustration 21). This static arrangement ignores the mounting imperative of haste at the end of the play. The scene is stylised but the three dimensional rock looks like a poor attempt to create a realistic piece of scenery. This staging is to some extent influenced by Appia as Ricketts considered that his theories required 'a discarding of all attempt at fussy realism or literalness of detail'.¹³⁶ The result in this case was unconvincing. Indeed, it is difficult not to concur with Brown's impression. 'Caithness, propped up above his men on a perilous rock, looked like nothing so much as an orator on a portable platform at the Marble Arch.'¹³⁷

Duncan's meeting with the bleeding captain in 1.2 was staged in front of half-opened traverse curtains which revealed a backdrop showing a stylised palisade of uneven planes of wood.¹³⁸ This palisade is reminiscent of that in Ricketts's backdrop of the camp before Dover in *King Lear*. The mixture of curtains and palisade create an indeterminate setting that is neither an interior nor exterior. As such the image is an unnecessary distraction that adds nothing to the mood of the scene or the play. Cave considers that the sketch for this scene shows that 'depth is given to the stage picture by groups of resting soldiers to left and right of the curtain who carry spears,

shields or flags.’¹³⁹ In reality the scene was cramped and played at the very front of the stage with two spear carriers to either side of the curtain.¹⁴⁰ No doubt, this scene was another casualty of the narrow stage but it would have enabled an effective transition to the full stage for the meeting of Macbeth and Banquo with the three witches. Again, Ricketts’s realisation of 1.3 owes much to Appia. A press photograph shows the witches standing on a slope of stylised rocks with other three dimensional rocks strewn across the stage.¹⁴¹ A plain curtain behind the actors suggests that effective lighting was used to evoke the immensity envisaged by Ricketts as essential to the play. ‘The blasted heath draws itself out to a far, misty horizon that is as bleak as the heath.’¹⁴²

The programme designates the setting for 1.4 as Duncan’s Palace at Forres. Ricketts created a sense of gracious opulence with half opened traverse curtains which revealed a central floor-to-ceiling hanging and a wall of back curtains suspended from a beam. A large rectangular emblematic frieze behind Duncan’s throne is placed diagonally to the stage. The barbaric splendour of the moment is captured in the devices on the shields of the King’s attendants and the lion rampart banners held by warriors at either side of the throne. Long spears held at arms length by warriors at either side of the stage direct the eye to the seated Duncan as he receives Macbeth and Banquo.¹⁴³ This simple and effective staging harks back to Ricketts’s early work for the Literary Society. Some modification such as drawing the traverse would have achieved a suitable setting for 1.5. – a room in Macbeth’s castle. However, it is unlikely that there was any such continuity. There is no record of the setting for this scene but Ricketts made a distinction between the soft draperies that he used for Duncan’s palace and the harsh, gloomy stone interiors of Macbeth’s castle. Any remaining sense of momentum must have been entirely lost between 1.5

and 3.1. These scenes, 5-9 in the programme, alternated between a room in Macbeth's castle and a courtyard of the castle with scene 8 and 9 taking place in the courtyard.

It was unfortunate that this was one of Ricketts's least successful designs. His illustration for this scene shows the lower portion of an imposing square stone tower that tapers towards the top. Its entrance, which has a triangular keystone, is denoted by two large pillars reached by a series of steps. The design is placed on a diagonal. A group of buildings is attached to the tower, stage left, and a diagonal wall runs from the tower stage right.¹⁴⁴ No doubt Ricketts intended this to be a formalised version of an eleventh century castle, but a press photograph shows that more detail was used in the realisation of the castle and courtyard, (illustration 22). Although not entirely pictorial, the inclusion of a thatched roof on the buildings and a band of brickwork, results in an uneasy compromise between realism and suggestion. In contrast the tower lacks the substantial presence of that in the original drawing. J.T.Grein was of the opinion that 'the palace, [...] had the outward aspect of a sty'.¹⁴⁵ Ricketts had resorted to a conventional interpretation of the street scene for Buckingham's farewell in *Henry VIII*. The exterior of Macbeth's castle demonstrated similar limitations. It is worth noting that exterior buildings do not feature in any of his other work as an artist. Clearly their possibilities were not a preoccupation and held less interest for the designer in terms of effective stage scenery.

The interval was followed by 3.2, a brief private scene between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth which foreshadows Macbeth's psychological disintegration in the public banquet scene. In placing this scene immediately after the interval the producer gave further emphasis to the emotional relationship between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth and their growing realisation of the emptiness of their position.

‘Better be with the dead, / Whom we to gain our peace have sent to peace, / Than on the torture of the mind to lie / In restless ecstasy.’ (3.2.21-24). Ricketts’s use of Duncan’s throne placed in front of a drop curtain was a simple yet symbolic evocation of the palace at Forres. It allowed Thorndike and Ainley to play the scene without scenic distractions. The throne stands as a mute reminder of Macbeth’s usurped power while the couple’s magnificent costumes are an outward show of regal splendour that conceals their growing turmoil and the futility of their ambitions. By 1926 such staging was a familiar convention in such Shakespeare productions as those at the Old Vic and Birmingham Repertory Theatre. The effectiveness of Ricketts’s design, however, brings to mind Norman Wilkinson’s use of a drop curtain and throne to evoke Orsino’s court in 1.1 of Barker’s production of *Twelfth Night*. The same idea was used again to a different effect in 1.1 of Barker’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. Here Hippolyta and Theseus sit in state on a double throne in front of a drop curtain covered in a pattern of luxuriant vines. That such effective and economical scenic effects were so limited in this production of *Macbeth* is no doubt a reflection of the constraints that Ricketts felt in terms of a commercial venture.

The audience would have seen seven other scenic settings before the second interval which was given after 5.1 the sleep-walking scene. This enabled Casson to give due emphasis to Thorndike’s final scene in terms of its mood of tension, despair and terror before building the momentum and atmosphere of the military scenes after the second interval. The *Stage* considered that in effect ‘the sleep-walking scene [was] tacked on to the arrangement.’¹⁴⁶ By this point the designer had provided the audience with a further variety of visual effects and scenic designs to illuminate the action. His sheer invention must have been sufficient to detract from the fluency of

the play. Grein considered that the effect was one where 'massiveness protested against archaisms. Overloading dwarfed collateral simplicity.'¹⁴⁷ Yet each succeeding scenic design had its merits. Cave points out that Ricketts's original design for 3.3 was a modification of his illustration of Barker's edition of *The Tragedie of Macbeth* for the same scene.¹⁴⁸ Three tall gaunt winter trees were placed diagonally centre stage. The three murderers hide to the right of the trees. The programme designates the scene 'A Park near the Palace' but the formalised sparseness in the design suggests that he achieved a bleak and isolated atmosphere. The restraint of this design shows that he was capable of a sensitive, but no less insistent response to the text.

Macbeth's return to the witches in 4.1 was set in a cavern which according to the drawing was lit by a diagonal shaft of light directed from a high fissure stage left, towards the witches and the cauldron centre stage.¹⁴⁹ Ricketts was aiming for a heightened effect where the cut out, round-headed monolithic rocks in front of the backdrop and those that formed a circle around the witches were undeniably artificial and stylised. In appearance these are not unlike those Ricketts used in his projected illustrations for *The Shipwreck* in *The Kingis Quair* (1903). The *Stage* describes 'the murk of [the witches'] environment'¹⁵⁰ so it must be concluded that, apart from the shaft of light, Ricketts used subdued lighting to achieve the shadowy world inhabited by the witches. Presumably the lighting was intended to facilitate the show of the eight kings. Unfortunately the illusion was unsuccessful 'dummy apparitions rising belatedly from the cauldron irresistibly recalled an inexpert showman sending up Punch, Mr. Ketch, and others.'¹⁵¹ Several reviewers considered that the witches' dance had inappropriate connotations of the Ballets Russes. This was a dance which the producer had inexplicably described as 'humorous and characteristic.'¹⁵² Clearly

Ricketts's realisation of the cavern could not surmount the other difficulties of presenting convincing witches to an audience in the late 1920s.

Casson's reinstatement of 4.2., the generally omitted slaughter of the Macduff household, left the audience in no doubt of the bloody state of Scotland. Given his view of the play, the scene must have been included to provide further evidence of Macbeth's tyranny and its contrast with 'Macduff [who] brings from "gracious England" the land of peace and quiet happiness, the help that gave to Scotland true government.'¹⁵³ In this case Ricketts's tapestry backdrop to the Palace of the King of England in 4.3 seems somewhat inappropriate. Here the stage is dominated by a large tapestry showing the Massacre of the Innocents. The narrative is depicted in a style somewhat akin to the Bayeux Tapestry with stylised figures that are similar in size, or much larger than the actors. A horizontal band across the base of the tapestry consisting of three bands of large circles and three of smaller circles prevents Macduff, Malcolm and Ross from becoming part of the background (illustration 23). The tapestry serves to reiterate the events of 4.2 and to reinforce the horror of Ross's news. Indeed, Cave considers that it 'contributes subtly to the poetic life of the scene.'¹⁵⁴ However, as the audience has been left in no doubt concerning the fate of the Macduff household this approach seems heavy-handed and unnecessary. Ricketts used tapestries in *Henry VIII* to create a sense of location and as a subtle and effective commentary on the action. Here, the images allude to the approximate historical period of the play but make no useful reference to the Palace of the King of England. Surely Casson would have expected this scene to have in some way reflected his notions as to the values represented by 'gracious England' rather than Macbeth's barbaric sway over Scotland? Fortunately, Basil Gill as Macduff was able to overcome the disadvantages of such an overwhelming backdrop. 'Here, receiving

news of his children's murder, he carried his audience with his grief; here at least imagination was for once completely made captive.'¹⁵⁵ At this point in the production Ricketts had already produced designs for interiors that differentiated between Duncan's Palace at Forres, a room in Macbeth's castle at Inverness, the Palace at Forres under Macbeth's rule, Macbeth's Banqueting Hall and a room at Macduff's castle in Fife. Clearly the tapestry setting was intended to suggest yet another location and one that differed again from that of the sleepwalking scene.

The setting for this was a hall in Macbeth's Castle at Dunsinane. The massive entrance to this lofty cavernous hall built of large rectangular hewn stone was set at a diagonal to a stone wall. This was broken by two narrow perpendicular windows which were used to light the scene in much the same manner as the witches' cavern.¹⁵⁶ Ricketts's understated realisation of the hall centred attention on Lady Macbeth. It had the effect of making her white clad figure look lost and forlorn against the cold, unforgiving austerity of her surroundings. The setting was sympathetic to the actor but Thorndike was unable to capture the essence of the moment. 'At the end the sleep-walking scene is void of mystery or thrill, which does not come from picturesque poses or deliberate speech.'¹⁵⁷ For one member of the audience her interpretation was too literal. 'Why, by the way, does Miss Thorndike apparently address herself to the Doctor and the Waiting-woman when uttering the words "Wash your hands, put on your nightgown; look not so pale". Is it customary for sleepwalkers to speak to people they happen to encounter'.¹⁵⁸ Unfortunately Ricketts's suggestion of a large, desolate interior had sufficient detail to draw comparison between a castle that had the exterior of a farm building but was unaccountably 'so lofty within'¹⁵⁹ His scenic designs were not intended for such

literal consideration but in effect there was sufficient realism to distract from aspects of the production.

Several reviewers remarked on the brevity of the five remaining scenes after the interval. This could have been the effect of fewer scene changes although they again comprised of an eclectic range of solutions. The use of a triangular frame for 5.2 has already been considered. For the two scenes within the castle Ricketts used the familiar transverse curtains and diagonally placed flats. A single round column was placed centre stage at their intersection. The lower halves of the walls were hung with curtains of a striking Romanesque chevron pattern.¹⁶⁰ It is one of Ricketts's most effective and interpretive pieces of staging. Macbeth confined into the corner with his back against the pillar stands alone. He is trapped, and isolated amid the barbaric splendour of his ambition. In terms of Casson's approach to the role, this setting is apposite for Macbeth's understanding of what he has lost 'My way of life / Is fall'n into the sere, the yellow leaf, / And that which should accompany old age, / As honour, love, obedience, troops of friends, / I must not look to have' (5.3.24-28).

In contrast to the constraint of the castle interior, Ricketts conceived the battlefield in terms of open vistas that he associated with the play. As with his other exterior scenes the view was a matter of simplified realism and in this case was sufficient to fulfil expectations of the pictorial. 'The battlefield had as a background a gorgeously glowing peak, flinging back the rays of the setting sun, and was most picturesque.'¹⁶¹ Evidence suggests that Casson attempted to present a stylised battle scene against this backcloth. By all accounts this commingling of elements of tradition and innovation was unconvincing. 'The battle-scene, in which a number of young men prodded one another lackadaisically behind a sheet of gauze, was merely ridiculous'.¹⁶² Agate expressed a similar view in *The Times*: 'a tableau of young

gentlemen flicking lethargically at each other with battle-axes being frankly absurd.¹⁶³ The duel between Macbeth and Macduff concluded off-stage so allowing the production to draw to a close in much the same way as Ricketts had anticipated in his illustration *The Tragedie of Macbeth* (opposite page 84). Here Macduff stands in front of a group of followers holding raised banners as Malcolm kneels with Macbeth's head on a salver.

A number of Ricketts's costume designs were published in the *Observer*.¹⁶⁴ These and photographs of the production, provide monochrome evidence of his use of pattern in the costumes and his subtle integration of Japanese and Byzantine elements. Only one original costume design survives that of a costume for Lady Macbeth.¹⁶⁵ Unfortunately this gives very limited evidence concerning his overall use of colour for the costumes. There is no suggestion that he adopted his usual approach of using a particular colour to identify factions or groups of people. Neither is it possible to ascertain to what extent the colour of the costumes contributed a sense of drama or cohesion. Given Ricketts's other theatrical work it is difficult to imagine that he did not adopt some of these approaches. However, the photographs indicate that the armour and costumes suggested a barbaric society but one that had wealth and sophistication. The *Theatre World* described the costumes as 'magnificent to the verge of flamboyance.'¹⁶⁶ It does appear as if Ricketts was intent on imparting a sense of occasion rather than creating the sense of a society darkened by violence and murder. Indeed Agate's comment that 'the production is handsome if a trifle Christmassy' is faint praise.¹⁶⁷

Ricketts freely adapted the styles of mid eleventh century to his purpose using a short tunic, breeches and cloaks for the men and over tunics, gowns, veils and cloaks for the women. Status and position are evident in the rich voluminous fabrics of the

cloaks. He could also have intended to convey this and aspects of character through the use of emblems and patterns on the costumes but they are indistinct in the photographs and it is not possible to establish any continuity of ideas. His ability to suggest character through costume is most evident in his designs for Lady Macbeth. They are consistent with an interpretation of the role that put little emphasis on Lady Macbeth's womanly qualities. *Theatre World* went so far as to say that 'it is hard to believe that this Lady Macbeth could incite a man to commit petty larceny, let alone murder, unless he were already bent on the crime.'¹⁶⁸ Thorndike was praised for her intellectual approach: 'clear-headed she hammers out the issue and moulds her steely judgment in the very metal-work of speech. Capability could have done no more.'¹⁶⁹ This idea of hard, uncompromising certainty is reiterated in the costumes. A photograph in *Sybil Thorndike* (1929) by Russell Thorndike shows her as Lady Macbeth holding the letter.¹⁷⁰ Thorndike's appearance in this costume was described as 'Mephistophelean in her red'.¹⁷¹ She wears a long under-gown of a heavy material that falls into a short train behind her. The most arresting part of the costume is the stiff three-quarter long sleeved jacket worn over this gown. The lower side panel is emblazoned with a large circle. The effect is angular and vaguely oriental. Its cut is severe with no concession to femininity. Thorndike's hair is concealed by a dark tightly fitted veil that also covers her neck. It serves to accentuate the actor's features and is Ricketts's only concession to historical authenticity. The shape of a second costume comprising of a long-fitted tunic over an under-gown is suggestive of the eleventh century but the tight bindings on the torso and arms are repressive. Her face is framed by a long hooded cloak pinned beneath her chin. Here again, the costume suppresses all evidence of femininity. Thorndike referred to her appearance in this costume as 'like a wasp'.¹⁷² Ricketts may have intended this association and it is

possible that the costume was yellow with black bindings. If so, this would suggest that Lady Macbeth's costumes for the early scenes were in vivid strident colours – a marked contrast to the subdued palette Ricketts had used for the scenery.

Thorndike's other costumes enveloped her body. Her magnificent cloak worn in the banquet scene outshone Macbeth's. It was made of a rich material that shimmered, possibly a heavy satin, and was embossed with a repeat motif of large patterned circles. Its heavy folds fell down the steps of the double throne on which Macbeth and Lady Macbeth were seated.¹⁷³ Ricketts chose not to give Lady Macbeth a crown – possibly an observation that her ambition was centred on her husband and not herself. Instead, she wears a circular headdress covered in pearls placed over a cap that conceals her ears with gem encrusted material. In appearance it is similar to the headwear worn by the Empress Theodora of Byzantium in the mosaic in the Church of San Vitale, Ravenna.

Opinion was divided as to Thorndike's success in the sleepwalking scene. Gordon Crosse considered that 'I have never known wretchedness presented on the stage as she presented it in this scene by her attitudes as well as by her voice.'¹⁷⁴ On the other hand the *Stage* expressed the view that 'the sleep walking scene is void of mystery or thrill, which does not come from picturesque poses or deliberate speech.'¹⁷⁵ Ricketts dressed her in a voluminous white nightdress complete with a tightly fitted nightcap cap that was secured under her chin. She would have appeared slight and vulnerable against the cavernous, dark stone walls of the hall of Macbeth's castle, (illustration 24). This costume is an interesting example of Ricketts's acceptance of convention when such a tradition served his purpose. George Henry Harlow's painting of *Sarah Siddons in the scene of Lady Macbeth sleepwalking* (Garrick Club, London, 1814) shows the actress wearing a very similar costume, (illustration 25).

Ricketts's costume designs for *Macbeth* were entirely consistent with Casson's view of the role and in keeping with the stylised staging of the battle scenes. In casting Ainley as Macbeth, the producer was hoping to find an actor who would be able to emphasise Macbeth's mental torment. In doing so Ainley gave a performance that lacked energy and conviction. The *Stage* expressed the view that 'one does not imagine this Macbeth unseaming the merciless Macdonald from the navel to the chaps.'¹⁷⁶ Ricketts's designs reinforce this thought for Macbeth's armour is unequivocally theatrical. The short-sleeved tunic of mail is made of rows of metal rectangles. Macbeth wears a three-quarter patterned cloak over his shield arm and carries a large shield similar to those depicted on the Bayeux tapestry.¹⁷⁷ Notwithstanding the overall effect is somewhat oriental. The restless exuberance of this design is lost in its execution. The tunic hangs heavily, Ainley wears breeches and his full length cloak is un-patterned.¹⁷⁸ Macbeth's other costumes are based on Ricketts's pattern of tunic, breeches and cloak and it seems likely that his fortunes were reflected in their richness, colour and pattern.

In many ways this production of *Macbeth* with its elements of tradition and innovation encapsulates the changing influences of staging and design in Shakespeare production in the first three decades of the twentieth century. There can be little doubt that the designer produced an elaborate array of costumes that afforded the production a theatrical splendour. However, except in the case of Lady Macbeth, this lavish display of over seventy costumes served little dramatic purpose. In fact one of the few reviews to mention the costumes points to the likelihood that they detracted from the production. 'Such marvels of the costumier arts as are seen here must be adequately displayed for their full beauty to be appreciated by the audience. This necessity causes some little awkward and unnatural movement as the actors

dispose and drape themselves about the stage at the bidding of their costumes.’¹⁷⁹ In his costume designs for *King Lear* and *Henry VIII* Ricketts had shown a discernment that was interpretive of text and character. It was an essential element in the overall sense of cohesion and unity that his designs brought to these productions. This was lacking in *Macbeth*. Possibly he had intended the visual richness of the costumes to establish a sense of continuity against the subdued palette of his ever changing scenic designs. It is also likely that both Ricketts and Casson were attempting to introduce elements of stylisation especially at the end of the play and that this had been misunderstood. Ricketts had misgivings about his contribution, ‘a general staleness has prevented my working with that sureness of touch I like to feel mine’.¹⁸⁰ In reality his difficulties were a reflection of his attempts to fulfil the producer’s worthy but impossible aspirations for the production. Given Casson’s earlier Shakespeare productions, especially his presentation of *Julius Caesar*, it is difficult to understand why he felt the need to equate his adherence to an almost full text with the need to present twenty-two scenes on stage.

Ricketts’s most successful scenic designs for Shakespeare achieved an interpretation of the dramatic moment with a coherence of stylisation and symbolism. In hindsight Casson’s attempts to reconcile some of the theatrical magnificence of Tree’s productions with his own views on Shakespeare were detrimental to this designer’s clarity of vision in terms of Shakespeare production. This is not to detract from Casson’s genuine desire to produce popular and commercial Shakespeare. His own experiences with innovative productions and the repertory system suggested that a compromise was necessary to ensure commercial success. In the theatrical climate of 1926 his retrospection was not misplaced but it is unfortunate that it tempered Ricketts’s ability to express a unified and personal

interpretation of *Macbeth* within the context of his scenic and costume designs. The reviews for *Macbeth* give a clear indication that understanding of the play was already informed by innovation in the staging of Shakespeare. The *Stage* considered it to be ‘a tragedy of incessant movement, of action of doing – a very elemental affair.’¹⁸¹ Jennings believed that it required ‘the swift march of the murder-and-ghost story.’¹⁸² Agate observed that Casson had been ‘strictly accurate’ in placing the dagger scene in the Courtyard but believed that ‘the essence of all this business is that it is a closet horror.’¹⁸³ The possibility of staging such interpretations was less than certain. As is shown in chapter 4, the modern-dress production, staged at the Royal Court in 1928 by Barry Jackson’s Birmingham Repertory Company, directed by A.K. Aylliff and designed by Paul Shelving, was unsuccessful. The Shakespeare Memorial theatre with its limiting Victorian stage, but now under the directorship of William Bridges-Adams, was destroyed by fire in March 1926. It was rebuilt and opened in 1932 with a proscenium stage that was to influence the scenic design and productions of Shakespeare into the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Almost twenty years elapsed between Ricketts’s first Shakespearean designs for *King Lear* in 1909 and those he designed for Casson in 1925 and 1926. It is testament to his personal vision that the distinctive nature of his work is evident in all three productions. His style evolved from the painted backdrops and suggestive columns and curtains of *King Lear* to his innovative use of diagonally placed flats to create evocative spaces that were sensitive to the text and the needs of actors. These, often used in connection with angled flights of stairs and part representations of buildings, were central elements of his style that were in part derived from the work of Appia. His illustrations to *Shakespeare’s Heroines* are centred on individual set designs for twelve plays rather than character studies. They show that he was able to

utilise these key elements to the purposes of Shakespeare's comedies, tragedies, histories and Roman histories. As such his designs had developed a potential that went far beyond the pictorial realism that had dominated Shakespeare production at the turn of the century. Yet his innovations were tempered with a pragmatism that did not demand radical changes in the theatres in which he worked. It is clear that ultimately this frustrated some of his ideas for *Macbeth* and contributed to the limitations of his scenic designs. Ricketts was the first designer in England to challenge the nineteenth century staging of *King Lear*, *Henry VIII* and *Macbeth*. As shown, he centred his two successful productions on key motifs – the symbolic trilithons and oriental patterned costumes in *King Lear* and symbolism influenced by Holbein and his world in *Henry VIII*. His ultimate achievement as a designer of Shakespeare can be seen in the unity and coherence of his scenic and costume designs for these two plays.

Note: SP = Charles Ricketts, *Self Portrait: taken from the Letters and Journals of Charles Ricketts, R.A.*, comp. by T. Sturge Moore, ed. by Cecil Lewis (London: Davis, 1939).

¹ Gordon Bottomley, 'Charles Ricketts R.A.', *Theatre Arts Monthly*, 16 (1932), (p. 378).

² Cary M. Mazer, *Shakespeare Refashioned: Elizabethan Plays on Edwardian Stages* (Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1981), p.111.

³ Ifan Kyrle Fletcher, 'Charles Ricketts and the Theatre', *Theatre Notebook*, 22 (1967), 6-23 (p. 8).

⁴ Charles Ricketts, *Pages On Art* (London: Constable, 1913), pp. 243-244.

⁵ Ricketts, *Pages on Art*, pp. 243- 244.

⁶ Stephen Calloway, *Charles Ricketts: Subtle and Fantastic Decorator* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1979), p.19.

⁷ Charles Ricketts, 'Introduction', *A Bibliography of Books Published by Hacon and Ricketts* (London: Vale Press, 1904), n.p.

⁸ William Shakespeare, *The Tragedie of Macbeth: Players' Shakespeare*, ed. by Harley Granville Barker, (London: Ernest Benn, 1923).

⁹ Charles Ricketts, *Shakespeare's Heroines* (London: British Broadcasting Company, 1926).

¹⁰ Charles Ricketts, *Self-Portrait: taken from the Letters and Journals of Charles Ricketts, R.A.*, comp. by T. Sturge Moore, ed. by Cecil Lewis (London: Davis, 1939), p. 120.

¹¹ Thomas Sturge Moore, (SP, p.16).

¹² Ricketts, *Journal*, 25 March 1914, (SP, p.190).

¹³ Bottomley, p. 378.

¹⁴ Herbert Furst, 'Charles Ricketts, A.R.A., and his stage work', *Apollo*, 1 (1925), 329-334 (p. 331).

¹⁵ Ricketts, *Journal*, 27 January 1901, (SP, p. 52).

¹⁶ Ricketts, *Pages On Art*, p. 231.

¹⁷ Ricketts, *Pages On Art*, p. 231.

¹⁸ Ricketts, *Self-Portrait*, p. 74.

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- ¹⁹ Ricketts, *Pages On Art*, p. 233.
- ²⁰ Ricketts, *Pages On Art*, p. 233.
- ²¹ Ricketts, *Pages On Art*, p. 238.
- ²² Ricketts, *Pages On Art*, p. 239.
- ²³ Fletcher, p. 6.
- ²⁴ Herbert Trench, 'Shakespeare and Modern Staging', *Saturday Review*, 13 July 1909.
- ²⁵ Ricketts, *Pages On Art*, pp. 237-238.
- ²⁶ Adolphe Appia was born in Geneva. Ricketts however refers to him as a Frenchman. See *Pages On Art* p. 237.
- ²⁷ Richard C. Beacham, *Adolphe Appia: Artist and Visionary of the Modern Theatre* (Great Britain: Harwood, 1994), p. 29.
- ²⁸ J.T.Grein, 'Haymarket: "King Lear"', *Observer*, 9 September 1909.
- ²⁹ Ford Madox Brown, (*King Lear*, 16 studies, WGM); (*King Lear*, 2 studies, BMAG).
- ³⁰ Ricketts letter to W.A. Pye, September 1907, (BL, 58090).
- ³¹ Gordon Craig, *Mask*, Vol 2.
- ³² Bottomley, *Theatre Arts Monthly*, p. 382.
- ³³ Ricketts letter to Michael Field, 17 September 1909, (BL, 58087).
- ³⁴ Richard Allen Cave, *Charles Ricketts' Stage Designs* (Cambridge: Chadwyck-Healey, 1987), p. 39.
- ³⁵ *Sketch*, 15 September 1909.
- ³⁶ Max Beerbohm, 'Lear at the Haymarket', *Saturday Review*, 18 September 1909.
- ³⁷ *Sketch*, 15 September 1909.
- ³⁸ *Sketch*, 15 September 1909.
- ³⁹ Unidentified newspaper clipping, (*King Lear* 1909, VATC).
- ⁴⁰ Furst, p. 331.
- ⁴¹ Cave, p. 39.
- ⁴² Ricketts, *Pages On Art*, p. 234

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- ⁴³ Cave, p. 39.
- ⁴⁴ Ricketts letter to W.A.Pye, 1909, (BL, 58090).
- ⁴⁵ Hubert von Herkomer, 'Scenic Art', *Magazine of Art*, (1892), 259-64 (p. 260).
- ⁴⁶ *Observer*, 9 September 1909.
- ⁴⁷ A.H., 'King Lear Revival. Fine Impressionism at the Haymarket', *Daily Mail*, 9 September 1909.
- ⁴⁸ Cave, p. 44.
- ⁴⁹ *Saturday Review*, 18 September 1909.
- ⁵⁰ Eric Binnie, *The Theatrical Designs of Charles Ricketts* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI, 1985), p. 30.
- ⁵¹ *Observer*, 9 September 1909.
- ⁵² Gordon Bottomley, 'Charles Ricketts (1866-1931.)', *Durham University Journal* (1940), 169-184 (p. 176).
- ⁵³ Ricketts letter to Sydney Cockerell, 20 December 1911, (BL, 58090).
- ⁵⁴ Joseph Darracott, *The World of Charles Ricketts* (New York: Methuen, 1980), p.179.
- ⁵⁵ *Sketch*, 15 September 1909.
- ⁵⁶ *Observer*, 9 September 1909.
- ⁵⁷ Bottomley, *Durham University Journal*, p. 175.
- ⁵⁸ *The Times*, 9 September 1909.
- ⁵⁹ *Observer*, 9 September 1909.
- ⁶⁰ *Daily Mail*, 9 September 1909.
- ⁶¹ *Saturday Review*, 18 September 1909.
- ⁶² *The Times*, 9 September 1909.
- ⁶³ *Observer*, 9 September 1909.
- ⁶⁴ Ricketts letter to Michael Field, 17 September 1909, (BL, 58087).
- ⁶⁵ *Observer*, 9 September 1909.
- ⁶⁶ *Daily Mail*, 9 September 1909.

⁶⁷ Cave, p. 41.

⁶⁸ Diana Devlin, *A Speaking Part: Lewis Casson and the Theatre of His Time* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1982), p. 155.

⁶⁹ Hebert Marshall, *The Other Theatre* (London: Lehmann, 1947), p. 11.

⁷⁰ See Chapter 4, p. 271-272.

⁷¹ See Chapter 4, pp. 271-288.

⁷² Devlin, p. 71.

⁷³ *The Stage Year Book* ed. by L. Carson, (London: Carson & Comerford, 1914), plates 1- 4 between pp. 42 to 43.

⁷⁴ Devlin, pp. 139-140.

⁷⁵ ‘The Empire. Revival of “Henry VIII”’, *Stage*, 31 December 1925.

⁷⁶ Francis Burrell, *Nation and The Athenaeum*, 9 January 1926.

⁷⁷ James Agate, *The Contemporary Theatre – 1925* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1926; New York: Blom, 1969), p. 26.

⁷⁸ Herbert Beerbohm Tree, *Thoughts and After-Thoughts* (London: Cassell, 1913), p. 291.

⁷⁹ Ricketts letter to Sydney Cockerell, 25 October 1925, (SP, p. 351).

⁸⁰ Ricketts, *Journal*, 11 January 1902, (BL, 58100).

⁸¹ Laurence Binyon letter to Charles Ricketts, 1909, (BL, 58090).

⁸² Susan Foister, *Holbein in England* (London: Tate, 2006), plate, 103, p. 94.

⁸³ Foister, plate 110, p. 101.

⁸⁴ Foister, plate 146, p. 136.

⁸⁵ Devlin, p. 157.

⁸⁶ Devlin had access to the prompt-book for *Henry VIII* while it was still in the possession of her family. After Sybil Thorndike’s death in 1976 the Casson / Thorndike archive was gifted to the V&A Theatre Collections. (Email from Diana Devlin, 22 October 2008).

⁸⁷ Gordon Bottomley letter to Charles Ricketts, 20 October 1926, (BL.58091).

⁸⁸ ‘The Theatre, The Lost Art of Dissembling’, *Spectator*, 9 January 1926.

⁸⁹ *Sketch*, 6 January 1926.

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- ⁹⁰ *Stage*, 31 December 1925.
- ⁹¹ Ricketts letter to Sydney Cockerell, 23 December 1925, (SP, p. 353).
- ⁹² Ricketts letter to Sydney Cockerell, 21 October 1925, (SP, p. 352).
- ⁹³ ‘Realism in To-morrow’s Play’, *Daily Sketch*, 22 December 1925.
- ⁹⁴ *Daily Mail*, 14 January 1926.
- ⁹⁵ Bottomley, letter 20 October 1926.
- ⁹⁶ *Tree*, p. 293.
- ⁹⁷ Foister, plate 102, p. 90.
- ⁹⁸ *Agate*, p. 24.
- ⁹⁹ Devlin, p.157.
- ¹⁰⁰ Ricketts letter to Sydney Cockerell, 23 December 1925, (SP, p. 353).
- ¹⁰¹ Bottomley, letter 20 October 1926.
- ¹⁰² *Stage*, 31 December 1925.
- ¹⁰³ Bottomley, letter 20 October 1926.
- ¹⁰⁴ *Theatre Arts Monthly*, no.16, 1932.
- ¹⁰⁵ Charles Ricketts scenic design, (*Henry VIII*, 1925, E.1147-1926, VAPD).
- ¹⁰⁶ Bottomley, letter 20 October 1926.
- ¹⁰⁷ *Stage*, 31 December 1925.
- ¹⁰⁸ Ricketts letter to Sydney Cockerell, October 1925, (SP, p. 351).
- ¹⁰⁹ Ivor Brown, ‘King and Empire’, *Saturday Review*, 2 January 1926.
- ¹¹⁰ *Sketch*, 22 December 1925.
- ¹¹¹ *Sketch*, 6 January 1926.
- ¹¹² Jane Martineau and others, *Shakespeare in Art* (London: Merrell, 2003), p. 149.
- ¹¹³ St. John Ervine, ‘At the Play. “Henry VIII”’, *Observer*, 27 December 1925.
- ¹¹⁴ Unidentified newspaper clipping, (*Henry VIII*, 1925, VATC).
- ¹¹⁵ *Agate*, p.24.

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- ¹¹⁶ *Observer*, 27 December 1925.
- ¹¹⁷ *Stage*, 31 December 1925.
- ¹¹⁸ ‘The “Macbeth” Revival. Why Miss Thorndike is doing it’ *Observer*, 24 December 1926.
- ¹¹⁹ Ivor Brown, ‘“Macbeth” – With Care’, *Saturday Review*, 8 January 1927.
- ¹²⁰ Cave, pp. 79-84.
- ¹²¹ Ricketts letter to Cecil Lewis, 1926, (SP, p. 370).
- ¹²² Programme, *Macbeth*, Prince’s Theatre, December, 1926, (VATC).
- ¹²³ Ricketts letter to R.N.R. Holst, Winter 1911, (SP, p.171).
- ¹²⁴ Ricketts, *Pages On Art*, p.239.
- ¹²⁵ Harley Granville Barker, ‘Preface’, in *The Tragedie of Macbeth: Players’ Shakespeare*, p. xxxv
- ¹²⁶ Ricketts letter to Gordon Bottomley, 27 October 1926, (SP, p. 367).
- ¹²⁷ Lewis T. Casson, ‘The Text of “Macbeth.” Some Suggestions’, *Telegraph*, 16 December 1926.
- ¹²⁸ Dennis Bartholomeusz, *Macbeth and the Players* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), p. 226.
- ¹²⁹ St. John Ervine, ‘At the Play. Miss Thorndike and Mr. Ainley in “Macbeth”’, *Observer*, 26 December 1926.
- ¹³⁰ ‘The Princes. Revival of “Macbeth”’, *Stage*, 30 December 1926.
- ¹³¹ Unidentified newspaper clipping, 21 January 1927, (*Macbeth*, 1926, VATC).
- ¹³² *Observer*, 26 December 1926.
- ¹³³ *Illustrated London News*, 8 January 1927.
- ¹³⁴ *Observer*, 26 December 1926.
- ¹³⁵ Unidentified typewritten review, 21 January 1927, (*Macbeth*, 1926, VATC).
- ¹³⁶ Ricketts, *Pages on Art*, p. 237.
- ¹³⁷ *Saturday Review*, 8 January 1927.
- ¹³⁸ *Sketch*, December 1926.
- ¹³⁹ Cave, p. 81.

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- ¹⁴⁰ *Sketch*, December 1926.
- ¹⁴¹ Unidentified newspaper clipping, (*Macbeth*, 1926, VATC).
- ¹⁴² *Observer*, 26 December 1926.
- ¹⁴³ *Sketch*, December 1926.
- ¹⁴⁴ ‘The New Setting for “Macbeth”: Designs by Charles Ricketts’, *Illustrated London News*, 18 December 1926.
- ¹⁴⁵ J.T. Grein, ““Macbeth at the Princes””, *Sketch*, December, 1926.
- ¹⁴⁶ *Stage*, 30 December 1926.
- ¹⁴⁷ *Sketch*, December 1926.
- ¹⁴⁸ Cave, pp. 82-83.
- ¹⁴⁹ *Illustrated London News*, 18 December 1926.
- ¹⁵⁰ *Stage*, 30 December 1926.
- ¹⁵¹ James Agate, ““Macbeth””, *The Times*, 24 December 1926.
- ¹⁵² *Telegraph*, 16 December 1926.
- ¹⁵³ *Telegraph*, 16 December 1926.
- ¹⁵⁴ Cave, p. 84.
- ¹⁵⁵ *The Times*, 28 December 1926.
- ¹⁵⁶ *Illustrated London News*, 18 December 1926.
- ¹⁵⁷ *Stage*, 30 December, 1926.
- ¹⁵⁸ Unidentified type-written review, 21 January 1927.
- ¹⁵⁹ *Sketch*, December 1926.
- ¹⁶⁰ *Illustrated London News*, 18 December 1926.
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- ¹⁶² *Saturday Review*, 8 January 1927.
- ¹⁶³ *The Times*, 24 December 1926.
- ¹⁶⁴ *Observer*, 19 December 1926.

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- ¹⁶⁵ Charles Ricketts costume design, Lady Macbeth, (*Macbeth*, 1926, F1933-103, BAGM).
- ¹⁶⁶ W.N.S., ““Macbeth””, *Theatre World*, 24 December 1926, (issued February 1927).
- ¹⁶⁷ *The Times*, 24 December 1926.
- ¹⁶⁸ *Theatre World*, 24 December 1926.
- ¹⁶⁹ *Saturday Review*, 8 January 1927.
- ¹⁷⁰ Russell Thorndike, *Sybil Thorndike* (London: Butterworth, 1929), opposite p. 255.
- ¹⁷¹ Richard Jennings, ‘The Theatre [“Macbeth,” by William Shakespeare, at the Prince’s Theatre]’, *Spectator*, 1 January 1927.
- ¹⁷² Elizabeth Sprigge, *Sybil Thorndike Casson* (London: Gollancz, 1971), p.178
- ¹⁷³ Unidentified newspaper clipping, (*Macbeth*, 1926, VATC).
- ¹⁷⁴ Gordon Crosse, *Shakespearean Playgoing 1890-1952* (London: Mowbray, 1953), p. 53.
- ¹⁷⁵ *Stage*, 30 December 1926.
- ¹⁷⁶ *Stage*, 30 December 1926.
- ¹⁷⁷ *Observer*, 19 December 1926.
- ¹⁷⁸ Unidentified newspaper clipping, (*Macbeth* 1926, VATC).
- ¹⁷⁹ *Theatre World*, February 1927.
- ¹⁸⁰ Ricketts letter to Bottomley, 16 November 1926, (SP, p. 370).
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CHAPTER 2

NORMAN WILKINSON

‘He was something of an Elizabethan, and his taste was catholic’.

William Bridges-Adams 1934¹

From Birmingham to London

Norman Wilkinson collaborated with Harley Granville-Barker on all three of his Shakespeare productions at the Savoy, designing the sets and properties for *The Winter's Tale* (1912), and taking responsibility for both scenic designs and costumes for *Twelfth Night* (1912) and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1914). As a designer he demonstrated an instinctive facility in the interpretation of Barker's innovative agenda for the production of Shakespeare. His scenic and costume designs were infused with an absorption and interpretation of new ideas. Wilkinson had the ability to create a theatrical unity from such. He drew on an eclectic range of influences, from the theatre and visual arts, to realise these designs. Wilkinson's work facilitated Barker's use of the stage and was interpretive of the mood of the play, while his costumes conveyed an awareness of character within the visual framework of the production. His work is best exemplified by the three Shakespeare productions, for which he created both scenic designs and costumes. Those at the beginning of his career, *Twelfth Night* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, demonstrate his response to the atmosphere of theatrical innovation generated before 1914. His designs for William Bridges-Adams's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, 1932) came towards the end of Wilkinson's life. His work for this

production demonstrates how his ideas had evolved, as well as his response to the play given the demands of the newly built theatre.

Wilkinson was educated in the enlightened climate of Abbotsholme School, where Cecil Reddie's curriculum was intended to provide boys with an 'Education of a thoroughly modern and practical character'.² A brief comment, in the school register for 1900, suggests that Wilkinson would be attracted to a career in the theatre.³ It notes, rather tersely, that he was 'entirely wrapped up in the stage'. From 1900 until 1903 he attended the Birmingham School of Art. In *My Approach to Art* (1978), Wilkinson's friend and contemporary Max Armfield, recalls its atmosphere: 'Birmingham possessed so many [Pre-Raphaelite] works and the staff of the school was permeated by their influence. [Charles] Gere and [Arthur] Gaskin were even then working on the illustrations for the Kelmscott Press with William Morris.'⁴ Wilkinson's early stylised paintings are redolent of these influences. *Très Gentil Chaucer* (1905), although strictly a water-colour, was included in the Tempera exhibition at the Carfax Gallery.⁵ *Richard II Holding the Red Rose of Lancaster* (1907) was exhibited at the same Gallery.⁶ This painting (illustration 26) with its stylised figures, intricate detail, symbolism and evidence of the influence of both Japanese and early Italian art, is typical of his work at this time. His illustrations for a limited edition of R.L. Stevenson's *Virginibus Puerisque and Other Papers* (1910), have a contemporary context and are set in a Cotswold landscape, but also contain strong elements of stylisation and symbolism.⁷ Wilkinson's collaboration with Keith Henderson on the illustrations for Geoffrey Chaucer's *Romaunt of the Rose* (1911) was a return to a highly wrought interpretation of medieval themes.⁸ Despite this preoccupation, there is some evidence to suggest that Wilkinson looked beyond the traditions of the Birmingham School of Art. Armfield recalls the publications which

familiarised them with the work of other artists. 'We brought the quite expensive copies of the various quarterlies then coming out, such as the *Savoy* and the *Pageant*, by which we became acquainted with the work of such artists as Puvis de Chavannes, Ricketts and Shannon, Condor, Housman, Beardsley and Savage.'⁹ Wilkinson's early paintings and illustrative work encapsulate the dramatic moment but there is little in their execution to indicate a latent talent for stage design.

There are few facts concerning his transition from an artist imbued with the spirit of the Pre-Raphaelites and Arts and Crafts medievalism, to that of a designer of theatre sets and costumes for Barker. As will be seen in Wilkinson's designs for Barker's *Twelfth Night* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, there can be little doubt that his rapid development as a stage designer was in part due to his response to the complex influences in the world of art and theatre design, which made such a resounding impact in London from 1910 onwards. They effected a fundamental change in his perspective and generated his creative interpretation of Shakespeare. His theatrical work is permeated by a sense of eclecticism. It can only be surmised that his early experiments in the synthesis of artistic influences into a personal style, provided a crucial experience, which he later adapted to his methods as a stage designer.

Armfield provides an explanation as to Wilkinson's entry into stage design. 'He had a one-man show of his Cotswold landscapes. They were not very accomplished and no one paid much attention to them. So Norman decided to move into stage design in which he had always been interested'.¹⁰ This seems an unlikely recommendation for a stage designer, but by March 1909 Wilkinson had commenced his career as a designer with Barker as part of his Repertory season at the Duke of York's, in partnership with Charles Frohman. Elizabeth Coxhead in *Constance Spry*:

A Biography (1975) writes that: 'he [Wilkinson] got to know Galsworthy and through Galsworthy Granville Barker'.¹¹ If this was the case, it no doubt provided the aspiring designer with the opportunity he was seeking.

The years 1909 until 1915, when Wilkinson worked solely for Barker, were the designer's most productive. His first designs were for *The Sentimentalists* (Duke of York's, 1909) by George Meredith and were quickly followed by Barker's *The Madras House* (Duke of York's, 1909). The next year he created designs for Schnitzler's *Anatol* (Little, 1911), *Bonita* (Queen's, 1911) by Peacock and Fraser-Simson, and Ibsen's *The Master Builder* (Little, 1911). Undoubtedly, such a variety of plays would have offered him the opportunity to develop his skills. A review of *The Master Builder* in the *Stage* shows that Wilkinson was already using suggestive backdrops. 'A sky of purple hue above the tree tops being used for the fall of Solness.'¹² 1912 was a prolific year with designs for four productions; Eden Phillpotts's *The Secret Woman* (Kingsway, 1912), and Gilbert Murray's translation of Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris* (Kingsway, 1912), *The Winter's Tale* in collaboration with Rutherford and *Twelfth Night*. Wilkinson's designs for these two Shakespeare productions and later Barker's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* secured his reputation, but his confidence and theatrical invention continued to develop throughout his association with the producer. Their final collaboration was in 1915 when Barker embarked on an American tour. It was during this tour that Wilkinson designed the vast outdoor set and costumes for *Iphigenia in Tauris* (1915) and *The Trojan Woman* (1915), performed at the Yale Bowl and other university venues. These designs showed him to be a consummate master of his craft. It is evident in his organisation of the mass and space of the set, and his exuberant interpretation of the costumes with their bold styles, striking colours and vivid patterns.

In November 1916 Wilkinson enlisted with the 2nd Artists' Rifles. His war record casts little light on his experiences, other than that he was transferred to the Camouflage School in September 1918.¹³ Indeed, very little is known concerning this period of his life, although Armfield was of the opinion that Wilkinson's alcoholism was connected to his experiences during the war.¹⁴ After the war, Wilkinson's creativity was undiminished but he was incapable of any sustained focus. However, he had a comfortable independent income from the Birmingham based family firm Wilkinson and Riddell, and did not have to accept work that did not interest him. Such factors must have affected his output and choice of work, for his career did not re-commence until 1923. His continued interest in Shakespeare and the culture of the seventeenth century is evident in the work that did attract him, as is his enthusiasm for the literature and costume of the eighteenth century. He was connected with the Phoenix Society and the Stage Society, for which he designed *The Faithful Shepherdess* (Drury Lane, 1923) by Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher. In the same year he produced scenic and costume designs for Donald Calthrop's productions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Kingsway, 1923) and *Twelfth Night* (Kingsway, 1923) but these attracted little critical attention. His penchant for the Elizabethan and Jacobean can be seen in his stylised illustrations for Baker's *Players' Shakespeare, Love's Labour's Lost* (1924).¹⁵

During 1925-1926 he worked on three productions for Nigel Playfair at the Lyric, Hammersmith. Little evidence survives of his designs for *The Rivals* (1925) by Richard Sheridan, Molière's *The Would-Be Gentleman* (1926), and *Lionel and Clarissa* (1925) by Isaac Bickerstaffe. Interestingly, a review of *The Would-Be Gentleman* suggests that Wilkinson had extended his eclectic taste to include the

work of Claud Lovat Fraser. A review comments: 'For the rest there are Mr. Norman Wilkinson's settings, which remind us of Mr. Lovat Fraser's.'¹⁶

Wilkinson's formal connection with the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre began in 1918, when Archibald Flower, the Chairman of the Executive Council, proposed him as a new governor. The minutes state that, 'Mr Wilkinson had attended festivals for 20 years and had done good work for Shakespeare'.¹⁷ Wilkinson appeared to show little interest until 1921 when he attended his first annual governors's meeting. Even then, he did not play an active role until after the original theatre was destroyed by fire in 1926. According to the Minute Book, Wilkinson does appear to have had some influence concerning the building of the new theatre although it is not possible to ascertain the degree to which he was consulted. 'A resolution was passed authorising our Architects to confer with Mr W. [Wilkinson] and Sir B. J. [Barry Jackson] in London on any question arising on the new building'.¹⁸ It is perhaps a matter of regret that the advice of this gifted designer may have been limited to 'the furnishings, decorations, act drop and colour-scheme in the new building'.¹⁹ He did, however, exert influence on decisions concerning the affairs of the new theatre, and the choice of productions. In October 1931 he offered, 'to design the scenery and costumes for a play in the opening Festival free of charge'.²⁰ His designs for Bridges-Adams's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1932) were the outcome of his offer.

A Fusion of Styles: *Twelfth Night* (Savoy, 1912)

Barker's stylish and insightful Shakespeare productions at the Savoy were a resounding challenge to the traditions of staging Shakespeare. They were grounded in his reappraisal and interpretation of the text and his attempts to re-examine it in terms of Shakespeare production. Cary Mazer considers that 'Barker's virtue lay not in his power of invention, but in his ability to integrate the varied and disparate features of the stagecraft of his day into a coherent system of staging'.²¹ It is an apt summary of Barker's very considerable achievement. He did articulate ideas advocated by Edward Gordon Craig, William Poel and Max Reinhardt, but the essential mood of Barker's productions was individual, decisive and confident. He used an almost entirely uncut text and encouraged his actors to use a naturalistic style of speech and unmannered acting. The stage was on three levels: a false proscenium arch upstage facilitated a raised level reached by four steps; the centre stage reached the permanent proscenium and two steps down from this was an apron extension. Thus, he created a space which allowed a closer intimacy between actor and audience. The footlights were removed and in place of subdued, emotive lighting, the arc and dress-circle lights provided clear, full light for many of the scenes. The speed and continuity of the play was enhanced by the use of curtains to effect scene changes, while the limited use of built sets enabled Barker to reduce the number of intervals. Barker was conscious that a radical new visual interpretation of the plays was integral to his intention. He considered that in order to free the plays from the confines of pictorial realism, it was essential to invent 'a new hieroglyphical language of scenery'.²² Wilkinson achieved an interpretive visual unity in the costumes and scenic designs for *Twelfth Night*. This was not produced through the creation of an entirely new approach to scenic design or for that matter to the

costumes. His work is indebted other designers but he fused this into a distinctive style of his own. It was from this, that Wilkinson resolved the demands of Barker's staging and created an inspired approach. Their collaboration brought about a coherent and refreshing re-appraisal of *Twelfth Night*. It was achieved with a panache that brought it resoundingly into the twentieth century.

Barker's sense of the mood of the play concurred exactly with some of the early artistic interests of his designer. It was expressed in his *Preface to Twelfth Night: An Acting Edition* (1912) - 'It is life, I believe, as Shakespeare glimpsed it with the eye of his genius in that half-Italianised court of Elizabeth'²³ It is known that Wilkinson spent time in Italy and Paris where he concentrated on 'an especially intensive study of Gothic art and Tudor design.'²⁴ The sophisticated, half-Italianised court of Elizabeth was, therefore, a natural starting point. His scenic designs and costumes express the spirit of a sumptuous Tudor court. This was achieved by a fusion of stylised Elizabethan costumes, with references to the orient, combined with ideas taken from the visual arts of the twentieth century. Wilkinson created a mood that was in turn improbable, flamboyant and indulgent. This was enhanced by his use of vibrant colours, especially pinks and yellows against black, for costumes and aspects of the scenic décor. This was in keeping with Wilkinson's stated intention: 'to give the play a simple, direct treatment that is free from 'style' and 'period' - simply something that is the result of a thorough investigation of the play as it stands - alone.'²⁵ He designed curtains and sets that were free from literal representation but were suggestive of locale. They evoked Illyria as an intangible world.

The play was presented with the same stage arrangement as *The Winter's Tale*. Wilkinson's stage decorations included six curtain drops, a built set for Olivia's garden and an inner stage for the prison and the drinking scenes. The final scene was

played in front of a flat, inserted at mid-stage level, representing a stylised white exterior. The influence of Reinhardt's designers is apparent in some of these scenic designs. It is unsurprising as they had informed aspects of Wilkinson's earlier work for Barker. He drew heavily on Alfred Roller's scenic designs for Reinhardt's *Oedipus* (Covent Garden, 1912) and for *Iphigenia in Tauris* (His Majesty's, 1912), (Bradfield College, 1912). His scenic design for Leontes' palace for *A Winter's Tale* has affinities with Roller's realisation of the entrance hall of Kreon's house in Reinhardt's production of Hofmannsthal's *Oedipus and the Sphinx* (Deutsches Theater, 1906). This, in itself, has similarities to Craig's design for Leonato's house for *Much Ado About Nothing* (Imperial, 1903). However, it is the influence of Karl Czeschka's designs for Reinhardt's *King Lear* (Deutsches Theater, 1908) that is apparent in Wilkinson's work for *Twelfth Night*. This is particularly evident in his curtain for Orsino's court in 1.1 and his setting for the final scene 5.1. Wilkinson's adaptation of this staging for a tragedy to the demands of romantic comedy, show his understanding of the potential of Czeschka's work. Its underlying simplicity of approach meant that it was possible to alter the mood of turmoil, conveyed in the patterned geometric designs of the curtain for Lear's palace, to one that imparted the heightened atmosphere at the Court of Duke Orsino. A drawing of Wilkinson's design for the 'Duke's cloth' shows a regular design of yellow triangles interspersed with gothic windows, each containing a plant.²⁶ According to a photograph of the set, Wilkinson simplified this still further to the basic elements of alternate vivid yellow and black triangles, interspersed with an outline suggestive of castle windows.²⁷ The stridently coloured curtain is an adaptation of the chevron pattern used to indicate a fairy-tale castle. It sets the light-hearted mood of the play, while the strong contrasts in colour are in keeping with the extremes of emotion expressed in the first scene.

The centrally placed high-backed seat implies authority in both Czeschka's and Wilkinson's stage set but, whereas, Lear's throne is plain, that of Orsino is emblazoned with a jaunty chevron pattern.

Wilkinson's final scene, the exterior of Olivia's garden, is a modification of Czeschka's austere castle exterior for *King Lear*, (illustration 27). Czeschka's four rectangular pillars, two either side of a small, central square door, are replaced by a central large curved arch, with gates and four arched windows. Wilkinson created a different acting space by adapting the arrangement so that the stage steps can be seen behind. His main arch has a softening effect which embraces the characters. The plain white of this flat, with its wrought gold-coloured gates, has an understated elegance and is a contrast to the vivid colours of the opening scene of the play (illustration 28). The use of this simple structure confirms a return to stability at the end of the play, as the complexities of the plot are resolved, and licence comes to an end.

Only one other design for a curtain has survived. The Account Book for *Twelfth Night* lists a 'sea shore cloth' that must have been used for Viola's arrival in Illyria.²⁸ This cloth is an excellent example of Wilkinson's technique of combining a variety of artistic influences to achieve his effect. The blocks of colour are handled in an impressionistic style. They suggest a blue sky, dark green and brown hills and a yellow beach, merging into a blue sea in the foreground. To the left, nestled in the hills, is a pink walled and roofed Italian town, reminiscent in execution of those found in the work of fifteenth-century Florentine painting. The juxtaposition of these two styles of painting suggest a locale but one that is both foreign and indeterminate. It justifies Viola's question: 'What country, friends, is this?' (1.2.41). The colours although clear and warm in tone, are a contrast to the confident, vibrant tone of the

opening scene. They are in keeping with Viola's uncertain situation. Wilkinson's introduction of an Italian element here also creates a connection with the one built set in the production - that of Olivia's garden. Most reviews accepted the convention of the curtains, although a few including the *Daily News and Leader* deplored their lack of pictorial exactitude. 'I do not see why some of them [the curtains] should be emblazoned with foolish Noah's Ark landscapes.'²⁹ The majority were comfortable with their purpose 'Most of the other scenes are mere hanging curtains with paintings more decorative than illustrative to suggest the changing background.'³⁰ Critical opprobrium was reserved for Wilkinson's innovative approach to Olivia's garden.

In conception this setting was a direct challenge to the methods associated with Hawes Craven's lavish realisation of Olivia's garden for Herbert Beerbohm Tree's production of *Twelfth Night* (His Majesty's, 1901). This attempt to reproduce the pictorial reality of large, opulent garden with terraces of steps was based on a picture from *Country Life*. The illusion was created by the use of painted cloth and flats to create an elaborate three-dimensional set. In contrast, Wilkinson's intended effect was in keeping with his rationale for the rest of the production, as the garden was unashamedly fanciful. This was achieved by the use of three-dimensional, stylised Italianate features that were realised in vibrant colours. The three pink cupolas, placed to the right, left and centre of the stage, with their golden Corinthian capitals, were simplifications of the arches and buildings of fifteenth-century Italian art. This made the appearance of the garden consistent with the medieval town featured on the sea-shore curtain. The precise shapes of topiary suggested by the three-dimensional stylised trees, fitted logically into Wilkinson's design, as this was a feature of both Elizabethan and Italian gardens. He was clear about his intentions:

The whole stage decorations, used for the more important scenes of the play, were treated in a real manner - real, that is, in that everything was solid, of those dimensions – tangible, not a flat piece of canvas painted to look like what it was not. All the objects that went to make up Olivia's garden were solid. They had plan and elevation, and were as usable as the component parts of any garden, or as a street and houses.³¹

The garden is essentially the designer's interpretation of the stylised realism that was evident in many of Ernst Stern's scenic designs for Reinhardt's productions. In *Twentieth - Century Stage Decoration* vol.1 (1929) Walter René Fuerst and Samuel J. Hume identify this technique as 'plastic execution' and aptly define the process.

Thus it is in part the plastic execution itself which compels us to eliminate, to cut, to reduce the details, - to make a choice of the scenic elements to be employed. And by this selection the required expression is accomplished. To this a second degree of stylisation is added by a greater or lesser simplification of the stage decoration.³²

This realisation of Olivia's garden appears to be yet another example of Wilkinson's ability to combine ideas from different sources. In addition to these, there are references to one of his paintings. This is undated but its style and content suggest that it was produced while he was in Italy. It shows a marked similarity to the arrangement and style of the seats and hedges used in this set. The main feature is a grand formal garden with central terraced steps, flanked in the foreground with tall box hedges. Placed in front of these, at either side, are garden seats, similar in shape to those in *Twelfth Night*. Despite Wilkinson's stylisation of such Italian features, its geometrical realisation informed the *Daily Mail*'s sub-title 'Cubism on the Stage'. The reviewer was of the opinion that, 'the principal scene is still somewhat of a nightmare, with its pink baldachino over a golden throne, its Noah's Ark trees, "box" hedges and dead flat white sky'.³³ Two features in the set received little attention from the critics. Three curved golden seats, covered in a lighter tone of a quatrefoil repeat pattern, were used, and two remained in front of the exterior wall for the final

scene. Their colouring created a visual link with the capitals of the cupolas and the golden gates in the arch of the wall, while their design related to the oriental aspects of the production. Several production photographs show that Barker put them to good use. One shows, Sir Toby, Sir Andrew and Fabian using them as a means of concealment in 2.5. It has the effect of allowing the audience to see their reactions, as well as those of Malvolio, who stands on the raised level of the stage, as he reads the letter he believes has been written by Olivia. The main stage was covered in pink and black chequered paving. The colours were consistent with Wilkinson's overall scheme. Emil Orlik had used a black and white chequered floor for Reinhardt's *The Winter's Tale* (Deutsches Theater 1906). In this case it cannot be assumed that Wilkinson's design was derivative. Such floors are featured in his paintings such as *Très Gentil Chaucer* as well as his illustrations to *Romaunt of the Rose*. It was a favourite motif and became a familiar feature of his later theatre and illustrative work.

Wilkinson realised a whimsical garden in keeping with the humour of Olivia's unrealistic love for Cesario, Malvolio's exaggerated musings after reading Maria's forged letter and the extremities of his later behaviour. Most reviewers objected to the solidity and studied artificiality of the garden, finding it intrusive to Wilkinson's decorative scheme in comparison with the easy transitions offered by the curtains (illustration 29). *Lloyds Weekly News* regarded it as an 'example of scenic caricature',³⁴ the *Evening News* considered 'what is meant to be subordinate becomes unduly distracting',³⁵ and the *Westminster Gazette* believed that 'there are some unimportant pink columns of a very ugly tone.'³⁶ Some reviewers were attuned to Wilkinson's purpose. 'Who [...] could blame a producer for having given this "Illyria" a quaint, fantastic architecture of its own?'³⁷ The genuine confusion in the

reaction to this built set, demonstrates the degree of acceptance afforded to the rest of Wilkinson's scenic work. It would appear that the concept of the garden, with its stylised, three-dimensional elements, confronted the audience with a conscious artificiality that was at odds with the production's atmosphere of nebulous unreality.

In contrast, the staging of the drinking scene 1.3, provided less of a visual challenge, and there were numerous enthusiastic references to its design. The 15ft wide by 6ft deep tapestried inset was an innovation in terms of common scenic practice, although inner rooms were a feature of Poel's Shakespearean productions.³⁸

The *Westminster Gazette* describes its effect:

There is one little gem: this is the scene of the revels. Here Mr Wilkinson uses what appears to be a novel contrivance: He employs what might be called a proscenium arch within the proscenium arch, and makes the actual scene far narrower than the stage, and sets it a good way back, producing the effect of a little boxed-in room³⁹

It is a measure of Wilkinson's assurance in mixing the styles of scenic designers, that he identified the value of adapting this aspect of Poel's staging, in order to capture the nocturnal mood of festivity and licence, in the most domestic scene of the play.

This room was not the conventional kitchen of previous productions nevertheless, the decoration was easy to associate with an Elizabethan household. Wilkinson's design themes remained consistent, with an Italianate tapestry of putti drinking from a fountain, or clambering over a vined trellis. The table and stools were covered in a material patterned with large cream carnations, on a deep pink background. The *Daily Sketch* describes how Barker used the limited space allowed by Wilkinson's design to confine the physical humour of the scene. 'All happens in a small tapestry-hung space with a low-ceiling, and this crowding gave such a scene of intimacy that one almost shrank guiltily in one's stall when Malvolio came to chide.'⁴⁰ It is a telling illustration of the understanding that the producer and the designer brought to

the re-interpretation of the play and the innovation that they brought to the staging of a very familiar scene.

Wilkinson's costumes for *Twelfth Night* created a marked distinction between Olivia's household and Orsino's court. The Account Book for *Twelfth Night* identifies the exact colours and types of fabrics employed for the costumes. When considered in conjunction with his costume designs, it is possible to gauge something of their visual impact.⁴¹ The designer commented that: 'I imagine [...] that to the Elizabethan gallants "Twelfth Night" ranked as would a very smartly-dressed comedy at a fashionable West End theatre in our day.'⁴² Mazer leaves as conjecture the idea that 'Barker thoroughly intended [...] to ape the success of Edwardian fashionable drawing-room comedy [...] to which the fashion-plate ethic of Wilkinson's Elizabethan style no doubt contributed.'⁴³ In fact, Wilkinson's skills went far beyond the mere suggestion of fashion. The costumes succeeded because he used them to define the characters in terms of the spirit of the play itself. He added to this effect a witty colour scheme that was redolent with the black, white, silver and gold of the Elizabethan period, but was combined with the contemporary shades of cerise and bright yellow. The text with its two fleeting references to 'the Sophy' - the Shah of Persia in (2.5.174) and (3.4.271) and evidence of Orsino's exotic sea-faring past, afforded him the opportunity to introduce flamboyant references to the orient. Nothing could have been more appropriate to the atmosphere of Orsino's court or to the current mood of fashionable London theatre. In capturing this, Wilkinson challenged the visual conventions of costume for this play. The year 1911 had offered audiences a diversity of experience in the interpretation and staging of an oriental theme. In January Reinhardt's production of Freska's almost wordless play *Sumurûn* (Coliseum, 1911), designed by Ernst Stern, was staged successfully for six

weeks. That summer, Diaghilev's Ballets Russes presented Nijinsky as the Golden Slave in *Schéhérazade* (Covent Garden, 1911), with décor and costumes by Léon Bakst. Using a more traditional approach, Oscar Asche had produced *Kismet* (Garrick, 1911), with pictorial scenes created by Joseph Harker. The mood was pervasive, glamorous and successful. Wilkinson made it integral to the production of *Twelfth Night* and in doing so gave it a visual sense of modernity. It was this expedient, rather than a connection with drawing-room comedy, that placed Barker's production of *Twelfth Night* visually in the twentieth century.

Wilkinson's spirit of innovative flamboyance, however, was tempered with ideas that had close analogies to Poel's productions of *Twelfth Night*. There are few reminders of the contribution made to Poel's productions by Jennie Moore, who designed and made all the costumes from 1893 until her death in 1924. The evidence of her work is confined to monochrome photographs but the *Stage* noted that, 'in her sketches [she] anticipated the brilliant combinations of elemental colouring which later became best known through the Russian ballet in this country.'⁴⁴ It must be assumed that the change in Wilkinson's palette was influenced by the *Manet and the Post-Impressionists* exhibition in 1910, the *Second Post Impressionist Exhibition* in 1912 and the work of Léon Bakst and other designers for the Ballets Russes but it is also possible that he drew on Moore's stylish use of colour. Poel staged *Twelfth Night* three times; in 1895 at Burlington Hall, as the first production of the Elizabethan Stage Society, 1897 at Middle Temple Hall and in 1903 when it was staged twice, first at the Lecture Theatre, Burlington Gardens, and then at the Court Theatre. There is no evidence that Wilkinson saw this, or any of the earlier productions, but he must have been familiar with Poel's ideas for the costuming of Olivia's household. Lillah McCarthy, Barker's Viola, played Olivia for Poel in 1895,

when all members of the Countess's household were dressed in black. Essentially, Wilkinson followed this idea with some modifications in order to denote status and character. Robert Speaight in *William Poel and the Elizabethan Revival* (1954) writes that Olivia wore 'a high red wig'.⁴⁵ In turn, Wilkinson's design for Olivia's first dress indicates red hair for the character. The *Daily Mail* describes the arresting effect of Olivia's first appearance in Barker's *Twelfth Night*, 'As she enters in her rich robe of black and silver, her auburn hair bound with gold fillets, she looks the great lady to the life'.⁴⁶ Maria and Malvolio wore black, but Sir Toby Belch was attired in a black doublet and breeches trimmed with gold brocade – the 'gentleman by birth' of Barker's *Preface*.⁴⁷ Sir Andrew Aguecheek, as a partial outsider, wore grey, while Feste's mixed allegiances were implied by his striped black and white jersey, black breeches and striped hose. Wilkinson accentuated Olivia's emotional journey through the play with her costumes. Distracted from her self-absorption and mourning after her first meeting with Cesario, she assumed a grey gown. After her wedding to Sebastian all vestiges of mourning were gone. Both she and her ladies wore costumes that reflected the colours of Orsino's court. Visually, the couples were united.

Wilkinson designs for Malvolio's costumes show that he concurred with Poel's thoughts on the character's association of elevated status with clothing. 'It is not unlikely, besides, that Malvolio, in anticipation of his certain promotion to the ranks of the aristocracy by his marriage with Olivia, had donned, in addition to yellow stockings, some rich costume put on in imitation of those fashionable young noblemen at court'.⁴⁸ Wilkinson's costume did not make Malvolio ridiculous, but emphasised his overwhelming ambition. By all accounts the costume was sumptuous, but it was realised within the overall colour-scheme. The Account Book

shows something of Wilkinson's attention to detail. It describes Malvolio's costume as; a 'short black velvet cape trimmed with silver rays, a grey velvet brocade tunic, trimmed with pearls, black silk knickers, white silk slashings. Yellow stockings, black velvet garters. Black velvet shoes, silver rosettes. Black velvet hat, white feather.'⁴⁹ Here indeed was a costume that manifested Malvolio's latent character, for according to the *Daily Chronicle*, Henry Ainley played Malvolio in the earlier scenes 'with the affected languor that heralded what was to come.'⁵⁰ Extravagantly attired, Olivia's steward, can be seen to have fallen victim to the same misplaced passions as his betters. His fate is somewhat different.

Barker's thoughts on many of the characters in *Twelfth Night* appeared in his *Preface*. As Kennedy points out this was 'close to the theatrical moment'.⁵¹ It shows that, in most instances, Wilkinson followed Barker's ideas closely when creating the costumes. The best example of this can be found in his realisation of Viola's disguise as Cesario. It was to set a precedent for Lovat Fraser and Paul Shelving when they designed the male attire for Rosalind in *As You Like It* (Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, 1919) and Imogen in *Cymbeline* (Birmingham Repertory Theatre, 1923). Barker's views on the portrayal of Viola were crucial to the realisation of the production. He understood that: 'Shakespeare's audience saw Cesario without effort as Orsino sees him; more importantly they saw him as Olivia sees him.' He was only too aware that nineteenth century audiences had been used to 'the common practice for actresses of Viola to seize every chance of reminding that they are girls dressed up, to impress on one moreover, by childish by-play as to legs and petticoats or the absence of them, that this is the play's supreme joke.'⁵² Wilkinson's costume helped to refute this convention. It reinforced Lillah McCarthy's interpretation of the role by giving her the Elizabethan doublet and long breeches, worn by members of Orsino's

court, and a three-quarter, silver brocade coat, (illustration 30). The costume's stiff formality must have played an important part in limiting any suggestion of a feminine gait and there were no other concessions to femininity. It is apparent that Wilkinson thought out Viola's appearance in its entirety, as the hairstyle in his costume design for Cesario, corresponds to the sharp, symmetrical, boyish style of hair worn by McCarthy in the illustration. Wilkinson's costume clearly contributed to the desired effect as response to the interpretation of Viola was enthusiastic. 'Miss Lillah McCarthy's Viola is very fine – the most boyish boy I have seen in the part.'⁵³ 'Miss McCarthy whose work was beautiful in its sincerity and restraint, was admirable for the skill with which she assumed the manners and gait of a young man'.⁵⁴ 'Miss McCarthy's Viola is the most rational one has ever encountered'.⁵⁵ It is true to say that in establishing the veracity of Viola's disguise, Barker and Wilkinson had brought new insights to the emotional force of the play.

Barker believed that Shakespeare had failed to develop Orsino's character as intended and that as a result 'Orsino remains a finely interesting figure; he might have been a magnificent one.'⁵⁶ Wilkinson's costumes did much to compensate for any perceived deficiencies in this character. He defined the sensual, extravagant nature of the Duke's temperament by emphasising the oriental aspects of his costume. Orsino's exotic sea-faring experiences were reflected in the appearance of his followers. This not only provided a stark visual contrast to Olivia's household, but reinforced the later connection between Antonio and Orsino. A description of just part of Orsino's costume gives an indication of its opulence and detail. 'Cerise velvet tunic, silver braid, [...]. Cerise velvet knickers, trimmed silver braid and pearls. Black and white collar and frills.' All these were essentially Elizabethan in conception. The effect of the orient was achieved by the addition of a gold turban

and loose over-garment. This hung in soft folds and was covered in stencilled gold circles.

Further descriptions in the Account Book show the degree to which Wilkinson paid attention to the costumes of the minor characters. This created an overall effect in the colour scheme of Orsino's court. That of the second lord gives a sufficient indication of the designer's intentions. 'Cerise velvet tunic and knickers trimmed white braid. Cerise stockings. White turban, cerise / white feather. White Roman satin cloak [...] lined with cerise sateen, trimmed gold cloth.' The *Daily Telegraph* conveyed something of the effect inevitably lost in monochrome photographs:

'altogether [the costumes] compose fascinating pictures, glowing and throbbing with life, with rich and subtle rhythms of colour in a daring harmony.'⁵⁷ There can be little doubt that Orsino's association with such a thrilling atmosphere did much to establish his attractions in the eyes of Viola and the audience. It is obvious that Wilkinson's realisation of oriental splendour in *Twelfth Night* was a worthy challenge to other theatrical interpretations that were available in London.

There is one instance where Barker allowed Wilkinson's oriental theme to override his own view of a character. It is a useful indication of the extent to which he was prepared to compromise, to enable his designer to achieve a visual cohesion in the production. Barker regarded Antonio as 'an exact picture of an Elizabethan seaman-adventurer'.⁵⁸ However, his costume was distinctly Arabian and consisted of a black sateen shirt, stencilled with gold feathers, purple silk, baggy trousers covered with a gold stencilled pattern, a blue silk sash and a white, silk turban with red Morocco feathers. There was a visual logic to his exotic appearance as it was in keeping with the costume worn by Viola in 1.2. She, accompanied by the Sea-Captain, had made her first entrance in a green Chinese silk gown, with brocade

overdress, a plaid gauze turban, and red Morocco shoes. He was costumed in black trousers, trimmed with green braid, a striped oriental shirt, a black coat stencilled with white rings and spots and yellow silk turban with white spots. As the reviewer in the *People* pointed out: 'Both Viola and the captain who have just been saved from shipwreck, appear on the seashore in immaculate dress.'⁵⁹ There is the possibility that Viola's oriental costume, with its similarities to those of Orsino and his court, was intended to suggest that they were akin in spirit. It is more likely that Wilkinson's prime intention was to create a telling visual impact at the outset of the production. The rapid succession of brilliant oriental colours and costumes against the complementary curtains must have left the audience in no doubt of the visual excitement of the production and the fantastical nature of Illyria.

The design of two costumes in particular, those of Feste and Sir Andrew Aguecheek, demonstrates that Wilkinson was attuned to the needs of an individual character or actor and that he catered for these within the context of his overall concept for the production. Wilkinson chose to convey Sir Andrew Aguecheek's character in the cut of his costume, in keeping with Barker's belief that similar individuals were to be seen 'any day after a west end London lunch, doing what I believe is called a slope down Bond.'⁶⁰ Aguecheek's position as a gentleman was confirmed in a costume of Elizabethan cut, realised in grey and black. Its style, however, was slightly exaggerated so that the breeches were longer and fuller with a higher waist. It was sufficient to convey his foppish nature. Feste's original costume with its white spotted breeches and tightly fitting stripped cut-away jacket, suggests that it was conceived for a young man.⁶¹ Subsequent modifications must have been in response to the casting of the musical-comedy artist Hayden Coffin. This reflected Barker's thoughts on the role. 'Feste, I feel, is not a young man either. There runs

through all he says and does that vein of irony by which we may so often mark one of life's self-acknowledged failures.⁶² Coffin was inspired casting. He received much praise for his role. Barker, again, was intent on the plausibility of the character rather than the idea of the traditional motley fool. The broad black and white stripes of Feste's jacket and stockings were sufficient to distinguish his appearance with a reference to the motley, but otherwise his costume was Elizabethan in style. Illustration 31 shows that thus attired, Coffin afforded the role a new dignity. The *Daily Sketch* conveys something of his achievement. '[...] we had a philosophic jester who could credibly have composed his own speeches and who sometimes rose almost to the significance of a chorus.'⁶³

Wilkinson's work for *Twelfth Night* was, to some extent, an accomplished assimilation of influences taken from the work of other designers and theatre practitioners. This should not detract from his creative achievement. He imbued these ideas with his own style, which was interpretive of the play, to create a cohesive framework for Barker's production. It was a clear demonstration that the work of a sympathetic designer could be intrinsic to a producer's interpretation of Shakespeare and that his contribution could enhance and underline the mood, character, realisation and pace of the play. Wilkinson had effected a visual approach to Shakespeare that placed it uncompromisingly in the twentieth century, by re-defining the traditional and fusing it with the colours and sense of the orient, that pervaded London at this time. His work was sensitive to the demands of Barker but established his own theatrical vision in terms of Shakespeare.

Despite Wilkinson's success as the designer of *Twelfth Night*, it was circumstance rather than intention that established him as the prime designer for Barker's Shakespearean productions. Like Reinhardt, Barker was interested in the potential of

very different artists as theatrical designers and his original plan was to involve a number of designers in his Shakespeare productions. As already stated in Chapter 1, Charles Ricketts after much deliberation declined an invitation to design *Macbeth* but offered to do *The Winter's Tale* instead.⁶⁴ By this time Albert Rothenstein and Wilkinson had been engaged to design the production.⁶⁵ Duncan Grant also received sympathetic encouragement to start design work for *Macbeth*. 'Your Lady Macbeth poster is fine – really really fine, if I may say so. How about your designs and the rest of the work? Would you like to meet and have a talk?'⁶⁶ By June 1913 Grant had resigned and the project was handed over to Wilkinson who was already involved in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.⁶⁷ He may have worked concurrently on ideas for both, as lists referring to *Macbeth* appear amongst preliminary designs for the fairies in his sketch-books. Two incomplete designs amongst his work may correspond to the zig-zag cloths mentioned as *Macbeth* scenery in the Account Book. It was a project that did not come to fruition for Barker, Grant or Wilkinson and only much later for Ricketts. It is a matter for conjecture as to whether difficulties with its visual realisation affected Barker's intentions to produce this play.

Unity from Pattern and Symmetry: *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Savoy, 1914)

Barker's collaboration with Wilkinson on *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was to be their second challenge to the preconceptions and conventions of the nineteenth-century and Edwardian theatrical approaches to Shakespeare. The choice of play was apposite, for its subject matter and perceived lack of dramatic qualities, had made it particularly susceptible to ideas absorbed from various artistic sources. A belief that its poetic qualities needed to be enhanced by a high order of visual interpretation, to ensure theatrical success, had its detractors as early as early as 1817.

What an opportunity for processions, for the sound of trumpets and glittering of spears! What a fluttering of urchins' painted wings; what a delightful profusion of gauze clouds and airy spirits floating on them!

Alas the experiment has been tried and has failed: [...]. The *Midsummer Night's Dream*, when acted, is converted from a delightful fiction into a dull pantomime. All that is finest in the play is lost in the representation. The spectacle was grand; but the spirit was evaporated, the genius was fled. - Poetry and the stage do not agree well together.⁶⁸

Barker's preference for Wilkinson as the designer for *A Midsummer Night's Dream* suggests that the producer retained the idea that the play should be framed within a strong visual context but that this could be intrinsic to his purpose. On the surface Wilkinson's costumes and scenic decoration were again a mixture of audacious colours and styles, tempered with a little familiarity. They also underlined the dramatic mood of a scene, often emphasising the use of symmetry and pattern that Barker employed to structure the production. Wilkinson's debt to other sources and designers is less evident and usually theatrical in origin; their synthesis more sophisticated and integrated into a unity. His work demonstrates an increased confidence in the possibilities of design contributing to the interpretation of Shakespeare but as Trevor R. Griffiths points out in *Shakespeare in Production: A Midsummer Night's Dream* 'so great and so varied was the critical response to the

fairies that it tended to obscure other elements of the production'.⁶⁹ This critical furore diverted attention from the overall achievement of Wilkinson's contribution.

Barker's comments in the Acting Preface to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* show that he had his reservations about the play:

The opening of the play may be bad. The opening speech is very bad dramatic verse. There is nothing much in the character of Theseus; there is nothing at all in Hippolyta. The substance of the opening scene is out of keeping both with its own method and the scope of the play.⁷⁰

His fundamental response to the play was, like that of his predecessors, to the beauty of its poetry. He did not, however, regard this as detrimental to its theatricality but argued that the dramatic qualities of the play were inherent in the verse:

No, [Shakespeare's] heart was in these passages of verse, and so the heart of the play is in them. And the secret of the play – the refutation of all doctrinaire criticism of it – lies in the fact that though they may offend against every letter of dramatic law they fulfil the inmost spirit of it, inasmuch as they are dramatic in themselves.⁷¹

This argument was central to his concept of the play. Wilkinson's role was to create a non-realistic but visually compelling situation that could support the drama of the verse. His attempts to effect a unity were more problematical than those he had encountered in *Twelfth Night* as he was faced with three distinct groups of characters and scenes that demanded a marked change in atmosphere and mood. Visual expectations of the play were firmly entrenched, reinforced by familiar images in the work of highly respected late nineteenth-century English painters. Such ideas had become inextricably linked to the play and were particularly associated with the presentation of the Athenian court and of Oberon and Titania. It is a measure of Wilkinson skill that was able to re-interpret some of these ideas and absorb them into the costumes but was prepared to reject others entirely.

The extent to which painting had influenced the visual realisation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is worth consideration. It gives an indication of the extent to which Wilkinson's designs challenged visual perceptions and enabled Barker to effect such a total reconsideration of the play. During the previous century Classicism had been a source of inspiration in British art. It was an important aspect of the work of such influential and popular establishment figures as Frederic, Lord Leighton, Sir Edward Poynter and Sir Lawrence Alma Tadema. Their approaches varied, but all produced paintings whose classical subject matter and decoration reflected many of the preoccupations of the Victorian age. Leighton's later work was dominated by classical myth and poetry. Such paintings as *Captive Andromache* (Manchester City Art Gallery, 1886-1888) and *The Garden of the Hesperides* (Lady Lever Art Gallery, 1892), exemplify his lavish palette, the execution of gracefully draped figures and the decorative harmony of his compositions. Poynter, his successor at the Royal Academy, and Director of the National Gallery, produced classical genre subjects and larger figure groups, characterised by the inclusion of many figures and archaeologically detailed settings. His interpretation of Shakespearean subjects is demonstrably theatrical in *The Ides of March* (Manchester City Art Gallery, 1883) with its architectural dominance and dramatic lighting. His depiction of *Cressida* (Folger Shakespeare Library, 1888) continued his theme of the sole female, seen in *Helen* (Art Gallery of New South Wales, 1881) and *Psyche in the Temple of Love* (Walker Art Gallery, 1882).

Although such paintings informed a visual perception of Greek and Roman culture, Tadema's work had the most identifiable influence on Shakespearean scenic design. His anecdotal subject matter was characterised by a wide knowledge of classical archaeology, although the effects were achieved with an aesthetic blend of

period and building styles, rather than historical accuracy. This classically eclectic approach extended to Tadema's scenic work for the theatre which included the supervision of Joseph Harker and Walter Hann's mounting of Tree's production of *Julius Caesar* (Her Majesty's, 1898) and his own scenic designs for Henry Irving's *Coriolanus* (Lyceum, 1901). Harker's memoirs record an informal but influential professional relationship. 'From the time I first met him right up until his death Alma-Tadema took the liveliest interest in my work. All I had to do when I was faced with a difficulty was to drop him a line [...] he had invariably got together all the books on the subject on which I sought his help.'⁷² Tadema's style of classicism had a pervasive authority clearly evident in Harker and Hann's scenic work for Tree's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (His Majesty's, 1900).

Fairy painting and book illustration created images of fairyland throughout the nineteenth century. Inevitably *A Midsummer Night's Dream* attracted the attention of artists, perhaps most famously *The Quarrel of Oberon and Titania* (National Gallery of Scotland, 1849) and *The Reconciliation of Oberon and Titania* (National Gallery of Scotland, 1847) by Joseph Noël Paton. The fairy status of many of the scantily clad figures was confirmed by the addition of insect wings so that any suggestion of eroticism did not offend Victorian probity. Obviously, no such beings were expected to appear on stage, but the theatre could strive to replicate the mood and mystery of the wood. The provision of wings, and gossamer costumes of a more substantial constitution, pursued the ethereal nature of the characters. The persistence of this image over several decades is exemplified in the 1886 studio portrait of Constance Benson as Titania (illustration 32). According to the actress, 'Many of the fairies' dresses were copied from Walter Crane's beautiful designs in his book of flowers'.⁷³ In essence, however, her appearance, with long flowing hair, wings and gauze,

costume was not dissimilar to Arthur Rackham's illustrations for J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* (1906). Such images were persistent and reinforced well established artistic and theatrical conventions (illustration 33).

The minute stature of fairies was regarded as a common feature of fairyland. Pictorially this was usually accomplished by either juxtaposing fully realised figures of different sizes, or as in the work of such artists as John Anster Fitzgerald, enlarging the proportions of flowers, leaves and other aspects of the fairy habitat in relation to the figures. The traditional use of children as fairies in productions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* reiterated this idea of size. Indeed, the text suggests the diminutive nature of the fairy attendants with such references as the First Fairy's claim 'that all their elves for fear / Creep into acorn cups, and hide them there.' (1.2. 30-31), and Titania's order, 'Some war with rermice for their leathern wings / To make my small elves coats,' (2.1.4-5). The subject matter of Fitzgerald's *The Chase of the White Mice* (Private Collection, c.1864) (illustration 34), demonstrates that, in their turn, Shakespeare's descriptions contributed to a fairy mythology that inspired both paintings and illustrations.

There were no theatrical precedents in England for the re-assessment of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Poel had not attempted to produce the play. Tree's 1900 production, with costumes by Percy Anderson and scenic designs by Joseph Harker and Hawes Craven, was the ultimate celebration of Victorian pictorialism, upholding the deep-seated traditions of Athenian views, gossamer-clad fairies and flower-strewn woodlands. It included all twelve numbers of Mendelssohn's music. Tree claimed, with some pride, that: 'It is believed that all these numbers have never before the present production been given with the text of Shakespeare's play in this country'.⁷⁴ Barker had seen a Reinhardt production of the play at the Deutsches

Theater in October 1910. Gary Jay Williams states that, ‘in fact [Barker] saw one of the simplest of Reinhardt’s eleven different stagings.’⁷⁵ Barker noted that it was ‘the five hundred and something’th performance.⁷⁶ This indicates that it was Reinhardt’s 1907 production that replaced the 1905 Neues Theater version when the producer moved to the Deutsches Theater. However, Barker’s report in *The Times* only mentions it in passing, and he seems to have been more drawn to aspects of staging in *The Comedy of Errors* (Kammerspielhaus, 1910), ‘But the true spirit of the play seems to me caught and jealously kept, and that matters most.’⁷⁷ However, *Faust I* and *Faust II* also made an impression. Given Stern’s designs for the gnomes in the Mummenschanz and some of the witches at the Walpurgisnacht, these ideas could well have influenced Barker’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*.

By 1914 Barker and Wilkinson had established their own conventions of staging Shakespeare. *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* was produced using the now familiar mixture of curtains and built sets with a fore-stage similar to that of *A Winter’s Tale* and *Twelfth Night*. Wilkinson’s designs for the production give an extensive indication of the designer’s intentions for the play. Detailed costume drawings for the Court, and the Mechanicals’ play, survive as well as numerous sketchbooks. The sketchbooks are unique, in as much as they show Wilkinson’s preliminary ideas. The quality and detailed realisation of the costume designs attest to his intense commitment to the production. His co-ordination of colour and careful application of pattern, show that the costumes supported the director’s visual structuring of the play. Evidence for the curtain and set designs is limited, but they do include a version of the final built set. In most cases they indicate little more than can be ascertained from photographs of the production and reviewers’ descriptions. Those that have survived usually corroborate reports as to colour and the intended effect. Muriel St.

Clare Byrne considered that photographs of the production provided evidence that, ‘what was not fully achieved by the ‘decoration’ was that unity of emotion and atmosphere throughout, which was already the explicit aim of the newer aesthetic theory of the time.’⁷⁸ An enthusiastic endorsement from the *Athenaeum* suggests that artistic eclecticism could have militated against this sense of unity. ‘There is hardly any idiom of pictorial art of which some trace may not be discovered in the rendering of the “Dream” now being given at the Savoy’.⁷⁹ A consideration of the evidence now available would suggest that Wilkinson did in fact achieve visual cohesion. It addressed the atmospheres of the mortal, and fairy courts, by relating the designs to the sense of pattern and symmetry created by Barker’s staging. This became fundamental to the drama and action of the production.

Photographs included in Barker’s promptbook are related to the appropriate page and line of text by a short quotation.⁸⁰ Although posed, it is clear that they replicate exact moments during the scenes. When these and other production photographs are considered in connection with information from the promptbook, Wilkinson’s original designs and costume descriptions in the Account Book, there is a clear indication of how the designer supported the director’s purpose. Barker established the mood, ritual and hierarchies of Theseus’s Court at the beginning of the play through the use of procession and symmetry. These visual themes were reiterated throughout the production and mirrored in the trains of Oberon and Titania.

Wilkinson’s schematic use of colour and design was inherent to this visual unity, but also created clearly defined worlds for the mortals and the fairies. Photographs of Tree’s *Midsummer Night’s Dream* and Anderson’s costume designs provide telling evidence of the extent to which Wilkinson’s visual images were a departure from the lavish, theatrical interpretation of classical Greece represented in this earlier

production. Many of these photographs show a crowded stage full of the panoply of a theatrically realised classical Greece, with events unfolding in front of a backcloth depicting Athens, or a wood of pictorial realism.⁸¹ Anderson's Greek-inspired costume designs are sensitive and detailed but each one appears to be realised for an individual with no overall sense of cohesion. The choice of colour for each appears to be arbitrary, while the colouring of the scenic designs indicates the intention of a rich, but somewhat muted effect.⁸²

That the appearance of Wilkinson's Shakespearean Greeks attracted little adverse critical comment, would indicate that his costumes did not completely confound preconceptions, although the reviewer from *The Times* seemed to consider that sartorial propriety had been restored in the final scene: 'they so to speak, put on their evening clothes - flowing Greek robes.'⁸³ In retaining an acknowledgement of Greek costume and setting, Wilkinson followed a similar strategy to the one he had adopted in *Twelfth Night*, by creating a fusion of the traditional with influences taken from prevailing fashion. In this case, acceptance may have been because Wilkinson's designs were a response to the reinvention of Greek costume that had become a symbiotic preoccupation of leading fashion designers, and was a particular feature of the Ballets Russes. His first response to this was in 1912 for Barker's *Iphigenia in Tauris*, although his costumes were also influenced by Stern's designs for Reinhardt's production of *Oedipus* (Covent Garden, 1912) which used stylised Greek costumes, often decorated or stencilled with the geometric patterns. The lighter mood of Wilkinson's designs for Shakespeare was summarised in Hermia's appearance, 'a résumé in one person of the prettiest and most up-to-date ladies on recent posters'.⁸⁴ The designer's predominant theme of gown and tunic, was a favourite motif of the fashion designer Paul Poiret, whose influence is apparent not only in the attire of

Duke Theseus's court but also evident in the high-waisted, cut-away tunic style, of Titania's costume. This is reminiscent of Poiret's, 1911 'Robe Strozzi'.⁸⁵ In some cases fashion and theatre had become inextricably linked. Poiret, for instance, worked for the theatre and had a theatrical workshop located at his fashion house. He and the Russian designer Erté, who became involved in theatre design in 1919, adapted these costumes for fashionable day and evening-wear. In 1913 Madame Paquin launched costumes based on Bakst's *Fantasies on Modern Costume*. Many were named after Greek goddesses or nymphs, and styles such as the striking yellow evening dress, Dioné, were directly inspired by Greek costume.

Bakst travelled extensively in Greece during May 1907. Alexander Schouvaloff in *Léon Bakst : The Theatre Art* (1991) describes the radical effect that the brilliant colours encountered on this journey had on the designer's palette. He concludes: 'Indeed the visit is henceforth reflected, sometimes with accuracy, sometimes with variation, sometimes with distortion, in all his work.'⁸⁶ This reached full expression in the years 1911-1912 in the designs for the three 'Greek' ballets *Narcisse*, *L'Après-midi d'un Faune*, and *Daphnis and Chloë* and the play *Hélène de Sparte*. The ten-minute ballet *L'Après-midi d'un Faune* was included in the 1913 Ballets Russes London season. The seven nymphs wore stylised, Greek, sleeveless, dresses of finely pleated gauze, bordered at the hem with small squares or undulating lines of red or blue. These colours were repeated in the patterns of the white overskirt, (illustration 35). Wilkinson adopted a more structured form for his designs but the matching of Theseus's attendants by the patterning of their costumes, is similar to Bakst's three matching pairs of nymphs, who were distinguished from the First Nymph by the individual patterning on her dress. Wilkinson's use of wigs to create uniformity was inspired by the nymphs in *L'Après-midi d'un Faune* who wore wigs of gold painted

cord, similar in style to those worn by Helena, Hermia and Hippolyta. They suggested the colour, if not the style, of those worn by the fairy court.

Wilkinson's design supported Barker's expression of the underlying order and conformity of the ducal court, but at the beginning of the play there was also an intention to delineate individuals and their status. Barker's disquiet, expressed in the Acting Preface, over the lack of characterisation in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was reiterated in a letter to William Archer after the opening of the production: 'the character drawing is very poor, very, and if the actors (Demetrius and Lysander especially) are not all the time better than their parts it is dull, dull, dull. It is a poor play from this point of view and there is an end of it.'⁸⁷ This no doubt informed Wilkinson's eclectic use of costume in differentiating the characters. The lovers were costumed in a marked contrast to Theseus and Hippolyta. A review in *The Times* identified possible sources for their costumes: 'As for Theseus and Hippolyta and their train, we do not know where their dresses come from. We can only make shots. Is it from the mural decorations of Minos's palace unearthed in Crete? But some of them seem Byzantine and suggest a Ravenna fresco.'⁸⁸ The *Daily Mail* noted, 'A distinct Japanese influence' in the costumes of Lysander and Demetrius but the designs suggest a youthful version of the later hunting outfits rather than this association.⁸⁹ Their costumes, although similar in style, were distinguished by colour. Lysander wore in a grey tunic and a yellow silk vest, with grey trousers, yellow stockings and black velvet shoes; Demetrius a black tunic and trousers, trimmed with green and gold and velvet boots.⁹⁰ The designs for Hermia and Helena's first costumes suggested individuality, although the basic tunic shapes hinted Athenian origins. The *Daily Mail* determinedly associated Hermia's green gown, with its painted primroses and deep black fringe, with Lysander's 'tawny

Tartar' taunt (3.2.264). 'Hermia looks like a pretty Tartar maiden.'⁹¹ Helena, dressed predominately in white, with a deep contrasting border on the base of the upper tunic, was identified further, with a blonde Greek style wig. At least two reviewers regarded this as the 'flaxen touch of Faust's Gretchen.'⁹² The comparison seems to be unlikely, as the wig is a fair version of Hermia's, so providing a further contrast in the appearance of the women and giving visual support for Lysander's insult to Hermia. 'Away you Ethiope' (3.2.257).

From the outset Wilkinson's work expressed a subtle but important shift of emphasis in the mood of Barker's production. Williams ascribes the grape cloth in front of which the court assembled as inspired by 'the style of Art Nouveau.'⁹³ However, Wilkinson was responding to earlier influences. He owned a copy of William Morris's *Kelmscott Chaucer* and the sinuous motif is reminiscent of the border decoration for the title page, as well as that of chapter one of Morris's Utopian prose work *News From Nowhere*. Wilkinson insisted that 'With Shakespeare the decorations must be no more than an accompaniment to the play'.⁹⁴ Indeed, the vine suggests the warm sun-drenched setting of Athens and Theseus's mood of celebration, 'Stir up the Athenian youth to merriments. / Awake the pert and nimble spirit of mirth.' (1.1.12-13). The designer's retention of a semblance of Greek costume afforded some familiarity to the ducal court but one of his many departures from tradition was the exclusion of martial allusion.⁹⁵ Williams, however, notes an 'austere and symmetrical tableau' at the opening of the production.⁹⁶ This effect was achieved by Barker's grouping of the stewards, courtiers, and Amazons and the contrast of their monochromatic costumes with the flamboyance of the hierarchical characters.

A sound of trumpets opened the scene, followed by the processional entrance of the court, which, with the exception of Philostrate, formed pairs.

At music cue, general entrance from Lower R as follows:- Enter 4 stewards in pairs [...]. Enter Hippolyta (above) Theseus (below) they X to throne, up steps remain standing facing audience. Enter four courtiers in pairs [...] Enter 4 Amazons in pairs.⁹⁷

A diagram in the promptbook substantiates the final placing of each pair as that shown in the photograph, (illustration 36). Seated at the apex of the tableau Theseus and Hippolyta are costumed in colours denoting a royal couple. Hippolyta in purple, trimmed with gold, and Theseus in a purple and gold brocade robe and blue silk shirt. Four Amazons, stage right, arms at their sides, stand downstage of Hippolyta, facing inwards. Similarly placed downstage of Theseus, stage left, four male courtiers face them. Further downstage, on either side, two stewards, each holding a staff in his right hand, face each other. All the groups wear long gowns of white cotton crepe, but they are differentiated by style, and Wilkinson's use of various black patterns. A suggestion of archaic Greece, is perhaps most evident in the simple lines and the layering of the Amazons' white stencilled dresses over longer stencilled black shirts. All the males wear white trousers beneath their gowns, the courtiers having a black and white stencilled band round the shoulder of their over-garments, whereas the stewards' gowns have sleeves gathered in a manner suggestive of a Greek mantle and have a curved wave pattern on the hemline. This expression of underlying uniformity and sense of order is further reinforced by the use of wigs. The men wear identical short black wigs and white fillets, the Amazons identical black curled wigs with ringlets, suggestive of Greek coiffure. Philostrate, staff in hand, stands to the left of Theseus. He is distinguished by a yellow cloak, lined with green and appliquéd with bold white zigzags, worn over a predominantly black gown. The bold patterns of his

costume denote Philostrate's unique position in the hierarchy and his role as Master of Ceremonies.

The arrival in the wood of Theseus and Hippolyta and their hunting party in 4.1.102 attracted no comment from reviewers, although the costumes in this brief scene were Wilkinson's most original interpretation of the Greek theme. They must have presented an explosion of vibrant, strong colour in contrast to the golden images of the fairy courts. Played with 'lights up' in front of the 'mound cloth' the atmosphere denotes a return to reality. A sense of cohesion and status is again provided by the use colour in the costumes but their vibrancy suggests an overall sense of exuberance, and freedom from the restricted conventions of the court. There appear to be no theatrical precedents for these costumes, although they could be the outfits that caused *The Times* reviewer to refer to Sir Arthur Evans's excavation of the Palace of Minos at Knossos.⁹⁸ The idea of such an influence is persuasive considering the references made by Hippolyta and Theseus to Crete, Sparta and Thessaly in their competitive comparison of their hounds. Both the males and females were dressed in a style similar to that of Hippolyta, (illustration 37). Theseus in a cerise, black and gold trimmed tunic with gold stencils, white gold stencilled trousers, and red wig, is accompanied by four huntsmen wearing red tunics trimmed with black, and grey trousers trimmed with grey, and white capes. Hippolyta wears a white tunic with pink, black stencilled sleeves that match her trousers. Two Amazons attend her. They wear yellow tunics with white sleeves and black and white trousers and have red wigs. Egeus is similarly costumed in white cotton trousers and white tunic with red stencils. There is no information as to whether Wilkinson's design for a hound outfit was used for this scene (illustration 38). Perhaps the inclusion of one,

or more, of these impressive creatures would have militated against Barker's dramatic intent.

The prompt-book does indicate that the scene was played in an atmosphere that enabled Theseus to assert his authority in recognition of the sincerity of the lovers. There is an early indication that the Duke's mood had been softened by the spirit of the hunting party as after the lines, 'But speak Egeus; is not this the day/ That Hermia should give answer of her choice? / It is my lord' (4.1.134-136). 'Thes motions Egeus to be quiet'. Barker emphasised the fact that Egeus remained unaffected by this spirit of revelry and that the father's attitude towards Hermia remained the same. 'Go bid the huntsman wake them with their / horns' (4.1.137) 'Her. rises, see [sic] Ege. who shakes his stick at her.' By kneeling to Theseus, immediately after their awakening, the lovers acknowledge their submission to his authority. Barker places them as pairs, reiterating his use of symmetry, to underline the return of their relationships to an acceptable sense of order. This, and Demetrius' tender declaration of love for Helena, clearly outweighs Egeus' objections.

The object and the pleasure of mine eye, / Is only Helena.' (4.1.169-170). 'Hel. covers her faces [sic]. Now do I wish it, love it, long for it,' (4.1.174). 'Going to Hel and taking her hand.' 'And will for ever more be true to it.' (4.1.175). 'Kneels and kisses Hel's hand.' The Duke's identification with the lovers is given further significance as, 'Of this discourse we more will hear anon.' (4.1.177). 'Thes down of [sic] mound to lovers who draw in towards him.'⁹⁹

It is unsurprising that Egeus, his objections to the union of his daughter with Lysander forgotten, follows at the rear of the hunting party, as it is led off stage by Theseus and Hippolyta.

Barker underlined a return to the order of the court by reiterating the use of symmetry in the final scenes of the play. This was supported by Wilkinson's simple, symmetrical built set, with its seven columns and 'tableau curtains' with ordered

stars. Griffiths suggests an implied symbolism in this set: 'If Barker intended the change from curtains to architectural set to act as some kind of visual parallel to the stability which had descended on the characters after the turmoil in the woods.'¹⁰⁰ His point is substantiated by illustration 39 identified in the promptbook as 'More than to us / Wait in your royal walks, your board, your bed'.¹⁰¹ Wilkinson's palette of purple, red and white for the costumes underlines a sense of conformity and common purpose. The bridesmaids, and other members of the court, are grouped in pairs, and visually balanced, according to the design and patterning of their costumes. Centre stage, Theseus and Hippolyta have richer versions of the costumes worn for the opening scene. Theseus wears purple crepe de chine, stencilled in black and white, with a gold edged fringe and a brocade cloak of purple and gold, lined with purple silk. Hippolyta has a mauve and gold under-dress, trimmed with gold bullion and silver braid and a red and gold over-dress. Egeus, in purple and gold, is aligned symbolically into the conventions of the court, as are the kneeling couples. Lysander and Demetrius are dressed identically in red brocade gowns, with white net cloaks. The appearance of Hermia and Helena is identical. Both have white gowns, stencilled with pink flowers. Barker's inclusion of Nedar in this scene is interesting. It is further evidence that the scene was intended to evoke a sense of order, a mood of ritual and unity. Nedar's white costume with its green border, and drapery with stencilled red crosses, however, acts as a contrast to Wilkinson's schematic cohesion for the rest of the scene.

The simplicity of the set enabled Barker to create a fluid transition between the final scenes of the play. The symmetrical patterning of the court was retained in almost mirror images, as they reclined on low couches with their backs to the theatre audience, for the presentation of Pyramus and Thisbe.¹⁰² The *Athenaeum* commented

that this was ‘one of the most admirably devised and most tellingly enacted scenes of recent contrivance.’¹⁰³ This unusual perspective allowed a sense of distance between the ordered couples on the forestage, and the disorder of the Mechanicals and their play of unrequited love, on the upper steps. The scene appears to have been turned on an axis of 180°. ¹⁰⁴ As such, the staging could have been suggested by Reinhardt’s use of the revolving stage at the Deutsches Theater.

Wilkinson’s costumes for the Mechanicals’s presentation convey a feeling of gentle parody. Thisbe’s green gown, with stencilled cerise flowers and trimming of silver, is similar in style to those first worn by Hermia and Helena. Bottom’s ebullience is evident in Pyramus’s blue and white spotted outfit, with its pink and white spotted sleeves and cerise plumed hat. It is essentially a variation of that worn by the male lovers at the beginning of the play. Kennedy notes a further symmetry. Quince as the Prologue, and Philostrate echo each other, in stance, during the performance of Pyramus and Thisbe. ¹⁰⁵ The similarity of their roles is given further emphasis in Quince’s stridently black and white patterned gown, with its lavish black velvet, rose lined train, which has a comparable flamboyance to that of his counterpart. Wilkinson’s most witty parallel can be seen in Starveling as Moonshine. The design for this costume shows a blue gown with white cloth stars. They are placed symmetrically and replicate those on Wilkinson’s dark blue drop curtain in front of which the Mechanicals perform, ‘before the Duke and the Duchess on his wedding day / at night’ (1.2.6-7).

In giving an enthusiastic endorsement to the concept of the golden fairies, *The Times* raised the question, ‘Who is the magician who invented these golden fairies? Is it Mr. Barker or Mr. Norman Wilkinson?’ ¹⁰⁶ It is an interesting point and one that can only be, in part, resolved by the evidence of Wilkinson’s designs. Barker gave

deep consideration to the interpretation of the fairies and dismissed traditional ideas. ‘Lacking genius one considers first how not to do a thing. Not to try and *realise* these small folk who war with rermice for their leathern wings that goes without saying.’¹⁰⁷ In coming to this conclusion, he needed his designer to create costumes that would reject all previously held preconceptions concerning the theatrical realisation of fairies. Barker alludes to a process of trial and error before a satisfactory solution was achieved: ‘It is a difficult problem: we (Norman Wilkinson and I - he to do and I to carp) have done our best.’¹⁰⁸ Sketches indicate that Wilkinson made several tentative attempts to find a solution. These show very early working ideas but there are no fully realised drawings of the final costumes for Oberon, Titania and their trains. Arguably, the completed designs could be elsewhere, lost or destroyed, but given that designs for all the other costumes are existent, it seems likely those for the fairies were never realised. None were ever reproduced, except for a simple line drawing that has some similarities to Puck’s final outfit. This is featured in the *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* Acting Edition.¹⁰⁹ It has some suggestion of the orient and is entitled ‘a dancing fairy’. The archive has similar sketches, many labelled in the same manner, but they have a very limited resemblance to the final appearance of any of the fairies.

After the opening of the production, photographs of the fairy courts, including those in colour in the *Illustrated London News Supplement*, appeared in abundance. An article in the *Studio* was illustrated with photographs and eight of Wilkinson’s original designs, but again these did not include any designs for the fairy costumes.¹¹⁰ Referring to Wilkinson’s early work Armfield stated: ‘He was very, very, slow [...] he took months to finish a single picture.’¹¹¹ The painstaking detail of the all the costume designs for *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* give the impression that

they required a great deal of time. Wilkinson could have simply run out of time to produce the final drawings for the fairies. Labelling on some sketches implies that the idea of 'gold' may have been an early decision. Perhaps, this made coloured drawings unnecessary, as details in the Account Book verify that the fairy costumes were created from quantities of gold jersey, satin, net, tinsel, braid and fringing. This lack of completed designs is an indication that the fairy costumes must have been evolved by the designer and producer. It was a process that ultimately achieved a close interpretation of Barker's perceptions.

J.L. Styan points out that: 'It was Barker who first seems to have recognised that one's understanding of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is to be measured by one's perception of the fairies'.¹¹² Kennedy argues, 'The fairies were the golden key.'¹¹³ The use of gold undoubtedly added to the impact of the fairy courts. Two small, partly finished designs for Oberon's costume, somewhat oriental in concept, can be found in the archive. Neither have much similarity to the completed costume. However, both are coloured in gold and are reminiscent of Bakst's designs for Vaslav Nijinsky as L'Oiseau de Feu in *The Firebird* and for the Siamese Dance in *Les Orientales*. These attempts, on the part of the designer, were in keeping with Barker's ideas. 'The Fairies are undoubtedly foreign (surely it is quite a modern idea to think of them as English? It seemed so evident that Shakespeare didn't).'¹¹⁴ Barker clearly wished to emphasise the importance of the fairies and draw parallels with the mortal world. The impact of their first entrance was crucial. Wilkinson had already used the regal connotations of gold to good effect in his scenic designs for *A Winter's Tale*; Leontes' palace being suggested by 'a simple harmony of white pilasters and dead gold curtains.'¹¹⁵ Gold had been used with great success by Gordon Craig in his production of *Hamlet* (Moscow Arts Theatre, 1911). *The Times* was the only

newspaper to initially report this production in Britain, but as is shown by Laurence Senelick in *Gordon Craig's Moscow Hamlet: A Reconstruction*, the reputation of Craig's experimental staging and interpretation soon spread across Europe and Russia.¹¹⁶ Wilkinson and Barker would have been aware of Craig's use of screens, covered in gilt paper for the court scenes, and the costuming of the court in gold. Could this have influenced the realisation of the gold costumes for the fairy courts? Reports show that the copious use of gold created a heightened sense of drama in both productions.

The King and Queen sat on a high throne in golden and brocaded costumes, among the golden walls of the throne room, and from their shoulders there spread downwards a cloak of golden porphyry, widening until it occupied the entire width of the stage and fell into the trap.¹¹⁷

And then came the real wonder of the evening. Oberon and Titania, with their attendant fairies, were dressed from top to toe in gold bronze, their faces gilt and eyebrows picked out with crimson. In shimmering robes and quaint Indian headdresses they moved with shuffling gait.¹¹⁸

Their bodies are made up of golden moonshine, and dressed in all shades of golden moonshine. King Oberon, under his pinnacled crown is a king indeed.¹¹⁹

Three ideas dominate Wilkinson's working sketches for the fairies. It is from two of these that their final appearance must have evolved. The influence of Bask's oriental ballet costumes is evident in the designs for Oberon, and is indicated in an outline costume for Puck and a drawing labelled, 'Persian dancer girl fairy.' The idea of fairies in a semblance of Elizabethan costume, shown in several drawings for female fairies, with ruffs around their waists, was rejected for this production. However, the creation of individual characters was an idea that did evolve. The Old Man Fairy, named in the prompt book, is identified by a labelled sketch and was originally conceived as a wizard. A portly dwarf, with long beard curling on to the

floor, and exaggerated curled shoes, conveys a humour in its execution, seldom evident in Wilkinson's work. This character was intended to be a steward. Two other sketches appear to be termed 'Eskimo' and 'Samovede? - old man.' They must have been the precursors of those identified as the Major, Professor and Doctor in the prompt book. Although these are early ideas, there is little to suggest the exaggerations so aptly described in *Punch*, 'hoary antiques with moustaches like ram's horns and beards tickling down to their knees.'¹²⁰ According to the Regiebuch for Reinhardt's 1905 *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Oberon's followers were 'trolls, dwarfs, gnomes, and pixies.'¹²¹ Barker could have seen Reinhardt use a similar group of these earth bound creatures at the Deutsches Theater in 1910. A study of Stern's twenty-six, inventive costume designs for *Faust I and II* shows closer analogies to the fairies.¹²² The gnomes in the Mummenschanz had long white beards, made of wood shavings. These were not dissimilar in effect to those worn by Egeus and Nedar and those of curled gold, sported by some of the fairies. Another parallel can be found in Wilkinson's sketches. A drawing showing two gauze covered heads under a tent-like frame, suggests conjoined twins. At first sight, this squat image has little bearing on Stern's design for two sinuous, semi-naked female, gauze-covered witches for the Walpurgisnacht. Yet, they too are entwined side by side and are conjoined. Barker's prompt book shows that twins were included in Oberon's train although they appear to have had individual costumes rather than being joined together as an entity.

Another possible source of inspiration for the fairies is Wilkinson's extensive collection of Indonesian shadow puppets.¹²³ This includes over one hundred and twenty characters with such exotic names as Pratih Seogriwa - Chancellor of Baludewa, and Raden Lesmana Mandrakumora of Ngestino.¹²⁴ Illustration 40

showing Proboe Salja, Vizer of Mandrake, with a sword, gives an indication of their elaborate detail. The idea that they were influential in the realisation of the fairies is persuasive, especially as reviewers commented on the nature of their movements: ‘they moved with shuffling gait and made weird mechanical gestures,’¹²⁵ and ‘the Cambodian idols fall into stiff postures in corners.’¹²⁶ Wilkinson’s collection must have been acquired over a period of time. It is unfortunate that it is not possible to establish whether the designer owned any of these shadow puppets when he worked on *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*.

Wilkinson had ample justification for the inclusion of outlandish beings amongst the fairies, as grotesque, horned and bearded creatures were as much a feature of Victorian fairy painting and illustration as their more ethereal counterparts. Richard Doyle for instance in *The Enchanted Fairy Tree* (Private collection, 1845) created a whole community of fairies governed by an elaborately moustachioed Elf King, while both Paton and Fitzgerald included the bizarre in their interpretations of fairyland. Barker commented, ‘One yields to the natural fun, of course, of making a thing look pretty in itself.’¹²⁷ Wilkinson’s elaborate realisation of individuals in the fairy court, replete with horseshoe shaped headwear, horned faces, massive gold curled wigs and beards, appears to be most attributable to an imagination that received enthusiastic encouragement from the producer.

Reviews, whether critical or laudatory, tried to define sources of inspiration for the fairy costumes. ‘They look like Cambodian idols and posture like Nijinsky in *Le Dieu Bleu*’,¹²⁸ ‘bronzed or brazen faced Indians’,¹²⁹ ‘ormolu fairies’,¹³⁰ ‘Hindu idols with the miraculous gift of perspiration.’¹³¹ This range of suggestions reflects the fact that a sense of the oriental was achieved by a fusion of ideas and there was little evidence of any particular derivation. The sense of cohesion was created by the

predominance of gold. Oberon's costume of a golden cloth coat, under a golden net coat, gold skirt and gold and silver trousers, with a golden tinsel train, provided a template, especially for the six male and six female train bearers. Each group had their identical costumes, but the outfits were differentiated by the gold cloth bodice and tinsel skirts, covered in gold net, worn by the women, and the long, gold, satin shirts, with fringed edges, covered in net and gold tights worn by the men. An outline, similar to that of Titania's costume, exists on tracing paper. She is distinguished from the other fairies in both the style and colouring of her gown and train. As already suggested, the style of her outfit with its cutaway outer tunic of copper tinsel, trimmed with gold beads, had a close resemblance to the fashion work of Poiret. Her mauve tinsel train, provided the only visual respite in Wilkinson's golden picture, but must have been complemented by the violets and blues of the two forest curtains.

Wilkinson's thoughts on the possibility of fairies in costumes with Elizabethan connotations materialised in the presentation of Puck. Barker was convinced that this character was unlike the other fairies. 'I think I am right as to the difference between Puck and the fairies. Puck [...] is as English as he can be'.¹³² As the part was usually the preserve of a female, or child actor, clad in tights, mossy tunic and wings, the interpretation of the character was yet another challenge to theatrical convention. Wilkinson's costume design was an essential element of this innovative approach. A completed design exists for this, and a colour reproduction in the *Illustrated London News Supplement*, shows that the outfit was an almost faithful copy of the original idea.¹³³ The bright red doublet and hose, with black trimmings, was Elizabethan in silhouette, although one leg was decorated with black spots and there were black geometrical shapes on the hose. This, along with a fair wig of tangled hair, certainly

achieved Barker's intention of differentiating Puck from the other fairies. The producer, however, was unsure of the final effect. 'His red dress I know is not quite right but I still think the idea is right.'¹³⁴ This may have been a reaction to some reviewers who misunderstood the interpretation and drew comparisons with European stories. 'I liked the gold dresses of the fairies enormously, so long as Puck - a sort of adult Struvel - Puck that got badly on my nerves - was not there, destroying every colour scheme with his shrieking scarlet suit, which went with nothing'.¹³⁵

The golden fairies were unlike any ever portrayed on the stage and the realisation of individuals such as the Old Man, Professor, Major, Doctor and Lady Stewardess, meant that Wilkinson had created characters with no textual authority. Their presence, however, was important to the undeniably mysterious mood of this fairyland and would appear to be in complete contrast to the almost anonymous uniformity of the ducal court. Kennedy points out that, 'The fantastic appearance was the distancing device'¹³⁶ but the overall concept of Wilkinson's designs enabled Barker to suggest Oberon's authority in the visual presentation of a symmetrical and ordered court, therefore creating a unity of mood between the two worlds. The fantastical element of the fairy court was underpinned by a firm structure of visual uniformity. Titania's six female train bearers, described in the prompt book as 'lady dancers' wore identical costumes as did Oberon's six 'male dancers.' Two male singers were presented as identical sentinels, while their female counterparts also wore matching gowns.

Visual parallels in the staging of Theseus's court in the opening scene of the play and that of the first meeting between Oberon and Titania have been considered by Kennedy.¹³⁷ In both of these scenes it can be seen that Wilkinson's costumes

contributed to the mood of order that reflected the rulers' authority. Oberon and Titania's first entrances are preceded by the individual fairies, whose actions reflect Egeus's authoritarian attitude. 'Enter Major to C, meets 3 small fairies at C, frightens them. Major twists them [The Twins] round and they continue twisting round to lower entrance L'¹³⁸ 'Old man fairy to children at R pros. seat. Frightens them to C.'¹³⁹ After the general entrance the final positions were maintained between lines 81-114. Oberon and Titania face each other at the centre of the stage, their long trains each borne by the six identically dressed bearers, standing in pairs of formal symmetry, across the stage. A diagram in the promptbook (illustration 41) shows that the scene is balanced by identically costumed pairs of singers, facing the audience, upstage right, with the seated Doctor and twins downstage left. Puck, the only symbol of disorder in his red costume, is stage left, opposite the Old man fairy. Four 'little girls' crouch, centre stage, presumably they are Cobweb, Moth, Mustardseed and Peaseblossom. They face Oberon and Titania. The Lady Stewardess is seated, stage right, opposite the Doctor. Amid this symmetry, the gold of the costumes and the balance between the individualised and identical fairies becomes a cohesive element that formalises the nature of the court.

Wilkinson's scenic curtains and two built sets for *A Midsummer Night's Dream* drew much less comment than his work for *Twelfth Night*. This may have been due to the reviewers' preoccupation with the golden fairies or to the fact that the use of such conventions for staging Shakespeare was becoming familiar and more acceptable. It also true that the designer's ideas were more fully integrated into the drama and staging of the play and, therefore, were less obtrusive. Those who referred to the scenic decoration were not always impressed, but the reviewer who regretted the absence of Tree's illusionistic settings was in the minority:

Anyhow, when at His Majesty's you saw Oberon in sylvan dress moving lightly through a wood that looked like a wood [...] you could believe in all the lovely things he had to say: but when you saw Mr Barker's Oberon [...] up against a symbolic painted cloth, [...] you don't believe a word of it.¹⁴⁰

The wood firstly represented by the 'star cloth' in 2.1 and by a semi-circular 'mound cloth' fronted by seven hanging draperies in 2.2 was achieved by a synthesis of influences from painting and the theatre. A partially coloured outline of the 'star cloth' shows that Wilkinson intended a pattern suggesting the outline of blue-green tree-tops, a large pale moon and a sky of strong blues and indigo, completely scattered with stars. Each area is clearly outlined so that the colours remain distinct. Such a design would have not been possible before the impact of the work of the post-impressionists, yet it is distinguished by Wilkinson's sense of careful linear control and exactitude. When discussing 'the screeds of word-music' in the play Barker pointed to Titania's lines (2.1.81-117), 'but what excuse can we make for Titania's thirty-five lines about the dreadful weather except their sheer beauty? But what better excuse?'¹⁴¹ Barker achieved a fusion of this poetry and Wilkinson's image of the golden fairies, against the symbolic blue hued wood, by allowing the lines to be delivered with no movement on stage. The effect must have been one of spell-binding theatrical enchantment albeit like none that had been seen before in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Baker and Wilkinson had established the importance of the fairy world and created a marked sense that they were beings of another world.

Wilkinson allowed a passing reference to the illusion of a wood in the small clumps of flowers, which appeared on the green mound used in the wood in 2.2. Foliage also was suggested by the large papier maché wreath which was hung centre stage to encircle the two gauze draperies that formed Titania's bower at the apex of the mound. Seven other draperies, 'of figured green [that] allowed between them a

vista of violet blue',¹⁴² corresponded to the seven pillars that represented Theseus's palace in the final scene. Barker made effective use of these draperies as the fairies used them for entrances in 3.2.155:

Four small fairies enter as follows, speaking their lines in turn as they arrive.

Pease.	Enters up L (2 nd entrance of curtains)
Cobweb R (1 st entrance of curtains)
Moth L (2 nd entrance of curtains)
Mustard R (1 st entrance of curtains) ¹⁴³

This suggested the depth of the wood but the illusion was quickly undercut. The last two dancers opened the cloth for the entrance of Oberon, as Titania exited with Bottom and her court, on 'Tie up my love's tongue, bring him silently.' (3.2.193).¹⁴⁴

Wilkinson's set has a passing resemblance to the forest devised by Karl Walser for Reinhardt's 1909 Munich production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.¹⁴⁵ Although

there can be no certainty as to Wilkinson's or Barker's familiarity with the production, the designs are worth comparison. Walser's design for 4.1 shows a vibrantly coloured wood, with the actors standing on a mound of green and blue.

Dawn is indicated by a yellow sky that is seen through four trees, depicted with grey barks and green tops. A large garland has been painted to hang amongst the trees, and the stage framed with decorative flowered curtains. Its style and execution tends towards the impressionistic but the dominant image is still that of recognisable trees.

Wilkinson's semi-circular design and the deep colours of the draperies suggested a denser more mysterious part of the wood and gave Barker further scope for his staging of the fairies. The wreath and mound became part of a formal device, which created Titania's bower, with a passing acknowledgement in the gauze draperies to the canopy of an oriental bed, or the curtains of a cradle. *Punch* regarded the scene as having a 'background of Liberty curtains'¹⁴⁶ Indeed this juxtaposition of colours was fashionable at the time and is prevalent in Bakst's work and the Art Nouveau work of

Tiffany. Perhaps, however, on this occasion, Wilkinson simply selected a palette to reflect the depths of a wood.

Wilkinson's visual realisation of Barker's production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* challenged every preconception of previous scenic and costume design for the play. There were inevitable claims that this approach was unacceptable - 'Shakespeare being slaughtered to make an intellectual and post-impressionist holiday.'¹⁴⁷ Such views were unsurprising, as many attitudes towards the play were intrinsically bound to theatrical traditions, which had been reinforced by the interpretation of Greece and fairyland by artists during the previous century. Others were beginning to note that the producer and designer had created a sense of unity throughout the play: 'The supreme condition of Barker and Norman Wilkinson's art - for these two are twins in the work and triumph - is one scheme of harmony in acting to a multicoloured panel.'¹⁴⁸ There is clear evidence that the production was served by Wilkinson's innate ability to interpret pattern and colour into a theatrical entity. His curtains and sets defined the mood and purpose of scenes and accommodated a fluidity of staging. In reserving his judgement until he had seen the production for a second time, Desmond MacCarthy wrote one of the most considered reviews. He saw past the initial impact of the visual innovations and appreciated their compatibility to the text:

It is without effort we believe these quaintly gorgeous, metallic creatures are invisible to human eyes. They, therefore, possess the most important quality of all from the point of view of the story and the action of the play. [...] But the second time I was not so attentive to it, [the scene upon the stage] and began to notice instead that it served excellently as a generalised background against which any sort of figure, Greek, gilded or bucolic, was more or less congruous.¹⁴⁹

The collaboration of Barker and Wilkinson had brought Shakespeare production resoundingly into the twentieth century with productions that challenged previous

preconceptions concerning the staging of Shakespeare. Barker had articulated practices that influenced many young producers of Shakespeare particularly after the First World War. Wilkinson's underlying achievement was to relate his designs to Barker's understanding of the integrity of Shakespeare's text and to achieve a sense of cohesion that was interpretive of the play. He exploited the vitality of the contemporary theatre and its designers to bring panache to Shakespeare design. His stylish use of colour and verve in the execution of his work epitomised much of the energy of the pre-war theatre. It is decisive evidence that Barker's productions emerged from a synthesis of ideas current in the theatre, fashion and the visual arts.

A Celebration of the Elizabethan: *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, 1932)

Wilkinson's third *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was designed in 1932 for William Bridges-Adams opening season at the newly built Shakespeare Memorial Theatre. It was the designer's last complete work, in terms of both sets and costumes, and a stylish expression of his ability to assimilate relevant visual ideas and interpret them in terms of this play. This time Wilkinson drew inspiration from the masque and style of Inigo Jones. The quasi Elizabethan-Jacobean mood of his designs and the atmospheric rendering of the woodland scenes, were very different to his work for Barker, but a few elements from the Savoy production were reworked into this new concept. There were also some affinities with Wilkinson's 1923 designs for Donald Calthrop's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at the Kingsway. Wilkinson was now able to refer to the Shakespearean work of English directors and designers who had assimilated the influences of Barker, Poel and Craig and his designs were in part a response to theatrical precedent. Barker's reflections on the play, published as the Preface to *The Players' Shakespeare: A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1923), also appear to have had a decisive influence on the spirit of the designer's interpretation. A reviewer in the *Stage* described the 1932 production as 'the pièce-de-resistance of the Festival', and suggested its impact: 'Perhaps nothing approaching it for originality of conception or for beauty in realisation has previously been seen here.'¹⁵⁰ This was an acknowledgement of other important influences - those of the new theatre, the possibilities offered by its stage machinery and the perceptions of Bridges-Adams.

Wilkinson and Bridges-Adams had begun their formal connections with the Stratford Memorial Theatre at much the same time. In proposing the designer's

election as a governor and member of the Executive Council, the Chairman, Archibald Flower, had emphasised Wilkinson's theatre work and sustained interest in the Stratford theatre: 'Mr Wilkinson [who] had attended festivals for 20 years and had done good work for Shakespeare was thereupon elected.'¹⁵¹ Bridges-Adams had become the first director of the newly constituted New Shakespeare Company in 1919, after the final departure of Frank Benson and his company, who had been responsible for the Festivals since 1886. Barker had little doubt about the task facing Bridges-Adams. 'I really care that you should do something for Stratford that has not yet been done. [...] But if you are not to clean out this rubbish heap then you must be fought against, for your own sake and Stratford's sake – and Shakespeare's sake.'¹⁵² Bridges-Adams adopted an approach that catered to the susceptibilities of the Stratford audience but also embraced many of his own concerns, although they were modified by limited budgets and rehearsal time.¹⁵³ Later he made a succinct summary of his agenda:

Tradition without traditionalism: fresh air and high spirits: grandeur of tone and gesture without ranting – “using all gently”: the virtues of the Elizabethan theatre without its vices, and its freedom without its fetters: scenic splendour where helpful, but the Play is the Thing.¹⁵⁴

Much of this was exemplified in the Bridges-Adams / Wilkinson's realisation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Wilkinson's approach was not entirely original in terms of its mixture of Elizabethan and Jacobean references. During the previous twenty years, other productions of the play had been informed by its Elizabethan credentials. Deriving initially from the revival of interest in Elizabethan staging, costume and custom, each one marked a significant move towards a visual definition of the play in terms of its Elizabethan, rather than classical associations. Features of these contributed to Wilkinson's reappraisal of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* but his approach

transcended any gestures towards a straightforward historicism. Costumes and sets were used to create a sustained mood of artifice in both the court and woodland scenes. These contributed to both the unity and dreamlike qualities of the production. His flair for integrating the cut and style of a period in costume to his own purposes was evident in Barker's 1912 and later Calthrop's 1923, *Twelfth Night* productions but as the *Birmingham Post* noted 'his [Wilkinson's] art has mellowed.'¹⁵⁵ References to stylised costume, interiors and architecture were crucial to his concept, as was a wood with simplified but recognisable trees.

Almost contemporaneous with Barker's production at the Savoy, Patrick Kirwan's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was performed as part of a two week Spring Festival at the Stratford Memorial Theatre in April 1914. Kirwan's striving for Elizabethan historicism - despite the apparent simplicity of his staging - seems far removed from the immediacy and modernity of the London production. Kirwan, however, did recognise the need to identify a feasible realisation for the fairies, within the context of his Elizabethan aspirations. Griffiths notes that Kirwan was the first to refer to a Renaissance authority for this purpose.¹⁵⁶ It was an important precedent.

During this short season Kirwan aimed to present in an atmosphere of Elizabethan authenticity, eight Shakespearean plays, as well as *The Two Angry Women of Abingdon* by Henry Porter and *A Woman is a Weathercock* by Nathan Field. 'It is the Elizabethan - the Shakespearean - note that I am trying to introduce. I am looking at everything - so far as I can through Shakespeare's eyes.'¹⁵⁷ Involvement with his acting company, in the 1912 *Shakespeare's England* extravaganza at Earl's Court, had enabled him to elaborate his enthusiasm for Elizabethan legitimacy and custom in the production of Shakespeare and pursue his advocacy of dramatists contemporary with Shakespeare.¹⁵⁸ This exhibition with its reconstruction of the

Globe and Fortune theatres, Shakespeare's birthplace, the Mermaid Tavern and Plymouth harbour, included 'faithfully represented' performances of *Much Ado About Nothing*, *As You Like It* and *The Tempest*. They concluded with a dance to the pipe and tabor, followed by 'a hymn for the safety of the Virgin Queen by [actors representing] the audience on their knees.'¹⁵⁹ Other activities embraced a banquet scene, Elizabethan music, Morris dances and an Elizabethan pageant. Given that the exhibition also included such attractions as a giant roller-coaster, an electric rifle range and a cinematograph theatre, Kirwan's Shakespeare work probably reached a much larger if less discerning audience than that of Poel.

The panache and sophistication of Wilkinson's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was achieved because it was not limited by the evident visual constraints of Kirwan's production. Mazer argues that 'Kirwan's Elizabethanism broke down with his production of *The Dream*.'¹⁶⁰ Citing the difficulty in what Kirwan 'believed were Elizabethan notions of fantasy', and 'the ponderous authority of Elizabethan authenticity'.¹⁶¹ Mazer is, in fact, pointing to the inherent limitations of the designer, Herbert Norris, who was responsible for the costumes. At this time Norris's considerable reputation and experience was founded on such enterprises as designs for historical pageants, the principal groups at the Shakespeare Ball in 1911, and his work for *Shakespeare's England* at Earl's Court in 1912 where he must have collaborated with Kirwan. Aptly described as a 'costume architect and archaeologist',¹⁶² he believed in diligent research and the accurate reproduction of historical images: 'consistent adoption of its modes in every detail will achieve a triumph which will reward [...] more generously than any hybrid makeshift'.¹⁶³ Although there is no pictorial evidence of any of his work for this Stratford season, his surviving designs for *Shakespeare's England* attest to the verisimilitude of his

approach. They encompass a wide range of Elizabethan society such as an apple-woman at the Globe, maids of honour, musicians and the Earl of Essex.¹⁶⁴ The Stratford costumes would have been historically accurate and given the ambitious scope of Kirwan's programme, some could well have been those designed for use at Earl's Court.

Kirwan's source for the fairy costumes was Michael Drayton's *Nymphidia the Court of Fayrie*.¹⁶⁵ Although the protagonists are essentially Queen Mab and Piggwiggen, the poem features both Puck and Oberon, and may have appealed because of the poet's Warwickshire connections. Norris would not have found a literary authority the most obvious or most helpful source, as descriptions of Puck and the fairies in *Nymphidia* are minimal. 'This *Puck* seems but a dreaming dolt, / Still walking like a ragged Colt,' and 'Hence Shaddows, seeming idle shapes / Of little frisking Elves and Apes',¹⁶⁶ would have required some imaginative interpretation. Inevitably Norris aimed for a literal response. According to the *Era* this was achieved by 'fairies [...] who will all be "pearl grey" shadows',¹⁶⁷ while the *Sunday Times* reported that 'at the start he [Puck] will wear a rough coat of pearl grey and an equine-like headpiece.'¹⁶⁸ In the absence of detail concerning Oberon's appearance, Norris seems to have relied heavily on Drayton's description of the magnificently armed Piggwiggen as 'a splendid iridescent beetle, with luminous jerkin of blue and green [...] while on his head rises the horned crest of a beetle',¹⁶⁹ The problems of deriving a consistent approach from one source arose with Titania. 'Titania is likened to a star, so over her snow white robe will be cast a star-shaped mantle, or tunic of silver, while silver-star rays will crown her hair.'¹⁷⁰ Drayton's poem does not give a description of Queen Mab and Norris's costume has little apparent association with Shakespeare's Titania.¹⁷¹

Kirwan's pragmatic championing of Elizabethan practice was eclipsed by Barker's innovations in Shakespearean production but his contribution should not be dismissed. According to George Speaight, Bridges-Adams had worked with Kirwan in Shakespeare repertory.¹⁷² Given Wilkinson's interest in the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, he may well have seen the 1914 season at Stratford or the Earl's Court presentations. In 1919 proponents of early English drama were given a theatrical focus when the Stage Society sponsored the Phoenix Society to provide for the performance of such plays. It appears to have afforded Wilkinson a means to return to the theatre after the war. He designed two permanent adaptable sets for these productions and in 1923 the sets and costumes for a highly acclaimed staging of Fletcher's *The Faithful Shepherdess*, directed by Allan Wade, with music arranged and conducted by Sir Thomas Beecham.

In *Shakespeare at the Maddermarket* (1986), Franklin J. Hildy argues that the set and costume designs for Harcourt Williams's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Old Vic, 1929) were essentially recreations of those used by Nugent Monck at the Maddermarket.¹⁷³ Evidence does indicate that Williams's designer, Owen Paul Smyth, freely adapted ideas that he had used in his set designs for Monck. His association with the Maddermarket and that of his assistant, the actor Peter Taylor Smith, enabled them to make an assured contribution to the realisation of Williams's production. This was visually Elizabethan, but was not preoccupied with the conditions of original performance. Williams ascribed his inspiration to John Masefield, referring in the programme notes, to observations made by Masefield in his *William Shakespeare* (1911): 'John Masefield has said that Shakespeare's imagination conceived Athens as an English town, and that in his play he set himself free to tell his love for the earth of England. Elizabethan costumes will therefore be

worn, with the addition of Greek apparel such as players might have adopted.’¹⁷⁴

According to John Gielgud’s biographer, Ronald Hayman, this idea still was sufficiently innovative to cause concern amongst the acting company but Williams received support from Gielgud who played Oberon.¹⁷⁵ Both productions were notable progenitors of Wilkinson’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and likewise retained influences from the Savoy staging of the play.

The design of Monck’s production would appear to have been the result of collaboration between the director and Smyth. Hildy states that Monck based the costume designs on Inigo Jones’s work for Thomas Campion’s *The Lord’s Masque*. Smyth must have been responsible for at least two of the sets. His catalogue for an exhibition in December 1923 of *Etchings, Woodcuts and Drawings*, lists *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* twice under the section entitled Maddermarket Theatre Settings.¹⁷⁶ Photographs provide the most reliable evidence for the costumes and sets produced in this small theatre, with its apron stage, gallery and inner stage, which had been inspired by the interior of The Fortune Theatre.

With the exception of the fairies, Norris had retained the suggestion of classical allusion in Kirwan’s production: ‘the costumes are Greek as seen with Elizabethan eyes, copied from prints in the British Museum and elsewhere.’¹⁷⁷ In costuming Theseus’s Court, the lovers, the mechanicals and Pyramus and Thisbe entirely as Elizabethans, Monck rejected most of the play’s classical references. Hippolyta, Theseus and the lovers appear to be afforded little character delineation by their costumes, but their status is emphasised by the richness of their outfits, (illustration 42). It is difficult to detect a direct connection between Monck’s fairies and Jones’s designs for *The Lord’s Masque*. There may be a passing similarity between Oberon and the Masquer Lord, costumed as a Star. Titania could have been based on the

Lady Masquer as a Transformed Statue, but the comparisons are tentative.¹⁷⁸ Puck and Oberon's adult male attendants wear a simplified form of a doublet and trunk hose beneath a surcoat. It appears to be constructed of loose panels, joined at the shoulders, and pointed at the hemline. These seem close in conception to the Three Fays in the final scene of *Oberon, the Fairy Prince* (1611), particularly that of the late medieval figure.¹⁷⁹ The style of wig and circlet does appear to be classical rather than Elizabethan in inspiration. Titania's gown and those of her attendants (illustration 43) are more immediately recognisable as deriving from the Elizabethan, as although uncomplicated in realisation, they are based on the form of the farthingale. This provenance in Jones's masques reveals an important visual unity between the Court, lovers and fairies. The characters no longer exist in disparate groups as their appearance implies something of a sartorial common identity. Monck's costumes convey the visual suggestion of the play's parallel and interrelated worlds, foreshadowing the doubling of Hippolyta / Titania and Theseus / Oberon in much later productions. Inevitably Wilkinson's costume designs were more sophisticated and technically detailed than those produced at the Maddermarket but his ideas were not dissimilar to those of Monck. Hildy notes an interesting correlation between Nigel Playfair's productions at the Lyric Theatre and those at the Maddermarket. 'In fact, of the nine productions which established the Lyric Theatre's reputation after *The Beggar's Opera*, all but two had been given their first postwar revival by Monck.'¹⁸⁰ Given Wilkinson's involvement with the Lyric at this time, and his marked interest in the Elizabethan and Shakespeare, it is probable that he would have been familiar with Monck's production.

Wilkinson's influence and that of William Rutherston is most evident in Smyth's forest setting.¹⁸¹ This was achieved by groups of symbolic drapes, hung against a

suggestive forest drop. The process was reminiscent of Wilkinson's Savoy arrangement of curtains for the wood, but the patterning on the drapes seems closer to Rutherford's forest curtain for Shaw's *Androcles and the Lion* (St. James's, 1913) produced by Barker. Hildy argues that the drop was similar to that created by Monck for W.B. Yeats's *The Countess of Cathleen* (Abbey Theatre, 1911) and that his assistant Bridges-Adams used this idea for *Aucassin and Nicolette* (Maddermarket, 1913). '[He] painted a beautiful forest setting of blue tree trunks against a gilded sky.'¹⁸² This is an interesting example of the synthesis of visual ideas from English designers that informed productions of Shakespeare.

The curtains and drop, used with steep blocks of steps, were Smyth's most straightforward adaptations from the Maddermarket production, to that at the Old Vic. Given the limitations of space on the Norwich stage - it was thirty-four feet wide and twenty feet deep with sixteen feet between the pillars - the use of these steps would have created an unlocalised area that could be used in each of the settings for the play. Possibly influenced by the work of Craig, they were utilised for the forest scene in the London production. 'His forest scene is a formal arrangement of curtains and flights of steps, up and down which his players climb and leap with the agility of chamois.'¹⁸³

Smyth's costumes for the female fairies at the Old Vic must have created a similar effect to those designed by Monck. 'Mr. Owen Smyth, the "Old Vic." designer, rightly went to Inigo Jones, the great artificer of masque, to robe his immortals. So Titania [...] is an Elizabethan lady turned "fey".'¹⁸⁴ An unidentified newspaper photograph, showing Gielgud as Oberon and Leslie French as Puck (illustration 44), indicates that this Oberon was considerably more Elizabethan than his Maddermarket counterpart, although his garments appear to be regaled with oak leaves, rather than

the seaweed suggested by Trewin.¹⁸⁵ Trewin also notes the ‘green faces’ of the fairy attendants, an idea that would seem to have been extended to Oberon.¹⁸⁶ The colour of face make-up for the fairies, had varied since the gold of the Savoy production, but had become something of a feature. Wilkinson used silver in 1923 and was to use it to effect again in 1932.

Given that Barker had reservations concerning the appearance of Puck in his *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, although not the intentions behind this interpretation, both Williams and Bridges-Adams followed his idea. ‘Puck is the right Robin red-breast, a pocket-size Lord of Misrule and masculine gadabout.’¹⁸⁷ Wilkinson may have preferred Monck’s visual integration of an adult male Puck with the other fairies as he achieved an interesting compromise in his design for the Stratford production front-curtain. Williams made a further acknowledgement to Barker by using the folk tunes that had been arranged by Cecil Sharp for the Savoy production.

In his preface to *The Players' Shakespeare: A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1923), Barker afforded a reappraisal of the play in terms of its possible original staging. In recognising the problems posed by staging the play for the twentieth century, he seemed to allude to the possible limitations of his own earlier solutions.

To bring discordant elements into the interpretation of any work of art is wrong. To avoid discordancy while satisfying still that hungry eye, modern producers have devised scenery which is not scenery, forests that are not like forests, and light that never was on sea or land. But have they thereby eliminated the competition too?¹⁸⁸

Although offering no prescriptive answers, or advocating an adherence to Elizabethan stage practices, Barker was drawn to the idea of the play’s original performance being intended for the celebration of a wedding. He considered it to be both consistent with its mood and a plausible explanation for some of the staging. ‘There is a fitness of the fable, the play’s whole tone and atmosphere, the appropriate

ending.’¹⁸⁹ E. K. Chambers, in his introduction to his edition of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (1923), suggested the possibility of the play’s first performance at the celebration of the wedding of William Stanley, Earl of Derby to Elizabeth Vere, at Greenwich.¹⁹⁰ Arthur Quiller-Couch and John Dover Wilson, drew similar conclusions in their edition of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (1924), but argued that the occasion may have been the marriage of the Earl of Southampton to Mistress Vernon. They also pointed to the close association between fairies and weddings invoked in Elizabethan literature citing Spencer’s *Epithalamion*.¹⁹¹ Williams acknowledged his debt to Barker when writing of his experiences in *Four Years at the Old Vic* (1935). As an actor Williams had worked with him at the Court, Savoy, Little Theatre and Kingsway and he had sought the director’s advice before starting his first season at the Old Vic. In the book he made an enthusiastic reference to Barker’s first volume of *Prefaces to Shakespeare* (1927), ‘I had been thrilled with *Julius Caesar*. Indeed, [...] I had been planning to give some special performances of the play, based on Granville-Barker’s Preface.’¹⁹² It is therefore a little surprising considering Williams’s approach to the presentation of the play that he turned to the rather antiquated comments made by Masfield, twenty years previously, rather than Barker’s more recent observations.

It would seem reasonable to assume that Wilkinson was conversant with Barker’s ideas. The publisher’s intention was to produce editions of the plays printed ‘litteratim’ from the First Folio ‘and illustrated by artists interested in the modern stage.’ under the art-editorship of Rutherson with introductions by Barker.¹⁹³ Wilkinson had provided illustrations of stylised Elizabethans for *Love’s Labours Lost* (1924) and may have been working on similar ideas for a *Romeo and Juliet*. Two completed illustrations, dated 1927, are comparable in style and show the

Prologue and Romeo.¹⁹⁴ The mood of Bridges-Adams's production would seem to reflect the idea of 'once upon a time' suggested by Barker in his argument for the Elizabethan tenor of the play.

Does our imagination respond differently to-day? Can we not hear
'Call Philostrate.
Here, mighty Theseus
Say what abridgement have you for this evening?
What masque? What music?'
without the classic names obliterating the Elizabethan phrase?¹⁹⁵

Unlike Smyth in the Old Vic production, Wilkinson rejected all classical allusions enabling him to evoke the 'unity of effect' that Barker considered was important for the play. This was achieved by the quasi-Elizabethan / Jacobean sets and costumes that informed an element of fantasy and a dream-like quality. These were augmented by the director's use of lighting and stage machinery. Wilkinson's skill in fusing artistic styles into a theatrical unity was evident from the outset of the play. The new stage allowed for an apron extension, but there were no pretensions to an Elizabethan stage. All three settings, and the drop curtain, were enclosed within a proscenium decorated with stylised scrolls and headed with a cartouche inscribed 'Londinium Feracissimi Angliae Regni Metropolis', locating the action in the sophistication of the capital. Although lacking any of the elaboration or allegory of a proscenium such as Jones's design for *The Queen's Masque of Indianes* (1634), the style is indebted to the masque. Its use created something of the effect that Bridges-Adams had worked with at the old Shakespeare Memorial Theatre: 'the Old Memorial Theatre had no apron stage worthy of the name. This was no bother to us, for we could make as much of a forestage as we wanted by erecting an inner proscenium.'¹⁹⁶ Here Wilkinson's scenic design served as an added reminder of the artifice of the events.

The drop curtain used for 1.1, provided the production's keynote of unreality with its two-dimensional depiction of an Elizabethan mansion fronted by Wilkinson's

familiar motif of a chequered board forecourt, (illustration 45). This and the numerous simple clouds in the sky, enhance a sense that this may be an illustration from a book - an illusion not an actuality. The design indicates the presence of the fairy world before the beginning of the play, as Oberon and Titania are depicted at roof level, while Puck hovers close to the central doorway. Drawings for these show that their blue gauze Elizabethan style costumes are similar to those of their characters in the play. Puck also wears blue and so here, is more integrated with the spirit world, than the red-coated character in the production that was essentially a reincarnation from the Savoy and Old Vic. Williams reiterates the suggestion that the design for the mansion was based on Charlecote House. The idea was first mentioned in a review of a revival directed by Martin Browne in March 1937.¹⁹⁷ The notion appears to have more to do with the persistent association of Shakespeare with the Hall, as there is only a cursory resemblance in the domed turrets with Wilkinson's exterior. The Hall is, except for the gate-house, a Victorian reconstruction and, furthermore, there are no similarities between Wilkinson's designs for the interior of Theseus's palace and that of the main hall at Charlecote. The idea, in fact, would seem inconsistent with the production's London setting and its mood of unreality.

The set for the interior of the Great House used in Act 5 was a marked contrast to the curtain, having a substantial three-dimensional aspect created by Wilkinson's use of architectural features to achieve a convincing pastiche of Jones's style. Although entirely different in concept to the pillars and starlit sky of the Savoy production, the designer's most architectural and structured set, again reflected the scene that demonstrated a return to the order of society, (illustration 46). The effect, with its panelled ceiling, ceiling to floor windows, elaborately worked three-arched screen and hanging candelabra is not unlike that of Jones's interior of the Queen's Chapel at

St. James's Palace. The screen, similar in style to those of the Inns of Court, but with a trompe l'oeil effect of carved wood and four inset statues, seems particularly apposite to Chambers's point that the masque was not a public entertainment but performed, 'in the palace, or in the great halls of the Inns of Court or of private dwellings.'¹⁹⁸ It provided a fitting and obvious structure for the performance of *Pyramus and Thisbe*, although the prompt book shows that the three apparently curtained doors behind the arches were not used for entrances and exits, but were intended for effect.¹⁹⁹ It is a demonstration of Wilkinson's skill in the fusion of ideas, for it is an elaborately artificial edifice, which allows all the players to become the performers in a wedding masque in the final act. Here a visual unity facilitated the culmination of the play's dream-like and fantastical qualities.

Although Wilkinson's rendering of Peter Quince's shop was simple, it had a passing reference to Elizabethan credentials, in that it hinted at an inner stage, albeit of a somewhat shallow construction. The shop exterior, with its upper window and compass and rule carpenter's sign, was created with the minimum of effect. A written sign proclaiming the owner and his trade, offers a more lowly but similar confirmation of locale, to that of the cartouche over the proscenium. Even here everything is not all that it seems. The bench is a solid substantial prop but the tools of Quince's trade are carefully painted on the flats. The total effect of the set design for the shop is of an illustration.

Wilkinson and Bridges-Adams achieved an atmosphere in the woodland scenes that was undeniably magical. Susan Brock and Marian Pringle in *Theatre in Focus: The Stratford Memorial Theatre 1919-1945* (1984), consider that 'Much of the magic of this production was achieved by Bridges-Adams' skilled lighting.'²⁰⁰ A.K. Chesterton's lyrical review shows that this was essential to the mood of the

woodland: ‘the picture of Titania caressing the Ass, illuminated by unbelievable subtlety of colouring, and suggesting some dream-vision seen in a rainbow land beyond all mortal verges’²⁰¹ The set, a mound behind which stood a dominant three-dimensional tree trunk and painted forest, was another reflection of Wilkinson’s ability to combine eclectic sources into a convincing unity, (illustration 47).

Movement of the oak tree to provide different aspects of the wood was achieved by use of the theatre’s new rolling stage. The artifice of this was pointed up in the 1934 revival of the production, when according to the *Stratford-upon-Avon Herald*, ‘Titania commands a huge tree to be hauled across the glade.’ Despite the lack of any apparent realism, the reviewer was not convinced by either the magical or theatrical nature of the action. He demanded authenticity as the fairies hauled the tree by means of tinsel ropes. ‘Not once is the rope taut; not once is one made conscious of any effort on the part of the Queen’s diminutive subjects’.²⁰² It would appear that, even by this date, some required a marked degree of visual realism, even in a fairy wood. Wilkinson found the mound or knoll, first employed in the Savoy production, a useful device. A sketch of the forest scene, reproduced in the programme for Calthrop’s production, shows Titania standing on yet another version of this idea, (illustration 48). This mound was still a dominant feature of his wood for his final production and his ideas for the realisation of the wood are not dissimilar. Evident in both is the mass of heavy, stylised leaves. These are also apparent in Wilkinson’s stage setting elevation for Acts II, III and IV, in The Players’ Shakespeare edition of *Loves Labour’s Lost*. All three are indebted to the style of Lovat Fraser, particularly his forest designs for Playfair’s *As You Like It* (Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, 1919).

In suggesting a wedding masque and performance in an Elizabethan / Jacobean house, Wilkinson's sets were original but interpretative of ideas that had been argued elsewhere. His realisation of the costumes worn by the lovers and court was entirely innovative and sustained the artifice and dream-like quality of this production. Other designers had relied on historical reference, but here Wilkinson's innate sense of theatricality served the unifying effect. Predominately white, these costumes were an eclectic mixture of quasi Elizabethan / Jacobean styling. While each one was fashioned to delineate aspects of individual characters, the overall effect was paramount. According to reviews the effect of the white appears to have been similar in both the court and woodland scenes. 'These four lovers [...] are Elizabethan figures in alabaster. [...] Theseus and Hippolyta are Elizabethans, too - noble statuesque, dreamlike Elizabethans, who go hunting in clothes as white as marriage garments.'²⁰³ '[C]ome some men-at-arms upon the forestage, all gorgeously plumed and raimented, like alabaster ornaments sprung to life from some huge mantelpiece.'²⁰⁴ Comparison of Wilkinson's designs for these with photographs taken of the original production and 1937 revival, indicate that initially the costumes were closely realised. However, versions of these and those worn by the fairy court were used in the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre's productions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* until 1944, by which time many subtleties in the design had been lost.

Wilkinson's original designs for the court and lovers are mainly pencil drawings with some colour wash. There are visual links between the respective couples and this may have been extended to Hippolyta / Theseus and Titania / Oberon. Although evidence concerning Wilkinson's costumes for Calthrop's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is entirely confined to reviews, there is a clear indication that the designer adopted a limited colour range for the Court. Two of these were red and white. 'Miss

Tree in her floating red and white Athenian dress, was the most decorative person in the play.²⁰⁵ A third had been used: ‘the Court of Theseus, in its tricolour costume’.²⁰⁶ Despite the difference in approach, Wilkinson may have reworked these colours for the Stratford production. It is likely that such a palette was a reference to the popular whites and reds of Elizabethan and Jacobean portraiture.

The design for Hippolyta’s costume (illustration 49), shows that Wilkinson’s initial intention was to use two striking colours in contrast to the white and that these were repeated in aspects of the other costumes. Purple is indicated for the patterning on her bodice and sleeve linings, while her cloak is lined in deep vermilion. Purple, however, is not mentioned in the reviews so it is possible that it was muted to grey ‘while the members of the Court of Theseus are gowned in white and dove-grey.’²⁰⁷ Also, it is possible that lighting modified both the white and purple in the costumes. Their luxuriant and opulent cloaks, stately and theatrical rather than appropriate to any given period, distinguish Theseus and Hippolyta. The design on the bodice of Theseus’s costume echoes that of Hippolyta’s but whereas his trunk-hose associates him with an older generation, her dress is more freely adapted. Wilkinson specified red hair for this character, perhaps implying a connection with Elizabeth I. There do, in fact, appear to be distinct similarities between aspects of her costume and that of Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger’s Ditchley portrait of the Queen, (illustration 50). These are evident in the shape of the bodice and farthingale, the distinctive long hanging sleeves and shape of the ruff and lace cuffs. Given the portrait’s association with Sir Henry Lee’s entertainment, in which Elizabeth I made her way through an enchanted wood, the connections seem even more persuasive.²⁰⁸ However, the deep layers of lace on her skirt, the plumed head-dress and patterning on the bodice, are theatrical in intent and have no historical foundation. The painting does not appear to

have been available as a reproduction at this time, so if it did serve as a template, Wilkinson must have had either personal access to the original, or been aware of a copy. The portrait remained at Ditchley, until the death of Lord Dillion in 1932, when it formed part of his bequest to the National Portrait Gallery.

When, almost forty years later, Bridges-Adams recalled Barker's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* he retained a distinct memory of the portrayal of the lovers. 'A Lysander who was a bit of a poet, a Demetrius who was a bit of a stockbroker, a Hermia who was a bit of a minx, and a Helena who was a bit of a fool.'²⁰⁹ The *Stage* considered that Bridges-Adams's actors had, 'invested the quartet of lovers with grace and humanity,'²¹⁰ but Demetrius's and particularly Lysander's costume suggest that Wilkinson echoed Barker's interpretation. In 1937 the doublets and breeches of these costumes had been interchanged but a photograph, taken in 1932, of Ernest Hare as Lysander, portrays a romantic character whose hair and fluid, beribboned costume, seem closer to the style of the court of Charles I. Demetrius, costumed in exaggerated three-quarter breeches and doublet with its row of small closely placed buttons, is a stiffer and more austere individual. Hermia's outfit identifies with that of Lysander in the ribbons on her bodice similarly, Helena's bodice is buttoned in the same fashion as that of Demetrius.

It is not easy to visualise Wilkinson's fairy costumes for Calthrop's production from the few existing descriptions but it is clear that the designer made effective use of blue and silver: 'in the dim blues and the silver ornaments of the fairies' dresses and in the shadowy forest settings, Mr Norman Wilkinson [...] , is at his most successful.'²¹¹ There is, again, the possibility that Wilkinson adapted some of his own ideas for the fairy court from this earlier production, especially as he appeared to have achieved a similar effect: 'silver, blue and grey, star-spangled and moon-

shot, the pervading atmosphere of the forest scene.²¹² Wilkinson sustained not only the artifice of the production in his creation of the fairy costumes but succeeded in suggesting a visual connection between the mortal and supernatural worlds. This centred on the costumes of Oberon and Titania but was reiterated in the indication of Elizabethan styling in some of the outfits worn by both the male and female child fairies, (illustration 51). The structured bodices worn by both Oberon and Titania, covered with regular slashing of silver, are clearly Elizabethan in inspiration. Both have a similar patterning on the front. This links them as a couple and associates them with their mortal counterparts. The blue, transparent gauze of Titania's farthingale and Oberon's trunk hose, provide an insubstantial contrast to their upper garments, yet sustain the Elizabethan silhouette. His gauze cloak, silver spangled in the original production, belongs to no historical period but contributes to the ethereal nature of his costume. Sketches for the fairy costumes show that they were intended as variations of single designs, one each for male and female. Farthingale shaped skirts and three-quarter breeches, echo the Elizabethan but all the upper garments are sleeved tops, with a simple silver pattern on the front, while the silver wigs are reminiscent of the Savoy fairies. Although the design of these costumes alluded to the connection between the mortals and the fairies, their colours enabled Bridges-Adams use of atmospheric lighting to emphasise their supernatural qualities: 'it was a midnight wood, of midnight blue, streaked here and there with the silver of moonlight; the fairies, dressed in the same midnight-blue and silver, *disappeared* when they stood against the tree trunks. Oberon disappeared, Titania disappeared.'²¹³ It is evident that, Wilkinson's mixture of the Elizabethan and supernatural created a balance that sustained a mood of stylised artifice throughout the play.

There are references to Elizabethan styling in the costumes designs for both Pyramus and Thisbe, showing that Wilkinson intended to integrate them into the mood and unity of the play. The exuberant colours - red and cerise offset by a grey tunic and blue hat, with cerise feather for Pyramus, and a green and cerise gown for Thisbe - are a marked contrast to controlled palette of the court and fairies. These costumes, display a freedom and humour reminiscent of those in the Savoy production. However, it is not certain that these later designs were ever realised or that Wilkinson's entire intentions for this production were achieved. A posed photograph of the mechanicals taken for the 1937 revival shows them dressed for the performance of Pyramus and Thisbe in a disappointing array of loose smocks that could well have come from any production that had vague classical allusions.²¹⁴ It is possible that the envisaged costumes had not been made or could have been rejected by this date. Letters from Bridges-Adams to Archibald Flower indicate that the director was having considerable difficulty in getting a response from his designer. 'Norman has now taken to his bed is eating nothing still drinking hard and will be quite unapproachable for a week.'²¹⁵ Wilkinson's alcoholism had made him unpredictable and unreliable and compromises may have been necessary.

Wilkinson's work on both sets and costumes for Shakespeare plays was limited to three productions, yet as a designer he made an important contribution to the visual possibilities of interpretation. The skills that had enabled him to make such a notable contribution were evident in his early paintings and illustrations. Here, he had fused the styles, influences and preoccupations of the Birmingham School of Art with his own responses to intricate detail and pattern. His work for Barker, demonstrated that he was able to adapt contemporary influences in the visual arts and structure them into effective designs that were intended to add relevance to the play. His third *A*

Midsummer Night's Dream demonstrated that, although Wilkinson's technique remained essentially the same, he was capable of responding to very different aspects of the visual arts in order to achieve his effects. However it would seem that his approach to Shakespeare, although distinguished by stylish interpretation would have been narrowed by his interest in the Elizabethan period. Fabia Drake commented that 'he would use no other period for his designs of décor for the plays of Shakespeare.'²¹⁶ As Brock and Pringle point out, Wilkinson's sets for Bridges-Adams's *Romeo and Juliet* (Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, 1933) were 'very similar to Bridges-Adams' highly praised set, designed in conjunction with Conrad Leigh, for his production of the play in 1929 and 1930 at the Stratford-upon-Avon cinema.'²¹⁷ The intention in 1933 was to recreate the conventions of the Elizabethan stage in as far as it was consonant with the design of the new theatre. An appropriate space was created by Wilkinson who achieved an unlikely yet convincing fusion of Elizabeth Scott's interior with an inset stage, balcony stage and apron. In an interview concerning his approach to *Romeo and Juliet* he appeared to repudiate the elaborate influences of his 1932 *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. 'I am convinced that any deviation from the Poel method of simplicity is silly, old-fashioned, and dull, and that only by going one better than Poel would one have achieved anything to be proud of in one's own work - but that, I fear, I have not done.'²¹⁸ This comment, although made in the context of a production that was looking towards the recreation of Elizabethan simplicity, would suggest that Wilkinson sensed an unresolved dichotomy in his own work. His sense of design and engagement with Shakespeare enabled him to create an underlying sense of structure and unity. The few sketches that he completed for *The Tempest* indicate that he was again considering Elizabethan costume and some elements of the masque, but given the play, it would

have been unlikely that Wilkinson would have considered any other approach. He clearly did not believe that this method was incumbent on other designers and supported Bridges-Adams in his attempts to employ Theodore Komisarjevsky as both director and designer of *The Merchant of Venice* for the 1932 summer season. ‘Bridges has spoken to me over the phone regarding his proposals for the production of “The Merchant” acting & all by Komisarjevsky & I am in complete accordance with his proposals.’²¹⁹ At the beginning of his career Wilkinson had made an apparently effortless transition from the artistic values of late Victorian Birmingham to those of the artists, directors and designers who influenced Shakespeare production in the first decades of the new century. If he did sense the limitation of his self-imposed style in his later work, he had the theatrical imagination to envisage the potential of an innovative designer, whose approach was to be very different to that of his own.

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- ¹ William Bridges-Adams, 'Death of Mr. Norman Wilkinson', *The Times*, 16 February 1934.
- ² Derek Sederman, *A History of Abbotsholme School 1889-1989* (Staffordshire, Abbotsholme School, 1989), p.2.
- ³ Abbotsholme School, Register, June 1900.
- ⁴ Max Armfield, 'My Approach to Art by Max Armfield' in *Max Armfield*, comp. by A.A. Ballard and E.Ogborn (Southampton: Southampton City Art Gallery, 1978), n.p.
- ⁵ Aymer Vallance, 'The Tempera Exhibition at the Carfax Gallery', *Studio*, 35 (1905), 289-296.
- ⁶ *Studio*, 40 (1907), (p.231)
- ⁷ Robert Louis Stevenson, *Virginibus Puerisque and Other Papers*, illustr. by Norman Wilkinson (London: Chatto & Windus, 1910)
- ⁸ Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Romaunt of the Rose*, illustr. by Keith Henderson and Norman Wilkinson (London: Chatto and Windus, 1911).
- ⁹ Armfield, n.p.
- ¹⁰ Anthony Everitt, 'Norman Wilkinson: a second rater of the first order', *Birmingham Post*, 14 February 1970.
- ¹¹ Elizabeth Coxhead, *Constance Spry: A Biography* (London: Luscombe, 1975), p.56.
- ¹² *Stage*, 30 March, 1911.
- ¹³ Norman Wilkinson, war service record, 16 September 1916 – 13 January 1919 (0235-0255) Public Records Office, Kew.
- ¹⁴ *Birmingham Post*, 14 February 1970.
- ¹⁵ William Shakespeare, *Love's Labour's Lost*, intro. by Harley Granville Barker, illustr. by Norman Wilkinson, Players' edition (London: Benn, 1924)
- ¹⁶ *Truth*, 24 November 1926.
- ¹⁷ SMT. Minute Book 1, 23 April 1918. (SCL).
- ¹⁸ SMT. Minute Book 2, 25 August 1928. (SLC).
- ¹⁹ SMT. Minute Book 2, 28 November 1931. (SLC).
- ²⁰ SMT. Minute Book 2, 24 October 1931. (SLC).

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- ²¹ Cary M. Mazer, *Shakespeare Refashioned: Elizabethan Plays on Edwardian Stages*, (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1980), p.150.
- ²² Harley Granville Barker, *Play Pictorial*, November 1912.
- ²³ Barker, 'Preface' *Twelfth Night*, by William Shakespeare (London: Heinemann, 1912), p.viii.
- ²⁴ Max Armfield, *Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. L.G Wickham Legg, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1949), p. 909.
- ²⁵ Arthur Scott Craven, 'Modern Scenic Art', *Stage Year Book*, (1914), 19-20.
- ²⁶ Unless otherwise stated all the scenic and costume designs, discussed in this chapter, are held at the Courtauld Institute of Art (Norman Wilkinson Bequest, 1938, University of London).
- ²⁷ See, Dennis Kennedy, *Granville Barker and the Dream of Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p.144.
- ²⁸ Account Book for Savoy and St. James's seasons, 1912-1914, (VATC).
- ²⁹ 'Twelfth Night' at the Savoy. Granville Barker's New Production. Beautiful and Close to Shakespeare', *Daily News and Leader*, 16 November 1912.
- ³⁰ "'Twelfth Night'" at the Savoy', *People*, 17 November 1912.
- ³¹ Craven, p. 20.
- ³² Walter René Fuerst and Samuel J. Hume, *Twentieth-Century Stage Decoration*, 2 vols (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1929; repr. New York: Dover, 1967), 1, p.22.
- ³³ "'Twelfth Night'" Mr. Granville Barker's Success. Cubism on the Stage', *Daily Mail*, 16 November 1912.
- ³⁴ "'Twelfth Night'", *Lloyds Weekly News*, 17 November 1912.
- ³⁵ 'A Perfect Blend in "'Twelfth Night'" The Popular and the Artistic', *Evening News*, 16 November 1912.
- ³⁶ *Westminster Gazette*, 16 November 1912.
- ³⁷ H.M.W., 'Plays and Players. The Success at the Savoy', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 18 November 1912.
- ³⁸ These dimensions are noted in the Account Book, n.p.
- ³⁹ *Westminster Gazette*, 16 November 1912.
- ⁴⁰ "'Twelfth Night.'" More Granville-Barkerised Shakespeare at the Savoy. Merry Production Warmly Received', *Daily Sketch*, 16 November 1912.'

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- ⁴¹ Norman Wilkinson, costume designs for *Twelfth Night*, (NWB).
- ⁴² *Standard*, 11 November 1912.
- ⁴³ Mazer, p.145.
- ⁴⁴ *Stage*, 10 July 1924.
- ⁴⁵ Robert Speaight, *William Poel and the Elizabethan Revival* (London: Heinemann, 1954), p.104.
- ⁴⁶ *Daily Mail*, 16 November 1912.
- ⁴⁷ Barker, p.vi.
- ⁴⁸ William Poel, *Shakespeare in the Theatre* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1913; repr. New York: Blom, 1968), p. 211.
- ⁴⁹ Account Book, n.p.
- ⁵⁰ S.R.L., “Twelfth Night.” Beautiful Production by Mr. Granville Barker’, *Daily Chronicle*, 16 November 1912.
- ⁵¹ Kennedy, p.137.
- ⁵² Barker, p.vi.
- ⁵³ Boyle Lawrence, “Mr Granville Barker’s Production at the Savoy”, *St. James’s Gazette*, 16 November 1912.
- ⁵⁴ *Westminster Gazette*, 16 November 1912.
- ⁵⁵ *Morning Post*, 16 November 1912.
- ⁵⁶ Barker, p.v.
- ⁵⁷ ‘Savoy Theatre. “Twelfth Night,” A Beautiful Production’, *Daily Telegraph*, 16 November 1912.
- ⁵⁸ Barker, p.vii.
- ⁵⁹ ““Twelfth Night” at the Savoy’, *People*, 17 November 1912.
- ⁶⁰ Barker, ‘Preface’ *Twelfth Night*, p.vii.
- ⁶¹ Costume design for Feste, *Twelfth Night*. (WL, 115/B/E 37-38).
- ⁶² Barker, p.vii.
- ⁶³ *Daily Sketch*, 16 November 1912.

⁶⁴ Charles Ricketts, letter to Lillah McCarthy, 12 March 1912. (BL, 58090).

⁶⁵ There is no indication that Charles Ricketts had any involvement with the designs for Barker's *The Winter's Tale* or *Twelfth Night*. Despite this, the idea has been reiterated. See. Stephen Calloway, *Charles Ricketts: Subtle and Fantastic Decorator* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1979), p.23, J.G.P. Delaney, *Charles Ricketts: a Biography*, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990), p.261 and Ifan Kyrle Fletcher, *Theatre Notebook*, xxii (1967), 6-23 (15).

⁶⁶ Barker, letter to Duncan Grant, 10 August 1912. In the possession of Richard Shone.

⁶⁷ Barker, letter to Grant, 28 June 1913. In the possession of Richard Shone.

⁶⁸ William Hazlitt, *Characters of Shakespear's Plays and Lectures on the English Poets* (Glasgow: Maclehose, 1903; repr. London: Macmillan, 1920), p.82.

⁶⁹ Trevor R.Griffths, *Shakespeare in Production: A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 44.

⁷⁰ Harley Granville Barker, 'Preface', *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, by William Shakespeare (London: Heinemann, 1914), pp. iii-iv.

⁷¹ Barker, 'Preface', *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, p. viii.

⁷² Joseph Harker, *Studio and Stage* (London: Nisbet, 1924), p. 93.

⁷³ Constance Benson, *Mainly Players: Bensonian Memories* (London: Thornton Butterworth, 1926), p. 87.

⁷⁴ Herbert Beerbohm Tree, Souvenir Programme. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 10 January 1900, n.p. (TCW/PG/000057), (UBTC).

⁷⁵ Gary Jay Williams, 'A Midsummer Night's Dream: The English and American popular traditions and Harley Granville-Barker's "World Arbitrarily Made."', *Theatre Studies*, 23 (1976-1977) 40-52, (p. 42).

⁷⁶ Barker, 'The Theatre in Berlin' *The Times* 19 November 1910.

⁷⁷ Barker, *The Times*, 19 November 1910.

⁷⁸ Muriel St Clare Byrne, 'Fifty Years of Shakespearian Production: 1898-1948', *Shakespeare Survey*, 2 (1949), 1-20 (p.9).

⁷⁹ *Athenaeum*, 14 February 1914.

⁸⁰ Promptbook, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Savoy, 1914). (UM).

⁸¹ Photographs of Tree's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (His Majesty's Theatre, 1901 (VATC)).

⁸² Percy Anderson's designs for *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Her Majesty's Theatre, 1900). (HBT/00004/2-15, UBTC).

⁸³ "'A Midsummer Night's Dream.'" Mr. Barker's Production. Golden Fairies at the Savoy Theatre', *The Times*, 7 February 1914.

⁸⁴ *Athenaeum*, 14 February 1914.

⁸⁵ Edward Steichen's photograph of this costume is reproduced in Alice Mackrell, *Paul Poiret* (London: Batsford, 1990), p.24.

⁸⁶ Alexander Schouvaloff, Léon Bakst. *The Theatre Art* (London: Sotheby's, 1991), p.53.

⁸⁷ *Granville-Barker and his Correspondents*, ed. by Eric Salmon (Detroit: Wayne State University, 1986), pp. 61-62.

⁸⁸ *The Times*, 7 February 1914.

⁸⁹ 'A Shakespeare Nightmare. Mr. Barker's Ideas. Titania with a Gilt Face. Fairies with Crimson Eyebrows', *Daily Mail*, 7 February 1914.

⁹⁰ The references to colours and fabrics used in this chapter are consistent with those used for *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1914) in the Account Book.

⁹¹ *Daily Mail*, 7 February 1914.

⁹² 'Savoy: Revival of "A Midsummer Night's Dream"', *Sunday Times*, 8 February 1914.

⁹³ Williams, p. 43.

⁹⁴ *New York Press*, 21 February 1915.

⁹⁵ A militaristic emphasis is evident in Percy Anderson's costume designs. Costumes for Oberon (HBT/000004/1), Hippolyta (HBT/000004/3) and Theseus (HBT/D/000004/14) include breastplates. The captain of the guards (HBT/000004/4) and Theseus's guards (HBT/000004/15) wear breastplates and plumed helmets. (UBTC).

⁹⁶ Williams, p.30.

⁹⁷ Promptbook, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Savoy Theatre, 1914, p.3, (UM).

⁹⁸ *The Times*, 7 February 1914.

⁹⁹ Promptbook, pp. 63-64.

¹⁰⁰ Griffiths, p. 43.

¹⁰¹ Promptbook, p.69.

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- ¹⁰² Promptbook, p.71.
- ¹⁰³ *Athenaeum*, 14 February 1914.
- ¹⁰⁴ Barker had used a revolve stage to effect major set changes in his production of Shaw's *Androcles and the Lion* (St. James's, 1913)
- ¹⁰⁵ Kennedy, p.167.
- ¹⁰⁶ *The Times*, 7 February 1914.
- ¹⁰⁷ Barker, 'Preface', *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, p.vi.
- ¹⁰⁸ Barker, 'Preface', *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, p.ix
- ¹⁰⁹ Barker, 'Preface', *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, opposite p. 70.
- ¹¹⁰ T. Martin Wood, 'Norman Wilkinson's Decoration of "A Midsummer Night's Dream" at the Savoy Theatre.', *Studio*, 61, (1914), 301-307, (pp. 304-305).
- ¹¹¹ Armfield, n.p.
- ¹¹² J.L. Styan, *The Shakespeare Revolution*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), pp. 97-99.
- ¹¹³ Kennedy, p.161.
- ¹¹⁴ Salmon, p. 62.
- ¹¹⁵ *The Times*, 23 September 1912.
- ¹¹⁶ Laurence Senelick, *Gordon Craig's Moscow Hamlet: A Reconstruction* (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1982), pp.176-177.
- ¹¹⁷ Constantin Stanislavsky, *My Life in Art*, trans. by J.J. Robbins (London: Bles, 1924), p. 514.
- ¹¹⁸ *Daily Mail*, 7 February 1914.
- ¹¹⁹ *Observer*, 8 February 1914.
- ¹²⁰ *Punch*, 18 February 1914.
- ¹²¹ J.L. Styan, *Directors in Perspective: Max Reinhardt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p.58.
- ¹²² Ernst Stern, designs for Reinhardt's *Faust I and II*, (1909), (VATC).
- ¹²³ These were included in Wilkinson's bequest to the Courtauld. They are on permanent loan to the National Museums and Galleries, Merseyside.

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- ¹²⁴ Pratih Seogriwa – Chancellor of Baludewa (N.88.1762), Raden Lesmana Mandrakumora of Ngestino (N.88.1762), Man with Turban (N.88.1810), Proboe Salja, Vizer of Mandrake (N.88.1810), (NMGM).
- ¹²⁵ *Daily Mail*, 7 February 1914.
- ¹²⁶ *The Times*, 7 February 1914.
- ¹²⁷ Barker, ‘Preface’, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, p.ix.
- ¹²⁸ *The Times*, 7 February 1914.
- ¹²⁹ *Referee*, 8 February 1914.
- ¹³⁰ Desmond MacCarthy, “‘A Midsummer Night’s Dream’”, *New Statesman*, 2 (1914), 629-30.
- ¹³¹ *Punch*, 18 February 1914.
- ¹³² Salmon, p.61
- ¹³³ *Illustrated London News Supplement*, 11 April 1914.
- ¹³⁴ Salmon, p. 61.
- ¹³⁵ *Punch*, 18 February 1914.
- ¹³⁶ Kennedy, p.162.
- ¹³⁷ Kennedy, p.162.
- ¹³⁸ Promptbook, p.18.
- ¹³⁹ Promptbook, p.19.
- ¹⁴⁰ *Punch*, 18 February 1914.
- ¹⁴¹ Barker, ‘Preface’, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, p.viii.
- ¹⁴² ‘Savoy Theatre “A Midsummer Night’s Dream”’, *Telegraph*, 7 February 1914.
- ¹⁴³ Promptbook, p.38.
- ¹⁴⁴ Promptbook, p. 39.
- ¹⁴⁵ Walser’s design is reproduced in colour in *Art and the Stage in the Twentieth Century* ed. by Henning Rischbieter (Greenwich: Conn., New York Graphic Society, 1970), p. 29.
- ¹⁴⁶ *Punch*, 18 February 1914.
- ¹⁴⁷ John Palmer, ‘Mr Barker’s Dream’, *Saturday Review*, 14 February 1914.

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- ¹⁴⁸ *Sunday Times*, 8 February 1914.
- ¹⁴⁹ MacCarthy, *New Statesman*.
- ¹⁵⁰ *Stage*, 5 May 1932.
- ¹⁵¹ SMT. Minute Book 1, 23 April 1918.
- ¹⁵² Salmon, p. 437, Barker letter to William Bridges-Adams, 20 August 1919.
- ¹⁵³ Sally Beauman, *The Royal Shakespeare Company: A History of Ten Decades* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp. 68-92.
- ¹⁵⁴ *A Bridges-Adams Letter Book* ed. by Robert Speaight (Leicester: Society for Theatre Research, Blackfriars Press, 1971), p.32. Bridges-Adams, letter to J.C. Trewin, 23 January 1932
- ¹⁵⁵ *Birmingham Post*, 29 April 1932.
- ¹⁵⁶ Griffiths, p.120.
- ¹⁵⁷ *Pall Mall Gazette*, 20 April 1914.
- ¹⁵⁸ Patrick Kirwan Collection (T9), Scrapbook 1904-1909. This gives an episodic but useful picture of Kirwan's activities and includes playbills, reviews and photographs. (JHL).
- ¹⁵⁹ Daily Programme, *Shakespeare's England at Earl's Court* (London: W.H. Smith, 1912), p.18.
- ¹⁶⁰ Mazer, p.76.
- ¹⁶¹ Mazer, p.76
- ¹⁶² *Who Was Who 1941-1950*, 4th edn, 4 vols (London: Black, 1967), iv, p.854.
- ¹⁶³ Herbert Norris, foreword, *Costume and Fashion : The Evolution of European Dress through the Earlier Ages*, 3 vols (London: Dent, 1924), p. ix.
- ¹⁶⁴ Norris. *Shakespeare's England* (Pageant). *Earl's Court 1912*, (S.308-1988 to S. 313-1988 and S.260-1989), (VATC).
- ¹⁶⁵ *Sunday Times*, 12 April 1914.
- ¹⁶⁶ Michael Drayton, *Selections from the Poems of Michael Drayton*, ed. by A.H. Bullen (Chilworth, 1883), p.78.
- ¹⁶⁷ *Era*, 15 April 1914.
- ¹⁶⁸ *Sunday Times*, 12 April 1914.
- ¹⁶⁹ *Sunday Times*, 12 April 1914.

¹⁷⁰ *Sunday Times*, 12 April 1914.

¹⁷¹ Norris's subsequent career must have been influential in disseminating the use of historical authenticity in the design of sets and costumes. He lectured at East London College on historical costume and stagecraft for the University of London's Diploma in Dramatic Art. He also worked between 1919 and 1939 for the Board of Education and the Central School of Speech Training.

He wrote and illustrated:

Costume and Fashion: The Evolution of European Dress through the Earlier Ages, vol.1 (London: Dent, 1924).

Costume and Fashion: Senlac to Bosworth, vol. 2 (London: Dent, 1927).

Costume and Fashion: The Tudors, vol.3 (London: Dent, 1938).

He collaborated with three other directors at the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre. Bridges-Adams, *Hamlet* (1922), Iden Payne, *Henry V* (1937) and *Henry VIII* (1938) and Robert Atkins, *Richard II* (1944).

¹⁷² Speaight, p.14.

¹⁷³ Franklin J.Hildy, *Shakespeare at the Maddermarket : Nugent Monck and the Norwich Players* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1986), p.120.

¹⁷⁴ John Masefield, *William Shakespeare* (London: Williams and Northgate, 1911), p. 67.

¹⁷⁵ Ronald Hayman, *Gielgud* (London: Heineman,1971), pp. 20-21.

¹⁷⁶ Archive, (MT).

¹⁷⁷ 'Shakespeare's Town. Preparations for Stratford Festival', *Birmingham Gazette*, 20 April 1914.

¹⁷⁸ Stephen Orgel and Roy Strong, *Inigo Jones : The Theatre of the Stuart Court*, 2 vols, (London: Sotheby Parke Bernet, 1973), ii, fig. 80, 240 and fig. 82, 251.

¹⁷⁹ Orgel and Strong, fig. 66, 221.

¹⁸⁰ Hildy, p.42.

¹⁸¹ Albert Rothenstein changed his name to Rutherston shortly after the outbreak of the 1914-1918 war.

¹⁸² Hildy, p.35.

¹⁸³ 'Shakespeare at the Old Vic. "Midsummer Night's Dream" Effective Clowning', *Daily Telegraph*, 10 December 1929.

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- ¹⁸⁴ “‘A Midsummer Night’s Dream.’ by William Shakespeare’, *Observer*, 15 December 1929.
- ¹⁸⁵ Unidentified newspaper clipping, (*A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, Old Vic, 1929). (VATC).
- ¹⁸⁶ J.C. Trewin, *Shakespeare on the English Stage*, (London: Barrie and Rockcliff, 1964), p.117.
- ¹⁸⁷ *Observer*, 15 December 1929.
- ¹⁸⁸ Harley Granville-Barker, ‘Preface’, *The Players’ Shakespeare: A Midsummer Night’s Dream* by William Shakespeare (London: Ernest Benn, 1923), p. xi.
- ¹⁸⁹ Barker, ‘Preface’ *The Players’ Shakespeare*, p. xvi.
- ¹⁹⁰ E.K. Chambers, ‘Introduction’, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* by William Shakespeare (London: Blackie, 1923), pp.7-24 (p.13).
- ¹⁹¹ Arthur Quiller-Couch and John Dover Wilson, ‘Introduction’, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* by William Shakespeare (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1924), pp. vii-xxi (pp.ix-x).
- ¹⁹² Harcourt Williams, *Four Years at the Old Vic* (London: Putnam, 1935), p.12.
- ¹⁹³ The Publishers’ Advertisement, *The Players’ Shakespeare: A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, n.p.
- ¹⁹⁴ Prologue, (L15/8/F9-10), Romeo (L15/8/E39-40), (WL).
- ¹⁹⁵ Barker, ‘Preface’, *The Players’ Shakespeare*, p. xxvi.
- ¹⁹⁶ William Bridges-Adams, ‘Proscenium, Forestage and O’, *Drama*, 62 (1961), (p. 27).
- ¹⁹⁷ “‘A Midsummer Night’s Dream’ at Stratford. Mr. Baliol Holloway as Bottom’, *Birmingham Post* 30 March 1937
- ¹⁹⁸ Chambers, p.13.
- ¹⁹⁹ Prompt book, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, 1932), (71/21, SCL).
- ²⁰⁰ Susan Brock and Marian J. Pringle, *Theatre in Focus: The Stratford Memorial Theatre 1919-1945* (Cambridge: Chadwyck-Healey, 1984), p.42.
- ²⁰¹ *Stratford-upon-Avon Herald*, 29 April 1932.
- ²⁰² ‘Shakespeare Festival. “A Midsummer Night’s Dream”’, *Stratford-upon-Avon Herald*, 8 June 1934.

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- ²⁰³ “‘A Midsummer Night’s Dream’ Mr. N. Wilkinson’s Nocturne in Blue and Silver’, *Birmingham Post*, 29 April 1932.
- ²⁰⁴ *Stratford-upon-Avon Herald*, 29 April 1932.
- ²⁰⁵ “‘A Midsummer Night’s Dream’”, *Evening Standard*, 14 November 1923.
- ²⁰⁶ ‘Kingsway Theatre. “A Midsummer Night’s Dream”’, *The Times*, 14 November 1923.
- ²⁰⁷ *Leamington Chronicle*, 1 July 1932.
- ²⁰⁸ Roy Strong, *The Elizabethan Image: Painting in England 1540-1620* (London: Tate Gallery, 1969), p. 45.
- ²⁰⁹ William Bridges-Adams, *The Lost Leader* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1954), p.11.
- ²¹⁰ *Stage*, 5 May 1932.
- ²¹¹ ‘Kingsway Theatre. “A Midsummer Night’s Dream”’, *Daily Telegraph*, 14 November 1923.
- ²¹² *Stage*, 5 May 1932.
- ²¹³ Fabia Drake, *Blind Fortune* (London: Kimber, 1978) pp.100-101.
- ²¹⁴ Photographs, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (Stratford Memorial Theatre, 1937) (SCL).
- ²¹⁵ Bridges-Adams letter to Archibald Flower, 16 January 1932. Flower Family Papers, (SCL).
- ²¹⁶ Drake, p.100.
- ²¹⁷ Brock and Pringle, p. 47.
- ²¹⁸ *Observer*, 18 June 1933.
- ²¹⁹ Wilkinson letter to A. Flower, 5 June 1932 Flower Family Papers, (SCL)

CHAPTER 3

CLAUD LOVAT FRASER

‘[He achieved] the maximum of effect obtained by the slightest of means [...] a distillation of the essential spirit in simplified forms and broad masses of striking colour’.

P.G. Konody. 1921¹

A Starting Point

Claud Lovat Fraser had known some success as an artist, book illustrator and commercial designer before the outbreak of the 1914-1918 war. His aspirations as a stage designer were not realised until he designed the costumes and scenery for Nigel Playfair’s *As You Like It* (Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, 1919). After two performances at the Spring Festival in Stratford-upon-Avon the production was toured briefly at the Gaiety, Manchester and Palace Pier, Brighton, before a much delayed presentation at the Lyric, Hammersmith in April 1920. This production was an affirmation that the principles which had informed innovative productions of Shakespeare prior to the war, had survived the intervening years. It showed that those committed to the reappraisal of staging Shakespeare were evolving their own methods of interpreting the plays. Lovat Fraser’s simple, bold and vibrant scenic and costume designs together with Playfair’s fast paced production challenged the entrenched traditionalism of Shakespeare productions at Stratford-upon-Avon. It was this production of *As You Like It* that effectively marked the passing of the late nineteenth century values of staging Shakespeare at the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre.

The origin of this production was unusual as Lovat Fraser's preliminary designs were made without the collaboration of a producer and with no theatre in mind. A letter from the designer to his wife, Grace, shows that in July 1918 he already had 'the set by me for showing to folk'.² Grace Lovat Fraser's account of the production, given *In the Days of My Youth* (1970), indicates that Playfair 'had been very taken'³ when he had seen her husband's sketches prior to the producer's entry into theatre management, and had proposed staging a production when he found a theatre. His eagerness to work with Lovat Fraser's existing designs shows that he could see that they were adaptable and had potential in terms of his own views on Shakespeare production. As an actor Playfair had worked with Harley Granville Barker and had performed in a number of his productions. Three of these: *Anatol* (Little, 1911), *The Winter's Tale* (Savoy, 1912) and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Savoy, 1914) had been designed by Norman Wilkinson. Playfair, therefore, understood from the actor's point of view the advantage of Barker's staging methods, especially in terms of Shakespeare. As the producer of *As You Like It*, he adopted many of Barker's ideas. He achieved a fluid production using an uncut text, encouraged unaffected acting and introduced musicians who played English folk music on stage. This was facilitated by Lovat Fraser's creation of simple, uncomplicated sets and stylised costumes that emphasised the play's atmosphere of fairytale and artifice.

There is no record of why Lovat Fraser was drawn to this play as a choice for a speculative experiment in the design of a Shakespeare play. This preference was most likely guided by his own delight in the fantastic, for this is an essential aspect of much of his illustrative and other non-theatrical work. However, he was introduced to Edward Gordon Craig in 1912, through his friendship with Haldane Macfall, and this had a marked effect on his artistic style. He absorbed many of Craig's ideas into

his non-theatrical work. An example of his indebtedness can be seen in his illustration for *The Two Wizards* in his book of poetry *The Two Wizards and Other Songs* (1913) published under the *nom de plume* Richard Honeywood⁴, (illustration 52). A triangular shape dominates the composition and is reminiscent of Craig's 1901 designs for the costumes of the King and Queen in the *Masque of Love* (Coronet, 1901), (illustration 53). Lovat Fraser's response to *As You Like It* was highly individual but it resonates with references to Craig's early theatrical experiments. Given these circumstances, it seems certain that they influenced Lovat Fraser's interest in the possibilities of producing scenic designs and costumes, with similar elements of simplicity and stylisation which would convey an idealised world.

At the turn of the century, Craig staged Henry Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* (Coronet, 1901). This was followed by *The Masque of Love* and *Acis and Galatea* (Great Queen Street, 1902) by George Frederic Handel and John Gay, and then Laurence Houseman's *Bethlehem* (Imperial, 1902). Cary Mazer points out, in *Shakespeare Refashioned: Elizabethan Plays on Edwardian Stage* (1980), that all Craig's productions were 'musical vehicles [...] requiring a "fantastic" treatment.'⁵ Craig eschewed any sense of realism suggested by their pastoral settings, in favour of creating a mood. These were evoked with simplicity, using such devices as children distributing pink and white balloons, to express the mood of a midsummer day in *Acis and Galatea*. The indigo night of the first scene of *Bethlehem* revealed shepherds in a pool of light, their flock represented by sacks filled with wood shavings inside a sheep-pen of Essex sheep hurdles. These productions, the first three with Martin Shaw for the Purcell Society, were short lived and seen by comparatively few. They were not devised for theatres but presented in halls where

Craig was able to effect experiments with alternative staging and lighting. He shaped his productions by altering the content of the scores or texts and held extensive rehearsals using amateur singers and actors. All this was much removed from the realities of commercial theatre, but informed reviewers recognised the innovative achievement of Craig's stylised effects. Some, including Macfall, saw the potential for staging Shakespeare: 'does it not point out the way for which we have looked so long - the way in which we may see Shakespeare and Maeterlinck in all their poetry?'⁶ W.B. Yeats commented that Craig had, in *Dido and Aeneas*, 'created an ideal country where everything was possible, even speaking in verse, or speaking to music, [...] and I would like to see Stratford-on-Avon decorate its Shakespeare with like scenery'.⁷ *As You Like It*, with its fantastical plot, elements of courtly and pastoral romance, integral poems and songs and conscious artifice, offered Lovat Fraser similar elements to those that had engaged Craig. Craig's production of *Much Ado About Nothing* (Imperial, 1903), would have suggested possibilities in the simplicity of staging Shakespeare with the use of limited settings. These were centred on a plain colonnade with the use of a blue cloth to indicate the garden and grey curtains for indoor scenes. This production, although influential, was circumscribed by the conventional approach of Ellen Terry and the realities of London theatre. Lovat Fraser's designs for *As You Like It* owe more to the simplicity and cohesive mood of Craig's other early work.

Craig inspired Lovat Fraser's fascination with the woodcuts of Joseph Crawhall. In his biography *Joseph Crawhall: The Newcastle Wood Engraver 1821-1896* (1972), Charles S. Felver shows that in turn Craig's woodcuts were indebted to the work of Crawhall, through the work in the same medium by William Nicholson.⁸ Macfall in *The Book of Lovat* (1923) indicates that Craig's woodcuts for *The Page*

(1898) were pivotal to Lovat Fraser's realisation of the broadsheets and chapbooks he issued at *The Sign of the Flying Fame*, 'and Gordon Craig, in "The Page," had revealed the living application, for he had glorified it and made it a thing of rare charm.'⁹ In 1911, Craig applied his thoughts on woodcuts to those of scenic design. Writing as Felix Urban in *The Mask*, he published eight fifteenth-century wood engravings and examined the effect of the absence of detail in their backgrounds. He suggests 'that nowhere else are such good lessons to be found.'¹⁰ The influence of this technique can be found in Lovat Fraser's illustrative work where the subject matter dominates the central ground. He either situates his subject on a low horizon, so that a single coloured sky forms the background, or places a large uncoloured cloud behind the subject as seen in the title page for *The Luck of the Bean-Rows*, (illustration 54). This approach is also apparent in Lovat Fraser's scenic designs for *As You Like It* as exemplified in the scene near Oliver's house (illustration 55). A review in the *Brighton Herald* aptly described this as 'just a sky and a wooden fence'.¹¹ It is framed with stylised trees, but has similarities to the backcloth used by Craig for *Acis and Galatea*. This he described as 'an enormous white cloud, with a minute line of landscape at the bottom and a hint of blue sky around the edge.'¹² A photograph in Christopher Innes's *Edward Gordon Craig: A Vision of Theatre* (1998) of the shepherds in *Bethlehem* shows the simplicity of this scene as they sit huddled besides a fence.¹³ It is another example of Lovat Fraser's indebtedness to Craig.

The few examples of Lovat Fraser's early experiments in theatrical design also point to the influence of Craig. These date from 1913 and were intended for *The Three Students*, Macfall's un-staged play about Omar Khayyam and are reproduced in *The Book of Lovat*.¹⁴ The scene designs, with their use of pillars and curtains to

effect simple staging and harmonious colouring, are characteristic of Craig's insistence on a visual unity and mood achieved by stylisation and suggestion. The use of a limited palette to enhance these effects is typical of Lovat Fraser. The two coloured sketches for Act 2 'The Seat of Judgment', and Act 3 scene 2, 'The Great Arras', show that the designer intended to stage these with the use of two permanent pillars to support, first a screen or cloth of pale blue grey squares on a white background, and then a single curtain in a heavy brocade or stencilled material, of black, white, russet and ochre, draped towards the left. Both create a sense of place with an economy of staging especially 'The Great Arras' (illustration 56). Here, Lovat Fraser's palette suggests a visual unity between the characters and the setting. It is not clear whether the drawing of Aboo Ali for Act I was intended as a costume design. It conveys the nature of the character in the strength of its lines and the colour reiterates, in stronger tones, the palette of the two scenes. The overall effect is generalised and would be more suited to a book illustration. Indeed, it has much in common with Lovat Fraser's broadly realised illustrations for *Pirates* (1915). As such it shows that he was yet to develop an assured and individual signature for costume design

A fundamental tenet of Lovat Fraser's work was his use of colour. He acknowledged this when he wrote humorously on a postcard from Rome: 'I am a dull orange, but there! That comes of being a colourist.'¹⁵ His sense of colour was individualistic but was unequivocally informed by his response to the visual arts of the early twentieth century. He had little formal training as an artist. A brief time spent studying under Walter Sickert, at the Westminster School of Art, must have done little more than confirm the difference in their approach.¹⁶ Sickert's narrow tonal range and preference for impasto oils, has little in common with his pupil's

instinctive economy of style and gaiety of colour. Lovat Fraser's approach to his subject matter is essentially light-hearted, often idealistic and stylised whilst Sickert's best works achieve a psychological dimension in the urban realism of such subjects as *Jack the Ripper's Bedroom* (Manchester Art Gallery, 1912) and *Ennui* (Tate Britain, c.1914). One of Lovat Fraser's sketchbooks entitled *Still Nothing*, records his visit to the *Manet and the Post Impressionists* Exhibition at the Grafton Galleries in November 1910.¹⁷ It confirms that he was drawn to such artists as Maurice Vlaminck, Henri Matisse and Paul Gauguin, whose work displayed both an intense use of colour and a strong sense of design. Another sketchbook, *Doing the National Gallery*, dated 1911, gives an insight into his eclectic theatre visits with thumbnail sketches of Beerbohm Tree as Wolsey in *Henry VIII* (His Majesty's, 1910), H.B. Irving in the last act of *Princess Clementina* (Queen's, 1911), the slave in Max Reinhardt's *Sumurun* (Savoy, 1911) and an acrobatic dancer at the Hippodrome.¹⁸

It was Lovat Fraser's visits to the Ballets Russes that provided inspiration for some of the paintings in his first one man exhibition, held at his studio in Roland Gardens, in February 1913. There are no known examples of these but an enthusiastic review in *Hearth and Home* gives a sense of his use of colour. 'Mr. Lovat Fraser is as resolved as Matisse to show his impression of things [...]. The result is that his pictures haunt us like some of the colour schemes of Bakst; indeed, his presentations of the Russian ballet are finer than the Russian originals. The lyric splendour of his colouring is simply a revelation.'¹⁹ This enthusiastic endorsement of his work may be partial, as he worked as the newspaper's artist under the editorship of Frank Harris. It does, however, give an indication of his response to contemporary influences and demonstrates that his inspiration, especially in the use of colour,

extended beyond that of Craig who, in fact, had a strong distaste for the Ballets Russes. This had been expressed in the *Mask* under the pseudonym of John Balance. He argued that the Russians had ‘borrowed an artificiality from a blasé people and have elaborated it.’ He passed scathing judgements on Bakst and Benois, describing the work of the former as ‘vulgar’ and the latter as ‘another painter who without caution rushed in.’²⁰ Lovat Fraser’s work shows that he had no such reservations and that his visits to the Ballets Russes encouraged his experimentation with both form and colour.

An Idealised World: *As You Like It* (Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, 1919)

The circumstances that lead to Lovat Fraser's only Shakespearean stage designs appearing at the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre are worth consideration. By 1919, Archibald Flower, the Chairman of the Theatre Governors, clearly believed that change was both necessary and desirable. His attempts to introduce fresh and modern approaches to Shakespeare by inviting Playfair to present *As You Like It* and J.B. Fagan *Twelfth Night* (Court, 1918) at the first Spring Festival after the end of the war, signifies that he was aware that the theatre at Stratford had become a bastion of parochial traditionalism. Opened in 1879, this theatre had ensured a home for the performance of Shakespeare during annual seasons. Since 1886 the plays had been presented, with few exceptions, by Frank Benson whose touring company commanded local loyalties. Sally Beaman shows in *The Royal Shakespeare Company: A History of Ten Decades* (1982) that Flower was aware of innovative productions of Shakespeare and had made tentative attempts to introduce new ideas from as early as 1907.²¹ These included invitations to William Poel to present *Measure for Measure* (Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, 1908) and *Troilus and Cressida* (Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, 1913). As shown in Chapter 2 of this thesis, Patrick Kirwan introduced Stratford audiences to his own interpretation of Elizabethan staging when he presented the Festival in 1914.²² Benson ran his last Stratford Festival in 1916, which included a celebration of the Tercentenary. After this the theatre closed for the remainder of the 1914-1918 war.

The appointment of Norman Wilkinson as a Governor of the theatre in April 1918 indicates that Flower had every intention of continuing a policy of introducing new people and ideas. Playfair's invitation to present *As You Like It* was clearly another aspect of this strategy. A sense of Flower's manoeuvres to oust Benson and establish

a company with a modern approach to Shakespeare can be discerned in the various versions of events that surround this invitation to Playfair's company. In *The Story of the Lyric Theatre* (1925), Playfair diplomatically states 'we were invited to come and give three performances at the Birthday Festival in 1919 - one of "Candida" and two of "As You Like It." Very sensible of the honour that was being done us, we naturally accepted'.²³ Lovat Fraser's diary entry reveals previously unavailable information. He describes a more fractious situation: 'To the [Lyric] Theatre in afternoon. [...] Flower is discussing arrangements with Lytton and Nigel. Awful scenes'.²⁴ J.L. Styan in *The Shakespeare Revolution: Criticism and Performance in the Twentieth Century* (1977) makes the unlikely claim that 'at the invitation of Sir Frank Benson, Playfair's company was among those that opened the 1919 Birthday celebrations at Stratford'.²⁵ More to the point, Lovat Fraser writes that Playfair had been led to believe by Benson that Flower was looking beyond the immediate necessity of staging the Spring Festival. He understood that: 'it is to resolve itself into a competition between them [Fagan's company] and us for the honour of always doing the Festival'.²⁶ Neither producer received this invitation but the idea of the competition is plausible as Flower had dispensed with Benson by August 1919 and established a permanent company at the theatre under William Bridges-Adams. Playfair had originally intended to stage *As You Like It* after a run of *Abraham Lincoln* by John Drinkwater, which had transferred to the Lyric from Barry Jackson's Birmingham Repertory Theatre. The play opened in February 1919 and its unforeseen success caused the postponement of the beleaguered Shakespearean production. Circumstances at the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, and the Lyric, were apposite for an invitation.

Lovat Fraser's designs challenged the visual values that had been associated with the play for almost eighty years. These had become entrenched at the Stratford where *As You Like It* was one of the standard plays in Benson's repertoire. A partisan assumption that the play was set in Warwickshire's Forest of Arden, was fostered by the traditional use of a stuffed stag in the hunting scenes. This animal had been shot in Charlecote Park where Shakespeare had supposedly poached deer from Sir Thomas Lucy. It had been used to great effect when the play was presented at the opening of the Memorial in 1879. 'The deer was afterwards stuffed and kept as a property [...] to be used always in this play.'²⁷ Playfair's reappraisal of the play, aligned to Lovat Fraser's confident scenic designs and costumes, was inevitably disconcerting for some individuals. Stratford-upon-Avon was after all, a small, traditional country town seeking a sense of continuity after the disruptions of the 1914-1918 war. Playfair and his designer both recount incidents where they were left in no doubt of a hostile response from individuals who may have seen or possibly just heard rumours of their production. The producer comments that: 'people turned their backs' on him at his hotel.'²⁸ Lovat Fraser was confronted by a group of ladies at his hotel who 'raged like lionesses' one stating 'we know his Arden and his meadows.'²⁹ There is evidence to suggest that such reactions were not widespread and that Flower was not alone in considering Benson's productions outmoded. Indeed, by 1914, the local paper had found much to criticise in Benson's scenic presentation of *As You Like It* 'except for one hideous and worn cloth, they were almost tolerable. The lighting of the sunrise [...] was, if anything worse than usual.'

³⁰ A year later censure was directed at Benson himself. 'Mr Benson remains faithful to some debatable bits of business, as to when he comfortably munches an apple to the "Seven Ages".'³¹ Lovat Fraser observed a positive reaction of the audience to the

new production on the first night. 'The audience's breath went in a gasp on the first curtain and didn't return till it fell.'³² Critics - an unfamiliar phenomenon at the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre - were divided over the production and in particular the visual realisation. The strongest response came from Benson. Recalling the evening in *Mainly Players: Bensonian Memories* (1926), his wife Constance expressed her bewilderment by observing that the production was 'not the *As You Like It* of Shakespeare's fancy.'³³ Lovat Fraser writes that 'it proved too much for F.R.B [Benson] the rational sensible representation of his bard and he left markedly during the first act.'³⁴ His departure eloquently symbolised the passing of the old order.

Lovat Fraser drew on two very different sources for his visual reinterpretation of the scenic designs for *As You Like It*. Both have strong elements of stylisation and he fused these into an innovative re-appraisal of the staging required for the play. He identified his sources as a fifteenth-century missal in the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, Paris and an illuminated English manuscript showing Lydgate presenting his book to the Earl of Salisbury. In themselves, these represent highly stylised and idealised images and interestingly reflect the ambivalence of Shakespeare's suggestion of both English and French settings for the play. The realisation of the scenic designs, however, was informed by Lovat Fraser's interest in Benjamin Pollock's toy theatres – an enthusiasm he shared with Craig, who using the *nom de plume* Edward Edwardovitch, described them as 'the best Theatre in London' and urged readers of *The Mask* to acquire one.³⁵ In a long, detailed letter written to the *Observer*, Lovat Fraser wrote that he considered that 'the period of the play is arbitrary'.³⁶ However, he followed the convention established by William Charles Macready's production of *As You Like It* (Drury Lane, 1842-3) of basing the costumes on the fashions of the

fifteenth century and in identifying tapestries as another source of inspiration considered that, '[they] have preserved to us the gaiety, the freshness, and the fantasy of an age which otherwise in this country would have left little trace of its form and character'.³⁷ It was characteristic of the designer that he should turn to books and tapestries for his art was informed by his love and knowledge of old books, printed materials such as ballads and broadsides, and even fabrics that caught his eye. Indeed a diary entry made during his visit to Italy in the spring of 1914 shows that he had scant regard for Renaissance painting: 'the Italian painters appeal to me not one jot [...]. Every corner is filled up with unimportant detail, everywhere is overladen.'³⁸ This was exactly what Lovat Fraser avoided in his approach to *As You Like It*. His wife gives a succinct summary of his approach to realising his ideas: 'His method was to steep himself in a period, and then to design inventively within its basic conventions. His designs were true to the spirit of a period, but never copied its styles [...] they always had freshness and individuality of invention'.³⁹ He justified his choice of vibrant colours by arguing that in the early years of the fifteenth century 'the colour of the costumes were uncompromisingly vivid; there were no half measures'.⁴⁰ It is evident, however, that the jewel-like colours of missals, tapestries and illuminated manuscripts reflected his own love of colour and he developed this in terms of his concept of the play. He exploited colour to create a sense of unity that emphasised elements of the plot and gave the idealised world of *As You Like It* a visual cohesion. The boldness of his vision liberated the play from the pictorial realism of the nineteenth century.

Lovat Fraser considered his design work for *As You Like It* as a challenge to what he regarded as 'shockingly slipshod productions, that is the great jungle that I have to cut my way out of now'.⁴¹ His approach was pragmatic, as he did not seek to change

existing stage spaces but to work within their constraints. The programme for the production of *As You Like It* at the Lyric gives some indication as to how the presentation of the play was organised. As it has not been possible to trace a programme for the two performances at the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, this must suffice as the best evidence as to how the play was arranged. A note under the cast lists states that ‘the scene lies near Oliver’s House, afterwards partly in the Usurper’s Court and partly in the Forest of Arden’.⁴² This confirms Grace Lovat Fraser’s statement that ‘there were only two full stage sets – the Court of the usurping Duke and the Forest of Arden. The first scene of Act I was played in front of a small fence, similar to that used by Craig for the opening of *Bethlehem* and a blue act-drop which lifted to reveal the Duke’s Court.’⁴³ She was, of course, recalling the production fifty years after the event, so although she describes a simplified version of illustration 55, it is likely that this design with its frame of stylised foliage would have been used. In the event, the stark simplicity of the opening of the play served to focus attention on the text and characters rather than their surroundings.

A photograph of Lovat Fraser’s model for the exterior of Duke Frederick’s court (illustration 57) provides evidence of his design for this scene.⁴⁴ His use of the symmetrical columns for the cloisters and straight lines for the fairytale buildings beyond the wall, are a contrast to the random placing of the stylised tree trunks and foliage he used for his design of the Forest of Arden shown in illustration 58. It is a reminder that, at the beginning of the play, the values of Duke Frederick differ from those who seek the sanctuary of the forest. Playfair’s description of Duke Frederick’s court closely resembles the photograph. It gives an insight into his innovative staging of the wrestling scene.

In front of the stage was a cloister, forming a sort of false or second proscenium. Under it, in shadow, stood the Court. Beyond was a brilliant sunlit triangle of grass, where they wrestled; behind, a high wall, over which the villagers watched. Thus the wrestlers were half out of sight, continually appearing and disappearing behind the spectators.⁴⁵

Playfair's identification of his designer's use of a 'false or second proscenium' is interesting. Innes points out that Craig had considered the use of a double proscenium for his production of *Bethlehem*. 'At one point Craig intended to use a double proscenium, with an upper stage behind a row of arched windows above the ordinary acting area.'⁴⁶ Innes does not indicate whether this was the adjustable proscenium envisaged by Hubert von Herkomer but comments that the idea was rejected on grounds of economy. The photograph of Lovat Fraser's set indicates that his proscenium was a piece of fixed scenery, intended to reinforce the artifice of the events and not transform the scale of the set. It did, however, create a flexible playing space, as the stool placed in front of the windows indicates that the forestage was used as the interior of the court from where the Duke Frederick, Rosalind, Celia and the court could view the wrestling match. This reduction of an idea of a second proscenium to its most simplified and practical form exemplifies Lovat Fraser's approach to stage design.

His model for the Forest of Arden shows that there was much justification in the claim made in the *Birmingham Post* that: 'the scenes are, quite simply, no more than the penny plain outlines of the children's toy theatre of forty years ago.'⁴⁷ This indicates that the set would have been constructed with the use of side wings which are a familiar feature of the toy theatre. The stylised, slender silver and black trunks of the birch trees and the loops of green and purple foliage that frame the proscenium are created by bold cut out shapes. Grace Lovat Fraser recalls that 'the Forest set remained until the end of the play with a few easily handled additions to mark a

change of place.’⁴⁸ One of these must have been the unequivocally two dimensional pink cottage shown in illustration 59. This would have been used as a backdrop behind the permanent forest set to denote Celia’s cottage, so establishing a different part of the forest to that occupied by Duke Senior and his followers. Playfair used it to ensure continuity of action as he was able to dispense with the forest lords for 4.2, as well as the ubiquitous stuffed stag. The song ‘What shall he have that killed the deer?’ was sung off-stage ‘while Rosalind and Celia listened alone on the stage in front of Lovat’s stylised little pink cottage.’⁴⁹ The subdued use of washes in illustration 55 and illustration 59 indicate that Lovat Fraser intended his scenic designs to provide a subtle sense of location that did not detract from the action or the mood of the play. Critical opinion was divided concerning its effect. The *Observer* considered that the Forest of Arden had been reduced to ‘three sickly trees on the edge of an open field.’⁵⁰ A reviewer of the Brighton production expressed the general consensus, considering that the scenes were ‘completely satisfying because they are neither realistic nor symbolic, neither too ornate nor too severe.’⁵¹ It was not until *As You Like It* was produced at the Lyric that Lovat Fraser’s technical achievement, in terms of Shakespeare, was identified. ‘The scenes are shifted with such incredible rapidity that the play scarcely takes longer to act than it would have done in Shakespeare’s time.’⁵² The stylised court of Duke Frederick and that of the forest reiterated the artifice of the play and provided a unifying framework. They were indeed places where Orlando could fight Charles the wrestler and declare, ‘Yes, I beseech your grace./ I am not yet well breathed. (1.2.205-206) and Orlando and Rosalind could fall in love at first sight. A fantastical wood could accommodate Rosalind’s sustained disguise as Ganymede, Orlando’s encounter with the lioness and the timely religious conversion of Duke Frederick at the end of the play. ‘His

crown bequeathing to his banished brother, / And all their lands restored to them again / That were with him exiled.’(5.4.161-163). These scenic designs gave Playfair the opportunity to present a fast moving and uninterrupted version of the play, where there was little time to dwell on such implausible occurrences. Lovat Fraser had created a setting that was undeniably his own, but one where he could achieve the same idealised effects as Craig. These had been described in the *Saturday Review*. ‘Mr Craig desires us to contemplate his productions as one looks at a picture: it is something external to us and to be viewed as from a distance.’⁵³

Lovat Fraser recorded his thoughts about the production of *As You Like It* in his diary after his return to London. Most of this entry is concerned with the demands of rehearsing and mounting the production in a very limited time. One comment, however, is close to the moment of performance. It gives an important indication that his ideas were similar to those of Craig.

From the first moment when the golden wreathed musicians played before the curtain till the last scene of all the Masque of Hymen, [...] the whole thing realised absolutely my conception of the comedy. I thought it wholly beautiful, national and a series of missal scenes, which I had been aiming at fulfilling.⁵⁴

Clearly, the designer chose to ignore the darker side of Arden and to use the idea of the missals and tapestries as a means of celebrating the play’s life affirming qualities. This was achieved through the joyful invention of his costumes that were realised in a basic colour scheme of black, white, scarlet, emerald and saffron. This established a visual unity and cohesion that firmly placed the production in the realms of an artificial pastoral. In doing so he challenged the supposed naturalism of the pictorial that had dominated Benson’s interpretation of *As You Like It*. The impact of his bright colours and uncompromising patterns on the costumes, caused the *Observer* to comment that ‘Mr. Fraser takes his good where he finds it, and a pack of cards

(Hymen was dressed as the Knave of Hearts), a medieval missal and a painting by Mr. Gertler and Mr Wolmark seem to serve his purpose equally well.⁵⁵ Anxious to refute this claim, Lovat Fraser wrote a reply in which he detailed his consistent references to the silhouettes, styles, and colours of the fifteenth century. This claim of absolute fidelity to his sources was disingenuous for his costume designs for *As You Like It* demonstrate his interpretive skills in terms of a sense of the theatrical demands of the play. His ability to manipulate a colour scheme as a means of creating a homogeneous group of distinct individuals is particularly evident in this production and serves to heighten the sense of an idealised world.

The designer gave a visual expression to the restrictive values of the court and the freedom of the forest, by making a distinction between the costumes for the court of Duke Frederick and the followers of the banished Duke Senior. As shown in illustration 60, Lovat Fraser's designs established a basic stylised version of the fashions of the early fifteenth century for the usurper's court with simple short, sleeved tunics tied at the waist and tight-fitting parti-coloured hose. It is apparent that although each costume is individual, the retainers unequivocally belong to the court. Each costume is a variant of the dominant colour scheme of black, white, scarlet, emerald, and saffron with an emblematic badge placed at the top left of the tunic to signify allegiance. These designs avoid uniformity but create a sense of cohesion and this theme is reiterated in the costume design for the Pages shown in the same illustration. They wear a further variant of the colour scheme, although scarlet and saffron predominate and bold stripes and a checked pattern are used on respective tunics. The individuality of each musician, page and retainer is further suggested by a variety of headwear. The former sport laurel and flower wreaths; a page wears a jaunty feathered hat and the retainer a black hooded cowl.

Other characters clearly belonged to the court of Duke Frederick. The costume design for Charles the wrestler shows a quartered tabard of scarlet, emerald and white with the Duke's emblem, worn over a black tunic and hose with one white and one scarlet leg. His head and shoulders are covered by a black cowl and he wears a soft emerald hat with a white border (illustration 61). His puny physique is hardly that of a wrestler and this would suggest that from the outset of the play Playfair intended that the audience should regard the ensuing events in less than realistic terms. The characters in the majority of Lovat Fraser's designs have generic facial features but his early foray into caricature, as shown in *Six Caricatures* (1910), is evident in his design for Playfair's costume as Touchstone. The jester, drawn with the features and figure of Playfair, wears the insignia and colours of Touchstone's former master. The costume suggests the jester's ambivalent feelings towards his arrival in the forest. 'Ay, now I am in Ardenne; the more fool I. When I was at home I was in a better place.' (2.4.14-15). Lovat Fraser produced one of his most flamboyant and exuberant male costumes for the minor character of Le Beau. The design suggests an elevated status and all the vanity of the supremely fashion conscious. Le Beau is dressed in a tailored high-necked, fitted tunic and tight hose of scarlet with saffron trimmings and pointed shoes. Numerous long ribbons of slashed fabric trail from each elbow of the tunic. His authority is confirmed by the chain of office worn over the tunic and a slender staff of scarlet and saffron. His appearance would have been a telling contrast to Orlando and the wrestler and would have reinforced the fantastical element of the production. The designer's use of the authentic detail of the period is evident in the numerous elaborate hats and headwear that further define character and status. Le Beau's large scarlet, turban-shaped head dress covered in pieces of petal-shaped material is a spectacular example

(illustration 62). The nature of Duke Frederick's costume is a matter for conjecture as there are no surviving designs. However, both Dukes were played by the same actor, William J. Rea. It is just possible that Lovat Fraser took this opportunity to emphasise this duality with a more elaborate but darker coloured version of the costume worn by Duke Senior. However, it would be wrong to assume any real significance in this other than the need for expediency. The doubling of this part was in all probability due to the unavailability of male actors so soon after the end of the war. This also necessitated the casting of some women as forest lords and possibly influenced Arthur Bliss's choice of a female quartet of musicians.

Lovat Fraser's designs for the woodland lords showed that indeed, 'Men of great worth resorted to this forest' (4.4.153). These costumes although more individualistic, so suggesting a greater freedom in the forest, retain much of the richness and style of those of the court. They conform to Lovat Fraser's description of 'rougher fashions of contemporary country life',⁵⁶ inasmuch as the hose are essentially loose but bound with strips of different coloured cloth. The former status of these lords is confirmed by their fuller patterned tunics with heavier 'dagged' and draped sleeves. The designer continued the balance in his colour scheme with slightly less strident shades to reflect the rustic aspect of Arden, but this is a slight concession to rural life and has little suggestion of hardship. A design showing three forest lords, shows two in white tunics with differing stencilled patterns, wearing respectively light emerald and pale scarlet loose hose. The third lord wears a saffron tunic with black leggings, (illustration 63). Amiens's costume reflects that of the other members of the exiled court. His tunic, worn with a blue cowl, is of a simpler cut but is scarlet and patterned with black circles and semi-circles. It is worn with white loose hose and bound with saffron coloured cloth. In keeping with his

character, Jacques' costume is subdued. His over-tunic of pale pink has a pattern of stylised flowers and full 'dagged' sleeves, lined in black. This is worn with a black cowl, and black tunic, under-tunic and hose. His scarlet boots with emerald turnovers link him to the overall colour scheme. Duke Senior's costume is similar to that of his followers inasmuch as he wears hose bound with material but his rank is denoted by a fuller and more opulent over garment in pale lemon, with heavy draped sleeves. In continuation of the colour scheme and perhaps as a whimsical acknowledgement of his forest dukedom, it is patterned with simple scarlet and emerald flowers encircled in emerald.

Orlando's first costume confirms Lovat Fraser's systematic use of style and colour to define status in the male characters. The youngest son of Sir Rowland de Bois wears a fitted tunic of plain mid-blue with heavy pleated sleeves. Its simplicity and lack of decorative pattern supports his claim that Oliver 'bars me the place of a brother' (1.1.18) and shows that Orlando has no allegiance to the court. It connects him closely with his servant Adam, who wears a less tailored tunic in the same mid-blue with a black cowl. Two designs exist for Orlando's second dress. They are not dissimilar and both suggest an elevated status in terms of Lovat Fraser's designs. The tightly fitted over-tunic is white but heavily patterned with a circular motif. The under-tunic has deep red and white striped sleeves and the fitted hose are of black and white stripes. The second design (illustration 64) presents a more cohesive picture with a black hooded cowl, trimmed with a red border and a black and red hat. White gloves are indicated, bordered with red and black and finished with a white fringe.⁵⁷ This costume is consistent with the elaborate effects of other costumes worn for the Masque of Hymen. It would, therefore, seem likely that it was intended that Orlando should wear it for this scene.

The costumes created an idealised world that differentiated between the court and the forest but, in keeping with this artifice, made only a slight concession to the realities of Arden. In several cases the style of these costumes had to provide an adequate disguise for the number of women who were cast as pages and forest lords. This included the female string quartet of two solo violins, a viola and cello led by Fanny Wadsworth, the wife of the painter Edward Wadsworth. They were dressed as male musicians and presumably wore the costumes shown in illustration 60. Both the designer and producer insisted on the authenticity of the male appearance of the women: ‘One little Gaiety lady, I remember, thought she was going to go on the stage as a sort of Principal Boy; [...] she heard Lovat and me saying that she looked too young, and must wear a beard.’⁵⁸ However, the costume designs suggest an androgynous appearance and this can only have added to the sense of artifice that the designer aimed to capture in the actual production.

A photograph in the *Tatler* of Athene Seyler dressed as Ganymede shows that the designer dressed her in appropriate and convincing male attire, so following Norman Wilkinson’s precedent for Cesario in Barker’s *Twelfth Night*. The costume obscures her femininity; her hair is hidden under the hood of a cowl that is of sufficient length to conceal her breasts, while the skirt of the tunic and loose trousers tucked into boots obscure her hips and any suggestion of shapely legs (illustration 65). All this was in marked contrast to Ganymede’s traditional attire that often emphasised the very attributes it was intended to conceal. This costume design gave a new plausibility to the relationship between Ganymede and Orlando as Rosalind had indeed adopted a disguise ‘That I did suit me all points like a man’ (1.3.115). Playfair and Seyler exploited the opportunity to reconsider the interpretation of Rosalind. The *Birmingham Daily Post* caught the mood of Seyler’s performance: ‘as

Rosalind [she] was full of high spirits, and her comedy with Orlando was gracious and firm in the handling.’⁵⁹ One reviewer saw nothing appropriate or consistent in Rosalind’s disguise, declaring that it ‘suggests Arctic exploration, a Russian ballet, or anything rather than a simple old English forester.’⁶⁰ His incomprehension seems a determined rebuttal of Lovat Fraser’s redefinition of Ganymede and its consequential effect on the interpretation of the play.

The designer’s approach to the female costumes was less cohesive and more individualistic than that of the male characters. The designs vary in artistic style and show that he was still experimenting with techniques to express the mood of the play. Only one design survives for a costume worn at the beginning of the play and this differs in artistic execution from his other designs. In contrast to his usual fluency of line and bold application of colour, the design for Celia’s first costume is tentative and restrained (illustration 66). It lacks the confidence of his other work and shows an attention to historical accuracy which suggests that it was copied from one of his sources. The soft, rather subdued pink material, covered in a repeat stencil motif of a blue encircled flower, is consistent with his colour scheme for the female costumes but the final costume has two important modifications that reflect how the designer developed his ideas.⁶¹ The original drawing shows that he intended Celia’s costume to be made of a heavy satin or velvet material with deep ‘ermine’ fur linings to the ‘dagged’ sleeves. In the event he rejected such materials, which were the staples of nineteenth century stock costumes, in favour of unbleached calico and brightly coloured furnishing materials. These replicated the drapery in the missals and tapestries to the designer’s satisfaction. Lovat Fraser had originally intended to use appliqué to create the elaborate patterns on the court costumes. In the event economic expediency, on the part of Playfair and the Hammersmith management,

necessitated the costume and properties being made in the designer's studio by his wife and a band of helpers which included cast members. The decision was made 'to substitute stencilling, heightened by a certain amount of hand painting.'⁶² This process was not unusual, in itself. Charles Ricketts had, for instance, used it to realise many of his costumes. Here, it was intended to suggest the richly patterned brocades worn by the court but the vivid contrasting colours created an unfamiliar effect. The stencils used on Rosalind's and Celia's wedding dresses are particularly striking. Given the evidence of illustration 67 it is unsurprising that some reviewers, including the *Times* considered that the designs were 'perhaps not altogether unaffected by the Omega style'.⁶³ Despite Lovat Fraser's claim to the historical authenticity of his costumes, it is evident that in realisation they reflected both the fifteenth and the twentieth century.

This is borne out by Grace Lovat Fraser who writes that that her husband 'was never afraid to take such liberties as he thought needful for the effect that he wished to make'.⁶⁴ This is even more apparent in the costume design for Phoebe's and that of Audrey's wedding dress. The designer's fifteenth-century primary sources would have been of little help in terms of appropriate attire for either, and any reference to the period seems limited to the high waists used for each costume. Phoebe's costume, with its suggestion of Greek drapery, alludes to that of a classical nymph and reflects the restoration of her pastoral romance with Silvius at the end of the play. There is no surviving design for Silvius's costume, but it is likely that it in some way mirrored that of his shepherdess. Lovat Fraser's rationale for the design of Audrey's wedding dress is less obvious, unless it is intended to indicate the mismatch in her union with Touchstone and her naivety concerning the fashions of the court, (illustration 68). The rich pattern of her pink over-gown overlaid with black circular stencils suggests

a connection with the court, but its scarlet raised shoulder inserts and loose half sleeves are not of the fifteenth century. They do confer an element of sophistication to an otherwise simple costume that makes reference to Audrey's country origins. The designer's choices were undoubtedly intended to reflect the status of Phoebe and Audrey, for they are a marked contrast to the wedding dresses of Rosalind and Celia. However, the central colour scheme for the production is reiterated in the detail of Phoebe's boots, Audrey's over-gown and sleeves and her stylised bouquet. Neither design reflected the attention to the style of the fifteenth century that the designer had shown elsewhere. No doubt this would have contributed to the charge that the costumes were not consistent with any particular period.

The lack of a prompt-book and photographs of the actual production mean that there is limited information concerning Playfair's staging of *As You Like It*. Reviewers were on the whole preoccupied with its visual impact and the producer makes modest claims concerning his own contribution. They do, however, give a useful context to the little that is known. 'My endeavour, when doing something new, has always been to do it as modestly and unobtrusively as possible – to let it depend on its intrinsic value rather than its novelty for appreciation.'⁶⁵ According to Lovat Fraser's diary, some, if not all the production had been filmed. 'To the Marble Arch "Pavilion" [...] to see Nigel and "As You Like It" on the film. The dresses all looked remarkably fine but the whole thing was so funny and impromptu that I was almost sick with laughing.'⁶⁶ This would have been an invaluable archive but unfortunately there is no mention of this film elsewhere or any trace of its survival. However, given the designer's differing reactions to the film and the actual performance, much must be said for information regarding the theatre performances. Norman Marshall makes the point in *The Other Theatre* (1947) that 'it is difficult to

judge how much his [Playfair's] productions owed to his designers or how much his designers owed to his productions - which is a proof of a good collaboration.⁶⁷

Notwithstanding there is sufficient evidence to show that Playfair achieved a fundamental re-interpretation of *As You Like It* that caught the play's mood of implausibility and artifice far removed from Benson's approach.

Clearly there was a consensus between producer and designer on the centrality of music to this production. Its integration in the production was yet another element that created an idealised and fantastical world. It is open to debate whether its use was due to the influence of Barker or Craig or indeed reflected Playfair's and Lovat Fraser's interest in music. Innes describes Craig's use of music in *Much Ado About Nothing* as a 'characteristic insertion of almost continuous musical accompaniment – an overture, a minuet, two madrigals, a fanfare, a jig, and a Morris dance in the first two scenes of act I, "music continually" in the third scene, and vocal pieces to cover the scene changes.'⁶⁸ Cecil Sharp used old English folk-songs for the dances of the fairies and rustics in Barker's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Both producer and designer were familiar with this production. As already stated, Playfair played Bottom and Barker's approach had made a definite impression on Lovat Fraser. 'Then we go to see Granville Barker's "Midsummer Night's Dream" at the Savoy. I don't suppose G.C [Gordon Craig] would have approved but I thought it one of the most English affairs I had ever seen.'⁶⁹ The designer had encouraged the Lyric management to employ his friend Bliss to arrange the incidental music. 'Also they agreed that Thomas [Arthur Bliss] should do the music.'⁷⁰ He opted for music that was generally contemporary with the writing of *As You Like It* rather than the designer's fifteenth-century costumes, arranging traditional English tunes from the sixteenth century and incorporating the music of William Byrd and Giles Farnaby.

This was used respectively during Act 1 and at the fall of the curtain after Act 4. Bliss's employment of settings by Thomas Arne for the songs by Amiens and Hymen, indicates that he was intent on creating an effective musical atmosphere rather than fidelity to an historical period. The mood was set by the quartet of costumed female musicians, playing a selection of tunes on stage before act 1. These included 'Barley Break', 'The Staines Morris Tune' 'John Come Kiss Me Now' and 'Sir Edward Noel's Delight'. They also appeared before act 2 with renderings of 'Galliard', 'Sweet Margaret' and 'Peg-a-Ramsay'.⁷¹ As Styant points out, the music was performed as part of the play 'rather than as a musical addition or decoration, and their function returned the play to something like the spirit of good musical comedy, in which words and music, speech and song, remained in the same key throughout.'⁷² The evidence suggests that Playfair's use of music was less insistent than that employed by Craig in *Much Ado About Nothing* but that it was an important aspect of the producer's freshness of approach to *As You Like It*.

Playfair's acting company was a mixture of those who had no previous experience of playing Shakespeare and were unencumbered by ideas concerning traditional stage business, and older more experienced actors. This was used to advantage as there was an unaffected approach to speech and even the critical *Morning Post* noted that this benefited the prose which 'has come to be too heavily underlined and with a more spirited delivery it gained use and suppleness'.⁷³ Seyler was obviously the key to the youthful exuberance of the production having previously been 'known only as a rather idiosyncratic comedy actress'.⁷⁴ Playfair's casting would suggest that he was hoping that she would bring her experience to the humour of the role. There are numerous opportunities. Possibly, she brought a droll exasperation to the predicament of her disguise. 'Alas the day, what shall I do with my doublet / and

hose! What did he when thou sawest him? What said he? Werein went he? (3.2.214-216). Playfair responded to the evidence of the text encouraging the actress to take 'the part at a tremendous rate'.⁷⁵ The producer, however, was clearly looking for an interpretation of the play that went beyond the notion of musical comedy. A review of the 1920 Lyric production in the *Spectator* considered that Seyler's acting and that of Herbert Marshall as Jacques had 'made us conscious of the deep current of the philosophy of life which runs under the play, bearing up its exquisite fragility'.⁷⁶ The *Birmingham Daily Post*, reviewing the Stratford production, confused Marshall, a youthful Jacques, with Stafford Hilliard who played Jacques de Bois, but nevertheless praised his delivery of 'the seven ages' as 'a fine piece of modern declamation which would stand comparison with any of the previous renderings here'.⁷⁷ This approach was inculcated throughout the company as even the elderly Gilbert Hare, who played Adam, was reported to have 'avoided the unusual faults of the old actor in this part'.⁷⁸ Playfair was responding to Barker's approach to speaking Shakespeare and in doing so provided the audience with a verbal re-examination of the familiar lines of *As You Like It* that was consistent with the visual vibrancy achieved by Lovat Fraser.

There is a little evidence to suggest that Playfair balanced the fast pace of the production with moments of stillness. J.C. Squire criticised one scene where 'the usurper, with a kneeling page at each side, posed facing the audience; I heard no words, I only saw a tableau vivant, as our fathers used to call it'.⁷⁹ In this instance, it would appear that Playfair used the idea to give a visual reference to the Duke's religious conversion and to provide a dramatic pause before the closure of the play. Its static quality is in keeping with Lovat Fraser's concept of missal scenes.

According to the *Spectator* the idea was used elsewhere. 'One or two set pieces of groupings were great features of the performance.'⁸⁰

There is no way of knowing if Playfair made any changes to his interpretation of the production before it was staged at the Lyric. The London reviews, unlike those for the Stratford production, show that an element of threat undercut Lovat Fraser's idealised Arden. It is interesting to note that much of this was encapsulated in Playfair's realisation of Touchstone. 'Mr Playfair got right away from the semi-dancing, intoxicated buffoon of tradition, and was a dry, disagreeable man of the world, entirely unsentimental and unlovely. He was like sand in this bed of roses, stalking through the scenes, thrusting his ugly common sense like a sour wiseacre into the middle of all the laughing prattle'.⁸¹ The *Spectator* saw Jacques in a new light. 'Mr Marshall's remarkable acting gave a curiously bitter, almost sinister, value to the seven ages that I thought had long ago been recited out of existence.'⁸² It is difficult to know how the plight of the court musicians, who were present at the Duke's feast, was played. According to the *Spectator* they sat watching events 'hungrily and uncomfortably'.⁸³ As servants they could have been the only members of the Duke's retinue yet to eat when Orlando makes his request 'Then but forbear your food a little while' (2.7.127). On this occasion Arden would have been less than an agreeable place for the musicians. Playfair's attention to such detail suggests that he followed Barker and indeed Barry Jackson, by giving credence to minor roles and in doing so enhanced the interpretation of the production.

Some of the most important evidence concerning Playfair's approach to the play can be found in his treatment of the masque of Hymen. Its inclusion was another break with convention but this went beyond his insistence on the integrity of the text. It was at this point that the production identified the emotional centre of the play by

acknowledging the integral mood of this scene and its celebration of marriage. Both the producer and designer responded to its importance and exploited its dramatic potential. Playfair writes that he avoided the difficulty of providing ‘a whole new cast for a few minutes in the last act [...] by making the actual characters in the play dress up as in a charade.’⁸⁴ All the actors, therefore, appeared in different costumes, reflecting the changes that love had brought about in the forest and symbolising the start of marriage. Those for Rosalind, Celia, Audrey, Phoebe and Orlando have already been considered. They indicate that Lovat Fraser put considerable creative energy into realising the dramatic and visual potential of the four marriages. As the couples gathered, Rosalind and Celia, in their wedding dresses, descended from the tail of a cart designed by Lovat Fraser. This idea, and indeed the setting for the rest of the scene, may have been derived from Craig’s unrealised project *The Harvest Home* (1902). This was intended to recapture English rural customs and was based on the tradition that the final load of corn was escorted to the barn by local musicians, the singing of harvest songs and Morris dancers. Amiens assumed the role of Hymen. An unidentified press photograph shows him standing between Rosalind and Celia. He wears a knee length tunic, quartered with the symbols of love. A blazing torch, three arrows and a heart can be identified, (illustration 69). Playfair judged the scene to be ‘one of the most beautiful that Lovat [...] ever contrived.’⁸⁵ According to Lovat Fraser the dance and music at the end of the scene was staged in the atmosphere of a ‘dark summer’s night [when] the gay Renaissance figures danced fantastically to the woodland pipes.’⁸⁶

Playfair and Lovat Fraser had effectively changed the ethos of the play from one that reflected a late Victorian view of *As You Like It* as literal and pictorial, to a production where the journey to reconciliation and the restoration of the rightful

order occurs in a stylised world of artifice. Styan places Playfair's *As You Like It* in the same context as such productions as Lewis Casson's *Julius Caesar* (Gaiety, Manchester, 1913) and Martin Harvey's *The Taming of the Shrew* (Prince of Wales, 1913) and *Hamlet* (His Majesty's, 1916) and indeed Norman Wilkinson's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Stratford Memorial Theatre, 1932). These he terms 'stylised' as he argues that they conform to 'a general convention of speech and movement, costume and décor, set consistently at an appropriate distance from real life.'⁸⁷ This production of *As You Like It* undoubtedly fulfils this criteria but its importance as a landmark is more far reaching. There is no evidence to suggest that it occurred to Lovat Fraser to illuminate modern preoccupations with this production, although Playfair recognised the possibilities of a darker view. In essence, their approach enhanced the life affirming qualities of *As You Like It* at a time when the country was coming to terms with the traumas of the 1914-1918 war. As such, it said much about the outlook of Lovat Fraser and his contemporaries, who had survived the war, and looked to the possibilities of a better world in the future. This production had built on many of the experiments in stagecraft that had occurred before the war. Playfair responded to the work of Barker in terms of the presentation of an uncut text, rapidity of action and clarity of speech in order to achieve a reappraisal of the play. Lovat Fraser had absorbed the ideas of Craig and aligned them to his personal taste and vision of theatre. In combining his love of colour, the clarity of woodcuts, toy theatres, missals and tapestries he had indeed drawn on an eclectic mix of the visual arts. In this production he united their elements to emphasise the artifice of *As You Like It* and relocate the mood and visual emphasis to that of a stylish, beautifully illustrated story book. His approach reaffirmed that the

work of a sensitive and inventive designer could effectively influence a production in terms of mood, playing space and cohesion.

As You Like It was staged at the Lyric in April 1920 when it received some good reviews but only ran for five weeks. Playfair writes that it ‘had a certain effect, at any rate among the younger generation of Shakespearian producers’.⁸⁸ It undoubtedly signalled imminent change at the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre and confirmed that the experimental stagecraft of the early part of the century was crucial to the future development of fresh approaches to Shakespeare in the twentieth century. Lovat Fraser’s designs emphasised the significance of the stage-designer in terms of new insights into Shakespeare and the staging of his plays. Neither Playfair nor Lovat Fraser was involved in the production of another Shakespeare play. It is likely that those designers who merely replicated the apparent simplicity of his work and were attracted to his use of vibrant colours, were more familiar with his designs for Playfair’s production of John Gay’s *The Beggar’s Opera* (Lyric, 1920). Their revival of the first English musical, devised over a hundred and twenty-five years after Shakespeare had written his most musical play was theatrically a natural progression. Both the producer and designer were able to explore their interest in the drama and literature of the eighteenth century. The production caught the public’s imagination and secured the reputations of Playfair and Lovat Fraser.

Despite this, the designer’s early death in 1921, meant that much of his potential as a stage designer was unfulfilled. A speculative design for *Henry IV* published as the frontispiece to Walter René Fuerst’s and Samuel Hume’s *Twentieth Century Stage Decoration* vol.2 (1928) shows that Lovat Fraser would have approached this play with a familiar mix of vibrant colour, stylised costumes of the period and simple, suggestive scenic design. It would have proved an interesting response to the

possibilities of staging an historical play. However, this is scant evidence on which to base any consideration as to the potential outcome.

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- ² Claud Lovat Fraser letter to Grace Lovat Fraser, 26 July 1918, (BMSC).
- ³ Grace Lovat Fraser, *In the Days of My Youth* (London: Cassell, 1970), p.17.
- ⁴ Claud Lovat Fraser, (pseudo. Richard Honeywell), *The Two Wizards and Other Songs* (London: Privately printed, 1913), p.5.
- ⁵ Cary M. Mazer, *Shakespeare Refashioned: Elizabethan Plays on Edwardian Stages*, (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research, 1980), p. 98.
- ⁶ Haldane Macfall, 'Some Thoughts on the Art of Gordon Craig', *Studio*, 102, (1901) p. 255.
- ⁷ W.B. Yeats, *Ideas of Good and Evil* (London: Bullen, 1903), p.150.
- ⁸ Charles S. Felver, *Joseph Crawhall: The Newcastle Wood Engraver 1821-1896* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Graham, 1973), pp.100-106.
- ⁹ Haldane Macfall, *The Book of Lovat* (London: Dent, 1923), p.96.
- ¹⁰ Edward Gordon Craig, (pseudo.Felix Urban), 'Some Early Italian Woodcuts. A Note upon their Use to Modern Scene Designers', *Mask*, 4 (1911), 47-56 (p.47).
- ¹¹ *Brighton Herald*, 10 May 1919.
- ¹² Edward Gordon Craig, *Gordon Craig: The Story of His Life* (London: Gollancz, 1968), p. 144.
- ¹³ Christopher Innes, *Edward Gordon Craig: A Vision of Theatre*, ed. by Frane Chamberlain, 2nd edn (Amsterdam: Harwood, 1998), p.73.
- ¹⁴ Macfall, The designs for *The Three Students* appear as follows; opp. p. 57, 69, 85, 87, 104, p.105, p.107, opp.p.111, n.p., opp.p.117 and 119.
- ¹⁵ CLF postcard to Florence Fraser, 27 March 1914, (BMSC).
- ¹⁶ Florence Fraser, diary 30 May 1911.
- ¹⁷ Art Works, Box 9, *Still Nothing*, (BMSC).
- ¹⁸ Art Works, Box 10, *Doing the National Gallery*, (BMSC).
- ¹⁹ *Hearth and Home*, 20 February 1913.
- ²⁰ Edward Gordon Craig, (pseudo.John Balance), 'Kleptomania, or the Russian Theatre', *Mask*, 4 (1911) 97-101(p.98-100).

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- ²¹ Sally Beaman, *The Royal Shakespeare Company: A History of Ten Decades* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp. 53-58.
- ²² See Chapter 2, pp. 178-180.
- ²³ Nigel Playfair, *The Story of the Lyric Theatre* (London: Chatto, 1925), p. 48.
- ²⁴ CLF, diary, 1 March 1919, (BMSC).
- ²⁵ J.L. Styan, *The Shakespeare Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p.125.
- ²⁶ CLF, diary 27 March 1919.
- ²⁷ Sarah Flower, *Great Aunt Sarah's Diary 1846-1892* (Privately printed, 1964), p. 88-89.
- ²⁸ Playfair, p.55.
- ²⁹ CLF, diary, 19 April to 27 April 1919.
- ³⁰ *Stratford-upon-Avon Herald*, 14 August 1914.
- ³¹ *Stratford-upon-Avon Herald*, 13 August 1915.
- ³² CLF, diary 19 April to 27 April 1919.
- ³³ Constance Benson, *Mainly Players: Bensonian Memories* (London: Thornton Butterworth), p.302.
- ³⁴ CLF, diary 19 April to 27 April 1919.
- ³⁵ Edward Gordon Craig, (pseudo. Edward Edwardovitch), 'The Best Theatre in London', *Mask*, 5 (1912) 54-59 (p.56).
- ³⁶ C. Lovat Fraser, 'Costume in the Forest of Arden', *Observer*, 4 May1919.
- ³⁷ *Observer*, 4 May1919.
- ³⁸ CLF, diary 15 March 1914.
- ³⁹ Grace Lovat Fraser, 'Introduction' *Claud Lovat Fraser*, (1969), 5-22 (p.14).
- ⁴⁰ *Observer*, 4 May 1919.
- ⁴¹ CLF diary, 19 April to 27 April 1919.
- ⁴² Programme, (*As You Like It*, Lyric, 1920), n.p. (VATC).

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- ⁴³ G. Lovat Fraser, *Days of My Youth*, p.250.
- ⁴⁴ Photo box 22, folder 5a. (BMSC).
- ⁴⁵ Playfair, p.51.
- ⁴⁶ Innes, p.77
- ⁴⁷ ‘The Shakespeare Festival at Stratford-on-Avon. Mr Playfair’s Production of “As You Like It.”’, *Birmingham Post*, 23 April 1919.
- ⁴⁸ G. Lovat Fraser, *Days of My Youth*, p.250.
- ⁴⁹ G. Lovat Fraser, *Days of My Youth*, p.256.
- ⁵⁰ *Observer*, 27 April 1919.
- ⁵¹ *Brighton Herald*, 10 May 1919.
- ⁵² *Woman’s Leader*, 20 April 1920.
- ⁵³ *Saturday Review*, 3 January 1920.
- ⁵⁴ CLF, diary, 19 April to 27 April 1919.
- ⁵⁵ *Observer*, 27 April 1919.
- ⁵⁶ *Observer*, 4 May 1919.
- ⁵⁷ Claud Lovat Fraser, costume designs for *As You Like It*. (Series VI. Theater and Stage, BMSC).
- ⁵⁸ Playfair, p.54.
- ⁵⁹ ‘Mr. Playfair’s Production of “As You Like It”’, *Birmingham Daily Post*, 23 April 1919.
- ⁶⁰ ‘Shakespeare Festival. “As You Like It” Up-To-Date. Challenge to Stratford’, *Morning Post*, 23 April 1919.
- ⁶¹ ‘Youth Acts in a Play of Youth: Arden at Oxford’, *Sketch*, 30 June, 1920, p. 313.
- ⁶² Grace Lovat Fraser, *In the Days of My Youth*, pp. 251-252.
- ⁶³ *Times*, 23 April 1919.
- ⁶⁴ G. Lovat Fraser, ‘Introduction’, *Claud Lovat Fraser*, p.14.

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- ⁶⁵ Playfair, p. 49.
- ⁶⁶ CLF diary, 2 May 1919.
- ⁶⁷ Norman Marshall, *The Other Theatre* (London: Lehmann, 1947), p. 33.
- ⁶⁸ Innes, p.98.
- ⁶⁹ CLF diary, 14 February 1914.
- ⁷⁰ CLF diary, 7 March 1919. An earlier entry confirms the identity of Thomas.
‘“Thomas” (Arthur) Bliss comes in the afternoon to tea.’ 12 January 1919.
- ⁷¹ Kenneth L. Thompson, ‘For Arthur Bliss’s 75th Birthday’, *Musical Times*, 107 (1966), 666-670 (pp.672-673).
- ⁷² Styan, p. 129.
- ⁷³ *Morning Post*, 23 April 1919.
- ⁷⁴ Playfair, p.47.
- ⁷⁵ ‘A New Rosalind’, *Manchester Guardian*, 23 April 1919.
- ⁷⁶ *Spectator*, 8 May 1920.
- ⁷⁷ *Birmingham Daily Post*, 23 April 1919.
- ⁷⁸ *Birmingham Daily Post*, 23 April 1919.
- ⁷⁹ J.C. Squire, *Outlook*, 8 May 1920.
- ⁸⁰ *Spectator*, 8 May 1920.
- ⁸¹ Frank Swinnerton, ‘As You Like It’, *Nation*, 8 May 1920.
- ⁸² Tarn, “‘As You Like It’ at the Lyric Hammersmith’, *Spectator*, 8 May 1920.
- ⁸³ *Spectator*, 8 May 1920.
- ⁸⁴ Playfair, p. 51.
- ⁸⁵ Playfair, p. 51.
- ⁸⁶ CLF, diary 19 April to 27 April 1919.
- ⁸⁷ Styan, p. 122.
- ⁸⁸ Playfair, p. 57.

CHAPTER 4

PAUL SHELIVING

‘For him the stage is always a stage and his decorations are stage decorations created in harmony with the play’s atmosphere’.

Bache Matthews. 1924¹

An Experimental Atmosphere

Between 1923 and 1929 Barry Jackson’s Birmingham Repertory Company presented six Shakespeare plays in modern dress. These seminal productions were essentially an entirely new departure in the visual reinterpretation of Shakespeare in England. They offered fresh insights by defining the characters in terms of the twentieth century and afforded new perspectives in the staging of the plays and acting techniques. The first, *Cymbeline*, (Birmingham Repertory Theatre, 1923) was modestly staged. A more ambitious and elaborate production of *Hamlet* was presented in London (Kingsway, 1925). This was followed by *Macbeth* (Royal Court, 1928) and *The Taming of the Shrew* (Royal Court, 1928). All these were later staged at the Birmingham Rep where *All’s Well That Ends Well* and *Othello* were produced respectively in April 1927 and February 1929.

This chapter considers Shelving’s response to the visual arts in three of these productions, *Cymbeline*, *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*. These productions afford the best insight into the designer’s approach to modern-dress Shakespeare. In the case of *Cymbeline* and *Hamlet*, Shelving’s scenic and costume designs were central to Ayliff’s reappraisal of the plays in terms of the twentieth century. The designer’s realisation of *Macbeth*, however, impinged on visual realities which confused and

alienated the audience. In doing so, it revealed the complexities and limitations of the Rep's interpretation of modern-dress Shakespeare. The other modern-dress productions for differing reasons, offer less information concerning Shelving's design work.

When compared with his input into the other modern-dress productions, it can be seen that Shelving's contribution to Ayliff's English version of the *The Taming of the Shrew* was limited. The production originated in October 1927 in New York where Ayliff had produced it for the Shubert management. The scenic designs were by Watson Barratt and costumes by Aline Bernstein, with additional outfits for Katherine supplied by the fashion house, Jenkins. Alice Margarida, in "'Two Shrews': Productions by Lunt / Fontanne (1935) and H.K. Ayliff (1927)'" (1981), describes the New York production as the 'contemporary high society taming of a Park Avenue socialite.'² It ran for twenty-two weeks and evoked all the gaiety, materialism and excess of a society as it hurtled unheedingly towards the Wall Street crash of 1929 and the Great Depression. Shelving re-worked the curtain designs for the English production, most notably that for the Induction, which took place in front of 'The Swan' an ale-house in Wincot, Warwickshire. A stylised street-cloth showing a steeply rising flight of steps framed by a cut-out archway and the silhouette of rooftops set the rest of the action in Italy. Much else in the production, including the costumes, now designed by the English couturière Elspeth Fox Pitt, translated easily from the New York *Shrew*. Shelving returned to his established formula for simple cloths and costumes for the Birmingham Rep's *All's Well that Ends Well*. The few reviews indicate that, here, colour played a part in evoking the comedy in the second part of the play. There are no photographs and few reviews for

Othello. A review in the *Stage* describes Shelving's scenic designs as simple, effective and full of bright colour.'³ By now this was a familiar technique.

Shelving's career as a stage designer extended over forty-five years, during which he worked almost exclusively for Barry Jackson at the Birmingham Rep from 1920 until 1961, the Malvern Festival between 1929 and 1939, and at various London theatres until 1958. The longevity of his career must be ascribed to the diversity of his skill. Richard Cave aptly identifies this as an ability to 'transmute the design idioms popular in the Twenties, Thirties, Forties, Fifties, into images that were wholly personal through his wit and his sense of the poetic possibilities of line, focus and colour'.⁴ The circumstances of Shelving's employment were unusual: as Tessa Sidey points out, 'none of the leading artistic designers such as Norman Wilkinson, Albert Rutherston, Charles Ricketts and Claud Lovat Fraser were to experience the constantly changing challenges of a fortnightly repertory system'.⁵ The ethos of the Rep clearly encouraged Shelving's creativity as, given the varying and constant demands of the repertoire, this designer achieved a noteworthy consistency and variety in his work. At one level his approach was simple. Bache Matthews gives a succinct summary of Shelving's technique. 'Shelving [...] paints [...] almost entirely in the flat, but he gives to it decorative significance and it has no pretensions to be other than a flat background for the action of the play.'⁶ The designer, by all accounts a self-effacing man, afforded limited information concerning his working practices but did state: 'I suppose I draw all my inspiration from the past. The fearless use of brilliant colour, simplified outlines, occasionally, where it seems appropriate, the introduction of a bright toy-like quality, appeal to me; but you will find they all derive from bygone (and therefore sound) forms of art'.⁷ It was from

this basis that he created a personal style that brought a new visual excitement to the work of the Birmingham Rep.

Shelving had the intention of becoming a theatrical designer from the outset. His employment in 1905 with the Moody-Manners Opera Company enabled him to learn the techniques of the scenic artist, as did playing small roles with Herbert Beerbohm Tree's company at His Majesty's. Examples of Shelving's work during this period, such as sketches from *Henry VIII* (His Majesty's, 1910) show that he was making close observations of character and costume. There is also evidence of copies of designs by Léon Bakst and Mikhail Larionov. A watercolour frieze illustrating the characters in Tree's revival of *The Darling of the Gods* (His Majesty's, 1914) shows the influence of Japanese art in the posture and arrangement of the individuals.⁸

Graham Barlow, in his contribution to *Paul Shelving (1888-1968) Stage Designer* states that the designer's sense of colour was influenced by the stage designs of the Ballets Russes but that Shelving was particularly interested in the work of Sergei Sudeikin and Mstislav Dobuzhinsky.⁹ The influence of Sudeikin's posters for the Chauve Souris Theatre is obvious in Shelving's realisation of the scenic designs for the Norwegian drama *The Witch* (Birmingham Repertory Theatre, 1920) by John Masefield after H. Wiers-Jenssen. Here his dazzling palette of purple, black, orange and greenish blue create a sense of intense foreboding, in keeping with the psychological tensions of the play. The hard edged clarity and vibrant colour of Shelving's costume and scenic designs for the première of George Bernard Shaw's five part play cycle *Back to Methuselah!* (Birmingham Repertory Theatre, 1923) are also indebted to these Russian designers.

Examples of Shelving's non-theatrical work between 1913 and 1916 show the clarity of line that characterised his theatrical designs. They also demonstrate his

ability to pastiche an artistic style and adapt it to the purpose of his work. Both techniques are apparent in his menu designs for the Annual Prize day at the City of London School and programme covers for *The Theatrical Garden Party*, (illustration 70). A Prize Day menu for 1913 depicts Orlando carving Rosalind's name on a tree; a programme cover portrays a fantastical group of eighteenth-century masked revellers. Both are clearly derivative of Aubrey Beardsley. A 1914 Prize Day menu, with its border of roses surrounding a line drawing of Shakespeare, is reminiscent of William Morris.¹⁰

Few of Shelving's early theatrical designs have survived. Those that have suggest that from the beginning of his career he was able to adopt an artistic style that best reflected the mood of a particular play. Bakst's influence is perhaps most effectively exemplified in Shelving's costume designs for Rutland Boughton's *The Immortal Hour* (Birmingham Repertory Theatre, 1921) and (Kingsway Theatre, 1922), (illustration 71). The influence of Bakst is also apparent in Shelving's medieval costumes for *The Knight's Tale* (1913)¹¹. Intended for a pageant at the University of London, these costumes display the delineation of period with bold simplified outline shapes and the use of striking, geometric patterns. They have similarities to a 1911 poster illustrating Bakst's costume designs for minor characters in *Le Martyre de Saint Sébastien*.¹² Shelving's drawings, however, realise the spirit of Chaucer's tale. Three existing costume designs for Mabel Dearmer's *Kit and The Cockyolly Bird* (Court, 1914) are distinctive in the clarity of their outline.¹³ The rigidity of each character's stance intimates a toy-like quality that is sustained in the uncomplicated use of colour. Red, white and mid-blue for the soldier; the same blue and white for the unnamed female character in striped ankle-length divided skirt, and a black full length dress with white trimmings and yellow polka-dots for a very disgruntled

looking, older female character. In direct contrast the only set design has an elegant fluidity, showing two pearl encrusted peacocks whose sweeping tails form a sleigh for a plumed fairy and attendants. Beardsley possibly influences its style, but it is Shelving's combination of these designs that suggest a fantastical world. Such designs suggest that, although Shelving drew on the work of others, his theatrical vision was already clear-sighted and individualistic.

Shelving's work at the Rep quickly established his reputation as an outstanding stage designer. He seemed undaunted by the challenges offered by its adventurous repertoire and confidently assimilated influences from the visual arts into his work to produce scenic designs and costumes that drew plaudits from reviewers. *Lloyds News* went so far as to declare that in *The Immortal Hour*, 'every scene is a work of genius',¹⁴ while the *Sunday Telegraph* observed that, 'its gorgeous settings by Paul Shelving add to its mysticism with telling effect'.¹⁵ He responded to the oriental setting of Adolf Paul's *The Language of the Birds* (Birmingham Repertory Theatre, 1923), by creating 'a sky of radiant pink, warm and glowing, broken only by a boldly raised throne of burnished gold'.¹⁶ Commenting on Shelving's work for *Back to Methuselah!* the *Observer* claimed, 'I am not sure that the greatest triumph of all was not Mr. Paul Shelving's. His scenery could hardly have been better'.¹⁷ The effect of Shelving's settings for Shaw's *Caesar and Cleopatra*, (Birmingham Repertory Theatre, 1925) and (Kingsway, 1925), was conveyed in *The Era*.

The majestic white sphinx between whose paws Cleopatra sleeps is a lovely thing set in a circle of stars. The sentinel looking out from the ramparts across an empty sea is a spectacle of emotional quality. Cleopatra's boudoir, with narrow windows revealing an intense blue sky, is a marvel of colouring. These pictures establish Mr. Shelving among the foremost scene designers.¹⁸

A production of Georg Kaiser's expressionist play *Gas* (Birmingham Repertory Theatre, 1923) showed that Shelving's talents of interpretation extended beyond the

exotic and mystical. Here, the designer underlined the themes of the play with an expressionistic view from the window of the office of the Millionaire's son, where 'the roofs and chimneys of the works beyond were etched out in fire upon the darkness, [while the] expressive Rostrum scene [was] built up of a few purple lines under a single beam of light from directly overhead'.¹⁹

Many of the Rep's productions, however, called on Shelving to provide a traditional room interior with walls and ceiling on stage, a typical example being Eden Philipotts's popular and long running *The Farmer's Wife* (Birmingham Repertory Theatre, 1923) and (Royal Court, 1924). Matthews explains the care that the designer expended on the detailed realism of such sets in order to accomplish a 'subtle emotional difference'.²⁰ As ever, the atmosphere was achieved by the choice of colour, but Shelving also selected the furniture, carpet, light fittings and suitable properties such as books and flowers to complete the effect. The designer was to draw heavily on this experience when creating simple, naturalistic scenic decoration for the modern-dress Shakespeare but he also assimilated expressionistic, symbolic and stylised elements into his work.

Prior to the modern-dress Shakespeare, Shelving had designed three other Shakespeare productions for the Rep. Given his commitment to learning all aspects of stage design he must have been conversant with contemporary developments in the staging of Shakespeare. It is certain that Shelving saw Edward Gordon Craig's *Much Ado About Nothing* (Imperial, 1903). Years later, he wrote that he regarded this as seminal to scenic reform in the theatre, but expressed the opinion that at the time it had 'made a very deep impression on an appreciative minority'.²¹ Barry Jackson identified this production as the first to impress on himself that Shakespeare could be staged in other than the traditional and accepted style. He recalled mutual

memories, ‘some discussion with Paul Shelving on the subject of Craig’s front cloth leads us to believe that it may have been one of the earliest experiments in projected scenery’.²² There can be little doubt that this was one of many such conversations between colleagues at the Rep concerning the staging of Shakespeare. As with other productions, Shelving interpreted the mood of Shakespeare’s plays by drawing on his knowledge of the visual arts and adopting different artistic approaches. He successfully captured the opulence and wealth of Venice in the costumes for *Othello* (Birmingham Repertory Theatre, 1920). According to the *Birmingham Gazette* they were ‘gorgeously coloured’.²³ The *Era* stated that they had been ‘based on old Italian engravings’.²⁴ Shelving’s personal vision was less assured with *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (Birmingham Repertory Theatre, 1920) which, unusually for Rep Shakespeare, employed drop scenery. This featured conventional half-timbered houses set amid snow and was influenced by Oscar Asche’s winter setting of the play, (Garrick Theatre, 1911).²⁵ The *Birmingham Gazette* claimed that the speed of the production was maintained. However, this approach to staging Shakespeare was not repeated.²⁶ Shelving’s designs for the scenery and costumes for *Romeo and Juliet* (Regent, 1924), were the first of his Shakespeare work to be seen in London. Critical comment shows that there was some continued resistance to new approaches. The semi-permanent set and especially the high, blank walled balcony was described in *The Referee* as ‘a kind of Gordon Craigery run mad’.²⁷ A surviving model from the Rep’s original 1922 production, for a curtain set of a street scene in Verona, gives an indication of Shelving’s approach to colour.²⁸ It is described by Matthews: ‘Pink buildings relieved with red, black and white, standing before an ultramarine river. The sails of the ship are yellow. The sky is turquoise blue’.²⁹ Shelving’s intuitive understanding of the relevance of colour was also evident in the costumes. Surviving

designs show that the family factions were identifiable by the colour of their clothes; the Montagues resplendent in a range of patterned and textured blues and the Capulets arrayed in orange, ochre and brown.³⁰

The new direction in Shakespeare production evolved within the context of Jackson's vision for the Birmingham Rep. The theatre, financed by Jackson and completed in 1913, was the first to be built for repertory work in Britain. Jackson's intention was to use his theatre and a fully-professional repertory company 'to enlarge and increase the aesthetic sense of the public in the theatre, to give living authors an opportunity of seeing their works performed, and to learn something from revivals of the classics: in short to serve an art instead of making that art serve a commercial purpose'.³¹ The modern-dress Shakespeare productions emerged from the Rep's established reputation for an innovative approach to Shakespeare and a strong sense of direction achieved by like-minded individuals. The productions were characterised by the clarity of Shelving's interpretive design and his sensitive understanding of costume. These were in complete sympathy with the Rep's approach to Shakespeare. This was centred on a fuller use of text, rapidity of action aided by a simplification of setting and the inclusion of minor characters. Shelving's work underlined the atmosphere of the plays and reflected a response to the visual arts that moved the interpretation of Shakespeare irrevocably into the 1920s. In doing so, the productions revealed analogies to popular culture mainly in terms of character and plot. Shelving's contribution to the modern-dress Shakespeare went un-remarked by many reviewers, yet it was characteristic of his consummate skill that he understood the need for unobtrusive sets and costumes that did not appear contrived. It is evident that prior to his work on the modern-dress Shakespeare, Shelving, like Ricketts, Wilkinson and Lovat Fraser drew on the visual arts of the late nineteenth

and early twentieth century and combined them with a stylistic interpretation of the modes of other centuries to achieve his designs for Shakespeare. He was the first designer to respond to the popular culture of the twentieth century as a means of interpretation.

A Re-Dressed Melodrama: *Cymbeline* (Birmingham Repertory Theatre, 1923)

The genesis of the idea of presenting *Cymbeline* in modern dress has been attributed variously to Ayliff, Shelving and Jackson. Accounts differ, but they all point to the level of collaboration and creativity that existed at the Rep during the 1920s. The idea was described by Jackson as ‘a daring experiment [...] but it is one that I have long wanted to try’.³² Ayliff points to a comment by Shelving, during discussions between the designer and director. ‘I maintained that period did not matter at all; whereat Shelving retorted that such being the case we might as well do it in modern dress.’³³ Ayliff then recalls further discussions with Jackson, who supported the idea. Trewin describes a similar situation: ‘he, [Jackson] Ayliff and Matthews could not agree on an appropriate style. [...] Jackson said quietly: “Modern dress, I think,” and it was so’.³⁴

The idea had few precedents. At the time of the modern-dress productions Jackson made no allusion to Reinhardt’s earlier experiment. Much later in 1955 he recalled ‘a vague notion that I read somewhere or other of a production by Reinhardt in Berlin of a *Tartuffe*’.³⁵ As Reinhardt’s one recorded production of this play was in 1906 at the Deutsches Theater and has not been noted for an innovative approach, it seems a less likely influence than his *Hamlet* (Grosses Schauspielhaus, 1920). When commenting on the Rep’s modern-dress *Hamlet* in 1925 Craig recalled that in 1904 he had had ‘something of the same idea as Sir Barry’.³⁶ This can be confirmed by his design for a costume for Hamlet as an English gentleman, (illustration 72) which is dated 1904. A later inscription on the mount indicates that modern dress was not his entire intention: ‘Modern dress was not what I had aimed at here but a dress made of some of the elements of the modern man – bags – a cardigan – a muffler and these not quite modern’.³⁷ As with so many of Craig’s ideas- the notion was speculative.

His concept is more in keeping with Reinhardt's production, where the costumes created a neutrality of period rather than defined characters and Ernst Stern's scenic designs addressed the demands of a large arena theatre. Jackson and his team had an entirely different approach in mind.

It is entirely possible that Jackson was aware that, rather than such precedents, the modern-dress *Cymbeline* was a response to his own very sincere attempts to engage the Birmingham public with the repertoire of his theatre and Shakespeare. Despite the vitality of the Rep's work and critical recognition of many of its productions, the theatre did not attract large audiences. Writing at the time of the Rep's threatened indefinite closure in 1924, the *Birmingham Mail* expressed the opinion that, 'for the majority of Birmingham people it has always been, and is to-day, the little home of highbrow experiments [...] not to be taken seriously'.³⁸ Despite this, Jackson identified his audience not as those 'who could afford it, and whose education had been otherwise good' but as those who sat in the cheaper seats and were 'Labour's intelligent hardworking representatives'.³⁹ It is likely that he had such an audience in mind when he described the possible problems encountered by 'the man in the street' on seeing a Shakespeare play. 'He knows before he comes that he is to see a play by an author whom three centuries and five continents of admiration have made a demi-god. His awe is increased by the sublime unnaturalness of blank verse, and doubled by the strangeness of the costumes and the conventions of Shakespearean acting.'⁴⁰

Jackson was also well aware of the attractions of the cinema and the competition it presented. He commented with regret, that: 'When he went to the cinema he was amazed at the horrors that people sat through. There was no doubt that audiences liked tragedy on the screen'.⁴¹ The evidence of this success was very much on the Rep's doorstep. The Electric Theatre, Birmingham's first purpose built cinema, had

opened in Station Street three years prior to the Birmingham Repertory Theatre. It was one of the City's numerous cinemas that thrived by providing the public with an immense variety of silent films that had their own mythologies of time, place and character, and also reflected fashion and society in their newsreels. According to Victor J. Price in *Birmingham Cinemas: Their Films and Stars* (1986) over nine hundred films were distributed in the United Kingdom each year during the 1920s.⁴² Audiences could experience epics such as *The Ten Commandments* (1923), *The Covered Wagon* (1923), and *Ben Hur* (1926). There was escapism and adventure in such films as *The Thief of Bagdad* (1924) and gothic romanticism in *The Phantom of the Opera* (1926). *Beyond the Rocks* (1922) and *Flesh and the Devil* (1926) were representative of the genre of romantic melodrama that also had its place. The stars of the silent screen such as Rudolph Valentino, Ronald Colman, Gloria Swanson, Greta Garbo, Mary Pickford, Douglas Fairbanks and John Gilbert were legendary. Price makes the point that: 'the films [...] had an influence on the mass audiences, and in effect, dictated their standards of behaviour, hair styles and dress'.⁴³ J.B. Priestley's *Angel Pavement* (1930) also conveys the pervasive influence of the silent cinema. It also aptly describes the appeal of other visual sources. 'Miss Matfield [...] spent an envious ten minutes glancing through one of those illustrated weeklies [...]. It showed her demi-gods and goddesses racing and hunting in the cold places, bathing and lounging in the warm places, and eating and drinking and swaggering in places of every temperature.'⁴⁴ Magazines such as *The Lady* and *The Queen* gave a view of the gentry and aristocracy. The illustrated press such as *The Graphic* and *The Sphere* disseminated images of the rich and sophisticated enjoying the freedoms of the 1920s. The Rep's modern-dress Shakespeare placed the plays within the context of these images of twentieth-century society. In doing so they reflected the genres of

popular culture and elements of society that had been made familiar through modern media. It would be incorrect to suggest that Jackson embarked on the modern-dress Shakespeare productions as a challenge to the cinema, but it is worth note that the dates of the productions correspond with those of the hey-day of the silent film.

Cymbeline had received little attention since its staging by Henry Irving at the Lyceum Theatre in 1896. Shaw's review of the production inveighed against the unsuitability of the pictorial designs by Alma-Tadema. 'That cave [...] wants nothing but a trellised porch, a bamboo bicycle, and a nice little bed of standard roses to complete its absurdity.'⁴⁵ According to the *Birmingham Mail*, *Cymbeline* 'was last played in the city nearly two decades ago under the Turner regime at the Grand Theatre'.⁴⁶ As was the case with Harley Granville Barker's production of *A Winter's Tale* (Savoy, 1912), the Birmingham Rep's production of *Cymbeline* must have benefited from the limited preconceptions of the audience and reviewers concerning staging and costume. The vagaries of location, embracing ancient Britain, Italy and the wilds of Wales and intricacies of the plot, with its elements of fairy-tale, melodrama and implausibility, hardly encouraged a rationalisation of mood, time or place. Bridges-Adams's productions of the play at the Stratford Memorial Theatre in 1920 and 1922, however, had used simplified scenery and shown that it was possible to present the play 'in a practically unbroken sequence'.⁴⁷ The 1922 production had been presented as a fantasy and the incongruities were celebrated with the use of Roman, British, mediaeval and Elizabethan costumes. Shelving may have been particularly aware of this staging, as he was familiar with work at Stratford and had designed some tapestries for a Bridges-Adams production in 1920.⁴⁸ Bridges-Adams's simplicity of staging was in sympathy with the methods employed for the Shakespeare productions at the Birmingham Rep, but Jackson had identified an idea

that would create an overall sense of visual unity in his theatre's production of *Cymbeline*.

Dennis Kennedy considers that in their approach to the modern-dress productions 'Ayliff and Shelving were forcing a reconsideration of the entire conventional structure that supported Shakespearean interpretation in England'.⁴⁹ Visually this was the case, but the staging was achieved by the use of an established three-stage framework, with false proscenium steps and curtains that had been devised by Jackson to accommodate all the Rep's productions of Shakespeare. Clearly this was influenced by the ideas of William Poel and Barker and its use for the modern-dress productions provided an established base for the experiment. Shelving's abilities in scenic design were fully exploited for the later modern-dress productions but the visual emphasis in *Cymbeline* was almost entirely concerned with the costumes. His scenic designs were reticent, almost perfunctory. They suggested locale with absolute economy leaving the audience little time to ponder the constantly changing setting of events. The only use of decorative style was in the creation of a fanciful cave, at the side of which arched an art nouveau tree. Gentle hills were sketched on the horizon. This stylisation sufficed to underline the improbable elements of the play, (illustration 73). A single ornamental parapet indicated a terrace in the garden of Philario's home. Other scenes were staged in front of plain grey curtains that separated the main stage from the upper level. Used either open or drawn these provided an unobtrusive setting that allowed the audience to absorb the full effect of characters costumed for the twentieth century.

As no costume designs exist for any of the modern-dress productions, it is likely that Shelving evolved ideas during rehearsals and then devised appropriate costumes. This, in itself, suggests a very different way of working for the designer in terms of

Shakespeare. Evidence of his scenic and costume work for these productions survives almost entirely in monochrome production photographs and newspaper photographs.⁵⁰ Passing references in newspaper reviews indicate that usually he adopted a palette in keeping with the fashions of the time. His manipulation of colour, however, was noted in some scenes, particularly those where he needed to underline the splendour and magnificence of an assembled court. The reception of the Roman ambassadors in *Cymbeline* and the appearance at court of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth after the coronation, were presented in this way. Given this designer's use of colour in other productions to achieve his effects, it is unfortunate there is such limited information concerning those he employed for the modern-dress Shakespeare.

In devising the costumes for *Cymbeline*, Shelving established a visual vocabulary that became applicable to all the modern dress productions. It was within these parameters that the producer and designer reflected a recognisable hierarchical system that enabled them to interpret Shakespeare's characters in terms of the society of the 1920s. The aftermath of the 1914-1918 war was reflected in the literal representation of uniforms and the close association of royalty with the military. Dinner jackets, the social uniform of the upper class and middle-class male, were de rigueur for scenes of social gathering. The dictates of both male and female fashion during the 1920s enabled Shelving and Ayliff to suggest the formality, or informality, of a particular occasion. Although all women did not receive the vote until 1928, the effects of both the suffrage movement and the role women had played during the war had changed perceptions of their position in society. As Georgina Howell points out in *In Vogue: Seventy-Five Years of Style* (1991), 'Women had grown more confident, more independent, and had begun to earn their own living.

[...] The war had killed one out of every seven eligible men, [...] so marriage was not inevitable.⁵¹ Post-war fashion reflected this emancipation with the adoption of the simple tube outline of the chemise and an ‘on the knee’ hemline that meant ‘the hourglass figure of the old Gaiety girls now looked comic’.⁵² Shelving appeared to be particularly sensitive to the inherent possibilities of re-defining female Shakespearean characters in terms of the nuances of these new fashions. Other characters were costumed according to their position in the social structure of the period – the continued employment of servants by the upper and middle classes at this time – allowing the designer to make a clear correlation with their Shakespearean counterparts.

Cymbeline had not intentionally been selected with modern dress in mind but its complex and implausible plot that includes a virtuous princess who marries for love, a peremptory father, children lost at birth, the schemes of a wicked queen and a conniving villain, has all the characteristic potential of melodrama. However, Shelving clearly realised that in order to carry conviction *Cymbeline* had to reflect contemporary preconceptions concerning society, status and fashion. As Shelving sought to correlate Shakespeare’s characters with their twentieth-century counterparts it is unsurprising that they closely reflected those that had become familiar through the influence of popular culture in the 1920s. Prior to the first performance Jackson observed that modern dress would ‘bring out its strong melodramatic qualities.’ Indeed, in the same interview Jackson was prepared to comment on comparisons between the plot of *Cymbeline* and popular literature. ‘As one of the cast remarked to me the other day ‘it will be like an Ethel M. Dell story told in extraordinarily beautiful language’.⁵³ Given this, it is unsurprising that

reviewers drew some analogies between the production and the melodrama of silent movies.

Apart from the Queen and Imogen, there are only two other minor female roles in the play; that of Helen, Imogen's attendant and the Ghost of Posthumus's mother. With such limited opportunity for female costumes Shelving had to make very definite statements. Given the role of the conniving Queen and her influence over Cymbeline, the design of her costumes was central to the melodramatic potential of the character and the play. The similarity between this character and her silent screen counterpart had not gone unnoticed in Bridges-Adams's earlier production. 'Miss Ethel Warwick combined majestic appearance with snake-like cunning [...] with a success which suggested [...] she might do worse than play "vampire" parts on the screen.'⁵⁴ Clearly, Cymbeline's queen had an easily identifiable modern counterpart. In appearance Evelyn Hope, who played the queen in the Rep's production, epitomised the evil woman of popular melodrama. She was 'a queen who dressed in a tight-fitting black frock looked exactly like the presiding genius of a manicure establishment in Bond Street. The red wig [...] even suggested a traffic in some illicit drug.'⁵⁵ The *Manchester Guardian* considered that the Queen's scarlet wig and 'tight-fitting and sinuous gowns' were those of the cinematic 'vamp' – a stereotype that had been popularised by the actress Theda Bara.⁵⁶ A production photograph of the reception of the Roman ambassadors shows the Queen in a well-cut, pale-coloured dress beneath an ermine-trimmed coronation robe attended by stylishly gowned women courtiers in evening dresses.⁵⁷ Clearly, the queen presided over a sophisticated and affluent court. It was one where she would have wished to maintain her position and influence through the marriage of her son Cloten to her step-daughter Imogen (illustration 74).

Imogen's first appearance in a youthful, pink silk jumper and skirt provided a telling contrast to the worldliness of the Queen. Yet it defined a young woman with an open mind, free of the conventions of the older generation. One reviewer considered that Imogen's modernity reduced her to 'a sensible and homely young woman as unobtrusively gowned as Princess Mary'.⁵⁸ It was a singular reference to a member of the British royal family but usefully illustrates the delicate balance that Shelving had to maintain between illusion and everyday reality. When attired as a young woman of the 1920's Imogen's independent choice of a husband, her resolute constancy of character and Iachimo's invasion of her bedchamber assumed a new resonance. According to the *Daily Express* Cymbeline, played by Slaine Mills, wearing the full dress uniform of a Field Marshall, addressed his daughter in 'a parade ground bellow.' That she was perceived to have 'a neat retort or two' in reply suggests that Eileen Beldon played the character as a modern young woman with determined views.⁵⁹ She could no longer be regarded as the idealised heroine of the nineteenth-century theatre but had certain affinities to the virtuous, but fiery girl next door, epitomised in films by such stars as Mary Pickford. Imogen's disguise as Fidele was accomplished in a cycling suit with a peaked cap – an appropriate leveller of rank for one who sought 'A riding-suit no costlier than would fit / A franklin's housewife.' (3.2.76-77). It was not intended to flatter. The *Birmingham Post* commented that, 'She has not the knack of wearing male clothes – her open shirt collar and her sagging belt were just wrong'.⁶⁰ Given Shelving's attention to detail it must be assumed that this was exactly the effect he wished to achieve and that he wanted to avoid her looking like an immaculate male impersonator. Neither were there concessions to her femininity later in the play, when as servant to Caius Lucius, she wore, as did the rest of the Roman troops, the uniform of an élite Italian military

force – the Bersaglieri, (illustration 75). Such costumes were in the spirit of Wilkinson's disguise for Viola as Cesario in *Twelfth Night* (Savoy, 1912) and Lovat Fraser's for Rosalind as Ganymede in *As You Like It* (Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, 1919). Here, Shelving had taken their ideas to a logical conclusion and had provided Imogen with modern male clothing which indeed concealed her femininity.

Shelving's interpretation of the British and Roman courts was literal. Despite this, the overall effect appears to have been generalised as reviewers seemed untroubled by a representation that changed the Italians from allies during the 1914-1918 war to enemies of the British. Cymbeline and the members of his court wore British military dress uniforms and the Romans wore those of the Italian court. Field uniforms were adopted for the battle scene. The British wore khaki and tin hats – a uniform all too familiar from the war years – and the Romans the blue of the Bersaglieri, an Italian high mobility infantry corps. No doubt, their distinctive wide brimmed hats decorated with capercaillie feathers, added to their foreign appearance. Morgan and his stolen sons, Polydore and Cadwal, wore Australian uniforms. This was a convenient and witty reminder of Morgan's fugitive situation while their costumes also served to underline their support for the British cause. It is yet another example of the thought that Shelving expended on the costumes. It is interesting that the designer's use of dress uniforms did not add to the implausibility and confusions of the plot for the audience. This may have been because impressive dress-uniforms had proliferated in the numerous pre-war courts of the Balkan states and Europe. Their magnificence imparted importance and status, but the nationality of the wearer was not necessarily distinguishable. Even Cymbeline's full-dress uniform of a modern British Field Marshal was not associated with that of a British king. His appearance, dressed in a short red coat decorated with recognisable medals, blue trousers with a

broad red stripe and a helmet with a cascade of white feathers, resulted in him being compared to Ferdinand of Bulgaria or ‘a mild imitation of the ex-Kaiser’.⁶¹

The *Daily Telegraph* confirms that Shelving’s use of dress uniforms, and minimal scenic design, had the desired effect of locating the action in an unspecified distant locale. ‘I felt rather as if I were listening to a play translated literally from some picturesque foreign tongue – Spanish perhaps – and as if some action were taking place in some romantic distant kingdom, say in South America. So long as these suppositions held good I felt quite happy.’⁶² Here, Shelving had achieved an effect that was consistent with the romantic melodrama of the plot, and characters. This technique had much in common with settings for romantic melodrama in films, where events frequently took place in non-existent but suitably glamorous sounding countries, such as Ruritania. However, the same reviewer found difficulty with the harsher realities of the battle scene. This was dimly lit and according to the *Birmingham Mail* was intended to be more ‘symbolical than actual’.⁶³ Even so, it was the actuality of the field uniforms and the modern weapons that finally alienated the writer in the *Daily Telegraph*. ‘I lost all sense of romance, and began to feel increasingly bored at a burlesque realism which was not meant to be funny and yet never seemed quite serious’.⁶⁴ That the use of the familiar field uniforms caused a conflict of expectations was a point of view that apparently had little impact on Ayliff and Shelving. From the outset, the modern-dress *Macbeth*, was constrained by such limitations.

The fashion code of the 1920s enabled Shelving not only to delineate character but also to imply time and place. This was used to great effect in the wager scene which was staged as a sophisticated, evening gathering where the men wearing dinner jackets were handed cocktails by a hotel bell-boy. This created a plausible

atmosphere in which charged male conversation developed into the public wager between Posthumus and Iachimo. It was the stuff of modern day melodrama. The *Manchester Guardian* conveys something of its effect. 'The converse of these dinner-jacketed young men over cocktails in Rome is racy and exciting'.⁶⁵ Iachimo played by Cedric Hardwicke with 'a sallow face and elegant air and short black moustache; was a character that naturally fitted into the scene.'⁶⁶ Crompton R. Rhodes believed that this suave Iachimo gained credibility. He also noted that the interpretation of this character embodied for him the most successful aspect of the modern-dress experiment. 'It was startling in its reality, and, though the character is a melodramatic conception, all its crudity was softened, and one thought not only of Iachimo, but of Iago, with a curious sensation of getting closer to Shakespeare's mind than ever before'.⁶⁷

Shelving succeeded in creating an entirely different atmosphere for the second meeting between Iachimo and Posthumus where the former offers supposed evidence of his conquest of Imogen. This scene was staged in front of the balustrade which indicated an outdoor encounter, while the costumes also suggested daytime. Both men were attired comparably, Iachimo in a dark tweed suit, Posthumus in a lighter one. Shelving paid careful attention to detail 'soft collars, rainbow ties, brogues and jazz socks' was described in the *Birmingham Despatch*.⁶⁸ The modern costumes clearly allowed not only Hardwicke but Scott Sunderland as Posthumus to explore the possibilities of his role. Jackson commented that "the contrast in temperament between Italian Iachimo and British Posthumus is revealed to be as true now as it doubtless was in Shakespeare's day".⁶⁹ Here, the text and acting revealed the differences between the earnest, but misled husband and the subtle confidence trickster. Imogen's supposed infidelity was no longer that of some distant princess

but that of a modern, newly married woman. In these circumstances Posthumus's sense of betrayal and incensed threat was seen in a new light. 'O that I had her here to tear her limb-meal! / I will go there and do't i'th court, / before / Her father. I'll do something.' (2. 4.148-150). It is unsurprising that the *Birmingham Dispatch* commented 'Mr Sunderland's Posthumus and Mr Hardwicke's Iachimo made a fine melodramatic contrast.'⁷⁰

The realisation of Cloten, never a character to attract much sympathy, says much about the success of collaboration between Ayliff and Shelving. Wallace Evenett, who played the part, exploited his costume in order to convey 'the triumphant survival of the universal fool'.⁷¹ The *Daily Telegraph* gives an indication of his appearance. 'Cloten was transmuted [...] into a squire of low degree, such as you may encounter in the bar parlour of any country inn'.⁷² Clearly, his appearance distinguished him from the other male characters and identified his true social status. As such, in terms of the twentieth century, he was an undesirable and unsuitable match for Imogen.

Although the changes in post-war society brought less dependence on servants, their continuing employment by the upper and middle classes enabled Shelving to easily assimilate their presence in the play. The physician was accorded his appropriate status in relation to the Queen. Several commentators equated his appearance in 'white dickey and well-cut greatcoat'⁷³ to that of a Harley Street doctor, while the incongruity of the soothsayer was solved by giving him the black wide awake hat, cape and long white beard of the spiritualist. Pisanio was dressed 'in decent blacks and leggings',⁷⁴ the oddly antiquated garb of a modern palace servant or footman. In the battle scenes he wore the uniform of a red-cross orderly, cleverly suggesting that this character was bound by duty but would not become involved in

the fighting or killing. Shelving's inventiveness was evident again in the interpretation of the gaoler, who became a Cockney Tommy wearing the red arm-band of the military policeman. Jackson stated that one of the reasons for the *Cymbeline* modern dress experiment was to show that 'human nature has not changed, and the great types that Shakespeare created are about us in the world to-day'.⁷⁵ As rehearsals progressed it must have become increasingly apparent that plausible twentieth-century characters were emerging from the combined input of Shelving, Ayliff and the company. Jackson must have been aware that the production had real significance as he gave several interviews prior to the performance and invited the local reporters to the dress-rehearsal.

News of the experiment attracted national reviews while the Birmingham press gave the production extended coverage. Some found the enterprise regrettable but none expressed a real sense of outrage, or considered that there had been a desecration of Shakespeare. Many conceded that the costumes had made certain scenes particularly effective and that characters had benefited from a reinterpretation of their appearance. There was some agreement that the play itself had severe limitations, especially the last act, 'it is the worse act that Shakespeare ever wrote. When played in costume it is tedious, when played in modern dress it is execrable'.⁷⁶ The wager scene, the bedroom scene and that in which Iachimo produced proofs of Imogen's alleged unfaithfulness were all felt to have gained from the use of modern costumes. The *Birmingham Gazette* considered that Trevor Roberts, a boy soprano, wearing an Eton suit added unusual poignancy to *Hark, hark the lark*.⁷⁷ The *Birmingham Mail* made no direct reference to Shelving but recognised some of the characteristics of his work in the effects achieved for reception of the Roman envoy. 'The scene [...] is a bit of true Repertory brilliance in design and colour effect.'⁷⁸

The battle scene, played in subdued light with noises off sounding like howitzers, was not regarded as a success. Other criticisms tended to dwell on the particular, such as the presentation of Cloten's head and the need for Pisanio to draw a sword which turned out to be 'a sharpish paper-knife from the study table at the palace'.⁷⁹ Ayliff had included Posthumus's dream in the production but as the text was not used it must have been presented as a mime. Reports mention that Jupiter did not wear modern dress but unfortunately there are no further references as to how Shelving resolved the presentation of this deity. It is likely that this was one of the scenes Ayliff had in mind when he wrote that, 'we agreed that there were too many weak spots in the play, and weak spots do not lend themselves to modern dress, while costume hides them'.⁸⁰ It was for these reasons that Jackson did not take *Cymbeline* to London but he had been encouraged by the outcome of the experiment. As Ayliff observed, '*Cymbeline* taught us, more than anything else, that Shakespeare was a modern author'.⁸¹ He and Shelving had discovered that it was possible to create a viable visual correlation between a Shakespeare play and the 1920s. The simple scenic designs and modern costumes created a sense of visual cohesion and unity which had made it accessible to audiences. The Birmingham Rep and its designer had established a template that was adapted with growing confidence in the later modern-dress Shakespeare productions.

A Psychological Drama: *Hamlet* (Kingsway, 1925)

Given the impact of Noël Coward's *The Vortex*, (Royalty, 1924), triumphantly transferred from the Everyman Theatre in Hampstead to the West End, and the appearance of the popular American actor John Barrymore as *Hamlet* (Haymarket, 1925), Jackson's decision to present a modern-dress *Hamlet* in London was either apt or ambitious. Coward's play was seen to be a dramatic mirror of the times. S.P.B. Mais considered that it showed that 'the modern young man is desperately lonely and appallingly embittered, taking refuge in verbal cleverness, cynicism and discourtesy'.⁸² The Rep's production of *Hamlet* caught much of the popular theatrical moment of *The Vortex*. It was a marked contrast to Barrymore's production of *Hamlet*. Anthony B. Dawson in *Shakespeare in Performance: "Hamlet"* (1995), rightly places this production at a stylistic crossroads owing 'as much to the Victorians as it did to the new stagecraft'.⁸³ The designer Robert Edmond Jones had used a combination of ideas taken from Craig, Leopold Jessner and his designer Emil Pirchan to create a unit setting that was 'unabashedly derivative'.⁸⁴ A dominant flight of central steps surmounted by a massive Romanesque arch provided a permanent playing area, while interior scenes were performed in front of draperies drawn across a central platform. This use of architectural space lit to create the mood for different scenes investigated the ideas of Adolphe Appia. Although the set was imaginative, it was not used to facilitate a fluidity of action and despite severe textual cuts the performance lasted nearly four hours. Despite this, reviews were on the whole enthusiastic, although Barrymore's interpretation of Hamlet was considered to lack a traditionally expected quality. *The Times* considered that: 'it is this very quality of sweetness that one misses most in Mr. Barrymore's Hamlet'.⁸⁵ *The Bookman* expressed a considered opinion as to the appropriate portrayal of the prince. 'He is

the “noble mind,” the “courtier, soldier, scholar,” the “mould of form” – not the “sweet prince.” So that we stop short of that down-right affection which has bound three centuries of readers and play goers to Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*.⁸⁶ Clearly such late nineteenth-century concepts of the character were still current. His view is substantiated by the numerous press photographs such as illustration 76 which shows the marked romanticism of Jones’s late Italian Renaissance costumes. This production was ample proof that imaginative stage design was in its self insufficient to challenge attitudes and to provide new insights into Shakespeare. Shelving’s scenic designs were much less ambitious but provided the framework for a production of *Hamlet* that challenged the entire concept of the play. It did this by providing a psychological insight into the characters that was enhanced by the use of modern costume and localised but suggestive scenery that augmented the atmosphere.

As Claire Cochrane demonstrates in *Shakespeare and the Birmingham Repertory Theatre 1913-1929* (1993), Ayliff tailored the text to the demands of the emotional and psychological elements of the drama.⁸⁷ Such an emphasis was ideally suited to the first modern-dress production of *Hamlet* and was consistent with Jackson’s stated intention of showing that Shakespeare’s characters ‘with their affections and enmities and aspirations are unchanging, and their outlook and behaviour will be repeated by persons of any age when confronted by such “enterprises of great pith and moment”’. This concept was very different to Reinhardt’s *Hamlet* (Grosses Schauspielhaus, 1920) for which Ernst Stern had realised what he termed nearly modern clothing. Anthony Hostetter in *Max Reinhardt’s Grosses Schauspielhaus: Its Artistic Goals, Planning and Operation, 1910-1933* (2003) considers that this production ‘must have been an attempt to connect *Hamlet* with the war and the fall of

the German monarchy'.⁸⁸ Claudius and Polonius wore the traditional clothes of German knights so representing the old German order. Hamlet wearing a heavy loose coat represented the German *Volk* whose failure to take decisive action brought about a situation similar to that of the Berlin uprising in the November revolution. Stern's sets were concerned with open and generalised space being sliding walls that were closed for interior scenes and opened to provide large playing spaces.

Shelving's localised scenic designs for the Rep's production were more traditional in concept than the spaces created by Jones and Stern. They were designed for the same stage structure that had served *Cymbeline* but were realised on a more sophisticated level. These designs were restrained and evocative, relying on Shelving's bold clarity of line, stylisation and subtle references to the visual arts to achieve the required effect. Essentially they were a synthesis of characteristic approaches that Shelving had used for Shakespeare productions at the Rep and the skills he had developed while working with more traditional approaches. They succeeded because they framed the psychological impact of the drama but did not obtrude on the intended dynamics of this production. Shelving's skill lay in the fact that his designs were far from the dogmatic literalism predicted by one reviewer. '[Denmark] is a homely, bustling country producing enormous quantities of butter, noted for its bacon factories, and altogether as efficient, pastoral, and unromantic as the Middle West of the U.S.A.'⁸⁹ His scenic designs provided a plausible setting for twentieth century Elsinore by suggesting the ambiance of a small European court.

For the main set Shelving used scale and simplicity to suggest a large hall or public room in a castle. A stippled stone effect was used on the floor, the two steps that lead to the inner stage and the columns created by a false proscenium. A backdrop dominated by two impressive, long, rectangular leaded windows indicated

an interior wall of the same stone. The entire space lacked any sense of opulence, decoration or domesticity. It effectively suggested the transience of human activity, both past and present. Even the small, heraldic devices on the windows gave little indication of permanency. The two-dimensional chandelier hanging from the centre of the flys was a reminder that ‘Shelving’s scenery never pretends. For him the stage is always a stage and his decorations are stage decorations’.⁹⁰ Furniture was minimal and offered no sense of dynasty. The heavy Jacobean pieces could either have been genuinely historical or recent reproductions. Although in keeping with the solid anonymity of the set, their prime purpose was utilitarian. A low upholstered bench supported by six short bulbous legs was used frequently as were some simple but sturdy chairs. Ledges at the base of the columns also provided seating and were utilised as playing areas. It is plausible that Shelving had in mind Edwin Lutyens’s design for Castle Drogo in Devon. Intended as an ancestral home, it was built between 1910 and 1925 for Julius Drew the founder of the Home and Colonial stores. It combined the austerity of a medieval castle with Jacobean styling and the comforts of the twentieth century in the living areas. The design epitomises a sense of timelessness. In particular the entrance hall, corridor and main staircase evoke a similar mood to that of Shelving’s main set for *Hamlet*, (illustration 77).

Shelving achieved other settings by changes in the back-drop or the use of plain-coloured curtains for front scenes. The royal family’s personal quarters were designated by a painted curtain. This conveyed an oppressive and uncompromising atmosphere and was used to accommodate Claudius’s attempt to pray, Hamlet’s interview with Gertrude and the murder of Polonius. It was retained until Claudius arranged for Hamlet’s departure to England. Dawson observes that this provided ‘a single resonant physical space in which to enact the psychological dynamics’.⁹¹

Shelving ensured that the images on the curtain underlined the psychological anguish of the characters. Possibly intended to represent a tapestry, they provided a strong sense of religious presence. Romanesque in inspiration, a row of stylised robed figures, each apparently a saint with a halo, were realised in outline. Each slightly contorted figure faced in an opposite direction so creating a sense of tension and unease. They were contained individually by the Romanesque outline of arches or cloisters. As such, they suggested an older part of the castle still bound to religion and the past. These saints were a potent reminder that, despite their modern clothes, the actions of Hamlet, Gertrude and Claudius were subject to the laws of religion. Edith Shackleton in the *Evening Standard* noticed the implied weakness in Claudius who '[kept] a syphon and decanter next to his prayer closet'.⁹² It was a naturalistic gesture for Frank Vosper, who played Claudius, to turn to the modern solace of a whisky and soda, before he attempted ineffectual prayer kneeling on a prie-dieu. Hamlet challenged Gertrude's behaviour watched by the same saints. Shelving's setting gave full import to the lines 'Heaven's face doth glow, / Yea this solidity and compound mass / With tristful visage, as against the doom, / Is thought-sick at the act.' (3.4.47-50). Cochrane identifies an instance after Claudius had despatched Hamlet to England 'that might have some [sic] straight from a modern thriller. As the curtain drew across, the King moved away and then shrank back at the sight of Polonius's blood'.⁹³ Ayliff must have had the genre in mind. A similar moment is recorded in a photograph which shows Gertrude's implication in the concealment of Polonius's body. She draws back the curtain to assist Hamlet as he hauls away the body. They are observed by the omnipresent Saint John the Baptist as well the other saints.⁹⁴

Shelving's design for this curtain owes something to that of Jones's tableau curtain for the Barrymore production. Jones's drawing shows six large figures swathed in simple long robes, each slightly different in style. Although crowned, their heads are surrounded by a halo. Morrison suggests that 'In general outline, they suggested the representation of the Ghost in the first act'.⁹⁵ This seems unlikely as initially the Ghost had been realised 'as a greenish, wavering light, ten feet high, against the midnight blue of the backdrop'⁹⁶ and the figure was not robed but armoured. An on-stage armour-clad Ghost was adopted for the second season of the Barrymore *Hamlet*. It therefore appears more likely that these looming multiple images were those of saints and that Shelving had appreciated both the visual and dramatic import of this curtain design. He made a further visual statement concerning the ambivalence of the scenes performed in the presence of the saints. The suits of armour placed at either side of the stage were a reminder of violence and historical deeds of valour. These were the values of the past that had been out of place in both Hamlet's mind and the superficial sophistication of the Court. Whether decorative or genuine, the armour was a stark contrast to the religious nature of the curtain, but an appropriate device to provide Hamlet with a sword as he considered his opportunity to murder Claudius.

The effectiveness of Shelving's skill in using economy of design to capture the resonance of a scene was perhaps most evident in his interpretation of the graveyard. Its style is influenced by the designer's interest in Expressionism. There was no suggestion of naturalism and the effect was stark and austere. The back-drop had outline images of a winged marble angel and a group of pale tombs stage right; a funerary urn, Danish cross and tall obelisk stage left. The presence of a large simple cross standing on a plinth and placed centrally on the upper stage enhanced this

sombre mood. Ophelia's grave was a plain rectangle resting on the steps in front of this cross (illustration 78). Its realisation exemplified his approach: 'What we try to do to-day is to accept the fact boldly that all scenery is a convention, and to simplify it wherever possible, having as our aim a background which throws up the actors and helps them to suggest the fiction of the play by a few leading characteristics rather than a wealth of detail.'⁹⁷ Shelving's ability to create an apposite atmosphere can be judged by the analogy drawn in the *Great Provincial Conservative Daily*, 'Ophelia's funeral took place in a Kensal Green full of monumental masonry'.⁹⁸ This cemetery had been created on the outskirts of London in 1832 to accommodate the need for more burial space in the capital. It quickly became a fashionable site for Victorian interments and magnificent memorials such as Shelving's marble angel were commonplace. Its reputation was secured with the burials of Prince Augustus Fredrick, the sixth son of George III and Princess Sophia, his fifth daughter. Later, in 1904, a mausoleum was built for a grandson, Prince George, Duke of Cambridge. Such associations accorded well with the burial of a 1920s Ophelia.⁹⁹ Yet the stark, comfortless effect of Shelving's design is also in keeping with the uncompromising humour of the grave-digger. The staging of Ophelia's funeral served to emphasise the tragic loss of a young life and the personal nature of the mourning. The *Newcastle Journal* observed that 'in the customary presentation [...] you lose the pathos of it in the pageantry. In the Kingsway performance the effect of the mourners appearing at the graveside in present day robes was to intensify to an unbelievable degree the overwhelming poignancy of the tragedy'.¹⁰⁰ Photographs confirm that although the Ghost of Old Hamlet first appeared in front of a cloth that indicated the bold outline of battlement tops and toy-like canon, his subsequent manifestations were in this graveyard.¹⁰¹ Although this would have limited scene changes and aided

the quickened pace of the production, there is also the inference that he too could have been buried here.

Shelving's designs for the 'The Mousetrap' were a marked contrast to those for the rest of the production. As such, there was a sense of dislocation between appearance and reality which gave an added psychological resonance to the scene. The artificiality of the play's presentation and the revelation of the murder of Old Hamlet heightened the effect of Claudius's response. The play was presented with the court seated at either side of the stage, where Gertrude and Claudius were placed centrally side by side on an upholstered bench. Hamlet lounged on the floor, stage left. The players, dressed in medieval costumes, performed the play at the top of the steps using two different backdrops. These pictorial scenes were depicted with full perspective. One showed two flat-bottom barges on an inland waterway. Although of no particular period, the neat buildings on either side were not medieval and the effect suggested the Netherlands rather than the Viennese setting of the story of Duke Gonzago and Baptista. This image was contained in a picture frame and was rolled up to reveal a 'stage' and the second backdrop that illustrated a forest clearing framed by trees, beyond which undulating hills were surmounted by a fairy-tale castle. Reviewers made few references to Shelving's scenic designs but comments concerning these back-cloths revealed a certain amount of confusion. One regarded it as a 'background of the most modern decorative scene paintings',¹⁰² another considered that the back-cloth 'looked as if it had been picked up at a sale.'¹⁰³ (illustration 79). Shelving's intention appears to have been to establish a strong visual distinction between the staging of *Hamlet* and 'The Mousetrap,' the disparity of costume and scenery perhaps suggesting the rather precarious and sometimes makeshift nature of Victorian touring companies. Opinion was divided on the staging

of this scene. Some considered that the idea had been unsuccessful. 'It is inconceivable that any court which had arrived at cocktails and ragtime and boiled shirts could be entertained by any piece so *naïf* and so childishly staged.'¹⁰⁴ J.K. Prothero's enthusiastic endorsement of the production was qualified by his thoughts on the staging of 'The Mousetrap'. 'You are conscious for the first time in the production of an unreality. The archaic garments are unnecessary and I think that the players should wear modern clothes.'¹⁰⁵ G.W. Bishop believed, however, that 'the most striking gain was in the play scene, for then the actors in their mediæval costumes were differentiated from the people of the Court'.¹⁰⁶ This must have been Shelving's intention, as it provided a telling contrast between the naturalistic characters in their modern dress and the parody presented by the players.

In essence Shelving's approach to the costumes for *Hamlet* was a progression of the ideas that he had evolved for *Cymbeline*. His cogent visual interpretation again used the fashion codes of the mid 1920s to evoke the ambience of a royal household and to define a social hierarchy. He followed a template that included military dress uniforms, evening suits and well-made fashionable clothes for the women. Yet there was a marked clarity in the subtle realisation of character through costume that was central to the cohesion of the production. The extent to which the success of *The Vortex* influenced the Birmingham Rep's production of *Hamlet* is a matter for conjecture. Given the fashionable trends of the 1920s certain similarities in the productions were inevitable. Syncopated music played by an unseen orchestra was heard as the modern-dress Danish court was revealed for the first time, cocktails were served and in keeping with the times, Claudius, Hamlet and other members of the court smoked cigarettes. Whether it was a conscious reaction to *The Vortex* or a thorough re-examination of *Hamlet* on the designer's part, Shelving's costumes

emphasised the youth of Hamlet, Ophelia and their contemporaries and created a contrast with the attire of the older generation. It was in this way that Shelving exposed the generational conflicts in *Hamlet* as never before. Jackson commented that: 'We are trying to avoid any fashionable extremes of dress in "Hamlet." We do not want the apparel of the players to take the audience's attention off the play'.¹⁰⁷ Given the adventurous and innovative nature of the production it was inevitable that critics would comment on the costumes. It is a measure of Shelving's success that they were judged to contribute to the plausibility of characters and to give a particular psychological reality to certain scenes.

The opening scene of the production was played on 'a more than usually darkened stage'.¹⁰⁸ This must have served the dramatic purpose of allowing the full impact of the modern costumes to be realised when the Court was revealed. It did afford the audience a glimpse of the modernity that was to follow. Barnardo and Francisco could be discerned in military greatcoats with Danish service caps. Old Hamlet's costume had been treated with a luminous paint in order to impart a ghostlike quality, but he wore the uniform of a Danish general with a full outdoor cloak giving the impression of an active military man. As intended, the mood of cold, unease and uncertainty was very different to the modern atmosphere which prevailed in the Court of Claudius and Gertrude.

The impact was unequivocal as the curtain rose on the Court assembled at an evening function. 'Then in a blaze of light came the great and sudden shock of seeing the Court of Denmark in the dresses and uniforms of today.'¹⁰⁹ Gertrude and Claudius were presented as attractive, plausible individuals. Vosper, considered that his character had 'benefited perhaps more than any other character by the clothes of to-day'.¹¹⁰ His interpretation did much to bring new insights to the play. For his first

appearance, Shelving dressed him in an immaculate tailed evening suit, with a pale blue garter ribbon, to signify his position. Throughout the play his costumes always presented a more formal aspect than those worn by younger characters. Even though his private reaction to 'The Mousetrap' had been to reach for a whisky and soda, he outwardly remained immaculate in a purple silk dressing gown, worn over his evening shirt and trousers, with his white tie in place. His well-cut morning suit, with winged collar and broad cravat, conveyed his sense of control as he witnessed Ophelia's madness. The new King's manner was suave and sophisticated. This made the behaviour of both Hamlet and Gertrude more intelligible and explained the Court's easy acceptance of his kingship. Vosper wrote that 'I have attempted to make him sufficiently attractive to account for Gertrude's frailty and "o'er-hasty marriage'.'¹¹¹ John Palmer in the *Fortnightly Review* recognised that this portrayal of a complex character brought other dimensions to the play and did much to explain Hamlet's irresolution. 'No one would hesitate five minutes about killing the conventional horrid monster of the romantic stage [...]. It is quite another matter to make away with the pleasant gentleman presented by Mr. Vosper.'¹¹² It was also credible that neither the court nor Gertrude suspected the King's villainy.

The London couturier Elspeth Macbeth is credited in the Kingsway programme with the realisation of the women's dresses and hats. Shelving's use of this expertise indicates that he intended that the cut, style and quality of the women's costumes would be consistent with their social status. Shelving dressed Gertrude as a stylish woman. He avoided the suggestion of a stereotype that he had exploited when dressing the Queen in *Cymbeline*, by devising costumes that afforded her a sense of dignity and personal expression. This distinguished her from the other court ladies. Gertrude, played by Dorothy Massingham, was provided with a range of appropriate

day and evening wear. The realisation of her costumes shows that Shelving had developed an astute understanding of the need to balance the delineation of a character and the theatrical moment against the prevailing fashions of the day. Gertrude's shingled auburn hair proclaimed her as a modern woman but allowed the passing thought that she, like Florence Lancaster in *The Vortex*, was 'the woman who is afraid that youth is slipping from her.'¹¹³ Shelving suggested a luxuriant, voluptuous element to her character by the use of a range of rich colours and a choice of striking fabrics. Indeed, Gertrude was a woman who expressed her status through her sense of fashion. The *Westminster Gazette* noted a sea-green frock with 'slanting flounces deepening to an almost emerald shade.'¹¹⁴ Other aspects of her extensive wardrobe were described by the *Manchester Weekly Guardian* as 'a gold tissue evening dress with a square train' and 'a red lace afternoon frock with short sleeves and a too narrow skirt.' Her negligée 'made with long wide square sleeves [...] falls to the ground in beautiful sunburn-tinted folds.'¹¹⁵ Such colours were occasionally favoured for women's clothes at the time but as Jane Dormer in *Fashion in the Twenties and Thirties* (1973) notes, 'the colours of the twenties were dull on the whole, almost as if the generation was afraid of sentiment and hid away any feeling it might have had for pretty feminine colours under a pall of pale browns and greys.'¹¹⁶ Shelving's choice of colours for Gertrude therefore subtly implied that the Queen's clothes sense was a little out of keeping with the times and represented a false sense of bravura. Indeed, the *Evening Dispatch* considered she was played as 'a Queen whose soul struggles against the grip of circumstance, a frail woman writhing in mental anguish'.¹¹⁷ The critic J.T. Grein also gives a telling insight into Massingham's realisation of the part, considering that the character had similarities

with the ill-fated Draga of Serbia: ‘Suave, an *amareuse*, terribly embarrassed, yet always a great lady’.¹¹⁸

The brittle ambiance of the court was undercut by the dress and appearance of Hamlet. Played by Colin Keith Johnston wearing a ‘soft collar and lounge suit’ with a black band around his arm, his clothes expressed that he was ‘simply a modern young man full of the spirit of revolt’.¹¹⁹ This immediate identification with an outlook that had been tellingly evoked by Coward in *The Vortex* was a crucial moment. Having established Hamlet’s youth and alienated mood through the informality of his dress, Shelving sustained this contrast with that of the older generation throughout the production. His ability to express the psychological intensity of the moment by the use of costume is aptly illustrated in Hamlet’s appearance after the death of Polonius. The Prince’s emotional turmoil and exertions were marked by his appearance in shirtsleeves with braces exposed and unfastened bow tie hanging around his neck. Hamlet’s arrival at the graveyard in casual ‘plus fours’ encouraged the reviewers to label the production ‘Hamlet in plus-fours’ but the aptness of Shelving’s subtle choice of costume appears to have gone unnoticed. It was, after all, an acceptable choice of garb for travellers. Its social incongruity at the funeral provided a visual reminder of Hamlet’s unawareness of Ophelia’s death and underlined his isolation from her black clothed mourners.

Many critics felt that the character of Polonius gained immeasurably when presented in modern clothes. His appearances in a high-buttoned long frock coat and spats, lounge suit with bow tie, and tailed evening attire, achieved the impression of a conscientious diplomat rather than the tiresome old fool of traditional productions. This credibility inspired a description in the *Evening Dispatch* that he was ‘the Polonius you often meet in your own drawing room, self important, a sly wit, a

dreadful bore, a bit of a fool and a bit of a sage – a very human person indeed!’.¹²⁰

Clearly this was written in the assumption that members of the audience would have their own drawing rooms in which to encounter such an individual. Thus attired, Polonius was easily identified as an indubitable politician who adhered to the values of the court. Within this context his allegiance to Claudius was comprehensible.

Given the humanity that A. Bromley-Davenport imparted to the character, the impact of Polonius’s murder could only have added to the horror of Hamlet’s actions.

It was clear to a twentieth-century audience that a generational difference informed Polonius’s relationship with Ophelia and Laertes. The *Liverpool Post* described him as ‘the typical platitudinous paterfamilias who does not begin to understand the rising generation’.¹²¹ This distance between father and daughter was made more apparent by the casting of the eighteen year old Muriel Hewitt as Ophelia. Shelving dressed her as a modern young woman, but his costumes emphasised her youth and vulnerability so she had little in common with the independent attitudes of some young women. Her hair was not bobbed but wound in ‘wrinkles’ so presenting a demure image. She wore the fashionably pale and neutral colours of the day but Shelving succeeded in creating an image that suggested a contemporary correlation with her character – the *Daily News* describing her as ‘pretty and dutiful to her father as a very young flapper in Surbiton who didn’t go to night clubs might be’.¹²² Her first costume was a decorous jumper suit, with a Peter Pan collar and box-pleated skirt in parchment-coloured crêpe-de-Chine. During the play scene she was clearly distinguished from Gertrude and the older women in their accessorised gowns by a simply cut, unadorned foxglove pink evening frock with a self-colour sash at her hips. Some reviewers had difficulty in equating the short, chiffon sleeved, black dress worn for her mad scenes with their previous conceptions

of the character. One considered that ‘Ophelia mad, it must be admitted, was less moving than when clad in flowing robes’.¹²³ The *Midlander* understood the psychological value of Ophelia’s costume for this scene. ‘The tragedy is far better appreciated when we see a slip of a girl in a black frock, dressed as one of our friends might dress, staring with unseeing eyes at her grief-stricken brother; then we feel the true pity and terror of it.’¹²⁴ The tragic waste of young life was again emphasised in the duel scene where Hamlet fought in his shirt sleeves, tie and ‘plus fours’ whilst Laertes met his death in grey flannels and a cable knit cardigan, (illustration 80).

Shelving’s costumes also established the social distinctions between the court and other characters in the play. This framed the credibility of *Hamlet* in terms of the twentieth century by creating a recognisable and plausible society. As in *Cymbeline*, royal servants, recognisable by their liveries, contributed to the ambience of a court: ‘a flunkey in gorgeous crimson livery moved about with a tray of coffee cups’.¹²⁵ The first gravedigger, played by Cedric Hardwicke, was clearly a working man costumed in a worn semblance of once smart attire – his ownership of a bowler hat and swallow tail coat perhaps suggesting that the character had acquired his clothes second hand. The *Birmingham Post* observed that a red handkerchief stuck through his coat tails – a deft touch by Shelving to associate the gravedigger with his textual designation as a clown.¹²⁶ Shelving’s realisation of the players was tempered by gentle parody. As social status in the 1920s was immediately discernible by the quality of clothes and the taste of the wearer, the audience would have expected the costumes to distinguish the players from the court. Shelving resolved this by responding to the inherent theatricality of the group, dressing the First Player as a flamboyant actor-manager ‘in a vivid brown coat and knee breeches’.¹²⁷ The *Manchester Weekly Guardian* described the distinctly different effect between these,

and those worn by the female courtiers; ‘two of the players [...] arrive fresh from their “train call” in abbreviated two-piece suits that cry out “ a bargain my dear, from a little place near Shaftesbury Avenue”’.¹²⁸ Several reviewers commented that the arrival of the players had raised ‘the first laugh of the evening’.¹²⁹ It would seem that the audience had recognised a familiar group of characters. Shelving’s sharp understanding of the inherent possibilities of 1920s fashion was inevitably extended to Osric – the *Daily Herald* noting that ‘it was a fine touch of satire to put Osric, that mincing fop of a courtier, into Oxford trousers’.¹³⁰ His extremely baggy trousers were a passing fad of the time and defined him as a fashion victim.

Critical response to this production of *Hamlet* was almost unanimously in accord with the comments of G.W. Bishop. ‘Speaking generally it was taken as seriously as Barry Jackson intended, and if there were any members of the audience on the first night who came to laugh most of them remained, if not to pray, certainly to be profoundly moved.’¹³¹ The production succeeded in interpreting the play in terms of the twentieth century. The definition of these terms varied but most drew analogies with popular culture. Some felt that it reflected the work of modern fiction writers such as E. Phillips Oppenheim who had popularised the thriller genre. Others drew comparisons with the Ruritanian novels of Anthony Hope. No doubt reviewers had the numerous film and stage versions of these writers’ work in mind as well as the original books. The most recent of the many revivals of Hope’s *Prisoner of Zenda* (Haymarket, 1923) had been a box office success. Phillip Oppenheim’s considerable popularity was reflected in innumerable films as well as the stage adaptation of *The Eclipse* (Garrick, 1919). Five films were made between 1923 and 1925. These included titles calculated to arouse the curiosity of the public such as *The Seven Conundrums* and *Michael's Evil Deeds* (1923), *The Terrible Hobby of Sir Joseph*

Londe (1924) and *The Adventures of Mr. Joseph P. Gray* (1925). Such was the enthusiasm for Hope's novels that they had been filmed several times. Versions of *The Prisoner of Zenda* had been made in 1913, 1915 and 1922 and *Rupert of Hentzau* had been filmed twice in 1915 and 1922. Clearly Shelving's stage designs and costumes had replicated something of the mood of the visual realisation of these popular fictions. Most critics, however, were drawn to the reinterpretation of the characters in *Hamlet* and commented on their humanity and the psychological insights afforded by the production. Shelving's originality in producing costume designs that related these characters to the twentieth century was an essential aspect of this achievement. As Norman Marshall in *The Producer and the Play* (1975) points out, the costumes affected the actors. 'They could no longer think of the people in the play as belonging to a world remote from the present. All the old conventional gestures, make-ups, and stage business had to be abandoned.'¹³² Many commented that Ayliff had shown that *Hamlet* could be regarded as a modern play and drew comparisons between Colin Keith-Johnson's *Hamlet* and 'that common interloper in modern plays, the rebel against home-life'.¹³³ A comment in the *Daily Mail* best reflects the consensus of opinion concerning the production: 'it became a gripping story with nearly every character the sort of person you might know or read about any day'.¹³⁴ This is a useful reflection of the carefully balanced theatrical fiction that was accomplished. The production caught the spirit of the moment in terms of the visual arts and used this to suggest the reality of a modern-dress twentieth-century *Hamlet*. Grein was alone in suggesting the modernity of the interpretation in a philosophical context. 'One thought of Werther, Nietzsche, Hegel, Haeckel.'¹³⁵ He also suggested that the play had a modern political dimension by identifying the characters with royalty who had been dispossessed through the

redistribution of territories in the 1919 Treaty of Versailles. Such notions were not the prime intention of this *Hamlet*. The Birmingham Rep's production had in fact succeeded by popularising the play in a manner that remained sympathetic to the spirit of Shakespeare but revealed the characters by reference to the popular culture of the day. The failure to discover a similar approach to the 1928 modern-dress production of *Macbeth* demonstrates that the definition of appropriate visual points of reference for modern-dress Shakespeare in the 1920s was an essential aspect of its success.

An Unsuccessful Experiment: *Macbeth* (Royal Court, 1928)

At the curtain call after the first performance of the modern-dress production of *Macbeth* Barry Jackson felt obliged to remind his audience that ‘all experiments have their failings’.¹³⁶ The *Daily Sketch* reported that the audience had ‘seemed hypnotised by it all’¹³⁷ and Jackson seemed to have been in little doubt that the critics would be similarly unimpressed. Indeed there was unanimous agreement that the production had been a failure, although some aspects were deemed a success. Few as these were, they indicate that the Birmingham Rep’s team had approached the production with similar ideas to those that had given validity to *Cymbeline* and resulted in such a resounding success for *Hamlet*. Eric Maturin’s performance as *Macbeth* took the brunt of the criticism. Given his evident difficulty in realising the role, it was unlikely that the rest of the production would carry conviction. However, Jackson may have believed that the production was redeemable. Following the practice of *Hamlet* it was reprised at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre in November 1928, but unlike its predecessor it had an entirely new cast and was produced by Matthew Forsyth. By all accounts Jack Twyman gave a far better performance of Macbeth. His ‘speaking of Macbeth was excellent, his acting often fine and rising well to the greatest tests’.¹³⁸ This did not, however, prevent the critics from again finding fault with the production by pointing out anachronisms and inconsistencies. These, they considered, detracted from the tragedy and reduced the drama to the level of the popular genre of crook play. There was little mention of Shelving’s costumes and scenery. In *Hamlet* this lack of comment concerning the scenic decoration signified that the designer had created a credible, subtle setting that enhanced but did not unduly intrude on the drama. With *Macbeth*, except in the opening and closing scene, Shelving seemed particularly uninspired and in places

resorted to a bland pictorialism. In the case of *Macbeth*, the use of military outfits meant that his realisation of the costumes required far less ingenuity than he had applied to *Cymbeline* or *Hamlet*. In effect this gave the audience limited opportunity to re-assess the characters and their relationships in terms of the twentieth century. That this played a major part in the failure of the production has been given scant consideration. Both *Hamlet* and *Cymbeline* caught the spirit of the time by reference to the genres of psychological drama and melodrama respectively. Their success was served by references to the popular visual arts. Similar references proved detrimental to *Macbeth* and in fact militated against an acceptance that it was a plausible production in terms of the twentieth century.

J.L. Styan is mistaken when he states that '[*Macbeth*] was set as if in World War I.'¹³⁹ There is no evidence to indicate that Shelving or Ayliff sought to create any parallels with actual events in either *Cymbeline* or *Hamlet* and it is apparent that the failure of *Macbeth* was in part due to the fact that there was little, if any deviation from the *modus operandi* of the previous modern-dress productions. In 1925 the production of *Hamlet* had caught the mood of the moment expressed by *The Vortex*. However, in 1928 there were no plays to suggest a precedent for a World War I setting for *Macbeth*. During the war years the early sense of patriotism, and then the bitter anger and sense of loss caused by the events of the war had found its expression in poetry. The government had realised that the cinema could be used for the dissemination of propaganda and had put this new medium to good use by promoting heartening films of the serving forces. King Vidor's highly successful film *The Big Parade* (1925) had shown that the public was ready to respond to a realistic war drama. Although a grim statement of the madness and futility of war, it was essentially a love story. It was not until 1929, after endless rejections, that R.C.

Sherriff's play *Journey's End* was staged at the Savoy. It was an immediate sensation and eventually was performed across the English-speaking world. Even if this production had preceded that of the modern-dress *Macbeth* it is unlikely that it would have had any bearing on its outcome. It is more likely that the naturalistic acting and stark realism of the events and characters would have borne little comparison. After the performance critics still determined that '[*Macbeth*] is saturated in a mediaeval atmosphere, and deals with an episode in the dark and bloody history of Scotland, of which there is none more fierce and savage in all the world.'¹⁴⁰ The production failed to reveal that *Macbeth* dealt with the ageless philosophy and psychology of evil. The common humanity that exposed the frailty and fears of Captain Dennis Stanhope and his British army infantry company in the trenches of Saint-Quentin was rarely evident in the Birmingham Rep's modern-dress *Macbeth*. It is worth noting that the Birmingham Rep did have a later connection with *Journey's End*: Ayloff's Hamlet, Colin Keith-Johnson, played Stanhope when it was staged on Broadway in 1930.

Shelving's skills in using modern costume to interpret the psychology of a character were not used to good effect in *Macbeth*. Paradoxically this was because he adopted exactly the same approach to the costumes as in *Cymbeline* and *Hamlet*. In these productions the presence of individuals in dress military uniforms had suggested the ambiance of a court gathering. Cymbeline's appearance as a British Field Marshal had caused little undue comment, while the dress uniforms of the Danish military had been incidental to the events in *Hamlet*. Shelving's use of a mixture of Scottish and English military uniforms in *Macbeth* dominated the production and created an insistent association with Scotland that was not apparent in the scenic designs. The uniforms provided by Morris Angel Ltd., were exact replicas of modern military field and dress uniforms and were worn by most of the male cast.

The rank of the officers was distinguished by red tabs and gold braid on their caps and it was possible, of course, to differentiate between the uniforms of the Officers and N.C.O's. At the start of the play Macbeth and Banquo wore the service uniforms of British generals and Duncan had the senior rank of Commander in Chief. His sons Malcolm and Donalbain wore tartan trousers and caps, although when in England Malcolm appeared in a lounge suit and felt hat. Macbeth was resplendent in a dress kilt and full ermine robes for his coronation and wore military full-dress tartan in the banquet scene. These costumes gave an outer and ceremonial semblance of Macbeth's kingship while his return to his British service uniform for the final scene re-affirmed his qualities as a soldier.

Nevertheless, this did little to assist the audience in understanding the character or play in modern terms. Critics considered that this dress was inconsistent with the poetry of the play. James Agate's comments were acerbic: 'At once we ask whether the habit engendered at Sandhurst and matured in Whitehall incline the modern soldier to chatter of temple-haunting martlets, pendent beds and procreant cradles?'¹⁴¹ To those who considered that much of the meaning of the play depended on a verbal tour de force from Macbeth, this problem was exacerbated by Maturin's attempts to deliver the verse as naturalistic speech. St. John Ervine, writing in the *Observer* did not mince his words: '[Maturin] chewed his words, laid stress in the wrong place, swallowed the ends of sentence, and, when he was warned against the Thane of Fife by the First Apparition, said, "Whate'er thou art, for this good caution, *thengks!*" [...] it turned Macbeth from a thane into a temporary general in the Territorial Force'.¹⁴² When the production was staged at the Birmingham Rep, Twyman's performance addressed many of these difficulties, but the inconsistencies raised by modern dress continued to concern the critics.

It is a sheer impossibility to ask the modern mind to believe that a modern Macbeth would or could act with such bloodthirsty ruthlessness in the attainment of an overwhelming ambition to become King of Scotland; that his wife as a modern great lady would take an active part in the murder of a royal guest or that both of them would wander about with bloodstained daggers in their hands.¹⁴³

Given journalistic niceties of the period, none of the reviews drew attention to a particularly striking analogy between the visual realisation of the production and the circumstances of the British Royal Family. Nevertheless, this could well have contributed to the problems of accepting a modern Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. It explains how the visual arts in terms of photography and journalism worked against the plausibility of this production. In 1923, on her engagement to Prince Albert, the second son of George V and Queen Mary, Lady Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon, the fourth daughter of the Earl of Strathmore, had become a popular national celebrity. Photographed portraits of this modern, unaffected young woman were placed in shop windows and pictures of her filled the illustrated newspapers (illustration 81). There were numerous photographs of her taken at Glamis Castle, her ancestral home. Her descent from Robert II added to the British credentials of the Royal Family, who had changed their name from Saxe-Coburg-Gotha to Windsor during the 1914-1918 war. The wedding, the first marriage of a royal prince in Westminster Abbey in five hundred and forty years, was extensively reported and the press abounded with photographs. By 1928, aided by constant good publicity and carefully selected photographs, the Duke and Duchess of York, with their young daughter Elizabeth had established themselves as the embodiment of traditional ideas of family and public life. Such photographs, of course, continued to emphasise their Scottish connections. It is likely that this production of *Macbeth* invoked connotations with these popular and eminently respectable members of the Royal family. In these

circumstances it is unsurprising that the critics had some difficulty in envisioning a modern couple predisposed to murderous intent in a Scottish castle.

It is apparent that much thought had been given to the physical appearance of Lady Macbeth and that the intention was to express something of her nature in her looks. Jackson wanted to challenge tradition and stated: 'It is the custom to portray her as a big, gaunt woman. Nothing of the sort. My Lady Macbeth will be a little fair haired viper.'¹⁴⁴ (illustration 82). Mary Merrall's performance was much better received than that of Maturin's. Some claimed that she ignored her modern clothes and spoke Shakespeare in a traditional style, but it is more likely that she just had a better grasp of her part in terms of the production. Following the practice established in *Hamlet*, Shelving collaborated with a London-based fashion house to realise the women's costumes. This time the expertise of Maud Hargroves was used to ensure that the outfits were consistent with the social class of the characters. Lady Macbeth's were designed to emphasise the characteristics described by Jackson. 'Fair-haired, pale-faced, slight of figure, her appearance was made the more striking by the daintiness of dress which made all the more remarkable her sinister implacability.'¹⁴⁵ According to the *Birmingham Mail* her first appearance in a short scarlet dress caused 'something like a titter in the house.'¹⁴⁶ Indeed, reviews associated her look with the vamp and dope fiend of cinema invention. The want of a better description can be argued in terms of a lack of journalistic imagination, but these epithets had now been applied to the Queen in *Cymbeline*, Gertrude and now Lady Macbeth. In terms of identifying a modern counterpart there is some justification for the comparison but Shelving's costumes were complicit in this stereotyping. As usual much skill had gone into the detail of Lady Macbeth's attire which included a gold and white coronation gown, a pale emerald chiffon evening

dress worn for the murder scene and ivory dress with a deep V of gold guipure for the banquet scene. Although their costumes were different in style and cut, the colours of Lady Macbeth's outfits were the same as those worn by Gertrude and Cymbeline's queen. All had made their first appearance in red, Gertrude and Lady Macbeth both wore green and there were similarities between the dress worn by the Queen in *Cymbeline* for the reception of the Roman Ambassadors and Lady Macbeth's coronation robe. Furthermore, Gertrude and the Queen both had red hair. It appears that Shelving was using red and green symbolically. Merrall, in fact, had suggested that she 'always associates green with evil'.¹⁴⁷ Red would have signified the passionate and dangerous nature of these women. This does not offer an explanation for Lady Macbeth's ivory evening gown for the banquet scene other than it could imply that she was innocent of Macbeth's later iniquities. Given Shelving's consummate sense of colour in the arrangement of such scenes, it is probable that the shade of this dress was intended to centre attention on Lady Macbeth. Agate's review of *Macbeth* makes several allusions to the ill effects of the cinema on the production. His description of the scene in which Lady Macbeth encourages Macbeth to murder Duncan was one. 'I confess that I never thought to see the speech beginning:- What beast was't then / That made you break this enterprise to me? with the speaker reclining in abandonment and luxury and the arms of her Sheik on an art-coloured divan'.¹⁴⁸ Given the implied dynamics of this scene, Lady Macbeth's costumes must have been designed to emphasise her sexuality. The *Daily Sketch* notes that the bodice of her evening gown looked 'as if she was poured into it'.¹⁴⁹ Critics found such effects inconsistent with their notions of a lady of apparent good breeding. In searching for an appropriate modern counterpart one even turned to the American newspapers. 'Given a different upbringing she might have

been one of those “bobbed-haired bandits” of whom the American papers speak so lovingly.’¹⁵⁰ Prior to the performance there had been some speculation as to whether Lady Macbeth would wear pyjamas - a recent innovation in terms of women’s sleeping attire. Clearly Shelving considered that a full-length nightdress would emphasise her fragility and be more appropriate to the mood of the scene. This was more in keeping with the costume of previous Lady Macbeths who had favoured long flowing robes for this scene. Some found Merrill’s appearance reassuring and considered that it added to the success of the scene. ‘The sleep-walking scene succeeded because one ignored the doctor in his dinner jacket and had eyes and ears only for Miss Mary Merrill, whose candle and nightdress were quite traditional’.¹⁵¹ *The Times* made the perceptive observation that this outfit had in fact ‘neutralised’ the period and it was this that had given credibility to the tragedy of Lady Macbeth in this scene.¹⁵²

Shelving had been able to use the fashions of the day in both *Cymbeline* and *Hamlet* to draw a contrast between the youth and character of Imogen and the Queen, and Gertrude and Ophelia. *Macbeth* offered him limited opportunity to develop such ideas. There was a distinction between the costumes of Lady Macbeth and Lady Macduff, played by Chris Castor, who wore a pale yellow velvet picture gown of modest length for her one scene. She was thus presented as a young, matronly woman, who in the domesticity of a simple room was about to take tea from a silver service, before the sudden entry of the murderers through a window.

Those who decried the appearance of the weird sisters considered that these women dressed in old battered jackets and bedraggled skirts of dubious colour, looked as if they were charladies, (illustration 83). Cochrane comments that ‘viewed from the perspective of more than half a century, the appearance of the witches

seems extraordinarily powerful.’¹⁵³ Indeed, this interpretation of their appearance has been common in many later twentieth-century productions. Shelving, however, had used modern costume to suggest a hierarchy in both *Cymbeline* and *Hamlet* which in its turn sustained a plausible sense of society. It is understandable that in 1928, when society still retained a strong sense of social class and sense of propriety that Ervine should comment: ‘I cannot believe in the brass-hatted general who solemnly listens to the inarticulate cacklings of three gin-sodden hags from the Cannongate.’¹⁵⁴

Despite the distraction caused by the costumes some actors did benefit from the freedoms of modern dress and brought a new clarity and poignancy to their roles. Scott Sunderland as Macduff received unanimous acclaim for the humanity he expressed when hearing of the death of his wife and children. The porter played by Frank Pettingell wearing a ‘crumpled boiled shirt and collar’,¹⁵⁵ and speaking with a broad Scottish accent, also gained approval. The Birmingham Rep’s policy of paying attention to minor roles succeeded yet again. Agate made particular mention of Douglas Payne as the Second Murderer while Crompton Rhodes praised the acting of Laurence Olivier as Malcolm and Frank Moore as Seyton.

Notwithstanding the success of these roles, Shelving’s costumes had failed to create a modern society in which the tragedy of *Macbeth* was plausible. Agate made a succinct summary of the problem: ‘Does the modern costume liberate the mind from inessentials, or preoccupy it with them?’¹⁵⁶ Lacking the guise of greatness associated with the flowing robes of a vague and barbaric period, Macbeth and his consort became mundane. The critics were unable to identify a viable modern equivalent to these characters and expressed views similar to those in the *Morning Post*, ‘Macbeth himself was turned into a sort of “smart set” ruffian’ who [was] merely uninteresting and unsympathetic’.¹⁵⁷ Unlike Hamlet and Claudius, his

costume had offered no insights into his character or state of mind; they had merely confirmed his status. Lady Macbeth's costumes were stylish but suggested a stereotypical 'vamp' – a woman who seemed incongruous with the play's inherent mood of unease and superstition. Their appearance lacked conviction and the critics experienced only a limited sense of engagement. This afforded them the opportunity to ponder on the inconsistencies that were inevitable in modern-dress Shakespeare.

Shelving's scenic designs for *Macbeth* employed a similar combination of unobtrusive simplicity, stylisation, pictorial representation and expressionism that he had used for *Hamlet*. It is evident that this variety of styles did not have the same cohesive effect. Cochrane rightly qualifies her comments concerning Shelving's work 'they were brilliantly evocative of period and place as ever, perhaps too much so.'¹⁵⁸ The heath scene was indeed evocative, the set for the banquet scene reticent and unobtrusive, Lady Macduff met her fate in a modern home and Macduff received the news of her murder and that of his children in a recognisably English setting. Yet most of these scenes and others tended to detract, or contribute little to the atmosphere of the production. It is possible to detect Shelving's artistic logic for these designs but much of their subtlety and intended effect was lost. The visual evidence indicates that Shelving was attempting to demonstrate that evil deeds could be devised and committed in the most unassuming and unexceptional surroundings. Given the assurance of Shelving's vital expressionistic interpretation of the heath scene there is a sense of compromise in those that follow.

Shelving provided several different locales to accommodate the fast moving changes of scene at the beginning of *Macbeth*. Each suggested a sense of place but except for the heath scene, lacked any real connection with the psychological momentum of the play. Duncan's meeting with the Captain, Malcolm, Lennox and

Ross at the beginning of the play took place in front of an unobtrusive cloth which indicated large wrought-iron gates, stone pillars and some iron railings. Ayliff augmented the atmosphere of distant battle with the sounds of artillery batteries and machine guns in action. This, and the shouting crowds and processional music before the Banquet scene, were recorded by the British Acoustics Films Company. The first widely seen talking picture, *The Jazz Singer* directed by Alan Crosland, had only been released in October 1927. Ayliff's use of the very latest film technology to provide realistic sound effects for *Macbeth* confirms an active interest in film production and an attempt to introduce some of its potential drama to the theatre. It would have been in sharp contrast to Shelving's conscious style of stage decoration. It must be a matter of conjecture as to whether this disharmony between reality and pretence, was an attempt on the part of the producer and designer to emphasise the unnatural atmosphere of the play. Perhaps the noise detracted from Shelving's main purpose which must have been to establish the visual impact of the characters in modern military uniforms.

His design for the heath scene had the potential to establish the mood of the play. He evoked the devastation and chaos of war with an expressionistic back cloth. It showed the shattered sails of a windmill and the sharp outline of destroyed buildings silhouetted against a pale sky. A report in the *Observer* prior to the opening of the production indicates that the scenery was to be 'a very simple arrangement of back cloths, with neutral colours, just indicating the scene.'¹⁵⁹ Unfortunately there is no record of whether this scene was realised in this manner. Shelving had used a strong, violent palette for *Gas* and could have adopted a similar approach here in order to heighten the illusion of destruction and sense of unease. Some of its intended effect can be judged in (illustration 84). This shows Macbeth and Banquo confronted by the

three Witches, who loom out from the chaos. Even after eighty years the sense of modernity is evident. The design is reminiscent of Shelving's back cloth for the final act of *Gas* which showed a 'wrecked gate thrust cornerwise into the air, the broken wheel and jagged fragments of masonry and metalwork, and in the background the massive pile of buildings'.¹⁶⁰ The strong diagonal emphasis of his designs for *Gas* and *Macbeth* suggests that his interest in expressionism included that of the German cinema. These scenic designs have similar characteristics to the work of Hermann Warm, Walter Reimann and Walter Röhrig in such seminal films as Robert Wiene's *Das Kabinett des Doktor Caligari*, (illustration 85). Given the sense of nightmare and unreality that characterise expressionist films, Shelving's design for the heath scene in *Macbeth* appears relevant and appropriate. However, it is evident that the various elements of modernity presented at the beginning of the production lacked the necessary conviction and cohesion. In his review of the later production at the Birmingham Rep, Crompton Rhodes commented that 'the "alarums and excursions," through all the din of battle, were by no means ridiculous, but rather thrilling.'¹⁶¹ He was alone in his reaction. The visual realisation of these scenes did set the mood of the production but not in the way intended. An ineffectual khaki clad Macbeth, the King and thanes in modern military uniform, shabbily dressed witches, and the too real sounds of battle, disconcerted and distracted the audience. Such distractions continued throughout the production. The problem was aptly summarised in the *Daily Telegraph* 'because our attention is distracted away from the characters to the action. The play ceases to be great tragedy and becomes almost an ordinary adventure-story.'¹⁶²

Given the sense of disquiet that was evident in Shelving's design for the heath scene it is surprising that he made no further use of expressionistic design elsewhere

in the production. He provided a literal interpretation of Duncan's comment that 'This castle hath a pleasant seat.' 1.6.1 with a cloth which showed Macbeth's castle walls behind which could be seen a view of rolling hills. The king's arrival in a motor-car was no doubt intended to reinforce the modern normality of the scene but this again caused a diversion. One critic asked 'why did the producer not go the whole hog and make Macbeth telephone the news of Duncan's coming'.¹⁶³ This no doubt gave the audience little time to ponder the duplicity of Lady Macbeth's welcome, or the irony of Duncan's pleasure at the situation of the castle. The interior of Macbeth's castle was an uneasy mixture of an ancient structure furnished with a few twentieth century items of furniture. Upstage a triple-arched stone frame, standing over three steps, led to the door of Duncan's chamber. Downstage a purple brocade divan provided Lady Macbeth with a familiar prop from film scenes on which to 'vamp' her husband into compliance with her resolve. The addition of a small table, standard lamp and pot of primulas reminded Agate of 'windows in Kensington High Street and Tottenham Court Road.'¹⁶⁴ Clearly Shelving's efforts to establish the interior of Macbeth's castle as a plausible twentieth century home, with the use of carefully chosen detail, had presented this critic, who had little sympathy with the production, with an opportunity for further diversion. It is worth noting, however that the *Yorkshire Post* was of the opinion that, at times, the production conveyed 'to the full the terrible intimacy of the bond between that of husband and wife.'¹⁶⁵ This critic conceded that 'nothing, however, could give this play power to gather a true tragic sweep over so many anomalies.'¹⁶⁶

The fulfilment of Macbeth's ambition was marked by his appearance, with his consort, after the coronation in a state room at Dunsinane. Macbeth was dressed in full ceremonial highland dress, and both he and Lady Macbeth wore ermine-trimmed

cloaks. The simplicity of the setting with two large windows draped with heavy, full-length curtains, surmounted with heavy gold trimmed pelmets and an elaborate cornice, allowed the court to be seen in full splendour. Most of the men wore English or highland dress military uniforms, while the women were fashionably attired in expensive evening gowns, tiaras and three-quarter length white gloves. Two footmen wearing white wigs, knee breeches and cutaway jackets, were in attendance, (illustration 86). Banquo's alienation from the event was marked by his appearance in a khaki field uniform. The effect was more elaborate but not dissimilar to that realised by Shelving for the reception of the Roman ambassadors in *Cymbeline*. In *Macbeth* this achieved a setting which again insisted on the normality of events, rather than suggesting an underlining atmosphere of tension. Shelving's attempt to create a modern setting for the banquet scene caused some critics difficulty with its staging. The window curtains were drawn for this, and three circular tables were placed upstage, with Macbeth and Lady Macbeth seated on the central table. The other tables were half out of sight behind the false proscenium. The effect lacked the grandeur of a banquet and instead suggested the intimacy of a restaurant. Edith Shackleton, ignoring stage convention, questioned how Macbeth could have held an unnoticed conversation with a murderer in such proximity to his guests. She disliked the effect when Macbeth 'asked a silk upholstered dining chair to shake not its gory locks at him.'¹⁶⁷ Similar reservations were expressed in the *Sporting Life*, 'when Macbeth sees Banquo's ghost, and "acts according" once again the guests affect to take no notice of his tantrums, but continue contently consuming the consommé!'¹⁶⁸ Hubert Griffith, writing in the *Evening Standard*, was unperturbed by such considerations and felt that the banquet scene 'came off

notably'.¹⁶⁹ He at least believed that Shelving's simple setting had allowed the drama to develop without apparent distraction from twentieth century associations.

Shelving's design for Lady Macduff's home was also unobtrusive. For many, this scene proved effective, although J.K. Prothero felt that there was a need to localise the setting beyond the practicable latticed window which the murderers used to gain entry. He considered that the murders occurred in 'a simple country bungalow' and that the sight of Lady Macduff and her son 'suddenly and ruthlessly sent to death, has a fresh significance.'¹⁷⁰ Here, Shelving's sensitive attention to detail served the brutal horror of the moment. A silver tea service was set out on a small table between a French style settee and single chair. Lady Macduff's vulnerability and that of her son is apparent amid such ordinary, domestic surroundings. Amid such familiarity, their slaughter carried conviction for the *Morning Post*. 'There was one scene, however, which was really better in this "modern" version than in any other of recent years. [...] Here the domestic touch came in perfectly.'¹⁷¹ For others however, the stark reality of the bloodshed was entirely lost in this setting. 'Enter, through the windows, a khaki-clad, cauliflower-eared bruiser and a horrible little thug in black who stab them both: this is not even good modern crook drama.'¹⁷² This was not the only review to equate the Birmingham Rep's production of *Macbeth* with this genre.

Shelving's backing cloth for the English scene was localised as it depicted aspects of Windsor Castle framed by the branches of a tree. By using this castle, a recognizable symbol of English stability, he was able to suggest an atmosphere of normality that was in sharp contrast to the horrors that now beset Scotland. 'Each new morn / New widows howl, new orphans cry, new sorrows / Strike heaven on the face that it resounds / As if it felt with Scotland and yelled out / Like syllable of dolour.' (4.3.4-7). Clearly neither Shelving's scenic design, nor the costumes,

detracted from the quality of the acting, particularly when Macduff learnt of the murder of his wife and children. The *Times* considered that the moment lost ‘nothing because Macduff and Malcolm wore felt hats, [it] seemed to gain in freshness and poignancy by the unaffected naturalism of Mr. Scott Sunderland’s acting.’¹⁷³ Ervine, however, maintained that the localization of the scene raised further questions in his mind. ‘When I saw Malcolm lolling in front of the King of England’s palace, I wondered why it was that there were no newspapers, no telegrams, no S.O.S. messages from the B.B.C., to keep him informed of events in Scotland’.¹⁷⁴ It is evident that for him the tragic momentum of the play had been entirely lost and that here the fault lay in Shelving’s design.

The final confrontation between Macbeth and Macduff was played in front of a backcloth that showed the smashed and broken window frames of a room at Dunsinane. The force of this simple design is telling. It is a literal realisation of the effects of the fighting but Shelving’s use of a restrained expressionistic style renders a sense of cataclysmic events. The gaping hole symbolising that Macbeth’s reign of terror has been breached and new light has come to Scotland (illustration 87). Here at least Shelving’s work appears assured and interpretive of the mood and action of the moment.

The main purpose of Shelving’s scenic designs for *Macbeth* was to provide an unobtrusive background that allowed the action of the play to centre on the effects of the characters in modern dress and the interpretation that this brought to the play. It is likely that the designs were intended to refute the barbaric atmosphere of previous productions, and instead to suggest that evil deeds were possible in the everyday world of the twentieth century. It is evident that the production lacked a cohesive vision and that this was reflected in Shelving’s designs. The *Birmingham Gazette*

aptly described some of the conflicts. It was played 'now as a "great war" play, then as a drawing-room drama and at times as a domestic comedy.'¹⁷⁵ Shelving was, of course, capable of producing designs that encapsulated the spirit of a production. Cochrane suggests that in *Macbeth* he was 'drifting too near the old conventions of representational décor.'¹⁷⁶ His uncertainties, however, concerning the direction of the production revealed themselves in the absence of an effective and cohesive atmosphere. His two expressionistic designs for *Macbeth* conveyed the discordance of battle. The fact that he did not choose to sustain this mood suggests that both Ayliff and Shelving were unable to engage with the innate psychology of evil that pervades the play in terms of their twentieth-century production.

The modern-dress productions of *Cymbeline* and *Hamlet* had acknowledged the twentieth century by using convincing references to the popular visual arts. In both cases this had contributed to a fresh and relevant re-interpretation of the plays. Shelving's sensitive and at times witty use of costume had informed an understanding of character that had brought a new relevance and coherence to these plays. His limited scenic designs for *Cymbeline* and quietly evocative settings for *Hamlet* had created an appropriate atmosphere that had enhanced the action. The failure of *Macbeth* must have made it evident that these productions could not provide a template and that a literal response to costume and setting was not appropriate to each play. The modern British and Scottish military uniforms had intruded on the production of *Macbeth* and had alerted the critics to anachronisms instead of providing illumination. Those critics who sought to define the cultural moment in the production could only find analogies in the crook play. The *Daily Express* went so far as to describe the production as 'merely a bad crook play.'¹⁷⁷ This may have been in part because Maturin had previously been known for roles as

the drawing room villain. Evidence indicates, however, that the tragic force of the play was too often lost amid concerns as to the plausibility of character and setting. Without this the events became mundane and the *Evening News* considered that 'it moved nobody to pity or terror.'¹⁷⁸ The *Daily Sketch* went so far as to claim that 'the miracle was accomplished and the tragedy of Macbeth was rendered *dull*.'¹⁷⁹

Shelving's work on the modern-dress productions showed that the values of unity and cohesion established in the work of Ricketts, Wilkinson and Lovat Fraser were still an essential aspect of realising successful costume and scenic designs for Shakespeare. Shelving established a visual approach to Shakespeare in these productions that established far-reaching ideas in the interpretation of Shakespeare in terms of the twentieth century. Indeed, Kennedy writes that 'the example of *Hamlet* [...] probably had more effect on twentieth-century international performance than any other British production between the wars.'¹⁸⁰ Indeed, Ayliff and Shelving's production of *Hamlet* (Volkstheater, 1928) with Alexander Moissi achieved outstanding success. The problems that Shelving encountered with *Macbeth* provided ample evidence that, in terms of design, the concept of any modern-dress Shakespeare play had to be realistically grounded in the cultural moment.

As directors and designers seek new ways to interpret Shakespeare, modern-dress productions have continued to inform the idea that Shakespeare's enduring appeal transcends cultural, social, historical and linguistic boundaries. Shelving's visual imagination was the progenitor of all such productions. In terms of the twenty-first century perhaps one of the most compelling was Calixto Bieito's *Hamlet* (Royal Lyceum, Edinburgh, 2003), (Birmingham Repertory Theatre, 2003). Here the designers Ariane Isabell Unfried and Rifail Ajdarpasic provided an uncompromising Palace night club, sparsely furnished with modern leather chairs. The actors wore

black designer suits, shirts and ties or evening dress (illustration 88). This created a convincing world and an atmosphere that enabled Bieito to ‘unlock [*Hamlet*’s] original passion and power.’¹⁸¹ The production was hard-hitting, uncompromising and enthralling. It was a fitting legacy to Ayliff’s and Shelving’s achievements in the first productions of modern-dress Shakespeare.

¹ Bache Matthews, *A History of the Birmingham Repertory Theatre* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1924), p.136.

² Alice Margarida, “‘Two Shrews’: Lunt / Fontane (1935) and H.K. Aylliff (1927)’, *Drama Review*, 25 (1981), 87-100 (p. 98).

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CONCLUSION

This thesis has shown that the stage designers Charles Ricketts, Norman Wilkinson, Claud Lovat Fraser and Paul Shelving made a major contribution to the presentation of Shakespeare on the stage between 1909 and 1932. Each was prepared to challenge previous preconceptions in order to achieve their aims, which were to bring clarity to the staging of Shakespeare and to create a unity of effect that was interpretive of the text and mood of the play. All responded to elements of the New Stagecraft and inevitably their work was informed by the producers with whom they collaborated and the theatre spaces in which they worked. That said; this study of four designers and ten productions of Shakespeare attests to the eclectic nature of their stage and costume designs and the breadth of their artistic creativity. Ultimately, however, it was their response to the visual arts that gave their designs a freshness and immediacy that brought their interpretation of Shakespeare resoundingly into the twentieth century.

In a matter of less than twenty years, four had been lost to the devastation of war, attitudes to the design of Shakespeare production in England had changed irrevocably. Ricketts, Wilkinson, Lovat Fraser and Shelving played their part in this, for their work was instrumental in defining the importance of the role of the designer in terms of Shakespeare. It contributed much to the understanding that Shakespeare's plays were protean and that a production should be the outcome of an artistic balance between, producer, designer and the acting company. The idea was now well established at the Old Vic, Birmingham Repertory Theatre and the Maddermarket as well as for commercial productions. When the newly built Shakespeare Memorial Theatre opened in 1932, three productions were realised by theatre designers; *A*

Midsummer Night's Dream by Wilkinson, *Julius Caesar* by Aubrey Hammond and *Twelfth Night* by George Sheringham. William Bridges-Adams and Wilkinson understood that new insights into Shakespeare were to be gained from fresh and stimulating productions. They were instrumental in Theodore Komisarjevsky's invitation to work at Stratford, albeit in the role of producer and designer. An acceptance of the crucial centrality of the stage designer to Shakespeare production is a lasting legacy.

It can also be said that key aspects of the work of these four designers continues to inform a vocabulary of design for Shakespeare productions. They aimed to facilitate the action of the play and establish a cogent sense of its mood. Ricketts understood the power of symbols and symbolic groups of colour; Wilkinson the potential of a curtain that suggested place and the effect that could be achieved with the controlled use of striking, or subtle colour. The simplicity of Lovat Fraser's sets and uncompromising vibrancy of his stylised, costumes left the play unencumbered. Shelving provided a template for all future modern-dress productions of Shakespeare.

What of their response to the visual arts? It is here that we can identify the most important and far-reaching legacy of these designers. They took their inspiration from the visual arts of the past and most importantly from the present, fusing their ideas into a theatrical framework which gave Shakespeare productions a new relevancy. It was in this way that their stage work created an immediate visual experience. Today productions of Shakespeare are informed by the ever changing world and the society in which we live. The demands of different theatre spaces inspire new and ingenious solutions to the staging of Shakespeare's plays. What ever the circumstances of the production, the designer must respond in some measure to

the influence of the visual arts for they are vital to our perception of our world. In doing so, twenty-first century designers continue to be informed by the central tenet of the artistic vision of Ricketts, Wilkinson, Lovat Fraser and Shelving.

APPENDIX A

December 1909: *King Lear*, Haymarket; designed by Charles Ricketts, produced by Herbert Trench.

November 1912: *Twelfth Night*, Savoy; designed by Norman Wilkinson, produced by Harley Granville Barker.

February 1914: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Savoy; designed by Norman Wilkinson, produced by Harley Granville Barker.

April 1919: *As You Like It*, Shakespeare Memorial Theatre; designed by Claud Lovat Fraser, produced by Nigel Playfair.

April 1923: *Cymbeline*, Birmingham Repertory Theatre; designed by Paul Shelving, produced by H.K. Ayloff.

August 1925: *Hamlet*, Kingsway; designed by Paul Shelving, produced by H.K. Ayloff.

December 1925: *Henry VIII*, Empire; designed by Charles Ricketts, produced by Lewis Casson.

December 1926: *Macbeth*, Prince's; designed by Charles Ricketts, produced by Lewis Casson

February 1928: *Macbeth*, Royal Court; designed by Paul Shelving, produced by H.K. Ayloff..

April 1932: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Shakespeare Memorial Theatre; designed by Norman Wilkinson, produced by William Bridges-Adams.

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press-cuttings
Hamlet (Royal Court, 1925)
press-clippings
Henry VIII (Empire, 1925)
press-clippings
programme
Macbeth (Prince's, 1926)
press-clippings
programme
The Taming of the Shrew (Royal Court, 1928)
Harley Granville-Barker, Account Book: Savoy and St James's Productions 1912-1914
Faust I and II, 1909
Ernst Stern
costume designs
Sybil Thorndike / Lewis Casson Archive.

V&A Prints and Drawings

Charles de Sousy Ricketts, R.A. Theatre Designs Archive

Individual scenic and costume designs for numerous realised and projected productions.

King Lear (Haymarket, 1909)
scenic design for Lear's palace
possible stage-setting for Act II
possible costume design for Goneril

Henry VIII (Empire, 1925)
scenic design for Trial scene

backcloth to the Baptism scene
Macbeth (Prince's, 1926)
possible scenic design for murder scene

University of Bristol Theatre Collection

A Midsummer Night's Dream (His Majesty's, 1901)
Percy Anderson
costume designs

University of Michigan

A Midsummer Night's Dream (Savoy, 1914)
prompt-book

Witt Library

Norman Wilkinson; various reproductions of designs in Norman Wilkinson Bequest 1938.

A Midsummer Night's Dream (Savoy, 1914)
costume design, Hippolyta
costume design, Hound
A Midsummer Night's Dream (Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, 1932)
costume design, Hippolyta

ART EXHIBITIONS

Victorian Fairy Painting (Royal Academy of Arts, 1998)
The Art of Bloomsbury (Tate Britain, 1999)
Art Nouveau 1890-1914 (V&A, 2000)
Kingdom of the Soul (Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, 2000)
Shakespearean Art (Dulwich Picture Gallery, 2003)
Art Deco 1910-1939 (V&A, 2003)
Van Gogh and Britain: Pioneer Collectors (Compton Verney, 2006)
Holbein in England (Tate Britain, 2007)