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SHAKESPEARE'S WOMEN
AND
THE FIN DE SIÈCLE



Sophie Duncan

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Shakespeare's Women and the *Fin De Siècle*

SOPHIE DUNCAN

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Introduction

Writing her memoirs in 1925, the Shakespearean actress Violet Vanbrugh (1867–1942) offered a roll-call of Victorian actor-managers:

It has been my good fortune to work under many great stage-managers. Sir John Hare, Sir Squire Bancroft, Sir Henry Irving, Sir George Alexander, Sir Herbert Tree, Arthur Bouchier, Dion Boucicault, Augustin Daly, Sir Arthur Pinero, Sir Charles Wyndham, Sir Charles Hawtrey, H.V. Esmond, Seymour Hicks.

The names are standard issue in any interwar theatrical memoir: a blazon of prestige and success. But then Vanbrugh's reminiscence takes an unexpected turn.

Each of them . . . was able and brilliant, in his own way, but to Mrs. Kendal I would award the palm of being the cleverest and most sensitive—in fact quite the finest stage-manager of them all.¹

Sensitivity was not a quality all colleagues ascribed to Mrs Kendal, born Margaret Shafto Robertson in 1848. But on one point her Victorian theatrical milieu, friends, and detractors (some sworn enemies) seem to have agreed: Madge Kendal was one of the most gifted performers and stage-managers Britain had ever known. Her artistic agency, financial volition, and fierce management of her celebrity personae all reveal the complex and intricately interconnected world of the most powerful Victorian Shakespearean actresses.

This book is about those women; that select group of *fin-de-siècle* performers who gave the most iconoclastic and controversial performances of Shakespeare's heroines. *Fin-de-siècle* Shakespeare was characterized by actresses: actress-managers, 'star' actresses, actresses from theatrical dynasties, and newcomers who changed their profession forever.² The key performers in this study span, between them, all

¹ Violet Vanbrugh, *Dare to be Wise* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1925), 50–1.

² I refer to women on the Victorian stage as 'actresses' throughout this book, while acknowledging the fact that twenty-first-century women in classical theatre frequently and understandably prefer to be called 'actors'. *Fin-de-siècle* actresses proudly described themselves and were described using this term. Their personal and professional distinction from *actors* was definitive. As Tracy C. Davis points out, the fact that actresses did not appropriate wages otherwise available to actors uniquely shielded them from a major contemporary argument against women working outside the home. The phrases 'woman actor' and 'women actors' appear in nineteenth-century discourse only when discussing Early Modern or Restoration theatre. Finally, feminist work on theatre history has typically used the term 'actress'. In doing so, I echo Tracy C. Davis's *Actresses as Working Women* (1991), Gilli Bush-Bailey's *Treading the Bawds: Actresses and Playwrights on the Late-Stuart Stage* (1996), Kerry Powell's *Women and Victorian Theatre* (1997), Jacky Bratton's *New Readings in Theatre History* (2003), Kate Newey's *Women's Theatre Writing in Victorian Britain* (2005), Gail Marshall's *Actresses on the Victorian Stage*

these categories. They are the British actresses Ellen Terry (1847–1928), Madge Kendal (1848–1935), Lillie Langtry (1853–1929), Janet Achurch (1864–1916), Constance Benson (1864–1946), Mrs [Stella] Patrick Campbell (1865–1940), Violet Vanbrugh (1867–1942), Lillah McCarthy (1875–1960), and Esmé Beringer (1875–1972). These were the star actresses with the greatest cultural capital who played Shakespeare through the *fin de siècle* until the First World War, across multiple genres and sites of performance.

John Stokes defines the 'star' performer around 1900 as 'protean, multiple, yet...unmistakeably themselves and no one else'. The 'star' achieved 'celebrity' based on being both 'famous, charismatic, mythic' and 'palpably *there*' onstage. The star brought 'distinct personal possibilities' to her acting and 'embod[ied] [her] own complex times'. Stokes thus describes European stars including the French Rachel Félix (1821–58) and Sarah Bernhardt (1844–1923) and the Italian Eleonora Duse (1858–1924). This book extends Stokes's invaluable paradigm, recognizing how British actresses also specifically upheld Stokes's criteria by performing popular, metropolitan Shakespeare at the *fin de siècle*. If occasionally less 'mythic' than their exotic counterparts, these British stars were more 'palpably' and regularly 'there' and 'of [a] time' to which British audiences could relate.³ Simultaneously, new advances in travel helped actresses like Ellen Terry, Madge Kendal, and Lillie Langtry be 'there' for audiences in an increasing range of cities and countries. These actresses were both popular and powerful, exercising tremendous artistic, financial, and (often) sexual volition compared to other women of the era.

By the *fin de siècle*, popular culture depicted the successful star actress as an overwhelming, even magnetic figure. Ellaline Terriss noted that stars 'ren[t] the hearts and shatter[ed] the emotions of their audience', while in fiction, Geraldine Jewsbury noted the actress's ability to 'make all that assembled multitude laugh, weep, or experience any emotion I please to excite: —there is a positive intoxication in it...that real power'.⁴ Journalists depicted the star as a siren—the young Madge Kendal was 'bewitching' and 'indescribably captivating', while Terry managed to make the traditionally monstrous Lady Macbeth 'beautiful and bewitching' as a 'siren in place of a virago'.⁵ Even a critic ambivalent about the extent of Lillie Langtry's talent found her beauty and charisma such that he responded to her 1890 Cleopatra with frenzy, admitting that 'The house shouted with delight, and I shouted loudest of all'.⁶ Their performances could be overpowering. Constance Benson's Katherine was so ferocious that Max Beerbohm was unnerved by such a

(1998), the essays in Maggie B. Gale's edited collection *The Cambridge Companion to the Actress* (2007) and in Katharine Cockin's edited collection *Ellen Terry, Spheres of Influence* (2011), Sos Eltis's *Acts of Desire* (2013), and Kirsten Shepherd-Barr's *Theatre and Evolution from Ibsen to Beckett* (2015).

³ John Stokes, 'Varieties of Performance at the Fin de Siècle,' in Gail Marshall (ed.) *Cambridge Companion to the Fin de Siècle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 207–22, 210.

⁴ Ellaline Terriss, *Just A Little Bit Of String* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1955), 19; Geraldine Jewsbury, *Half Sisters*, II.82, quoted in Kerry Powell, *Women and Victorian Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 9.

⁵ 'The Playgoer', *Penny Illustrated Paper* [hereafter *Penny Illustrated*] (27 February 1875), 130; 'London Correspondence', *Freeman's* (31 December 1888), 133; P. Pennyng, 'Art and Artistes', *Jackson's Oxford Journal* (5 January 1889), 8.

⁶ 'The Man about Town', *Country Gentleman* (22 November 1890), 1646.

‘malevolent being’.⁷ Similarly, Sarah Bernhardt’s impact on audiences was so intense that Arthur Symons felt ‘almost a kind of obscure sensation of peril’ while rapt by her performances.⁸ Star actresses became, in twenty-first-century parlance, ‘taste-makers’, whether through costumes copied by fashionable women, celebrity product endorsements, or as the objects—and thus barometers—of cultural attachment. Thus, by 1889, Frederick Wedmore could legitimately describe Ellen Terry as ‘the sympathetic actress, whom not to admire’, which automatically meant being ‘out of the fashion’.⁹

Star actresses also had exceptional financial power. In 1884, Madge Kendal pointed out that many women in the profession

can earn their £300 or £400 a year, and that is a very nice competence for a woman in the middle class of life, very much more than she would earn in almost any other career. Besides, she has the blessedness of independence, and that is a great thing to a woman, and especially to a single woman.¹⁰

During the *fin de siècle*, performer salaries increased sharply, and the women in this book were especially high earners. Lillie Langtry’s debut in *Ours* with the Bancrofts (January 1882) earned her £250 per week; Ellen Terry earned £200 per week in the 1890s.¹¹ Economic agency meant artistic agency. The most successful actresses could finance their own managements, either alongside husbands and investors, as Marie Wilton Bancroft, Madge Kendal, and Madame Vestris did, or alone, like Lillie Langtry and Mrs Patrick Campbell. This allowed actresses to control visual and technical choices, with Langtry rebuffing managers’ charges of extravagance by pointing out ‘But I want it, and it is *my* money, isn’t it?’¹²

Star actresses also deployed their power in ways not always publicly visible. Kerry Powell claims that Madge Kendal ‘always deferred to the authority of W[illiam] H[unter] Kendal’, her husband, with whom she acted continually following their 1869 marriage.¹³ Certainly, this is the front Madge Kendal presented to the world. Nevertheless, as Chapter 1 makes clear, her fierce management of her public and private life obscured the truth. Loudly proclaiming her wifely deference, Madge Kendal privately managed every aspect of her and her husband’s lives and careers, building them into the theatrical personification of ostensible Victorian domesticity. Deemed Britain’s best actress by commentators including Shaw, Kendal is a worthy addition to Bratton’s grouping of Ellen Tree, Céline Céleste, and Priscilla Horton as one of the ‘important women who . . . worked with their partners or husbands, and who were widely acknowledged to be the actual moving force of the concern . . . not only as star performers but also in the role we would call director or artistic director’.¹⁴ As Vanbrugh’s

⁷ Max Beerbohm, ‘Shakespeare in Two Directions’ (5 January 1901), *Around Theatres*, 320.

⁸ Arthur Symons, *Plays, Acting and Music* (New York: Dutton, 1903), 27.

⁹ Frederick Wedmore, ‘The Stage’, *Academy* (5 January 1889), 14–15, 14.

¹⁰ Madge Kendal, *Dramatic Opinions* (London: Murray, 1890), 31.

¹¹ Tracy C. Davis, *Actresses as Working Women* (Oxford: Routledge, 1991), 24.

¹² James Brough, *The Prince and the Lily* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1975), 275.

¹³ Powell, *Women and Victorian Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 69.

¹⁴ Jacky Bratton, *The Making of the West End Stage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 9.

experience indicates, Madge, not William, was the powerhouse behind productions. She vaunted her marital status and the title 'Matron of the Drama', and attacked (covertly and overtly) any professional competitor whose personal life was less unassailable than her own.¹⁵ This privileged her 'brand' of celebrity actress, and was a particularly astute move during the *fin de siècle*, when questions of actress respectability were especially charged.

By the late-Victorian period, the theatrical profession was, for the first time, on the *brink* of respectability, with Henry Irving (1838–1905) becoming the first theatrical knight in 1895. Meanwhile, as Davis shows in *Actresses as Working Women*, the clichés about actresses and prostitutes were untrue. Open prostitution would have destroyed performers' careers, and available documentary records (such as censuses, Magdalen homes, refuges, and paperwork relating to delinquent women) show no evidence that Victorian sex workers described themselves or were described euphemistically as 'actresses' (78–80). However, Davis does argue for acting and prostitution as 'parallel', if not 'convergent' occupations (81), with actresses undergoing the same ontological change as 'fallen' women: 'once a woman crossed the threshold of a stage door she was "An Actress" for the rest of her days' (97). But the situation was rather more complicated. Davis acknowledges that 'a number of actresses with impeccable professional and personal credentials', including 'Madge Kendal [and] Marie Bancroft', were 'not implicated at all... and a select number of others', including Terry, Langtry, and Campbell, 'were exempted due to their considerable and enduring popularity' (78). However, this binary is difficult to sustain. Marie Bancroft had had two illegitimate children, and, as Chapters 1 and 5 show, slurs on Langtry's personal life persisted in her professional reception.

Wealth allowed actresses such as Marie Bancroft, Ellen Terry, and Lillie Langtry to buy their way out of the poverty and isolation attendant on most mothers of illegitimate children. However, while Langtry's daughter Jeanne was initially raised as her niece, Terry, as Chapter 4 shows, benefitted from journalistic collusion in eliding the ages and parentages of her two children, who appeared publicly with her and were integral to her professional life.¹⁶ There was always more than one way of reading a popular actress's life. Simultaneously, there were ultra-pious actresses such as Helena Faucit (1817–98), who remained 'An Actress' professionally even after her marriage to Sir Theodore Martin, and was all but canonized by her husband and fans; Madge Kendal dubbed her 'Our Example'.¹⁷

In 1897, *Telegraph* critic Clement Scott's assertion that women in theatre were unable to defend their purity provoked outrage from actors and managers, and silence from actresses, perhaps suggesting they recognized the atmosphere of temptation and exploitation Scott described.¹⁸ At the same time, Terry, who had three marriages, two illegitimate children, and a long affair with co-star Henry Irving,

¹⁵ Madge Kendal, *Dramatic Opinions* (London: Murray, 1890), 17.

¹⁶ Laura Beatty, *Lillie Langtry: Manners, Masks and Morals* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1999), 303–4; see Chapters 1 and 4.

¹⁷ Madge Kendal, *Dame Madge Kendal By Herself* [hereafter DMK] (London: J. Murray, 1933), 5.

¹⁸ Raymond Blathwayt, 'Does the Theatre Make For Good?', *Great Thoughts* 1.249 (1898), 228–31.

was sustained, according to Shaw, by the 'consciousness that she had never done anything wrong'.¹⁹ Madge Kendal, meanwhile, benefitted from the respectability and protection of acting alongside her husband—especially one who deferred to her.

Kendal's career trajectory illuminates the changing patterns of management at the *fin de siècle*. Like Terry, Kendal had been born into a theatrical family with a stable 'stock' company. These dynasties facilitated theatrical training and what Davis calls 'physical and financial security within the family compact'. Such stock or family companies dissolved from the 1860s onwards, as the long-run system saw players engaged for single productions, rather than for a season's work in a company's repertory.²⁰ Acting with your husband, as Kendal and Constance Benson both did (this book also argues for the ways in which Irving and Terry's relationship acted as a 'marriage'), maintained this earlier kind of theatrical relationship.

Nevertheless, I am keen not to present Kendal and Benson's behaviour as primarily defensive, or suggest that actresses like Langtry and Campbell chose management primarily as a hiding-place from sexual exploitation. Powerful and influential scholarship on Victorian theatre has emphasized the uncertainty, vulnerability, and subjugation experienced by nineteenth-century actresses, presenting the Victorian actor-manager as a primarily despotic and oppressive figure.²¹ This book departs from those positions in arguing for the experience and agency of star Shakespearean actresses, while recognizing that the work done in specifying 'the nature and composition of the masses...the unnotable women' for whom the acting profession remained a constant struggle is unlikely to be bettered.²²

Kendal's focus on her married status was a shrewd commercial move in a celebrity marketplace where theatrical interlopers like Langtry challenged theatrical families' pre-eminence. Theories of celebrity are key to this book. The star actresses in this book all embodied, and moved between, the three models of celebrity theorized by Chris Rojek. The first type of celebrity is ascribed celebrity, wherein individuals' celebrity is predetermined by their 'lineage' or 'bloodline' as royals or members of other famous families. Ellen Terry and her children enjoyed ascribed celebrity as members of the extended Terry dynasty. Achieved celebrity is acquired through professional skill and success. Although all the star actresses in this book reached achieved celebrity, the clearest example is that of Mrs Patrick Campbell, who moved from obscurity to achieved celebrity without either ascribed celebrity or the third, most contentious variety: attributed celebrity. Attributed celebrity arises through association with existing celebrities, and via cultural intermediaries, such as photographers, advisers, wardrobe staff, and publicists, who provided 'concentrated representation of an individual as noteworthy or exceptional', with the attendant 'sensationalism...vault[ing]' individuals 'into public consciousness'.²³ Like Campbell, Langtry began acting through financial necessity. However,

¹⁹ Christopher St John (ed.) *Ellen Terry & Bernard Shaw: A Correspondence* (London: Constable & Co., 1931), xiv.

²⁰ Davis, *Actresses as Working Women*, 7.

²¹ Davis, *Actresses as Working Women*; Powell, *Women and Victorian Theatre*, 65.

²² Davis, *Actresses as Working Women*, xiv.

²³ Chris Rojek, *Celebrity* (London: Reaktion, 2001), 12.

Langtry began her career as a beauty icon and royal mistress, whose appearances attracted frenzied public interest. She both disrupted paradigms for the 'legitimate' *fin-de-siècle* actress and sheds new light on histories of celebrity. Rojek's theories of celebrity rest mainly on film, sport, and musical performers, and denote attributed celebrity as a post-1920 phenomenon, before which celebrities had to either have ascribed celebrity or have 'succeeded in a *career* [*italics his*]'.²⁴ Langtry's example indicates that Rojek's model has been at work for well over a century.

Other actresses in this book also had crucial extra-theatrical significance. Being a 'protean, multiple' *fin-de-siècle* star increasingly necessitated additional interactions with contemporary culture, whether societal, sartorial, or political. A proliferating press and Rojek's 'cultural intermediaries' facilitated this. Thomas Postlewait's historiographical framework of the theatrical event acknowledges the interaction between 'agent' (performers and theatre technicians) and 'reception' (audience) in performance. Similarly, his recalibration of the 'aesthetic factors' that affect performance emphasizes 'the training of actors in types of characters, specific roles, and particular gestures and modes of delivery' and 'our return to any of these works, players, productions, spaces, buildings, and festivals, for the experience of theatre'. Postlewait's framework is especially useful for delineating the agency and impact of actresses who moved between different 'types of characters, specific roles' and highly contested 'modes of delivery'.²⁵ We can also usefully extend that model to make explicit the agent–reception interactions *beyond* the theatrical space, the implications of which were especially resonant for *fin-de-siècle* Shakespearean performance. This book contributes to this task, whether looking at Langtry's Rosalind and Hyde Park fashions, Campbell's advantageous early patronage in *As You Like It*, or Beringer and McCarthy's suffrage activism around *A Winter's Tale*. At the same time, relationships between actresses illuminate the vibrancy and volition of women's creative networks at the *fin de siècle*.

Shakespeare was key to this volition. Performances of Shakespeare's plays were the most prestigious manifestation of Victorian culture's definitive art form: theatre. Victorian theatre disseminated ideas, influenced all other forms of visual and performing arts, and provided the major recreation of a rapidly urbanizing and expanding society.²⁶ By the *fin de siècle*, tens of thousands of Londoners attended the new West End theatres—nineteen of which had been built since 1870—every night.²⁷ Other cities had also developed pleasure districts, including Manchester, where Kendal and Terry played as young actresses.²⁸ In London, the actresses

²⁴ Chris Rojek, *Fame Attack* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), 7.

²⁵ Thomas Postlewait, *Cambridge Introduction to Theatre Historiography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 12–16.

²⁶ Russell Jackson, *Victorian Theatre: The Theatre in Its Time* (Franklin, NY: New Amsterdam Books, 1994), 1; Michael R. Booth, *Theatre in the Victorian Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 3.

²⁷ Jacky Bratton, *The Making of the West End Stage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 4; Joseph Donohue, 'Introduction', Joseph Donohue (ed.) *Cambridge History of British Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), II.254.

²⁸ H.B. Rodgers, *The Suburban Growth of Victorian Manchester* (Manchester: Manchester Geographical Society, 1962) [http://www.mangeogsoc.org.uk/pdfs/centenaryedition/Cent_17_Rodgers.pdf, accessed 12 June 2012].

discussed in this book performed in theatres with audience capacities in the thousands. The St James's Theatre could hold 1,200 people.²⁹ This smart theatre, under George Alexander's management, hosted Kendal's *Rosalind* in 1885, and Langtry's *Rosalind* in 1890, as well as chic sex problem plays like Pinero's *The Second Mrs Tanqueray* (1893) (starring Mrs Patrick Campbell) and three Wilde comedies: *Lady Windermere's Fan* (1892), *An Ideal Husband* (1893), and *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895).

The Lyceum, where Ellen Terry reigned for twenty years in partnership with Henry Irving, held 2,000 people, who flocked to see her play Shakespearean heroines like Beatrice (1882), *Lady Macbeth* (*Macbeth*, 1898–9), and Imogen in *Cymbeline* (1896). Elsewhere in London, Drury Lane held 3,500 and Her Majesty's Theatre (before 1897) about 4,000.³⁰ With increasingly long runs through the period—Mrs Patrick Campbell played Ophelia for over one hundred nights in 1897, with Terry managing seventy-two nights as Imogen the year before—actresses' performances of heroines were seen by hundreds of thousands of people.³¹ But the performances' impact and longevity were even greater. An intense, far-reaching theatre-reviewing culture disseminated critical accounts of performances across Britain and beyond. Regional and provincial publications routinely sent journalists to review major metropolitan productions, meaning theatre-lovers in places like Truro and Cardiff still formed their perceptions of Shakespeare's characters through the interpretations of star actors in London, despite belonging to 'families and places' beyond 'reach of the Lyceum', as the *Sheffield & Rotherham Independent* put it.³² This mass of written coverage helped create and sustain cultural memory of particularly iconic performances, but actresses also had tremendous longevity in especially popular roles. Campbell revived her *Lady Macbeth* repeatedly between 1898 and 1920, while Langtry developed both her personal interpretation of *Rosalind* and her professional legitimacy by playing the role very regularly between 1882 and 1890. Kendal's first *Rosalind* was in 1869 and her last full-scale *As You Like It* in 1885: her final performance in the role, however, came in 1933, when BBC radio recorded her as *Rosalind*, at the age of eighty-five.³³

Shakespeare was a vital presence throughout artistic, civic, social, and political Victorian life. Victorian publication of Shakespeare's plays was unprecedented. While only sixty-five editions of the *Complete Works* had appeared between 1709 and 1810, the Victorians published nearly triple that number in only nine years

²⁹ J.L. Sryan, *The English Stage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 325.

³⁰ Michael R. Booth, *Theatre in the Victorian Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 61; *Report from the Select Committee on Theatrical Licenses and Regulations* (1866), 2 [<http://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/011560718>, accessed 12 August 2015].

³¹ George Bernard Shaw, 'Hamlet Revisited', *Saturday Review* (18 December 1897), 711–12, 711; Roger Manvell, *Ellen Terry* (London: Heinemann, 1967), 213.

³² 'Our London Letter', *Sheffield & Rotherham Independent* [hereafter *SRI*] (1 January 1889), 5.

³³ Four recorded excerpts survive. 'Act IV, Scene 1: "Am I not your *Rosalind*... But will my *Rosalind* do so?"; 'Act III, Scene 2: "I pray you... to the gallows"; 'Act III, Scene V: "And why, I pray you... fare you well"; 'Act V, Scene 4 "If it be true that good wine... bid me farewell"', from *Stars In Their Courses* (BBC National Programme: 22 April 1933), in *Sound and Moving Image Catalogue*, British Library, Cat. No. 1CL0067205.

from 1851 to 1860. Shakespeare became 'the dominant component' of the new subject of English Literature, and a key imperial export.³⁴ Scholarship attests to Shakespeare's literary influence over major Victorian authors, including Dickens, Eliot, Swinburne, and Browning.³⁵ The Victorians invented modern Shakespearean tourism, with the 1847 acquisition of Shakespeare's Birthplace, and the 1861 creation of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust establishing Stratford-upon-Avon as the epicentre of travelling 'Bardolatry'.³⁶ This popular veneration of Shakespeare offered both the 'assurance and consolation of a vanished golden age' and the 'transcendent illumination of transhistorical genius'.³⁷ Above all, Shakespeare remained the cultural constant of the theatrical repertory. Janice Norwood identifies 866 productions of Shakespeare's plays across only ten London theatres between 1837 and 1900.³⁸

The Theatre Regulation Act of 1843 freed all managements to perform 'legitimate' drama: *fin-de-siècle* theatregoers could see Shakespeare on the mixed bills on 'minor' theatres and music halls. By 1882, London had fifty-seven theatres and 415 music halls.³⁹ Venues like the Britannia, Astley's, and Pavillion, which seated 3,900, 3,800, and 3,500 people respectively, were far larger than the Lyceum. Audiences moved reasonably fluidly between different types of theatres, with working-class theatregoers buying gallery tickets for Irving and Terry, and gilded youth slumming it 'eastwards' amid 'grimy streets and black grassless squares', like Wilde's *Dorian Gray*.⁴⁰ Simultaneously, as this book shows, actresses moved between wildly different types of roles and performances. All the star actresses in this book succeeded in contemporary as well as Shakespearean roles. Ellen Terry's most popular character was the heroine of W.G. Wills's *Olivia* (Court Theatre, London, 1878), while Campbell became a star actress as Paula, Arthur Wing Pinero's iconoclastic 'woman with a past' in *The Second Mrs Tanqueray* (St James's Theatre, London, 1893).⁴¹ Kendal created roles in contemporary dramas like Lilian Vavasour in Tom Taylor and Augustus William Dubourg's *New Men and*

³⁴ Gary Taylor, *Reinventing Shakespeare* (London: Vintage, 1991), 184; 194.

³⁵ See, for examples: Valerie L. Gager, *Shakespeare and Dickens* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Robert Sawyer, *Victorian Appropriations of Shakespeare* (London: AUP, 2003); Gail Marshall, 'Shakespeare and fiction', Gail Marshall (ed.) *Shakespeare in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 96–112. Marshall also discusses, with Philip Shaw, Shakespeare's influence on Tennyson and Barrett Browning; Gail Marshall and Philip Shaw, 'Shakespeare and poetry', Gail Marshall (ed.), *Shakespeare in the Nineteenth Century*, 113–28.

³⁶ Julia Thomas, *Shakespeare's Shrine* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012).

³⁷ Graham Holderness, 'Bardolatry', *Cultural Shakespeare* (Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2001), 125–40.

³⁸ Janice Norwood, 'A reference guide to performances of Shakespeare's plays in nineteenth-century London', Gail Marshall (ed.) *Shakespeare and the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 348–416. Norwood includes Covent Garden, Drury Lane, the Haymarket, Sadler's Wells, the Olympic, Princess's, Lyceum, Her Majesty's Theatre, Surrey, Pavillion, and Whitechapel theatres. Significant omissions include the St James's Theatre and Poel's work.

³⁹ John Russell Brown (ed.) *Macbeth* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 21.

⁴⁰ Booth, *Theatre in the Victorian Age*, 61; Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* [1890] (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 43.

⁴¹ Catherine Wynne, 'Ellen Terry, Bram Stoker, and the Lyceum's Vampires', in Katharine Cockin (ed.) *Ellen Terry, Spheres of Influence* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2011), 17–32, 21.

Old Acres (Haymarket, London, 1869) and Dora in B.C. Stephenson and Clement Scott's *Diplomacy* (Prince of Wales, London, 1878), as well as the eponymous heroine of W.S. Gilbert's *Pygmalion and Galatea* (Haymarket, 1871).⁴² All performed Shakespeare in repertory with modern drama.

By bringing together *fin-de-siècle* performances of Shakespeare and contemporary Victorian drama for the first time, this book illuminates the vital ways in which *fin-de-siècle* Shakespeare and contemporary Victorian theatre culture conditioned each other. This book draws on Jacky Bratton's readings in 'intertheatricality' and interrogations of 'repertory', which recognize the importance of considering contemporary performances alongside each other. As Bratton asserts, 'all entertainments, including the dramas, that are performed within a single theatre tradition' are 'interdependent'.⁴³ Reinterrogating actresses' most iconoclastic performances of Shakespeare's heroines, and those actresses' movements between Shakespeare and *fin-de-siècle* roles, demonstrates how such performances created collisions and unexpected consonances between apparently independent areas of this 'repertory'. The performances in this book illuminate the lively intersections between *fin-de-siècle* Shakespeare and cultural phenomena in and beyond the theatre, including the 'Jack the Ripper' killings, Aestheticism, the suicide craze, and the rise of metropolitan department stores. If, as previous studies have shown, Shakespeare was everywhere in Victorian culture, this book explores the surprising ways in which Victorian culture, from *Dracula* to pornography, and from Ruskin to the suffragettes, inflected Shakespeare.

There are good reasons why this work has not been done before. A major contribution to scholarship on Victorian Shakespeare has come from transhistorical studies of individual Shakespeare plays, which trace the receptions and performance traditions of individual works, as exemplified by the Cambridge *Shakespeare in Production* series. However, the Victorian productions selected for inclusion in such volumes are often atypical of popular theatre, such as William Poel's 'reconstructions' of Elizabethan performance. Moreover, individual play histories' emphasis on patterns and evolutions between successive centuries of performance necessarily means that canonical scholarship on Victorian performance typically isolates Shakespeare from the rest of the Victorian repertory. In the past, contextualizing Victorian performances of Shakespeare has been particularly difficult because many Victorian plays have fallen into obscurity. Nina Auerbach and Jacky Bratton, both of whom have done much to alter this situation, note previous critics' dismissal of early- and mid-Victorian drama as 'sub-canonical' and 'in deep darkness, waiting for a new drama that did not appear until Ibsen'.⁴⁴ Such plays have attracted fewer reprints and less critical attention than their *fin-de-siècle*

⁴² Tom Taylor and A[ugustus] William Dubourg, *New Men and Old Acres* (New York: De Witt, n.d.); Richard Foulkes, 'Kendal, Dame Madge (1848–1935)', *DNB* [doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/34274, accessed 23 August 2015]; W.S. Gilbert, *Pygmalion and Galatea* (London: Samuel French, n.d.).

⁴³ Jacky S. Bratton, *New Readings in Theatre History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 36–7.

⁴⁴ Nina Auerbach, 'Before the curtain', Kerry Powell (ed.) *Cambridge Companion to Victorian and Edwardian Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 3–14, 3; Bratton, *Making of the West End Stage*, 170.

successors. Despite significant scholarship on performers like the Kembles, Keans, Ellen Tree, and William Macready, it has been difficult to place Shakespeare in conversation with plays that are themselves rarely studied. Conversely, *fin-de-siècle* drama's particular vitality has been rewarded by extensive scholarship, particularly in the fields of gender and sexuality. Yet *fin-de-siècle* Shakespeare remains little-studied.

As Tracy C. Davis notes, Victorian women entered the acting profession 'in great numbers... equalling and then eclipsing their male colleagues, despite a concurrent influx of men'.⁴⁵ Davis, alongside Kerry Powell, Katherine Newey, Ellen Donkin, Maggie B. Gale, and Gilli Bush-Bailey, has done invaluable work in illuminating Victorian women's achievements as playwrights and theatre managers.⁴⁶ Jacky Bratton has mapped women's contributions to the Victorian creation of the West End, where many of the productions described in this book took place.⁴⁷ Equally importantly, Jane Moody's essay in *Women and Playwriting* revealed the actress-manager's collaborative role as co-author with named playwrights.⁴⁸ Her emphasis on theatrical cooperation informs my readings of Terry and Irving's collaboration as revealed through their *fin-de-siècle* promptbooks. Drawing on Moody's work on actresses' relationships with *fin-de-siècle* playwrights, this book explores how star actresses accepted or rejected the textual demands of canonical plays in their role preparation. Recent years have seen innovative and welcome rediscoveries of a 'new canon' of women theatre-makers, whether radical pioneers on the theatrical margins, or early nineteenth-century practitioners such as Joanna Baillie (1762–1851), Elizabeth Inchbald (1753–1821), and Jane Scott (1779–1839).⁴⁹

The richness of the above studies shows how much remains to be done in recovering and resituating women's performance: including in the Shakespearean mainstream. As Cary M. Mazer points out, 'theatre activity is most culturally and socially meaningful at its most popular'.⁵⁰ As well as popular, *fin-de-siècle* Shakespeare was political. Theatrical historiography rightly recognizes New Woman, 'problem play', and Ibsen roles as electrifying *fin-de-siècle* crucibles for challenging and debating established gender roles. However, the Shakespearean performances and receptions of British actresses with the greatest cultural capital played central roles in contemporary theatrical debates on gender and female sexuality. In fact, *fin-de-siècle* stage censorship and audience conservatism created a

⁴⁵ Davis, *Actresses As Working Women*, 9.

⁴⁶ Kerry Powell, *Women and Victorian Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Katherine Newey, *Women's Theatre Writing in Victorian Britain* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Tracy C. Davis and Ellen Donkin (eds) *Women and Playwriting in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Gilli Bush-Bailey and Maggie B. Gale (eds) *Plays and Performance Texts by British and American Women from the Modernist Period 1880–1930* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2012).

⁴⁷ Jacky Bratton, *The Making of the West End Stage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

⁴⁸ Jane Moody, 'Illusions of authorship', *Women and Playwriting*, 99–124.

⁴⁹ Nancy Henry, 'Lifting the Curtain', *History Workshop Journal* 53 (Spring 2002), 264–8, 267.

⁵⁰ Cary M. Mazer, 'New theatres for a new drama', *Cambridge Companion to Victorian and Edwardian Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 207–21, 210.

space for *Shakespearean* stagings of sexuality unavailable to living playwrights. Playwright Henry Arthur Jones (1851–1929) railed in his 1885 essay ‘Religion and the Stage’ that the popular prohibition on ‘all treatment of grave subjects’ by living playwrights left contemporary drama ‘hopelessly cut off from the main currents of modern intellectual life’.⁵¹ French plays were sanitized and Ibsen’s dramas given diluted endings in adaptation, while Shakespeare’s plays were increasingly performed in fuller texts than ever before.

The richness of Shakespeare performance through the late-Victorian and Edwardian periods has been one of the great pleasures of this project. A study of *fin-de-siècle* actresses necessarily includes *fin-de-siècle* actors. The *fin de siècle* was the era of the most influential Shakespearean actor-managers, three of whom appear regularly through the book: Henry Irving, F.R. Benson (1858–1939), and Harley Granville-Barker (1877–1946). In addition to Terry and Irving, the Kendals, and the Bensons, important partnerships include that of Johnstone Forbes-Robertson and Mrs Patrick Campbell, whom George Bernard Shaw dubbed Irving and Terry’s ‘heir and heiress apparent’.⁵² The *fin de siècle* was also the era that finally abandoned Tate, Cibber, and Garrick’s adaptations of Shakespeare in favour of innovations including Poel’s Q1 *Hamlet* (1888), revivals of rarely performed plays like *All’s Well That Ends Well* (1895, 1916), and *Cymbeline* (1896), and Benson’s uncut, six-hour F1 *Hamlet* at Stratford (1899). The *fin de siècle* also saw the birth of modern open-air Shakespeare performance, a new medium to which female theatre practitioners were central (see Chapters 1 and 3).

Shakespeare studies has done much to trace creative networks and genealogies of performance among male Shakespeareans. Derek Jacobi’s statement that Hamlet is ‘the greatest of all acting traditions’ is backed by books including Clement Scott’s *Some Notable Hamlets* (1900), John Gielgud’s ‘The Hamlet Tradition’ (1937), Austin Brereton’s *Some Famous Hamlets* (1972), and John A. Mills’s *Hamlet On Stage* (1985).⁵³ Jonathan Holmes’s *Merely Players?* (2004) devotes an entire chapter to Hamlet, the only one focusing on a single role. These accounts illustrate Patrick Stewart’s conception of the role as an ‘unbroken tradition from one age to the next’.⁵⁴ Other volumes including Aiden T. and Virginia Mason Vaughan’s *Shakespeare’s Caliban* (1991) and John Gross’s *Shylock* (2001) study the acting traditions and stage business around other major male roles. The seminal six-volume *Players of Shakespeare* series (1985–2004) is the most diverse consideration of classical actors in the late twentieth century. Only three of eighty-eight performances considered are of Hamlet, but only twenty-nine of eighty-eight roles are female. The richness of scholarship on men’s traditions shows how much could be gained

⁵¹ Henry Arthur Jones, ‘Religion and the Stage’, in *The Renaissance of the English Drama* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1895), 26–55, 29.

⁵² Letter to Max Hecht (27 February 1899), Christie’s Sale Catalogue (19 May 2000) [<http://www.christies.com/lotfinder/LotDetailsPrintable.aspx?intObjectID=1799216>, accessed 10 August 2015].

⁵³ Quoted in Jonathan Holmes, *Merely Players? Actors’ Accounts of Playing Shakespeare* (London: Routledge, 2004), 95.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

by giving women's performance traditions the same attention. This is particularly true when seeking narratives of intergenerational influence. Kaara L. Peterson and Deanne Williams's *The Afterlife of Ophelia* (2012) traces the character's post-textual influence on photography, painting, film, and social media, but Neil Taylor's chapter on eight actresses playing Ophelia does not consider theatrical influence, bar one quotation from Terry.⁵⁵ Carol Chillington Rutter's *Clamorous Voices* (1988) brilliantly illuminates patterns of influence between late-twentieth-century actresses through first-person testimonies by those performers.⁵⁶ As an examination of performances over a decade in the history of the Royal Shakespeare Company, it is unbeatable, and suggests the possible richness of attending to sustained, intergenerational tradition between women. Indeed, the title of Janet Suzman's book on women in theatre, *Not Hamlet* (2012), reflects the extent to which, to date, actresses have needed to differentiate themselves from male performance traditions, rather than identifying networks and traditions in their own right.⁵⁷

Some aspects of these *fin-de-siècle* networks, as in the complex and fraught relationship between Kendal and Langtry, were extremely difficult. But actresses' performances at the *fin de siècle* also illuminate networks of cooperation, mentoring, and training between actresses, across changing models of actress training. In analysing their experiences of mentoring and succession, I draw on the concept of 'surrogation', modelled by Joseph Roach. In *Cities of the Dead*, Roach defines 'surrogation' as the 'three-sided relationship of memory, performance, and substitution' by which 'culture reproduces and re-creates itself'. In theatrical culture, surrogation continues as 'into the cavities created by loss through death or other forms of departure... survivors attempt to fit satisfactory alternatives. Because collective memory works selectively, imaginatively, and often perversely, surrogation rarely if ever succeeds', as surrogates prove 'divisive'.⁵⁸ These actresses' performance genealogies are rich in surrogation, as evinced by the popular expectation that Terry's Lady Macbeth (1888) should, like all Victorian Lady Macbeths, constitute both surrogate and memorial 'effigy' for Sarah Siddons's Regency performance. Terry was expected to 'body forth', as closely as possible, a performance that no living spectator had seen, but whose 'set of actions', i.e. stage business, held 'an open place in memory' (36). 'Shakespearean stage business', Roach argues, carries a pre-eminent artistic prestige that gives remembered business a 'secular sanctity', from which departure inevitably seems profane (82). This was certainly true of women's creative networks at the *fin de siècle*, when Shakespearean performance traditions moved between actresses via imitation of, and mentoring by, an older generation, alongside converse processes of innovation and adaptation. A recurring tension, explored by this book, occurred when actresses departed from the 'secular sanctity' of inherited performance ideals, for innovation—including innovation for innovation's sake. To understand this tension, it is necessary to understand how

⁵⁵ Neil Taylor, 'An Actress Prepares: Seven Ophelias', Kaara L. Peterson and Deanne Williams (eds) *The Afterlife of Ophelia* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 43–58.

⁵⁶ Carol Rutter, *Clamorous Voices: Shakespeare's Women Today* (London: Women's Press, 1988).

⁵⁷ Janet Suzman, *Not Hamlet* (London: Oberon, 2012).

⁵⁸ Joseph Roach, *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (New York: Columbia UP, 1998), 2.

repertory, actor preparation, actor branding, and theatrical memory operated in the period. Twentieth- and twenty-first-century theatrical tradition centres on individual role creation as a discovery shared by actor and director. In sharp contrast, Tiffany Stern demonstrates how seventeenth- and eighteenth-century rapidly changing repertory theatre saw popular performers develop ‘across-play acting personalities’, through roles and productions that ‘held hands with each other’ as the short-run system placed actors’ performances in very close conversation.⁵⁹ The late nineteenth century’s longer runs, broader repertoires, expanding profession, and complex make-up and costuming effects might have slowed this process. In fact, the reverse was true, especially for star actresses who, as Kendal observed, were discouraged from ‘changing their appearances’, instead appearing in their ‘own persons’, while male performers exploited new effects.⁶⁰

Actresses had to uphold culturally sanctioned, antecedent ideals of Shakespeare in performance, while also appearing recognizably in their ‘own person’ to avoid the fan cognitive dissonance engendered when celebrities depart from established personae. A proliferating press made actresses’ task more difficult. Journalists’ ‘at home’ interviews, gossip columns, and discussion of personal lives offered audiences more extensive, intimate coverage of actresses’ home lives, forcibly locating the actress in her ‘own complex times’ and demanding she become ‘famous, charismatic, mythic’ in both professional and offstage personae, to succeed in—and beyond—the theatrical marketplace. Accordingly, actresses’ management of their reputations and households had to be even fiercer and more nuanced. Chapter 1 discusses Kendal’s manipulation of the ‘At Home’ interview in just this fashion. Simultaneously, the proliferating press meant more theatrical reviews by satirical, serious, liberal, and conservative journals, all with space to discuss performances in terms of former performers’ posterity as well as that of *fin-de-siècle* actresses. In recovering actresses’ receptions, this book draws on the widest possible range of reviews, now digitized by the new databases of periodicals. Rediscovering provincial and special-interest publications’ criticism reveals a more detailed, diverse range of responses to production, extending and sometimes reorienting our impressions of that production’s reception. This is especially true of the case studies of Langtry’s Rosalind, Terry’s Lady Macbeth, and the Irving Club *All’s Well That Ends Well* (1895). As Emma Smith notes, reviews reveal ‘less what a production was actually *like* and more what meanings were available to a particular professional audience member... writing for a particular context’.⁶¹ Accordingly, this book uses reviews to reconstruct reception (including the politics of reception) rather than performance.

When considering the passing-on of reception and creation of theatrical posterity, Pierre Nora’s theories of ‘true memory’ are useful. Acting epitomizes the ‘true memory’ Nora defines as ‘gestures and habits, in skills passed down by unspoken traditions’. Nora theorizes modernity as the replacement of *milieux de mémoire*

⁵⁹ Tiffany Stern, *Rehearsal from Shakespeare to Sheridan* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2000), 15.

⁶⁰ Madge Kendal, *DMK*, 94.

⁶¹ Emma Smith, “Freezing the Snowman”: (How) Can We Do Performance Criticism? Laurie Maguire (ed.) *How to Do Things with Shakespeare* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 285.

(‘environments of memory’), i.e. the ‘oral and corporeal retentions of culture’. However, as Roach notes, theatre combines the *lieu de mémoire* of an ‘artificial site’ of ‘modern production’ of memory with the innately ‘resistant’ properties of the living, challenging human body, with its ability to change, through theatre, what and how cultures remember. Discussing dance, Roach notes that ballet has ‘disseminated, transmitted, and contested social and even political attitudes from the seventeenth century onwards’, with dance creating ‘a transmittable form, a kinaesthetic vocabulary’ to do this. Theatrical gesture does the same thing. *Fin-de-siècle* performance genealogies reveal the transmission of gestures that reveal and contest individual ideas about actresses, characters, and bodies.

Within their memoirs, *fin-de-siècle* actresses’ accounts of their own formation and influences see them self-fashion as surrogates and successors. The actresses’ published memoirs illuminate how assiduously they continued to manipulate their public personae, even long after retirement: Langtry, Campbell, and Benson published in the 1920s, the Kendals in the 1930s. Their writing is saturated with the vocabulary, morality, and ideas of the period in which they were most active. Campbell stressed her emotional identification with Sarah Bernhardt, who in turn foregrounded an encounter with Rachel Félix and their analogous embodiments of feminine fragility. Meanwhile, Kendal, Terry, and Benson all stressed the familial and professional training that qualified them as surrogates for particular brands of performance. The epilogue to this book examines how twentieth- and twenty-first-century performers and critics continue to identify actresses as surrogates for Victorian actresses, across temporal expanses akin to that between Siddons and Terry. Roger Rees (1944–2015) identified Judi Dench, in 1975, as ‘the same thing’ as Terry, when Dench was rehearsing *Cymbeline*.⁶² Less absolute than surrogation, the actresses’ accounts stress the importance of mentors. Kendal was Vanbrugh’s greatest influence, while Terry was trained by Ellen (Tree) Kean, and mentored actresses including Lena Ashwell and Gwen Ffrangcon-Davies.

Terry has her own field of scholarship, notably Auerbach’s landmark 1987 study, and a 2011 collection edited by Katharine Cockin. Of the other actresses central to this study, only Campbell and Langtry have received full-length studies. Campbell is usually discussed through her work in sex problem plays, or through her relationship with George Bernard Shaw.⁶³ Langtry, as mistress to the Prince of Wales and Prince Louis of Battenberg, generates more popular than academic interest. Laura Beatty’s *Lillie Langtry: Manners, Masks and Morals* (1999) is the major critical source for her life and work.⁶⁴ International cross-currents run through this book as they did *fin-de-siècle* drama, and Bernhardt and Duse, as well as American performers Ada Rehan, Elizabeth Robins, and Eleanor Calhoun, are all important to this study as figures of contrast and comparison, illuminating and influencing their British

⁶² Roger Rees, ‘Posthumus in *Cymbeline*’, Philip Brockbank (ed.) *Players of Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 139–52, 144.

⁶³ Margot Peters, *Mrs. Pat: The Life of Mrs. Patrick Campbell* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1985); Bridget Elliott, ‘New and Not So “New Women”’, *Victorian Studies* 31.1 (Autumn 1987), 33–57; Joel H. Kaplan and Sheila Stowell, *Theatre and Fashion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 45–81.

⁶⁴ Laura Beatty, *Lillie Langtry: Manners, Masks and Morals* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1999).

colleagues. However, this study focuses on British actresses: most of the women listed above—especially Duse and Bernhardt—have been extensively and compellingly examined elsewhere, and this is not their book.⁶⁵

Nor is this a book dealing extensively with the plays of Henrik Ibsen. Ibsen's importance to gender debates, European drama, and the move towards modernism is well attested, and has been brilliantly explored, along with Ibsen's centrality to the period's conceptual, intellectual, and avant-garde histories. However, this book is primarily concerned with popular performance. Elizabeth Robins's production of *Hedda Gabler* (Vaudeville Theatre, London, 1891), the play's English premiere, has received much attention, but the 'few' who attended it belonged to the *avant-garde*, rather than the mainstream. Even the sympathetic *Pall Mall Gazette* acknowledged the production was only 'almost' popular.⁶⁶ Shakespeare was rarely placed in conversation with Ibsen in *fin-de-siècle* theatre reviews, but more frequently with the plays of Pinero or Henry Arthur Jones. Notably, while Mrs Patrick Campbell controversially returned to Shakespeare after starring in Pinero's *The Second Mrs Tanqueray* and *The Notorious Mrs Ebbsmith*, her 1896 performance in *Little Eyolf* did not exacerbate critical unease about her suitability for Shakespeare. Her Pinero roles were more determinative. Before Campbell played Ophelia, *Judy* called her 'Paula Juliet Ebbsmith Lady Hamilton' without mention of her Ibsen performances.⁶⁷ Campbell's own autobiography presents Maeterlinck, not Ibsen, as a desirable alternative to Shakespeare (see p. 106). While Robins found Shakespeare empowering, Kerry Powell notes that *Hedda Gabler* brought her only 'personal and transitory' success.⁶⁸ For Langtry, Shakespeare's Rosalind proved most liberating, and Terry similarly felt that Shakespeare offered actresses better opportunities than Ibsen's 'silly ladies', and said she would 'prefer not to act' in Ibsen's plays.⁶⁹ By contrast, one element of the best in recent Ibsen scholarship has been vital to this book. Julie Holledge's work on how the role of Ibsen's Nora (*A Doll's House*) accrued meaning through successive theatrical incarnations informed this book's concern with accreted cultural and stage business in the performance of Shakespeare's heroines.⁷⁰

The first chapter of this book traces two little-studied actresses' changing receptions in a single role: Rosalind. As well as exemplifying Kendal's skilful deployment of her married reputation, built around her wedding-day performance as Rosalind, Kendal's Rosalind's evolution in the public consciousness (1869–85) demonstrates the problems of an actress's age and sexual 'knowingness' in performance. Simultaneously, Langtry's genesis as a performer challenged the 'aristocracy of labour' defined by theatrical families, while the two women's fraught professional

⁶⁵ See John Stokes, Michael R. Booth, and Susan Bennett, *Bernhardt, Terry, Duse: The Actress in Her Time* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); John Stokes, *The French Actress and Her English Audience* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

⁶⁶ 'The Theatres', *Pall Mall Gazette*, hereafter *PMG* (21 April 1891), 2.

⁶⁷ 'The Stage Coach', *Judy* (25 August 1897), 400.

⁶⁸ Powell, *Women and Victorian Theatre*, 163.

⁶⁹ Ellen Terry, 'Stray Memories', *New Review* (June 1891), 499–507, 503.

⁷⁰ Julie Holledge, 'Addressing the Global Phenomenon of *A Doll's House*', *Ibsen Studies* 8.1 (2008), 13–28.

relationship illustrated the changing nature of theatrical celebrity.⁷¹ The second chapter centres on Terry's 'divinely beautiful' but controversial Lady Macbeth, performed amid hysteria over the Ripper killings and profound anxiety over the cognitive dissonance created by seeing a 'good' actress play a 'bad' woman.⁷² The results showed that a Shakespearean queen could interrogate the institution of marriage as fiercely as any 1890s problem play. In Chapter 3, Campbell's oscillations between society drama, Shakespeare, and Maeterlinck highlight *fin-de-siècle* anxieties about child suicide, sexuality, and the unhealthy female body. The chapter also challenges *fin-de-siècle* histories of Campbell as 'created' by performances in Pinero, revealing how her early career in open-air Shakespeare was crucial to building the wealthy aristocratic coterie audience whose prestige rivalled that of any theatrical dynasty.

Examining productions through their leading actresses' performances also illuminates their plays' particular performance histories and impacts. Chapter 4, on the Lyceum *Cymbeline*, reveals Terry's performance as Imogen as profoundly implicated in the genesis of Bram Stoker's Gothic novel *Dracula* (1897). Simultaneously, building on Chapter 1's discussion of Kendal's wedding-day performance as Rosalind, Chapter 4 uses Terry's Imogen to explore *fin-de-siècle* views of wifely sexuality, with the young bride emerging as a particularly sexualized, little-studied figure in Victorian performance. The final chapter examines performances of Shakespeare's 'difficult' or rebarbative heroines through the *fin de siècle* and beyond, reorienting mainstream critical histories of *All's Well That Ends Well* and examining commodity culture and *fin-de-siècle* sexuality in 1890s performances of *Antony and Cleopatra*. All the chapters in this book share an overarching concern with marriage, that most public and private of Victorian institutions. Actresses negotiated marriage on and offstage, placing their lives, cultural profile, and roles in highly charged conversation. When wives were simultaneously queens—and vice versa—the results were particularly electrifying for the Victorian public. British actresses' performances as Imogen and Cleopatra contributed to ideas of national character, queenship, and empire as Queen Victoria's reign neared its end.

The final chapter also highlights performances of Shakespeare's heroines associated with the theatrical and political networks of the suffrage movement. Extending the term 'suffrage drama' beyond the pro-suffragist plays of Cicely Hamilton, Elizabeth Robins, and others, Shakespeare's co-option as a suffrage playwright is evident from Harley Granville-Barker's Savoy productions, starring Lillah McCarthy and Esmé Beringer, and criticism by suffrage newspapers. Christina Walshe lauded *The Winter's Tale* as an 'exposition of the humiliation of women's position', while *Suffragette* newspaper described Beringer's Paulina as 'the eternal suffragette', and an ideal model of solidarity and support for abused women.⁷³

⁷¹ Davis, *Actresses as Working Women*, xiii.

⁷² Untitled item, *Morning Post* (31 December 1888), 2.

⁷³ Christina Walsh, *Daily Herald* review (5 October 1912), quoted in John Stokes, "A woman of genius": Rebecca West at the theatre', Michael R. Booth and Joel H. Kaplan (eds) *The Edwardian Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008) 185–200, 191; untitled review in the *Suffragette* (18 October 1912), 5.

Individual *fin-de-siècle* actresses, as well as influencing their colleagues, inspired other public women as emerging writers and activists.

A final joy in writing this book has been the opportunity to draw on a wealth of unpublished archival material relating to these actresses, from Lillie Langtry's flirtatious letters to Clement Scott, to Terry's promptbooks for *Macbeth* and *Cymbeline*, now at Smallhythe Place, in Kent. As well as Kendal's idiosyncratic and occasionally vituperative manuscripts and scrapbook, Chapter 1 examines previously unseen letters made available to me by the Kendals' granddaughter and great-granddaughter: I also employ the 1933 wax cylinder recordings of Kendal's Rosalind, the only recording of her voice, first digitized by the British Library in 2015. The book as a whole benefits hugely from the Garrick Club Library's resources, especially the unpublished *Percy Fitzgerald Scrapbooks*, chronicling the life of the Lyceum. Aided by this richness in archival material, this book presents the infinite variety of Shakespeare's women at the *fin de siècle*.

1

The Lily, the Matron, and Rosalind

A notorious and beautiful woman made her way to the table. With an insolent look, she said: 'I understand that Mrs Kendal is selling herself to-day.'

Quick as a flash Mrs Kendal replied that that was not her profession.

— Hubert Swears, *When All's Said And Done* (1937)

VICTORIAN ROSALINDS

As You Like It's performance history is distinctly matrilineal. The play was 'saved to the stage' by a succession of great actresses, who established its performance traditions.¹ Although nineteenth-century actors succeeded as Jacques, including William Macready (1842), Samuel Phelps (1847), Charles Kean (1851), and Hermann Vezin (1851), only writer H.N. Hudson ever suggested there could be any doubt 'whether Jaques [sic] or Rosalind be the greater attraction'.² The consensus, typified by Mary Cowden Clarke, was that Rosalind exemplified Shakespeare's notions of 'womenkind's innate purity and devotion', and offered unique professional attractions to the actress.³ In 1875, the *Pall Mall Gazette* identified Rosalind as generically 'neutral ground, independent of professional classification'. This was a valuable opportunity at a time when taxonomies of 'heavy women' and 'walking ladies' still survived, pigeonholing actresses. *PMG* also deemed the role 'open only to the most able and accomplished', one that identified the successful performer as a member of a professional elite.⁴ The successful mid-Victorian Rosalind had to equally convey 'the romance, the sentiment, the tenderness' of Rosalind, and her 'wit' and 'archness': ideal for 'comedy actresses who are not content merely to provoke laughter'.⁵ To be content 'merely to provoke laughter' had become a devalued Shakespearean stance. Rosalind had become a didactic model of 'artlessness, guilelessness, modesty' for Victorian girls, and cultural anxieties were recalibrating the relationship between femininity, comedy, and class. Actress Helen Faucit argued that Rosalind's comedy was inaccessible to 'mere comedian[s]', requiring an 'intellect

¹ George C.D. Odell, *Shakespeare—from Betterton to Irving* (London: Constable, 1921), 339.

² H.N. Hudson, *Shakespeare* (London: Ginn & Company, 1872), 240.

³ Mary Cowden Clarke, 'Shakespeare as the Girl's Friend', *Shakespeareana* (Philadelphia: Scott, August 1887), 355–69, 357.

⁴ Anon., 'As You Like It', *PMG* (5 February 1875), 11–12, 12. All subsequent newspaper articles are unsigned, unless otherwise stated.

⁵ *Ibid.*