

# The Shakespeare Institute Review

## Love & Lust in Shakespeare

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In the works of Shakespeare, love and lust frequently serve as driving forces, underlying and motivating the principal action—and frequently propelling it forward in intriguing ways. Although very different, characters may base their actions on love, lust, or, sometimes, on a conflation of the two. In the case of *Romeo and Juliet*, the blossoming of first love may include a healthy and natural dose of lust, while Angelo in *Measure for Measure* loses himself to his own lustful impulses. Representing a more material perspective, the titular character of *Macbeth* exhibits a singular lust for power and control that eventually devours him.

The articles contained in this issue reflect a tremendously broad range in the complex differences and interactions between these motivating forces particularly in specific presentations and adaptations of Shakespeare on stage, screen, but also as recorded and in Spenser's *Fairie Queene*, a poem that provided a great antecedent for Shakespeare's own work.

Aishani Gupta and Pooja Sanyal provide a brilliantly detailed analysis of the tempestuously shifting motifs of love and lust in Vishal Bhardwaj's film, *Maqbool*, an adaptation that sets Shakespeare's *Macbeth* in the criminal underworld of modern day Mumbai.

Eleine Ng's marvelous article looks at director Oh Tae-Suk's production of *Romeo and Juliet*, examining the way that adaptation utilizes differing cultural understanding to highlight certain elements of Shakespeare's work in terms of modern political tensions while retaining an immediacy and timelessness readily appreciated by so many modern audiences.

In *Left to her will by his owne wilfull blame*, Ananya Dutta Gupta takes us to the world of one of Shakespeare's great influences to explore Edmund Spenser's *The Fairie Queene*. This thoughtful article closely examines the siege metaphor as it is used to describe the trials of male subjection to the forces of lust in book five of Spenser's epic poem.

In a beautiful piece, *'The tempter or the tempted, who sins most?'*, Melissa Merchant offers an insightful comparison and contrast of Angelo's motivation in both Shakespeare's play and William Davenant's adaptation, while deftly marking the law that punished adultery as an intersection, where love and lust had traditionally been equated.

Rounded out with a brilliant review of the recent production of *Othello* at the National Theatre by Emer McHugh, and Sara Marie Westh's terrific review of a Danish recording of Shakespeare's sonnets, and a third successive fantastic cover illustration by Rachel Stewart, this issue really has something for everyone. We are confident that these selections offer new and interesting perspectives on ideas of love and lust in the works of Shakespeare and beyond, and we hope that our readers will enjoy them as thoroughly as we have.

Sincerely,

Thea Buckley, Paul Hamilton, and John Langdon  
Editorial Board of the S. I. Review  
Shakespeare Institute

**Review of William Shakespeare's *Othello* at the Olivier Theatre, directed by Nicholas Hytner for the National Theatre, Southbank, London, 22 July 2013**

*Emer McHugh, Centre for Drama, Theatre and Performance, NUI Galway*

(reprinted with permission)

Having been an Irish rat upon British shores for some time, July 2013 was a big step in my theatre-going life. Even though I had been living in the UK for almost twelve months then, it was the first time that I had set foot inside the National Theatre to see a show. I'm very glad that my first time happened to be Nicholas Hytner's production of *Othello* at the Olivier. It was an intense, claustrophobic production, anchored by some remarkable acting. It being my first time to see the play on stage might just banish the memory of being forced to watch the Kenneth Branagh-Laurence Fishburne 1995 film version in secondary school, which had a very wet Emilia, a Branagh whose otherwise great performance as Iago was hampered by the fact that they shot his soliloquies like a David Attenborough documentary, and a Desdemona dancing with a pole for no particular reason except it probably looked nice (upon which my English teacher commented, 'As you do').

Hytner placed his actors onto a set that was initially quite urban (Iago and Roderigo's first exchange took place outside a very loud bar, for example), but as soon as it moved towards the climax of Act One with the Duke's Council, Vicki Mortimer's set began to focus on the interior: as the production progressed, tiny, brightly-lit rooms were revealed, becoming the site for much of the action. This was particularly effective once the scene moved to the Cypriot barracks. With large, looming concrete walls and lamp posts in the background, it was almost as if someone had literally ripped off the roof of one of the cabins in order to peer into the characters' private affairs. This highlighted the domesticity and intimacy of *Othello*'s tragedy; carnal affairs, and things we'd rather keep to ourselves, are a preoccupation of many of the characters. It also lent a sense of claustrophobia to the proceedings; there was no opportunity for fresh air, everyone was in each other's faces, and there was no chance of privacy. People could overhear your raucous drinking sessions. People could be eavesdropping on your private conversations. Nothing was your private business here.

But perhaps the greatest success of this production was in its casting of its Othello and Iago (Adrian Lester and Rory Kinnear). Lester's Othello, hot on the heels of his Ira Aldridge

in *Red Velvet*, was charismatic, imposing, and remarkably restrained when he needed to be. Rather than making his curse the culmination of an explosive rant, Lester delivered his ‘Goats and monkeys!’ to Lodovico (Nick Sampson) in a deadpan fashion, before marching off stage without another word. The final scene of the play saw him swing in a short space of time from displaying cold ruthlessness to expressing genuine, honest grief, yet he pulled this off rather convincingly. His murder of Desdemona (Olivia Vinall) was particularly horrible, but we grew to express a degree of sympathy for him in his final moments of despair. Rory Kinnear’s Iago was refreshingly non-Machiavellian: there was a degree of earthiness to him which made him incredibly dangerous. When he spat out ‘I hate the Moor’, his bitterness and anger was palpable. One of the greatest ironies of the play is the constant refrain of ‘honest Iago’, and Kinnear’s performance actually made sense of this. He acted as mentor to Cassio after his disgrace in Act Two, and you assume that he had played a similar role to the soldiers who have also passed through the ranks. He was the friendly bloke at work whom you would have met on the first day, who shows you the ropes, and who takes you for your first pint at the end of the day; it wasn’t for nothing that this Iago led the drinking session that resulted in Cassio losing his job. One began to realise why Othello trusts his ensign so much: Lester’s performance benefited from Kinnear’s in that it became very hard to view Othello as a gullible fool, and Kinnear’s benefited from Lester’s in that Iago did not resemble a pantomime villain. Their friendship (albeit a very one-sided one) became tangible and more realistic to the audience member. Lester and Kinnear established a formidable partnership.

They were supported ably by the likes of Lyndsay Marshal, who played a wonderfully fiery, pragmatic Emilia, one who was not afraid to have a pint with the lads or to stand up to her husband (although, one disturbing moment of manhandling suggested that Iago was abusive towards her). Jonathan Bailey, most famous for annoying David Tennant on a daily basis in ITV’s *Broadchurch*, effectively brought out the braggadocio in Cassio, but also conveyed that the young lieutenant has a lot to learn. Olivia Vinall was terrific in parts (especially in her final scene), but she began her scenes in a weirdly declamatory fashion. Her performance should be applauded for teasing out aspects of the character beyond the usual two-dimensional ‘angel’ template, but it was jarring when she began with a booming ‘WHERE SHOULD I LOSE THAT HANDKERCHIEF EMILIA’ before easing into a delivery similar to that of her fellow actors. What was particularly interesting about how her performance fit into the grand scheme of things was how out of place Desdemona looked at the barracks. This incongruity was epitomised by the Venetians’ arrival in Act Two: Iago, Othello, Emilia, Cassio, and the rest of

the fleet arrived wearing army helmets and fatigues, but Desdemona rushed in wearing casual clothes and a blue backpack. There was genuine tenderness between her and Lester's Othello, but it quickly became clear that Desdemona didn't realise what she had signed up for when marrying into the army. Perhaps she took Othello's tales of 'most disastrous chances, | Of moving accidents of flood and field, | Of hair-breadth 'scapes i' th' imminent deadly breach' (1.3.136-8) at face value.

All in all, it was a very thoughtful, well-made production. The final moments left us with Iago onstage, pausing before leaving Othello and Desdemona's lodgings with Lodovico, Gratiano, and Cassio. He stared at the three dead bodies of Othello, Desdemona, and Emilia on the bed for a good few seconds. Initially, I believed he was staring at them with a degree of remorse – or perhaps he had thought he had exceeded his expectations and hit the jackpot. With a man who vows never to 'speak word', and who will never fully disclose his intentions, it was fitting that Hytner's production closed by leaving us with more ambiguity on Iago's part.



## **Morituri te salutant—or all hail the Bard**

### **Review of Thomas Magnussen's and Bjørn Palmqvist's Danish CD *Shakespeare Sonnets***

*Sara Marie Westh, Shakespeare Institute*

Valour is a thing that always reduces me to speechless awe. Up and down the pages of history, women and men, young and old, people of all creeds and nations hurl themselves headfirst into peril, screaming defiance. In this age of safety, this world of caution, such action is deeply inspiring. Therefore the gladiatorial title: "We who are about to die salute you"; as they spoke those words, the gladiators knew they were about to step into the meat-grinder of the public arena, and its life-or-death combat for audience opinion, and they still kept walking. Whether to call it valour or folly is a matter of perspective – they did more than anyone I know would dare do today.

Likewise, I have nothing but the utmost respect for Thomas Magnussen and Bjørn Palmqvist. What they propose to do on their CD *Shakespeare Sonnets*, setting a number of Shakespeare's sonnets to music, has been done before – most recently as part of the 2012 Cultural Olympiad and Queens' Jubilee, directed by Robert Hollingworth.<sup>1</sup>

But never before has this been attempted with a Danish translation. The innovative drive itself is to be credited. In a country where Shakespeare is increasingly considered the property of the bilingual, highly academic elite, a project that uses enjoyment of music to reach across cultural barriers and publicise poetry to the population demands my respect.

Before going any further, I do not profess any musical knowledge above that of the avid listener, and I regret that I will not be able to accurately pinpoint areas for criticism using the relevant terminology. I am, however, a textual scholar, a translator, and a native Dane, and while my review cannot offer insights into music theory, it does unite my other fields of knowledge in its assessment of Magnussen and Palmqvist's endeavor.

In spite of what seems like an immensely promising project, when I first listened through the eleven Danish tracks, my impression was not that actor Magnussen and composer

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<sup>1</sup> *The Telegraph*, Music News, 16 March 2012 <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/music/music-news/9146345/Shakespeares-sonnets-set-to-music.html>> [accessed 12 March 2016].

Palmqvist were attempting to illustrate the sonnets with music, but rather that they were creating small musical mood-pieces, with little connection to their Shakespearean material, apart from vaguely familiar words and disjointed remnants of metre. This musical illustration appears to rely heavily on synthesiser, with the words of the Sonnets spoken into the mix.

In spite of my minimal knowledge of musical theory, even I sensed a certain pattern repeated through the tracks, which lent a sense of a sameness of construction in the guise of musical variation, creating the strange impression that there was ever only one track. More often than not, the final couplet is repeated, echo effects are added to various lines, and the musical mood that was set during the first few beats endures throughout. On occasion, this works quite well – for example, as in the track “Hver gang jeg tæller urets timeslag / When I do count the clock that tells the time”, where the repetition underscores the idea of chronological movement. However, when repeated over eleven tracks it makes me wonder whether the sad, euphoric, angry, reflective, romantic, or happy musical moods remain the full extent of the *Sonnets* CD’s interaction with its source. Throughout the different tracks, the artists try their hardest to span the widest possible musical field in terms of genre, appealing in turn to lovers of jazz, blues, electronica, and rock, but without committing fully to one sound. The problem with this apparent bid for nuance is that in attempting to cover such broad ground, the eleven tracks run the risk of becoming forgettable and bland in their entirety. Perhaps that is why the final track, “A Lover’s Complaint,” is my unrivalled favourite. This is the track that comes closest to theatre in the manner of its interaction with the text. The music is made to comment on the poetry rather than dictate its interpretation, allowing room for variations throughout the narrative. In short, it maintains a pleasant balance between poetry and music, and thereby breaks away from the monotony of the preceding ten tracks.

The musical moods in themselves are well developed and of great variety, but none of them change greatly from the first to the last note, so for me, their relative novelty expires within fifteen seconds. Instead of creating music to follow the shifting nuances of the poetry, *Sonnets* offers eleven tracks that each remain suspended in a single emotional frame—evocative snapshots, but little more than that. Apart from dictating the overall meaning of each sonnet, this musical stasis ignores the thematic development from the opening line to the final couplet. It makes “Min elskov er som feber, længslen heftig / My love is as a fever, longing still” into something angry and desperate; “Sørg ikke længere når jeg er død / No longer mourn for me when I am dead” becomes a requiem, complete with church choir. A final problem with the delivery is its utter disregard for metre—especially apparent in the CD’s fondness for

repetition and echo-effects—yet amid a musical barrage of genres, sound, and occasional screams that strive to overwhelm the poetry, this seems like a lesser concern.

After further examination of the lyrics, I cannot agree with Line Krogh's choices in translation. The Danish sonnets abound in archaisms, ("ligne" for "like" – "urets timeslag" for "the clock that tells the time") unwarranted alliterations, ("barsk blæst bestormer" for "rough winds do shake"—"som solen stråler" for "like the sun") and phrasings that seem chosen primarily for their adherence to metre, consequently ignoring subtler shades of meaning. To give a few examples, "Let me not to the marriage of true minds" becomes "Jeg tror på bånd som ægte troskab binder" which translates as "I believe in ties that bind true faithfulness," and "dull substance" becomes "grove stof" – "rough cloth" or "rough matter." Finally, to return to Sonnet 12 mentioned above, its translated title exemplifies the overall effect of Krogh's decisions. "Hver gang jeg tæller urets timeslag" translates as "Each time I count the watch's chiming of the hour", a rather clumsy attempt to retain the sound of "tells" from the original title "When I do count the clock that tells the time" by using "tæller" (lit. "count"). Whereas none of the words that make up the original title would be unfamiliar to a reader today, "timeslag" is an archaism, an attempt to maintain the metre and alliteration of the original line at the expense of lexical range. The effect is unfortunately one of poetry in its most inaccessible form, archaic and burdened by the metre that originally made it sound effortless.

Here toward the end, I feel the *Shakespeare Sonnets* cover deserves a mention. Bafflingly, it portrays a naked young blonde amidst the throes of turning into a tree. Anything that could offend taste has been eroded to lay bare what might be severely desiccated muscle tissue, or a clever visual illustration of the desired effect of the CD—somewhere between orgasmic and organic. It is strangely fitting that Shakespeare's portrait (the Droeshout) is to be found hidden behind the CD of translated sonnets, his etched features gazing up at you when you remove the CD from its cover.

In the end, Magnussen and Palmqvist did more than anyone I know would dare do today. Upon reflection, it might have been safer if they had done less.

## Oh Tae-Suk's *Romeo and Juliet*: Reinterpreting Love and Death through a Korean Context

Eleine Ng, *Shakespeare Institute*

Performed since 1995, South Korean director-dramatist Oh Tae-Suk's critically acclaimed Korean-language *Romeo and Juliet* has toured to over twenty cities worldwide. This paper looks at a 2005 production, the first Shakespeare adaptation to be staged by the South Korean Mokwha Repertory Company. It examines how the themes of love, lust and death in *Romeo and Juliet* are translated and transfigured in Oh's intercultural production into a Korean context, through the use of indigenous performance idioms. The powerful expression of doomed love in *Romeo and Juliet* is often absorbed and reshaped by various theatre traditions and cultures that appropriate Shakespeare, subsequently engendering new approaches through which to interpret this familiar Shakespearean text. Oh's adaptation of the play expands on this interlacing motif of love, sex and death by assimilating the prevailing division between North and South Korea into Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, and relocating the 'ancient grudge' (1.Prologue.3) to the era of the Joseon Dynasty.<sup>2</sup> Likewise, Oh's remembrance of the Korean War (1950-1953) is similarly echoed in his reimagination of Shakespeare's lovers, as Kim Bang Ok observes, "Oh's plays are bound to the past. The past may be something he wants to forget and erase. It is the experience and memory of war and death Oh underwent in his childhood. . . [that has given him] the keen eyes of a realist by the deaths he witnessed as a child."<sup>3</sup> As such, Romeo and Juliet's ill-fated love is redefined allegorically through a distinctive Korean historical and cultural framework. The performance of Romeo and Juliet's first encounter, their marriage night union and their suicides will be given particular attention, to illustrate how local histories, folk culture and traditional customs have been used to re-

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<sup>2</sup> Korea's Joseon Dynasty was founded in the late fourteenth century and lasted approximately till the late nineteenth century. To summarise briefly, the division of North and South Korea along political lines began post-World War II (1945), as Soviet military forces occupied the north of the Korean peninsula, and US military forces occupied the southern region. This effectively saw Korea become separated by two contrasting sets of political ideologies, as the South instituted a right-wing government while the North was governed by a Communist administration. The Korean War resulted from the building tensions between the two halves of the Korean peninsula. This geopolitical division of Korea still persists, despite the growing emphasis on improving cross-border relations. Although the two nation-states are divided by politics, the connections between separated families, perhaps, form the precarious link between the North and the South. The first reunion between separated Korean families took place in 2010. Such meetings are not a common occurrence and stress how the North and South Korean divide continues to affect the Korean people.

<sup>3</sup> Kim's full excerpt can be found in the 2006 London Barbican performance programme; see the Asian Shakespeare Intercultural Archive (A|S|I|A): *Asian Shakespeare Intercultural Archive*. 3rd ed. National University of Singapore and JSPS Kaken/ Gunma-Nagoya City Universities, 2014 <<http://a-s-i-a-web.org/>> [accessed 1 July 2015].

contextualise the dramatisation of Shakespeare's 'star-crossed lovers' (1.Prologue.6) and their 'death-marked love' (1.Prologue.9).<sup>4</sup>

In this *Romeo and Juliet*, the director reframed the dramatic tragic trajectory of Shakespeare's play with two dance sequences that were accompanied by instrumental music, which mixed both Korean and modern instruments and musical styles, and the concluding fight scene will be elaborated on later in this paper.<sup>5</sup> The opening sequence began with a bare stage that was illuminated by blue lighting, and was slowly covered in a thick cloud of white smoke. Two groups of actors, one dressed in green and another in brown, represented the young men from the Montague and Capulet households, and the actors subsequently engaged in a highly stylised martial arts folk-dance. Initially, this ritualised sword dance comprised the various young men dancing alongside each other; however, this seemingly composed choreography quickly erupted into a brawl. Replacing Shakespeare's Prologue, this opening dance sequence established both the discordance between the two feuding families and, as Smith and other reviewers also suggested, it hinted at the North and South Korea divide.<sup>6</sup> While the conflict of the Korean War inserts a meaningful and culturally relevant layer to the tragic narrative of Shakespeare's iconic lovers, this particular historical point of reference is not the only referent that shifts and transposes the original text to a different context.

Scholarship traditionally has explored the interchange between comedy and tragedy in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, and the playwright's integration of comic elements arguably intensifies the tragedy experienced by his lovers. Secondary characters like the Nurse and Mercutio bring out the play's comic bawdiness, which is often in contrast with the passion in the poetic declarations of Romeo and Juliet, a contrast that can provide an acute distinction between lust and love. Oh played up this dichotomic feature of Shakespeare's play by deliberately injecting comic elements into the romantic scenes of the lovers. Besides heightening their tragic situation, this dramatic contrast worked to evoke the tragic expression of 'han' in this Korean performance. This feeling of 'han' is described by critic Lee Hyon-u as the indigenous and collective sentiment of pain and regret experienced by Korean natives, and

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<sup>4</sup> All citations from *Romeo and Juliet* in this paper are taken from: Shakespeare, William, *The Most Excellent and Lamentable Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet* (1595), eds. Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

<sup>5</sup> For more information on the production's various performance forms, see the *Asian Shakespeare Intercultural Archive (A|S|I|A)*.

<sup>6</sup> See Peter J. Smith's and Will Sharpe's reviews in *Glocalizing Shakespeare in Korea and Beyond*, ed. Lee Hyon-u (Seoul: Dongin Publishing, 2009), pp. 144-146 and pp. 149-152.

it is a response that arises from their complicated and turbulent national history.<sup>7</sup> This emotion that is strongly embedded in the collective consciousness of Koreans was most strongly invoked in Oh's adaptation in Act 3 scene 5, during Romeo and Juliet's wedding night. This scene began with a large sheet of white silk being pulled by stagehands across the entire stage, and the performance space was thus transformed to symbolise the lovers' wedding bed. The association between love and death was established in this scene not only through the use of the colour white, a cultural Korean sign of mourning, but also through the presence of the white sheet as a distinctive feature in the earlier scene, when the shamanic rites of Mercutio and Tybalt's funeral were being performed. Lee likewise notes that 'this scene shows most outstandingly the characteristics of Oh Tae-Suk's art to transform the tragic feelings of the original play into Korean humours and a feeling of "han."'

In this wedding night scene, 'han' was evoked expressly through the failure of the lovers to consummate their marriage. This was a key moment where the performance diverged from Shakespeare's play, in their playful and flirtatious interaction while engaging in the Korean wedding custom *Dongbanghwachock* (rites of passage), which involved Romeo comically struggling to remove Juliet's wedding dress, and ended in futility as he got lost trying to find Juliet in the endless white sheets. As such, what initially began as Juliet's mischievous attempt to play coy by hiding under the sheets, only added to a greater sense of despair and frustration, as a half-naked Romeo became entangled in their expansive wedding sheets, to find Juliet only when morning came. This enthusiastic interplay between Juliet and Romeo simulated the sexual energy and sexual play of their adolescent love, but their failure to consummate their marriage emphasised the extremity of elation and misery in this tragicomic scene. The performed intensity of these two juxtaposing emotions functioned to arouse the expression of 'han', a sentiment that, as explained, is intrinsic to the Korean cultural context, and thereby imbued the reading of the scene with a different significance. On a theatrical level, the lovers' chaotic pursuit under their wedding sheets and their disappointment at the end of the night added to the impossibility of Romeo and Juliet's union; however, on a metatheatrical level, especially for a Korean audience, 'han' is typically experienced as a culturally specific

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<sup>7</sup> Lee Hyon-u, 'British responses to Oh Tae-suk's *Romeo and Juliet* at the Barbican Centre', in *Glocalizing Shakespeare*, pp. 125-154 (p. 130).

form of emotion.<sup>8</sup> Permeating this new scene then, were the historical narratives tied to this cultural response to helplessness and sorrow.

This reshaping of Shakespeare's original scene not only disrupted the idealisation of the lovers' relationship, but also denied the audience the crucial scene in Shakespeare's play that gestures towards any hope of reconciliation between the two warring households, as in this production the lovers were unable to share their intimate moment together. Moreover, the striking visual image of a desperate Juliet and Romeo cocooned in their white wedding sheets crystallised the inevitability and fatality of their ill-fated love. The use of the white sheets continued to carry the emblematic undertones of the connection between love, lust and death in this adaptation, as the sheets were consequently substituted with a red cloth when Juliet prepared for her marriage to Paris – in Korean culture, the colour red symbolises an auspicious start to marriage; the red cloth was also left onstage during the tomb scene. As such, the use of both the white and strikingly red cloths became a way to visually represent the correlated imagery of the lovers' marriage and their deaths, and, as Peter J. Smith asserts, the use of the red sheets also functioned to demonstrate how their interrupted 'sexual intimacy prefigured the unity of their mutual suicide'.<sup>9</sup> Hence, Juliet's foreboding lines when she first meets Romeo: 'If he be married,/ My grave is like to be my wedding bed.' (1.5.133-134), became actualised in performance as the lover's wedding bed was literally transfigured into their shared tomb on stage. The tomb scene, which showed Juliet lying in the red slip that she had worn in the previous marriage scene, was again another instance in which Oh visually translated Shakespeare's metaphors and motifs into performance, thus intensifying the tragic quality of the play. Here, Capulet's reference to Death as a bridegroom and a sexual violator: 'Flower as she was, deflowered by him./ Death is my son-in-law, death is my heir./ My daughter he hath wedded.' (4.4.64-66), was a metaphor again represented through the use of colour and costume. The symbolic function of these cultural signifiers not only accentuated the interrelation between love and death Oh's *Romeo and Juliet*, but also integrated an explicit 'Korean-ness' into Shakespeare's play.

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<sup>8</sup> Some scholars have described "han" as an emotion that stems from the history of Korea's invasion by other countries and of the divided Korean peninsula. For more information, see Seo-Young Chu, 'Science Fiction and Postmemory Han in Contemporary Korean American Literature', *MELUS*, 33.4 (2008), 97-121.

<sup>9</sup> Smith, '*Romeo and Juliet*, directed by Oh Tae-suk for the Mokhwa Repertory Company, The Pit, Barbican, London, 8 December 2006, rear' in *Glocalizing Shakespeare*, pp. 125-154 (p. 145).

The acting style adopted in this production typifies the director's reconceptualisation of traditional Korean art forms as part of his modern theatre. This characteristic performance style, which consists of the actors delivering their lines while directly facing the audience instead of each other, is characteristic of Oh's theatre, and is reminiscent of Korean indigenous plays, for instance, those that showcase outdoor masked dances. These Korean forms of theatre have no concept of 'the stage as separate from the audience', and Oh adopts this style of performance so as to encourage the audience to actively and imaginatively collaborate in the action as his actors often interact with the audience and solicit their reaction.<sup>10</sup> The merging of naturalism with this method of addressing the audience, for instance, during *Romeo and Juliet*'s first encounter in the masque scene, resulted in the actors delivering their dialogue directly to the audience and breaking the 'fourth wall'. This mode of performance not only positioned the audience as active participants of the production, but also located them in the in-between space of the fictional and the real. As this acting style (that functions similarly to produce Bertolt Brecht's alienation effect) distanced the audience from the dramatic world of the performance, it urged them to contemplate how this adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet* reflected and encompassed certain truths of real-life events. Another example, the scene in which Romeo walked into the audience space to ask specific audience members whether he should divulge the secret of his marriage to Tybalt and end their conflict, was illustrative of how Oh disrupts the play's fictional narrative. This dramatic moment also showed the effectiveness of this acting style, as their silence made the audience mutually responsible for the tragedy that ensued. The audience's inaction, when tied to the tragic deaths of the lovers, thus demonstrates how this acting style operates on a performative level to situate the play within a larger socio-political milieu.

A distinct historical and political significance is likewise ascribed to the characters of *Romeo and Juliet*, as they become embodiments of the younger generation in Korea. Set in the ancient Joseon era, yet focusing on the current implications of the Korean War, Oh draws a connection between a Korean past and present, which resonates with his view that Korea's history is ultimately a tragic one.<sup>11</sup> Jill L. Levenson notes in her introduction to *The Oxford Shakespeare: Romeo and Juliet* that 'the lovers cannot change or break their social constraints because they have so completely internalized them'; in a similar way, Oh's Korean *Romeo and*

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<sup>10</sup> Kim, p. 209.

<sup>11</sup> See Maria Shevtsova, 'Cross-cultural Fields: Korean Shakespeare Productions in Global Context', in *Glocalizing Shakespeare in Korea and Beyond*, pp. 157-178 (p. 163).



Juliet are entrapped and delimited by the politics of their historical situation.<sup>12</sup> Accordingly, their death and doomed love are symbolic of the continuity of the North-South division, and of the inability of the younger generation to negotiate or devise their own resolutions, thus animating the anxieties of how ‘new mutiny’ can arise from ‘ancient grudge’ (1.Prologue.3). The pubescent nature of the lovers was also amplified in this production. While this overt representation meant that Romeo and Juliet had an untainted naivete and possessed an innocent sense of hopefulness, their adolescence also became the perfect analogy for the unchangeable nature of the conflict between North and South Korea, as the lovers are, in life and death, stuck in the transitional phase between childhood and adulthood. This notion of imprisonment was further articulated through Oh’s dramatisation of the birds and cages metaphor expressed in Shakespeare’s play during the iconic balcony scene (2.1.221-226). This metaphor was reinterpreted through a ‘crane dance’, a choreographed sequence where the lovers danced with bird-like movements. This dance was performed by the lovers when they were alone for the first time. Oh’s decision to edit the play’s original lines reinforced this dramatic trope, as in this production the visual and textual translation of Juliet’s use of hawking imagery (2.2.203-205) and her reference to Romeo as a ‘wanton’s bird’ underscored the idea that their love was precisely what entrapped them:

Juliet	Don’t go too far. You are a bird in my hand. With a silk thread I pluck you back.
Romeo	Where’s the cage.

These lines preceded the lovers’ ‘crane dance’, which was initiated by Juliet pulling an imaginary string that drew Romeo to her. This choreography was accompanied by the sound effect of birds playing in the background. Here, Romeo, mimicking the movements of a bird, slowly glided closer towards her, and their dance duet, gleeful and spirited, reflected their union as they performed in perfect harmony. However, this metaphor of birds and cages that epitomised their playful courtship during the balcony scene took on an entirely different meaning during the death scene, when Juliet realised her Romeo was dead and uttered the lines, ‘where is the cage’. This scene was thus laden with dramatic irony, as Juliet re-performed their dance duet in desperation and with the hopes of reviving Romeo. But it was only when faced with her solitude that she finally recognised that she and Romeo were ultimately imprisoned,

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<sup>12</sup> *The Oxford Shakespeare: Romeo and Juliet*, ed. Jill L. Levenson (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 41.

as reviewer Eve-Marie Oesterlen posits, ‘in a culture in which the inflexible imperatives of an inhuman tradition precludes their love.’<sup>13</sup> To further underscore the tragedy of the play and what Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* can embodied in a Korean context, Oh’s adapted script included the stage direction for Romeo to ‘die painfully’, while Juliet’s dying moment with Romeo was prolonged and agonising.<sup>14</sup>

The vivid and devastating realities this production aimed to represent were suggested in Oh’s reflection in the programme on his own personal experience of the brutality of the Korean War: ‘When I was 11, the Korean War broke out. One day a car stopped in front of our house and my father was forced to get into it and he was abducted. After that, everything in my life changed. . . . That’s when I realized that living in this world is not easy. While following the frontline at the age of 11, I learned how horrible death is’.<sup>15</sup> Whereas Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* are the unfortunate victims of their families’ feud, Oh’s Korean lovers are scapegoats to a grudge of national proportions that entails far more severe consequences. Besides Oh’s elimination of any signs of reconciliation between the two warring families, there is no longer any redemptive quality in his *Romeo and Juliet*’s love. In Oh’s production, the protagonists’ suicides, which in Shakespeare’s play are the ‘Poor sacrifices of our enmity’ (5.3.303), and which ‘with their death bury their parents’ strife’, became meaningless deaths rather than functioning as a necessary means of ending the feud, and the lovers’ deaths concretised the futility and persistence of the North and South Korean conflict.<sup>16</sup> The fatal conclusion to *Romeo and Juliet*’s love then reflected the real tragic nature of the Korean War and its destructive aftermath.

Furthermore, the allusion to the North and South Korean conflict was made more pronounced by Oh’s rewriting of Shakespeare’s ending. The performance culminated with the men of both households wielding their swords throughout the final dance sequence, each collapsing one by one to the ground till Montague and Capulet were the only characters remaining on stage ‘alive’. Stripping Shakespeare’s original of the reconciliation between the two warring families, what Oh left us with as the last image of the performance was an

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<sup>13</sup> Eve-Marie Oesterlen, ‘Mokhwa Repertory Company’s *Romeo and Juliet* at the Barbican Theatre, London, 8 December 2006’, in *Glocalizing Shakespeare in Korea and Beyond*, pp. 125-154 (p. 148).

<sup>14</sup> An English translation of Oh Tae-Suk’s original script is available on the *A|S|I|A* website.

<sup>15</sup> See the 2006 London Barbican performance programme, in the *Asian Shakespeare Intercultural Archive* (*A|S|I|A*).

<sup>16</sup> Also see Maurice Charney, *Shakespeare on Love and Lust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), pp. 87-88.

apocalyptic scene with dead bodies scattered on stage. The arresting image of the brightly coloured red cloth, which covered the entire performance space, further added to this visual chaos. Ironically, red, a colour that is typically used Korean weddings, now became the sign of death and bloodshed in Oh's production, and functioned as a poignant reminder of Romeo and Juliet's tragic union.<sup>17</sup> Whether an audience can identify the cultural connotation of this sign and what it represents in a Korean context, red, a color that is commonly recognised as synonymous with love, adds a poignant signification to the conclusion of this Shakespearean adaptation. The final tableau of Montague and Capulet standing over a sea of bodies engulfed in red signified the unending continuation of this national struggle, and the parallel between the beginning scene of the performance and this conclusion perpetuated the idea that all is trapped within the 'vicious circle of enmity and the impossibilities of reconciliation' in Oh's re-imagining of Shakespeare's 'fair Verona'.<sup>18</sup> The interweaving of this particular historical event into Shakespeare's text functions metatheatrically by layering signification onto Shakespeare's tragedy. Consequently, the theme of love and death in the original play is assigned a different meaning as these dramatic tropes extend to encompass the politics of Korea. Even Juliet's famous lines: 'What's in a name? That which we call a rose/ By any other word would smell as sweet' (2.1.85-86), begin to express a specific cultural implication when the production is reconceptualised in terms of the Korean War, as this fictional love story now enacts the complexities of Korea's history, and the present-day political realities and repercussions of its civil conflict. The transformative power of Romeo and Juliet's love must therefore be omitted from the ending of Oh's production, and the association with love, death and destruction duly reasserted and emphasised, since the play is reinterpreted to reflect the pessimism about the possibility of the reunification of this divided nation.

When read through the filters of these contexts, the fate of Shakespeare's iconic lovers and their interminable separation are then determined by the history and geography these figures symbolise in this dramatic paradigm. Collectively, the metatheatrical points of reference and indigenous performance elements incorporated into Oh's adaptation anchor the fatalism of Romeo and Juliet's love affair to the specificities of a Korean culture and history.

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<sup>17</sup> The colors red and blue are used together in Korean weddings to symbolise the notion of the *yin* and *yang* in a marriage. Red is representative of the female, and blue, the male; and these colors are emblematic of the importance of balance and harmony in a relationship.

<sup>18</sup> Kim Moran, 'The Stages "Occupied by Shakespeare": Intercultural Performances and the Search for Korean-ness in Postcolonial Korea', in *Re-playing Shakespeare in Asia*, eds. Poonam Trivedi and Minami Ryuta (New York: Routledge, 2010), pp. 200-220 (p. 205).

What motivates the dramatic context of the play is, therefore, a sense of reality that culturally transforms our interpretation of the association between love and death in *Romeo and Juliet*. Thus, Oh's *Romeo and Juliet*, which re-contextualises the significance of Shakespeare's original play, while still moving and powerful is now embedded in a new political and cultural relevance, and is representative of the value of contemporary intercultural Shakespearean productions from Korea.

## Love and Lust in Bollywood's Shakespeare: *rati* and *sringara* in *Maqbool*, Vishal Bhardwaj's film adaptation of *Macbeth*

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Her arms droop, languid, her palms glow  
reddened lifting up the watering-jar;  
her bosom still heaves as she draws deep breaths.  
The Sirisa blossom adorning her ear,  
caught in the sparkling web of beads of sweat,  
ceases its delicate play against her cheek.  
With one hand she restrains her hair, straying wild,  
unruly, released from its knot undone.  
(Kalidasa, *Abhijnanasakuntalam*, Act I, v. 29)<sup>19</sup>

The concept of *sringara*, or erotic love, has long been an integral part of Indian culture, evident in the explicit erotic portrayals in the sculptures of Khajuraho temples or the cave paintings of Ajanta and Ellora, as well as in treatises like the anonymous *Kamasutra* or plays like Kalidasa's *Abhijnanasakuntalam* and Bhasa's *Swapnavasavadattam*.<sup>20</sup> In his *Natyashastra*, the ancient Indian treatise on fine arts composed between 200 BCE and 200 CE, Bharata recognises eight basic emotions and their corresponding flavours or *rasa*, love (*rati*) being the most compelling emotion and the erotic (*sringara*) being its corresponding *rasa*.<sup>21</sup> *Rasa*, a term coined by Bharata in *Natyashastra*, can roughly be translated as the sentiment displayed and felt through art. It is the aesthetic experience derived by the audience from art forms; an intimate connection established between the observer and the profound scene that is presented before him. The *Natyashastra* advocates entertainment as the chief end of drama because it serves as 'recreation of the people, of the tired, the miserable, and those in pain and in grief.'<sup>22</sup> An essential component of entertainment on stage would be the depiction of

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<sup>19</sup> Kalidasa, 'Abhijnanasakuntalam', in *The Loom of Time*, trans. Chandra Rajan (New Delhi: Penguin, 1999), pp. 165-281 (p. 183).

<sup>20</sup> Bhasa, *The Shattered Thigh and Other Plays*, trans. A.N.D. Haksar (New Delhi: Penguin, 2008), pp. ix-xxx (p. xvi).

<sup>21</sup> Bharata, *The Natyashastra: A Treatise on Hindu Dramaturgy and Histrionics*, trans. Manomohan Ghosh (Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1951), p. 102.

<sup>22</sup> Haksar, p. xvii.

*sringara*, since it would serve as a metaphor for the sacred union of the human soul with that of the Creator, heralding a sense of happiness and peace in an otherwise difficult life.

Shakespeare connects the sexual to the political in *Hamlet*. Hamlet's hostility towards Claudius is two-fold: it comprises his fears concerning his political powers in Denmark and his insecurity about the sexuality of his mother, which Freud calls the Oedipus complex.<sup>23</sup> In Hamlet's dialogue to his mother in Act III Scene 4, Hamlet's unconscious sexual desire for his mother is overtly represented: 'Nay, but to live/ In the rank sweat of an enseamed bed,/ Stew'd in corruption, honeying and making love/ Over the nasty sty!'<sup>24</sup> Therefore, Claudius becomes the receiving end of Hamlet's political ambitions and also his unconscious domination of his mother's sexuality. Notably, the philosophy of the erotic prescribed in the *Natyashastra* has greatly influenced the most popular form of mass entertainment in the country, the modern Indian cinema.

For instance, in his tragedy, *Hamlet*, the transformation of Ophelia's love from the pure and virginal to the explicitly sexual is spurred on by her madness, and the expression of feminine sexuality through insanity is a clever way of adhering to the moral regulations of sixteenth century social life in an England that was essentially patriarchal.<sup>25</sup> The Indian film industry, dominated by Bollywood, has often attempted to fuse Shakespearean notions of love and lust with the Indian *rasa* theory of *sringara*. Rajiva Verma observes this fusion when he says, that in Indian cinema, 'Shakespeare is present...not as a cultural icon but as a resource to be exploited for characters and situations, often without acknowledgement.'<sup>26</sup> This theme of the erotic is found in cultures all across the world and it is not surprising to see that the sixteenth century Renaissance dramatist and poet, William Shakespeare, too, makes use of this concept in his works. However, Shakespeare's representation of the erotic is not simplistic; he deliberately moulds the motifs of love and lust to suit the varied psychology of his characters. This notion arguably explains why Shakespearean tragedies are especially popular among Indian filmmakers. Unlike his comedies, which are replete with stock characters and situations,

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<sup>23</sup> Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (New York: Avon Books, 1998).

<sup>24</sup> William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, III.4.91-94, ed. Peter Alexander (London: Collins, 1959), pp. 1028-1072 (p. 1055).

<sup>25</sup> Kathryn Martin, 'Fathers and Daughters in Renaissance England' <<http://www2.cedarcrest.edu/academic/eng/lfletcher/tempest/papers/KMartin.htm>> [accessed 26 August 2013].

<sup>26</sup> Rajiva Verma, 'Shakespeare in Hindi Cinema' in *India's Shakespeare: Translation, Interpretation and Performance*, eds. Poonam Trivedi and Dennis Bartholomeusz (New Delhi: Pearson Education, 2006), pp. 240-259 (p. 241).

Shakespeare's tragic plays contain characters that are more complex and situations that can be explored and modified according to the modern Indian cultural context. In recent years, the popularity of Shakespearean tragedies has been on the rise in Indian mainstream cinema, as is evident from film adaptations such as Gulzar's *Angeer* (1982) and Manu Sen's *Bhrantibilas* (1963) (both *The Comedy of Errors*); Jayaraaj's *Kaliyattam* (1997) (*Othello*); Rituparno Ghosh's *The Last Lear* (2007) (*King Lear*); Habib Faisal's *Ishaqzaade* (2012), and Manish Tiwary's *Issaq* (2013) (both *Romeo and Juliet*). This paper will deal with Vishal Bhardwaj's Bollywood film adaptation of Macbeth, titled *Maqbool* (2003).

Vishal Bhardwaj, known for his intellectually-stimulating films, started his career as a music composer. He moved on to filmmaking shortly before *Maqbool*, with *Makdee* (2002), a children's movie. He is best known worldwide for his Indianised re-telling of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and *Othello* (*Maqbool*, 2003, and *Omkaara*, 2006). Bhardwaj believes that cinema is a reflection of our society and it represents the mentality of the audience.<sup>27</sup> But he also points out that social realism should not be divorced from the depth of human feelings and emotions. Therefore, in an interview, he says that the reason behind incorporating the Mumbai underworld as the setting for his Shakespeare adaptations is, that usually such films focus only on gang rivalry and the human story gets left behind, but his purpose is to portray the turmoil in human relationships not only through one's passion towards others and towards God, but also through external, physical violence and aggression.<sup>28</sup> In *Maqbool*, one observes an artistic blending of human desires, both worldly and spiritual, through *sringara*, with psychological complexities which are so vivid in Shakespearean tragedies. Bhardwaj masterfully shows how the transformation of pure love into an obsessive passion (which is so common in Shakespeare) attains an incomprehensible nature evoking a sense of ecstasy that is the essence of *sringara*. In *Maqbool*, love becomes a language beyond the realm of human understanding that can only be resolved by the intervention of fate and destiny, as goes the narrator recites saying, '*Ishq junoon hai ke hawas Khuda jaane...*' ('God alone knows, whether it is love or obsession...').<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Newslandry, 2012, *Youtube* <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z3wZRw-AwCI>> [accessed 31 August 2013].

<sup>28</sup> Vijay Singh, 'Maqbool is Not an Underworld Story', *Movies, Rediff*, 24 January 2004, <<http://archive.asianage.com/life-and-style/shararas-lure-desi-girls-202>> [accessed 26 August 2013].

<sup>29</sup> *Maqbool*. Dir. Vishal Bhardwaj. Irfan Khan, Pankaj Kapoor, Naseeruddin Shah, Om Puri and Tabu. Kaleidoscope Entertainment. 2003.

In Shakespeare's play, the fates of Macbeth and the other characters are manipulated by the Three Witches who, in the opening scene, lure the audience into an imminent devastation that looms large over Scotland: 'Fair is foul, and foul is fair: Hover through the fog and filthy air' (1.1.11-12).<sup>30</sup> Bhardwaj, however, assigns this role of the Witches to two policemen, Pandit and Purohit, who, in their incessant obsession with the city's horoscope, bring a sense of the supernatural into the violence-ridden atmosphere that pervades Mumbai<sup>31</sup>. Theirs is a lust for control; their divided loyalties towards the establishment as well as towards the underworld "godfather", Abbaji (the counterpart of Duncan), reek of an intoxicated fervour which allows them to propel everybody towards a whirlpool of destruction, as the policemen chant while casting the dice of fortune: '*Shakti ka santulan bahut zaroori hai sansar main*' ('Balance of power is very necessary in this universe').<sup>32</sup> This desire for control of the city as well as its inhabitants gives birth to a kind of frenzied lust in Maqbool's mind, evident in one of the opening scenes where the hero is allured by the policemen's prophecies concerning his future. They continuously tease him about an anonymous mistress who satiates Maqbool's unconscious attraction for Abbaji's mistress, Nimmi (Lady Macbeth's Indian counterpart). While in the original play Macbeth is trapped in the witches' prophecies regarding the throne and is lured to drink the contents of the Witches' 'poisoned chalice' (1.7.11), in the movie it is the tongues of the procrastinating policemen that become double-edged swords, laced with honey on the outside and poison within: '*Zabaan zeher ugalti hai ke shehed, Khuda jaane*' ('God alone knows, whether the tongue overflows with poison or honey').<sup>33</sup> Their words prepare not only Maqbool but also the audience for an enigmatic affair between the hero and the heroine.

In *Macbeth*, Shakespeare does not dwell much upon the love between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. In contrast, Bhardwaj heavily explores the real human emotions which lie beneath the apparent surface of attraction and seduction. The "love story" of Nimmi and Maqbool is firmly established before Bhardwaj proceeds to create the tragedy caused by the murder of Abbaji. There must be a reason why love is given this position of utmost importance in what is originally a political tragedy. The answer to this is clear from Bhardwaj's interviews

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<sup>30</sup> William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, ed. Kenneth Muir (Surrey: Arden, 2004).

<sup>31</sup> Both Pandit and Purohit are names associated with religious knowledge in Hinduism; as priests, they hold the responsibility of mediating between man and God. Here they are playing with human fate by mediating between the human and the supernatural, in the process, subverting the notion of the 'pristine' associated with the Hindu priest.

<sup>32</sup> *Maqbool*.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*.



where he repeatedly stresses the need for the inclusion of a strong emotional and psychological dimension to every tragedy. It is because Nimmi and Maqbool's love is emphasized in the first half of the film, that her death in his arms at the end becomes profoundly tragic. Adhering to the Bollywood tradition of exploring the rasas, this film rises beyond mundane political conflicts to become a supremely fascinating romantic tragedy.

In keeping with the Indian tradition of *rati* and *sringara*, the relationship between Nimmi and Maqbool is based on the concept of true love between man and woman that is semi-divine in nature. One song sequence at the Dargah upholds the spirituality that exists in love<sup>34</sup>. When the *qawwals* sing 'Tu mere ru ba ru hai, meri ankhon ki ibaadat hai' ('You are close to me, my eyes worship you'), one is almost transported to a blissful, celestial realm.<sup>35</sup> The rapturous melody is in perfect harmony, as it were, with the sacred union of lovers represented by ancient Indian *rasa*:

Yeh zameen hai mohabbat ki,  
Yahaan manaa hai khataa karna  
Sirf sajde mein girnaa hai,  
Aur adab se duaa karna.

('This land is that of love,  
To hurt is forbidden  
O, bow down in reverence,  
And submit yourself in prayer.')

Nimmi's ethereal presence, sometimes in delicate *chikan salwar kameez* and at other times in bright flowing *ghararas* is in stark contrast to the earthly seduction she perpetrates on Maqbool.<sup>37</sup> Much like Ophelia's, hers is also a transition from pure love to maddening lust, although Bhardwaj ensures a humane reason for this transformation. A young woman in her sexual prime, Nimmi is stuck with an old man who is not only physically repellent to her but who, she knows, may discard her favours at any time since she is not his wife. In fact, her fears come true when Abbaji is temporarily attracted towards an upcoming Bollywood dancer,

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<sup>34</sup> A *dargah* is a Sufi shrine, a mausoleum built over the place where a Sufi saint or *pir* has been buried.

<sup>35</sup> *Qawwals* are those who sing Sufi devotional songs or *qawwali*.

<sup>36</sup> Gulzar, Daler Mehndi. *Tu Mere Ru Ba Ru Hai*. Vishal Bhardwaj.

<sup>37</sup> *Salwar kameez* and *ghararas* are worn by women in the Indian subcontinent. *Salwar* and *gharara* are loose trousers whereas the *kameez* is the tunic. They are usually accompanied by a *dupatta* (shawl).

Mohini. Mohini typifies the unadulterated concept of lust which is devoid of any emotional attachment. Nimmi, however, contains love and lust in equal measures; her light, flowing dresses represent an angelic purity whereas her kohl-rimmed eyes exuding sharp seductive glances bear testimony to the dark, unfathomable depths of passion that lie dormant within her. In this context, she is the prototype of *sringara*, an embodiment of both a heavenly, pristine love and a temporal, mortal carnality. Nimmi is a character who evokes complex, ambivalent feelings among the audience. On the one hand, she is vulnerable and can be pitied, but on the other, she is a subtle seductress much like Shakespeare's Lady Macbeth. If Lady Macbeth is the Fourth Witch, as many critics have opined, then Bhardwaj brings it out like no other through Nimmi by giving her the attributes of a captivating Indian witch or *daayan*.<sup>38</sup> This hint of sorcery is explicitly evident in the movie when Sameera (Abbaji's daughter) calls her a "churail" or a "bloodsucking witch" who, by sucking the life-force out of Abbaji, accelerates the family's ruin. Nimmi, unhappy with her present circumstances, sets out to blight the futures of those around her, much like the *daayan* who, in a socio-cultural context, ravages the lives of those who have made hers miserable. The portrayal of Nimmi as a *daayan* is a masterful fusion of *sringara* and *vibhatsa* (horrific) *rasas*: '*Ishq mein aag hai ke paaraa, Khuda jaane... Jism mein pyaas hai ke tadap, Khuda jaane*' ('God alone knows, whether the love contains fire or poison... Whether the body reeks of thirst or suffering, it is He who knows').<sup>39</sup>

This scene is a climactic representation of this blending of *sringara* and *vibhatsa* of Abbaji's murder: it comprises Maqbool entering Abbaji's bedchamber; Nimmi, in her nightdress, sitting on his bed, almost mutely goading Maqbool to execute the crime; Maqbool shooting him and the blood spattering onto her face from the wound. Thus, at one level, the blood that splashes onto Nimmi's face during the killing marks her victory over the society which has not given her legitimate status as a woman while, at another level, it is the contagion that she, like the *daayan*, spreads all around her: '*Khoon se boo uthti hai ya khushboo, Khuda jaane*' ('God alone knows, whether the blood gives off fragrance or the smell of death').<sup>40</sup> This line is, perhaps, Bhardwaj's take on 'Here's the smell of the blood still: all the | perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand.'<sup>41</sup> Lady Macbeth herself represents the appalling

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<sup>38</sup> *Spells of Magic*, 2013 <[http://www.spellsofmagic.com/read\\_post.html?post=539890](http://www.spellsofmagic.com/read_post.html?post=539890)> [accessed 31 August 2013].

<sup>39</sup> *Maqbool*.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> *Macbeth*, V.1.47-48.

enigma of *vibhatsa*: ‘Come to my woman’s breasts,/ And take my milk for gall...’<sup>42</sup> Hence, Nimmi retains the essence of Shakespeare’s Lady Macbeth, both being agents of evil and lust as characteristics of the *vibhatsa*.

Passion, in an Indian context, is also exemplified through the character of Abbaji, who is the king of the Mumbai underworld. His desire is not only for money, but also for the world that he rules so passionately. His unflinching love for the city, whose darkest paths he controls, is evident when he is offered a deal which requires him to shift his base abroad and he remarks: ‘Mumbai *humaari mehbooba hai, Miyan; ise chhod kar hum Karachi ya Dubai mein nahin bas sakte...*’ (‘Mumbai is my beloved, my dear man; I cannot leave her to settle in Karachi or Dubai...’).<sup>43</sup> Abbaji’s attachment is not merely to his city underworld as a commercial entity, but also to each member of the gang with whom he shares a paternal bond, defined by love and respect. This explains why Kaka (the counterpart of Banquo), in spite of being a Hindu, gets his share of love from Abbaji. Even Kaka’s son, Guddu (the counterpart of Fleance), is welcomed into Abbaji’s family through his imminent marriage to Sameera. This inclusion of familial bonds in a political tragedy is essentially Indian in nature, and can also be portrayed in Bollywood films like *Vaastav: The Reality* (1999) and *Kaminey* (2009).

Thus, the director establishes a contrast between, on the one hand, Abbaji’s true love for the establishment that he operates and the place he operates it from, while on the other, his lust for young, beautiful women like Nimmi and Mohini. For Abbaji, Nimmi is his trophy-mistress, a proof of his virility, as demonstrated by the intimate scene between the two as imagined by *Maqbool*. So, too, with Mohini; she is his latest prize. However, the scene following Mohini’s dance finds him blessing his daughter at her *mehndi* engagement ceremony, which clearly brings together Abbaji, the loving, doting father and Abbaji, the lustful male in a patriarchal society.<sup>44</sup> In Shakespeare’s play, Duncan is a character who is not given dimensions. But Bhardwaj takes care to make Abbaji a round character; not only does his Duncan exhibit dedication towards his duties as king and love for his subordinates, but also possesses the explicit sexuality that is a part of Indian eroticism.

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<sup>42</sup> *Macbeth*, I.5. 47-48.

<sup>43</sup> *Maqbool*.

<sup>44</sup> *Cultural India* <<http://www.culturalindia.net/weddings/wedding-rituals/mehndi-ceremony.html>> [accessed 31 August 2013].

The relationship between Abbaji and Maqbool is fairly similar to that between Duncan and Macbeth: that of love and eventual betrayal. In the first section of the film, Maqbool remains an essentially confused soul, his love for Nimmi constantly pricks his conscience; his loyalty and respect for Abbaji prevents him from making any rash decisions, evident when he feels, '*Ragon mein wafaa hai ke dagaah, Khuda jaane*' ('God alone knows, whether loyalty runs through the veins or betrayal').<sup>45</sup> This echoes Macbeth's inner conflict:

He's here in double trust:  
First, as I am his kinsman and his subject,  
[...] then, as his host,  
Who should against his murtherer shut the door,  
Not bear the knife myself. (1.7.12-16)

However, in the play, Macbeth is propelled towards his destruction by ambition alone, whereas in the film, Maqbool is fuelled by a combined lust for Nimmi as well as for power. In loving Nimmi, Maqbool unconsciously commits incest because Abbaji is almost a father to him and Nimmi, his mistress, is therefore as good as Maqbool's mother. In doing so, he crosses the boundaries of social legitimacy and not only betrays Abbaji but also the Indian family structure as a whole. Incest is a taboo in Indian culture as it is in other cultures worldwide, but ancient Indian scriptures do mention the prevalence of incest through several legends including that of Yama and Yami as well as through the practice of *niyoga*.<sup>46</sup> Thus, although Maqbool and Nimmi's relationship *may* seem illegitimate, the above examples show that such relationships are not alien to India at all. In fact, the relationship is shown to be fruitful in the sense that it witnesses the creation of a life: a child. This fruition is opposed to the original play where Macbeth and Lady Macbeth are childless; their love, therefore, is rendered unproductive and ends in unfulfillment. At the end of the film, both Maqbool and Nimmi meet with their untimely end; however, the legacy of their love which was at the root of all the all mishaps, lives on through their child who is finally adopted by Guddu and Sameera. As a new couple representing happiness and a new beginning, they embrace the task of protecting and nurturing a new life. Therefore, unlike *Macbeth*, which ends only in political triumph,

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<sup>45</sup> *Maqbool*.

<sup>46</sup> 'Indian Mythology', *ApamNapat*, 2004 <<http://www.apamnapat.com/entities/Yami.html>> [accessed 31 August 2013]; *Manusmriti: The Laws of Manu* <[http://www.hindubooks.org/scriptures/manusmriti/ch9/ch9\\_161\\_170.htm](http://www.hindubooks.org/scriptures/manusmriti/ch9/ch9_161_170.htm)> [accessed 31 August 2013].

*Maqbool* ends on a note of restoration of hope, peace and faith, which is the ultimate aim of *sringara rasa*.

Bhardwaj expertly incorporates Indian notions of love and lust into his film. Unlike most contemporary films that usually portray love and sexuality as isolated concepts which do not, in any manner, strengthen the plot, *Maqbool* uses Indian eroticism as a medium to usher in the fates of the characters and, in turn, the fate of the film itself. The deaths of Nimmi and Maqbool generate a sense of absolute emptiness, which bears testimony to the fact that all emotions have been spent in the course of betrayal, bloodshed and carnage, the vacuum and darkness upheld in one of the songs; this happens during a moment of tension between Nimmi and Maqbool prior to Sameera's *mehndi* ceremony:

Jab tu alag hoga, dard bahot hoga [...]  
Dard guzar jaaye jab had se, dard nahi hota re [...]  
Rona toh hai rone do, rone do na ji bhar ke  
Khaali nahi hote kabhi naina mere<sup>47</sup>

(‘When you leave me, it will hurt [...]  
When the pain knows no limits, I no longer feel any pain [...]  
I need to cry, oh, let me cry with all my heart  
My eyes never seem to be devoid of tears’)

This cathartic purgation of emotions resulting from the depletion and hollowness serves as the chief end of the action which had initially been set in motion by *rati* and *sringara*. Bhardwaj, in his exclusively Indian *Macbeth*, brings out every emotion, desire, longing and ambition through the infinitely intriguing motifs of love and lust. This film gives a new direction to Shakespeare by implicitly incorporating the theory of the *rasas*, forming an intimate connection between Shakespeare and the nuances of Indian culture. Bhardwaj initiates an evolution from the *vibhatsa*, as championed in *Macbeth*, to the more benign, all-encompassing, humane *sringara*. This is evident from the gradual disappearance of Pandit and Purohit and the coming of a new life; a suggestive triumph of the benevolent over the malevolent, and therefore, of *sringara* over all else.

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<sup>47</sup> Bhardwaj, Rekha. *Rone Do*. Vishal Bhardwaj.

## **‘The tempter or the tempted, who sins most?’: Love and Lust in *Measure for Measure* and *The Law Against Lovers***

*Melissa Merchant*

On 8 December 1660, following a long history of the prohibition of actresses in England, a feminine presence took to the London stage and altered it.<sup>48</sup> The addition of women to the professional stages of England led to changes in the way in which plays were written and presented. This piece explores the relationship between page and stage, looking at it as one that is mutually reflective but non-deterministic. This essay first contextualises the presence of the actress by looking at the sparsely documented contemporary theatre culture in Renaissance and Restoration England, while raising questions about the male narrative. Subsequently this piece uses a comparison of William Shakespeare’s *Measure for Measure* with Sir William Davenant’s 1662 adaptation, titled *The Law Against Lovers*, to demonstrate that, at least in terms of adaptations, the feminine presence on the English stage may have resulted in a toning down of the more licentious and sexualised content in Shakespeare’s original.

Whilst there appears to have been no specific law in England which forbade women from performing publicly, traditionally the practice was discouraged prior to the Restoration. Indeed, the idea was so unacceptable to the English theatre going public that when, in 1629, a French troupe had attempted to perform with actresses, they were ‘hissed, hooted and pippin-pelted from the stage’.<sup>49</sup> Consequently, English drama was coloured by this custom of male exclusivity, and it was in this world that William Shakespeare created each of his plays. Following the introduction of women to the professional stages of London, a number of changes were made to the English theatrical tradition, reflected in its textual history. Subsequently, it has been argued that the presence of the actress corrupted the stage; Allardyce Nicoll claimed such immorality was so pervasive that ‘no one in that age could possibly conceive of such a thing as innocence’, and John Wilson accused the actresses of being

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<sup>48</sup> The identity of this actress who played Desdemona in Thomas Killigrew’s production at the Vere Theatre is still unknown. Research has since contradicted the previous guess that this was Margaret Hughes and there is no evidence that it was Anne Marshall, as Sandra Richards posits in *The Rise of the English Actress* (New York: St. Martins Press, 1993), p. 3.

<sup>49</sup> John Payne Collier, *The History of English Dramatic Poetry: Volume II* (London: John Murray, 1831), pp. 23-24.

‘generally debauch’d and of lewd conversation’.<sup>50</sup> Both of these theatre critics were writing mid-twentieth century, yet such views can be found in the rhetoric of theatre historians and critics from the late seventeenth century until today. Gary Taylor, in his *Reinventing Shakespeare*, tells us that ‘women began to appear on English stages at the same time as pornography began to appear on English bookstalls’ and he goes on to refer to these actresses as ‘sexual bait’.<sup>52</sup> This rhetoric is indicative of the current and historical English cultural view that, as a direct result of women being on the stage, the Restoration Theatre was a licentious place, a hotbed of sexual activity that promoted lustful, immodest and immoral behaviour, in an era remembered for its ‘grossness [...] immorality [...] and indelicacy’.<sup>53</sup> In their introduction to *The Late English Theater*, Sylvan Barnet, Morton Berman and William Burton write that ‘what was now wanted in the theatre...was sexual titillation’.<sup>54</sup> Gilli Bush-Bailey, in *The Cambridge Companion to The Actress*, does not directly blame the actresses for the lewdness of the stage; yet, she does highlight the links made during the Restoration between actresses and prostitutes, stating that ‘the very public sphere in which her craft was practised quickly led to parallels with prostitution in a patriarchal society employing the binaries of private/public, virgin/whore as constructs of femininity’.<sup>55</sup>

The Restoration is of particular interest to theatre historians; when English theatres reopened following the Interregnum, theatrical parameters were effectively reset. What we see in the original Shakespearean texts is a Renaissance discourse of femininity, taking into account the fact that Shakespeare was writing for boy players and not actresses. In the Restoration, the rewriting of his plays shows a new, distinctly different discourse. As Rosamund Gilder writes, ‘The theatre is a product of its public as well as its creators and performers’.<sup>56</sup> What makes Shakespeare rare among English dramatists is the fact that his works have been continuously performed from the time he wrote them. Marianne Novy (1999)

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<sup>50</sup> Allardyce Nicoll, *A History of English Drama 1660-1900: Volume I, Restoration Drama, 1660-1700* (London: Cambridge at the University Press, 1967), p. 22.

<sup>51</sup> John Wilson, *All the King's Ladies: Actresses of the Restoration* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958), p. 107.

<sup>52</sup> Gary Taylor, *Reinventing Shakespeare: A Cultural History from the Restoration to the Present* (London: Hogarth Press, 1989), pp. 18-19.

<sup>53</sup> Edmund Gosse, ed., *Restoration Plays* (London: Aldine Press, 1964), p. vii.

<sup>54</sup> Sylvan Barnet, Morton Berman and William Burto, ‘Introduction’, in *The Genius of the Later English Theater*, ed. Sylvan Barnet, Morton Berman and William Burto (New York: Mentor Books, 1962), pp.7-27 (p. 8).

<sup>55</sup> Gilli Bush-Bailey, ‘Revolution, legislation and autonomy’, in *The Cambridge Companion to The Actress*, ed. Maggie B. Gale and John Stokes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 15-32 (p.15).

<sup>56</sup> Rosamund Gilder, *Enter the Actress: The First Women in the Theatre* (Cambridge: The Riverside Press), p. 12.

writes that ‘The use of Shakespeare dramatizes a link among...“multiple intersecting pasts,” and thus helps us to understand a condition of cultural hybridity’.<sup>57</sup> Similarly, the different performances of Shakespeare’s works through the years allow us to evaluate the different contemporary representations of his female characters.

The hegemonic, and largely gendered, discourse on the role of women in the Restoration continues to influence how this theatrical era is viewed today. It is important to note that William Davenant’s *The Law Against Lovers* was not the only adaptation which made changes to ‘accommodate’ the female presence on the stage, an act that Allardyce Nicoll terms as ‘giving some rising actress’ the opportunity to shine on the stage.<sup>58</sup> Between 1660 and 1700 there are believed to have been twenty-one English adaptations of Shakespeare’s works by various authors.<sup>59</sup> A number of the changes made by many of the playwrights can be seen to reflect the new presence of the actress. Some roles were made more chaste and the female characters’ behaviour less sexually explicit. For example, in Dryden’s 1679 adaptation of *Troilus and Cressida*, the character of Cressida is not the inconstant woman from Shakespeare’s play—rather she remains faithful to Troilus and ultimately kills herself when Troilus believes her to have been false. In Davenant’s adaptation of *Macbeth*, he enlarged the role of Lady Macduff and made her the epitome of the ideal woman—likely, to counter the sexual forwardness and ambition evident in Lady Macbeth. In Davenant’s *Hamlet*, all reference to Ophelia’s ‘chaste treasures’ (I.iii.31) has been removed in an attempt to sanitise the character of Ophelia.<sup>60</sup> Similarly, Nahum Tate’s adaptation of *King Lear* reduces Cordelia’s act of self-expression, in telling her father ‘nothing’ (I.i.78), to a ploy designed to allow her to stay home with Edgar, her new love interest.<sup>61</sup> These are only a few of the changes made to Shakespeare’s texts which reflect the re-workings deemed necessary now that women were playing women’s roles.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Marianne Novy, *Transforming Shakespeare: Contemporary Women’s Re-visions in Literature and Performance*, (New York: St Martin’s Press, 1999), p. 2.

<sup>58</sup> Nicoll, p. 176.

<sup>59</sup> Melissa Merchant, ‘The Actress and Shakespeare’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, Murdoch University, 2013), p. 130.

<sup>60</sup> Stephen Greenblatt and other eds., *The Norton Shakespeare*, 2nd ed. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2008), p. 1707.

<sup>61</sup> *Norton Shakespeare*, p. 2340.

<sup>62</sup> In some cases, the sanitisation of the female role reveals latent humour in mixed-gender situations, such as in *The Enchanted Island* (1712), the Dryden / Davenant adaptation of *The Tempest*.



In his patents to William Davenant and Thomas Killigrew, Charles II cited the ‘extraordinary licentiousness’ of the pre-Restoration theatre as a justification for permitting only two licensed theatre companies to operate in 1660.<sup>63</sup> There is an absence of regular records or audience testimonies of the staging of such productions. However, the dominant critical discourse as reflected in historical and theatrical texts, which considers the Restoration Theatre to be lustful and lewd, can be challenged through a comparative examination of playtexts such as Shakespeare’s *Measure for Measure* and Davenant’s Restoration adaptation *The Law Against Lovers*. The nature of the relationship between the plays’ heroine, Isabella, and villain, Angelo, is particularly enlightening in comparing the changing nature of the stage depiction of human attraction between the Renaissance and Restoration eras. If we look at the *Oxford English Dictionary*, we can see that the word ‘love’, during the time of the Restoration as well as during Shakespeare’s time, meant ‘a feeling or disposition of deep affection or fondness for someone,’ whilst ‘lust’ meant ‘sexual appetite or desire’. Put simply, Shakespeare’s play deals more with lust, whilst Davenant’s highlights love.

Most likely first performed in 1604, Shakespeare’s *Measure for Measure* is considered to be one of his ‘problem’ plays; despite its Folio classification, contemporary critics believe that it cannot be classified clearly as either comedy or tragedy.<sup>64</sup> Poet and critic W.H. Auden opened a 1947 lecture on *Measure* by claiming that the play was focused on three themes: ‘the nature of justice, the nature of authority, and the nature of forgiveness’.<sup>65</sup> A close examination of *Measure* suggests that Auden may have missed an important fourth theme, the nature of lust and love. To give a brief summary, Shakespeare’s play focuses on the enforcement of an ancient Viennese law against premarital sex, a law which does not recognise the difference between lust and love and one that prosecutes equally transgressions arising from both. As temporary ruler of Vienna, the puritanical Angelo decides to enforce the law. He begins by punishing Claudio, a young man who believes himself to be married to Juliet in the eyes of God; however, they are not considered man and wife in the eyes of the State. Claudio is sentenced to death for the crime of impregnating Juliet; his sister, Isabella, comes to Angelo to plead for her young brother’s life. Angelo agrees to spare Claudio if Isabella, a novice nun,

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<sup>63</sup> Percy Fitzgerald, *A New History of the English Stage from the Restoration to the Liberty of the Theatres, in Connection with the Patent Houses* (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1882), vol I, pp. 23-24.

<sup>64</sup> Frederick S. Boas, *Shakespeare and His Predecessors* (Oxford: Horace Hart, Printer to the University, 1910), pp. 357, 344.

<sup>65</sup> W. H. Auden, *Lectures on Shakespeare*, ed. Arthur Kirsch (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), p. 185.

will 'give up' her 'body to such sweet uncleanness' (II.iv.54) and sleep with him.<sup>66</sup> Shakespeare's Angelo is in earnest; it is clear that after meeting the chaste Isabella, he has fallen in lust. Isabella agrees to the indecent proposal, but only after setting up a 'bed trick' with Mariana, Angelo's contracted fiancée. By the end of the play, Angelo is exposed, Claudio is saved and able to legally wed Juliet, and the Duke of Vienna, who has been secretly watching and orchestrating much of the action, proposes marriage to Isabella.

*Measure for Measure* is a complex text in its treatment of sexual desire, one described by Harold Bloom as 'Shakespeare's farewell to comedy.'<sup>67</sup> It is a play that looks at the lust the character Angelo has for the virginal Isabella. Yet Davenant's *The Law Against Lovers* changes the plot so that Angelo's actions arise from love rather than lust. In adapting *Measure*, Davenant may have been following instructions that Charles II had given to him and Killigrew. In 1662, a new royal patent, issued to the two theatre managers, had instructed them to ensure that any 'old or revived plays' were 'corrected and purged' of 'all such offensive and scandalous passages'.<sup>68</sup> This meant that the two patentees were expected to amend existing plays and make them more suitable for a Restoration audience. Subsequently, in 1662, Sir William Davenant staged *The Law Against Lovers*. This was the first of many Restoration adaptations of Shakespeare's works. Davenant kept the Angelo/Isabella/Claudio/Juliet plot from *Measure for Measure*; however, while Angelo propositions Isabella in both the Restoration and Renaissance versions, Davenant's Angelo is actually merely testing the authenticity of her vow of chastity. There is no Mariana in Davenant's play, and Angelo does not carry out his seduction. Thus the difference between Shakespeare's Angelo and Davenant's counterpart is one of the character's intent.

In each text, the differentiated emphasis on lust versus love is apparent from the first meeting between Angelo and Isabella. Zdravko Planinc, in 'Shakespeare's critique of Machiavellian force, fraud, and spectacle in *Measure for Measure*', actually lays much of the blame on Isabella for Angelo's reaction in this scene; she goes to him with her face unveiled and claims that she will bribe him, and when he asks 'how', she deliberately misrepresents her 'aye' as an 'I'.<sup>69</sup> Harold Bloom calls Isabella Shakespeare's 'most sexually provocative female

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<sup>66</sup> Norton *Shakespeare*, p. 2069.

<sup>67</sup> Bloom, Howard, *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human* (London: Fourth Estate, 1998), p. 358.

<sup>68</sup> Colley Cibber, *An Apology for the Life of Colley Cibber* (London: John C. Nimmo, 1888), vol I, p. lxi.

<sup>69</sup> Zdravko Planinc, 'Shakespeare's critique of the Machiavellian force, fraud and spectacle in *Measure for Measure*', *Huminatas*, 23 (2010), pp. 1-9 (p. 5).

character' and writes that Angelo's desire is to 'dedicate Isabella's body to the wholly temporal gratification of his lust'.<sup>70</sup> Underlining Angelo's temptation, Shakespeare's text follows Isabella's exit with Angelo's twenty-six line monologue; he immediately asks, 'What's this? What's this? It is her fault or mine?/The tempter or the tempted, who sins most?'(II.ii.167).<sup>71</sup> Shakespeare's Angelo goes on to show that he believes the sin to be in himself, yet the fact that he asks the question at all indicates that even from the beginning, he is attempting to shift blame for the actions he knows he will carry out. The Restoration adaptation omits these lines and contains no equivalent. Davenant's Angelo speaks only six lines, which leave out most of the angst-ridden questions posed in Shakespeare's text. Davenant's Angelo simply tells us:

I love her virtue. But, temptation! O!  
Though false and cunning guide! Who in disguise  
Of virtues shape lead'st us through Heaven to Hell.  
No vitious beauty could with practis'd art  
Subdue, like virgin innocence, my heart. (II.ii.158-161)<sup>72</sup>

Already, Angelo uses 'love' to describe his feelings towards Isabella: in this instance, a love that is focused on her virtue.

When Isabella and Angelo next meet, Davenant has removed Shakespeare's opening monologue on lust in II.iv. In Shakespeare's text, Angelo opens the scene by exclaiming that all he can think about is Isabella, and that contained within his heart is 'the strong and swelling evil/Of my conception' (II.iv.6-7).<sup>73</sup> He is focused on the sin he intends to commit: 'Blood' he tells us 'thou art blood/Let's write 'good angel' on the devil's horn'(II.iv.15-16).<sup>74</sup> Angelo apparently believes that human nature cannot overcome a lust as strong as this; therefore, in this case, the devil shall win. Shakespeare's Angelo here decides to pursue Isabella, regardless of the sins associated with such an action. His motivations are not predicated on love, for love would not typically be mentioned in the same sentence as the devil, but rather they are predicated on lust, the 'original sin'. By removing this monologue from his adaptation, Davenant makes his Angelo later able genuinely to claim a love for Isabella, and the audience are more inclined to believe him.

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<sup>70</sup> Bloom, p. 366.

<sup>71</sup> *Norton Shakespeare*, p. 2066.

<sup>72</sup> William Davenant, *The Works of William Davenant* (London: T. N. for Henry Herringman, 1673), p. 287.

<sup>73</sup> *Norton Shakespeare*, p. 2068.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

The most damning scene for Angelo in Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* is in Act IV, Scene iv, in which he soliloquises:

This deed unshapes me quite, makes me unpregnant  
And dull to all proceedings. A deflowered maid,  
And by an eminent body that enforced  
The law against it! But that her tender shame  
Will not proclaim against her maiden loss,  
How might she tongue me! Yet reason dares her no,  
For my authority bears of a credent bulk,  
That no particular scandal once can touch  
But it confounds the breather (IV.iv.19-27).<sup>75</sup>

These lines are spoken after his arranged rendezvous with 'Isabella.' Not only does Shakespeare's Angelo demonstrate an awareness of the wickedness of the act he thinks he has carried out, but he also clearly considers how he will get away with it. Angelo supposes that, given his reputation and advanced standing, should Isabella accuse him she will not be believed. There is nothing in this monologue which can be interpreted as love, and it becomes clear at this point that Angelo is motivated by pure lust. This motivation is further emphasised when Angelo is confronted in the final act of Shakespeare's play. When accused by Isabella, a woman he believes he has 'deflowered,' Angelo declares her to be mad and is content to witness her false imprisonment. These are the actions of a man who has now sated his lust. Angelo only confesses his deeds when he realises that the Duke himself has orchestrated the plot to trick him. Angelo's bravado collapses with the lines, 'When I perceive your grace, like power divine/Hath looked upon my passes' (V.i.361-362).<sup>76</sup>

However, in *The Law Against Lovers*, as mentioned, Angelo never goes so far as to arrange a rendezvous with Isabella. Before it comes to this point, he confesses his ruse:

Stay Isabel! Stay but a moment's space!  
You know me not by knowing but my face.  
My heart does differ from my looks and tongue.

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid., p. 2093.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., p. 2102.

To know you much I have deceived you long.

To which she replies:

Have you more shapes, or would you new devise?

And he responds:

I'll now at once cast off my whole disguise.

Keep still your virtue, which is dignified

And has new value got by being tried (IV.vii.66-73).<sup>77</sup>

Davenant's Angelo then informs Isabella that he had arranged for Claudio's arrest as a way to meet her. Also, now that she has 'fully endured the test', he deems her to be worthy of his love and tells her that 'Submissive I woo/To be your lover, and your husband too' (IV.vii.86, 88-89).<sup>78</sup> Initially, Isabella believes that he is deceiving her, and possibly also himself. She tells him that had she been weak and acquiesced to his demands, he would have taken advantage of her. She suggests that his actions were, indeed, motivated by lust rather than love. Yet Angelo spends the rest of Davenant's play seeking to prove otherwise. When talking with Eschalus, a counsellor, Angelo explains that no 'sickness' could be worse than his own (V.i.9).<sup>79</sup> Upon hearing of Claudio's supposed death, Angelo offers his fortune to Juliet, only to be informed it had already been forfeit to Isabella as compensation for his treatment of her. To this, he responds, 'Tis righteously bestowed' (V.vii.71).<sup>80</sup> From here, we see Isabella soften towards Angelo and, by the end of *The Law Against Lovers*, they are betrothed and the assumption is that they will live happily ever after.

Shakespeare's Angelo is fascinating and complex; he is a supposedly pure man who has previously abandoned his betrothed and subsequently propositions a novice nun. Although the temporary ruler plans to execute the nun's brother for a crime of lust, he himself intends to commit a similar offence. He acts out of lust for Isabella and intends to hide his wicked deed behind his supposed respectability. In contrast, Davenant's Angelo is supposedly motivated by love; his intention in propositioning Isabella is only to test her purity. Although the passages

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<sup>77</sup> Davenant, p. 315.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., p. 318.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., p. 325.

examined in this essay necessarily present a relatively narrow view of their representative texts, they indicate a shift from lust to love in Angelo's character. This shift could be seen to result from the audience reaction to the professional presence of women on the stage for the first time. It could also be seen as an authorial reaction to the patent issued by Charles II in which he commanded that all the 'offensive passages' be 'corrected and purged' from the 'old or revived' plays.<sup>81</sup> Admittedly, further research is necessary to resolve the apparent inconsistency in the levels of immorality and sexuality between the toned down Restoration adaptations of Shakespeare's works and the more licentious plays written during the Restoration period, such as William Wycherley's *The Country Wife* and Aphra Behn's *The Rover*. However, between Shakespeare's and Davenant's two different versions of the story of Isabella and Angelo, there is a definite contrast between love and lust. This difference on the page exemplifies the disparity between the received discourse of Restoration Drama as one of a loose and immoral stage, and the reality of the relative constraints observed by performance texts produced during the time when women joined men in the profession.

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<sup>81</sup> Cibber, p. lxi.

## ***Left to her will by his owne wilfull blame: The reverse siege in Spenser's Faerie Queene Book Five***<sup>82</sup>

*Ananya Dutta Gupta, Visva-Bharati*

In this essay, I study the use of the siege as an allegory of unnatural subjection of an individual or a community in Book V of Edmund Spenser's *Faerie Queene* (1596). The subjection in question has sexual, moral and political ramifications. I argue that the struggles of the heroic spirit are presented in the form of what I would designate as a reverse siege, i.e. aberrant love or sexual submission of a man to a woman leading to physical and psychological confinement. Ordinarily in Elizabethan literature, the besieger is presented as the heroic male laying siege to an effeminate city. Here, the male besieger is himself under siege. This embarrassing and shameful effeminisation of the heroic male is attributed to romantic or sexual entanglement. In the remainder of this essay, I use examples from other Shakespearean works written throughout the decade of the 1590s to show in brief how the siege emerges as a serviceable allegory of sexual subjection in a range of late Elizabethan writing, not just in heroic poetry.

Throughout the essay I choose to focus on Spenser's use of the reverse siege in Book V of his heroic romance because it is predominantly exercised by the psychological state of being besieged, although it also presents sieges as emancipatory offensive military action. In Book V, the siege is an apt metaphor to denote male subjection to lust and idleness. Indeed, Radigund directly refers to Artegall's state of enslavement as a siege ("For I resolve this siege not to give over", V.v.51). The fact that the presiding knight, Artegall, is concerned with "Order" in the body politic (V.ix.23, 24) allows us to explore a key theme in early modern English literature, namely the overlap of sexual, moral and martial preoccupations around the idea of subjection.

The use of the siege in *The Faerie Queene*, written in instalments over eighteen years between 1579 and 1596, does not lend itself easily to exact historical contextualisation.<sup>83</sup> Sieges

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<sup>82</sup> Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, ed. A.C. Hamilton. Revised Second Edition (Edinburgh: Pearson Education Limited, 2001; revised second edition 2007), V.v.20. Hereafter, all references to this text will be cited in the main text within brackets in the format 'V.v.20', i.e. Book.canto.stanza.

<sup>83</sup> Hamilton, General Introduction, in Spenser, *Faerie Queene*, p. 19.

are, however, frequent in the topical Book V, which commemoratively retells recent English military victories like the Spanish Armada and Leicester's successful capture of Zutphen.<sup>84</sup> Malcolm Hebron's catalogue of the "richness of suggestive ideas" around the siege in medieval culture—"national solidarity and personal heroism, strength of religious faith, female beauty and sexuality, ... the trials of the soul or the state of mind of the courtly lover"—alerts us to the thriving tradition of siege allegory inherited by Spenser.<sup>85</sup>

This essay argues that Spenser's choice of the siege as a leitmotiv is central to his allegorical purpose. Critics have noted the presence of sieges as a perfunctorily represented type of armed combat in *The Faerie Queene*.<sup>86</sup> Realism in the depiction of sieges may not have been a primary concern. I contend that Spenser internalises the idea of the siege and assimilates it into his unique, religio-politically conditioned allegorical requirements. I maintain that Spenser's understanding of the siege is contemporary, even though his representational mode is anachronistic and quasi-chivalric. Further, although he occasionally does represent siege war in a city setting, as in Radigund's city, his preferred representative locus for an allegorical siege remains the castle, not the city in its entirety. The walled, gated castle that can easily stand in for a walled city offers a more minimalist trope for man's moral strength or weakness.<sup>87</sup>

An alternative allegorical influence is exerted by Prudentius' influential work of Christian spiritual struggle, *Psychomachia*, and Christian humanists' use of Prudentius' siege allegory to ethically privilege spiritual over physical warfare. However, Spenser's siege allegory is not straightforwardly reformatory. Instead, he brings a peculiarly angst-ridden spiritual outlook to bear upon his allegory of the siege as subjection.<sup>88</sup> Further, *The Faerie Queene*, Book V, uses the siege as a metaphor for a repetitive, tediously protracted, potentially inconclusive series of trials of inner strength. Spenser tends to portray select English siege

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<sup>84</sup> Viola Blackburn Hulbert, 'The Belge Episode in "The Faerie Queene"', *Studies in Philology* 36:2 (1939), p. 141, JSTOR edition.

<sup>85</sup> Malcolm Hebron, *The Medieval Siege: Theme and Image in Middle English Romance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 2-4.

<sup>86</sup> Michael West, 'Spenser's Art of War: Chivalric Allegory, Military Technology and the Elizabethan Mock-heroic Sensibility', *Renaissance Quarterly* 42:4 (1988), pp. 654, 663, JSTOR edition.

<sup>87</sup> Contrast the more tactically detailed account of Alexander's sieges in Sir Walter Raleigh, *The History of the World*, ed. C.A. Patrides (London: Macmillan, 1971), pp. 254-65.

<sup>88</sup> Two formative influences could well have been Spenser's early friendship with Jan van der Noot, a "zealous Calvinist" who had fled to England from Antwerp, as well as his absorption of Puritan theology during his Cambridge days. See Richard Rambuss, 'Spenser's Life and Career' in Hadfield, *Cambridge Companion*, pp. 17-18. For a detailed discussion of Calvin's influence on Spenser's writing, see Frederick Morgan Padelford, 'Spenser and the Theology of Calvin', *Modern Philology* 12:1 (1914), pp. 1-18, JSTOR edition.



campaigns in the Netherlands in an overwhelmingly optimistic light. However, the success of individual sieges does not lead up to any comprehensive sense of success. Instead, we find a seemingly endless chain of successful sieges, symptomatic of the repetitive structuring of all action in *The Faerie Queene*.

Typically, the siege fits into this ambience of apocalyptic angst without holding out any concrete apocalyptic promise of positive reversal. Evil keeps returning in “mutated form”, despite apparently successful campaigns against it.<sup>89</sup> Violence is neither rejected in principle nor shown as offering any decisive panacea to individual and collective misery. Instead, violence emerges as a disturbingly Machiavellian truth, an integral, inextricable adjunct of human existence.<sup>90</sup> Spenser had had a fair amount of direct exposure to large-scale violence. In November 1580, he probably witnessed the massacre, on Lord Grey’s orders, of 600 Irish rebels at Fort d’Oro, Smerwick. He may well have drafted “the official narrative of the Lord Deputy’s victory” in letters to the Queen and to Lord Burghley.<sup>91</sup> Spenser presents human action as lacking decisive fruitfulness and uses the siege to convey this perception allegorically. He is prompted to make this connection both by existing perceptions about the nature of sieges and the reality of contemporary siege warfare in the age of sophisticated fortification. Therefore, the challenges of an indefinitely prolonged siege are one of the few features of contemporary military reality in *The Faerie Queene*. In Book V, the siege of Belge’s castles is already of long standing when deliverance comes in the shape of Prince Arthur and his aide, Artegall.

Spenser’s implied preference for human expertise as opposed to technology in a siege context might be said to reflect a latent Machiavellian dissatisfaction with the viability of siege warfare. This may seem paradoxical in view of the intensive use he makes of the siege. But the intensive use actually suggests an acute anxiety about the psychological implications of the siege situation itself. Spenser generally betrays his impatience by persistently making the defenders “issue out” and the attackers draw the defenders out of the castle with equal alacrity. Machiavelli’s impatience with siege warfare was symptomatic of his impatience with political and military inaction. In view of his dream of a resurgent England in the vanguard of aggressive

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<sup>89</sup> Andrew Hadfield, *Shakespeare, Spenser and the Matter of Britain* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p. 129.

<sup>90</sup> See Hadfield, *Matter of Britain*, p. 142, for the theory that *The Faerie Queene* represents Orphic order and Protean chaos.

<sup>91</sup> Hadfield, *Cambridge Companion*, xviii, p. 27.

pan-European Protestant military expansionism, comparable to Machiavelli (and Ariosto's) vision of a resurgent Italy, Spenser must have been supportive of the idea of siege as inaction.<sup>92</sup> The fact that the chief obstacle to the realisation of this goal is the presiding female queen notorious for her tardiness in matters of cross-border military intervention compels Spenser to give a gendered twist to his siege allegory. He assimilates the love interest central to chivalric romance and the gender relations at the heart of the courtly love tradition into his equation of the siege with subjection.

Arthurian chivalric literature sees love as the spur to the quest for honour.<sup>93</sup> Instead, Spenser's fictive experiments in the afterlife of chivalry present a reverse siege that renders the quest for honour impossible to undertake. The idea of a reverse siege by a woman of a man becomes Spenser's chosen vehicle for conveying the exasperating emasculation of the martially proactive soldier-courtier by a compulsively vacillating, militarily diffident, and financially wary female monarch.<sup>94</sup> Critics are divided over what they read as Spenser's stand on contemporary governance in *The Faerie Queene*. William Oram cites Spenser's dissatisfaction with the badly managed English colonising mission in Ireland as the root of the stasis pervading *The Faerie Queene*.<sup>95</sup> Andrew Hadfield regards Spenser's writings in the 1590s as less optimistic and more explicitly critical of the politics and culture of the English court.<sup>96</sup> However, Spenser's reservations against the policies of the incumbent monarch are likely to have been issue-specific rather than blanket. Such studied ambivalence and juggling of endorsement and criticism would be symptomatic of what David Baker describes as Spenser's "nuanced engagement with current politics that cannot be reduced to factional alliances." Indeed, as Baker argues, Spenser's political dualism is often a refraction of contradictions he correctly gleaned from his theoretical sources such as Machiavelli, Bodin and Thomas Smith.<sup>97</sup> The trope of being under siege, I would argue, could also have struck Spenser as a fitting allegory of an ideological impasse, a conflict of political choices and systems.

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<sup>92</sup> Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, XXXIV.1-3; It may be noted that the word "siege" comes from the Latin word, "sedere", which means, to sit. Therefore, the siege in Malory's *Morte D'Arthur* is also used to mean "seat".

<sup>93</sup> See Graham Hough in Ariosto, *Orlando*, Introduction, p. viii.

<sup>94</sup> According to Andrew Hadfield, *Shakespeare, Spenser and the Matter of Britain* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp. 132-33, Spenser's portrait of Mutabilitee in Book VII is a veiled criticism of Elizabeth's "vacillating and fickle style of government".

<sup>95</sup> William A. Oram, 'Spenserian Paralysis', *SEL Studies in English Literature 1500-1900* 41:1 (2001): 49-70. Project Muse. Web. DOI: 10.1353/sel.2001.0010., pp. 63-64.

<sup>96</sup> Hadfield, *Matter of Britain*, pp. 126-27.

<sup>97</sup> David J. Baker, 'Spenser and Politics' in *The Oxford Handbook of Edmund Spenser*, ed. Richard A. McCabe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010; online 2012), pp. 56, 49-63. DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/978019227365.013.0004 [accessed 20 October 2015].

Assuming, then, that like many others in the Essex circle, Spenser would have preferred a more robust interventionist handling of the war in the Low Countries, it is not surprising that he should mask this sense of disempowerment with the direct sexual siege of Artegall by Radigund. Though he is careful not to equate tyranny with female rule indiscriminately, his representation could not have been in ignorance of the Presbyterian John Knox's *The First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women* (1558) and the Catholic Jean Bodin's critique of female rule, prompted by Elizabeth's accession.<sup>98</sup> Since martial efficiency is deemed possible only where the latter is assured, the siege of the mind is presented as a more formidable challenge than any actual military siege. In *The Faerie Queene* Book V, once the formidable siege of the mind is overcome through timely help of the right kind, sieges against public enemies prove to be less arduous.

It is allegorically appropriate that Artegall, who represents militant justice in Book V, should fall prey to a martial woman, an Amazon, and that his subjection should entail effeminisation. Unlike the Circe-like Acrasia who effects a permanent transformation of her captive knights "to monstrous hewes, /And horribly misshapes with vgly sightes" (II.v.27), Radigund's mode of enslavement is cross-dressing them in "womens weedes" and forcing them into occupations traditionally reserved for women – "To spin, to card, to sew, to wash, to wring" (V.v.20). Jane Aptekar refers to "the overshadowing sense of Jove himself" in Book V. Indeed, the spectre of Jove, who is constantly cited by Marlowe's *Tamburlaine*, underlines the equation of war and justice in Spenser's allegorical scheme. However, the mythological legacy most germane to our discussion of the martial implications of sexual subjection in Book V would be the Herculean one. Hercules' self-debasing love for Omphale is a mythological precedent and iconographic source for Spenser's allegory of the emasculated war-hero: "So also did that great Oetean Knight / For his loues sake his Lions skin vndight" (V.viii.2). As Aptekar informs us, Artegall's mission of vanquishing all forms of tyranny, within and outside national borders is a Herculean legacy.<sup>99</sup>

Artegall's Herculean connection is suggestive of an unnatural reverse tyranny, in that the very hero who is known for subduing tyrants at home and abroad is subdued by the tyrannical female. It is worthwhile noting that female tyranny, or the cruelty of the beloved is

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<sup>98</sup> Margaret L. King, *Women of the Renaissance* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1991), pp. 159-160.

<sup>99</sup> Jane Aptekar, *Icons of Justice: Iconography, Thematic Imagery in Book V of The Faerie Queene* (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1969), pp. 17, 171, 154-55.

a standard Petrarchan conceit, which Spenser himself uses in *Amoretti*.<sup>100</sup> Drawing inter-textual parallels between *The Faerie Queene* and *Amoretti* is justified by the contemporaneity in their composition. As Sonnets 33 and 80 attest, Spenser felt impelled to halt his writing of the former in order to complete the sequence in 1594-5.<sup>101</sup> The difference, of course, is that the beloved's tyranny is a mark of her impervious virtue, which actually raises her moral stature in the assessment of her male lover. Her exalted stature rests on a paradox. The Petrarchan beloved is active only in her virtuous resistance, and not in direct solicitation of love. On the other hand, Radigund's tyranny, like Phaedria's in Book II, essentially follows from an act of usurpation. She has assumed the authority that should ideally rest with the besieging male. Where she ought to have confined her role either to passive resistance or passive conquest, she issues out in active defiance, conquers the besieger, and enslaves him. Further, as Sonnet 65 in *Amoretti* argues, the mistress's victory will only spell blessed peace for both. Their "brazen towre" of love, "where spotless pleasure builds her sacred bowre", will be one of "faith".

Artegall's metaphorical besieger is an Amazon, so it is again appropriate that the process of subjugation should be a fully-fledged military siege. Ironically, though, it is Artégall who decides to lay siege to Radigund's city (V.iv.34-35). Characteristically for this chivalric text, the military siege soon makes way for a single combat, initiated by Radigund herself in order to spare her city from being "spoiled quight" (V.iv.47). We are told that Artégall is not so much "overcome" as he "to her yeilded of his owne accord" (V.v.17).

In a further inversion, Radigund falls in love with her "captive" (V.v.26:9) and now wishes to transform him into a prisoner of love from a prisoner of war (V.v.33). When Britomart ruminates over Artégall's long and unexplained absence, she apprehends that he might be "Amongst loose Ladies, lapped in delight", and upon hearing of his actual captor Radigund, an Amazon, continues to speak to Talus of "Thy maisters shame, in harlots bondage tide" (V.vi.6, 11). In fact, in a chiasitic reversal reminiscent of Cymochles' alternation between lust and wrath, "the warlike Amazon's" lust for Artégall (V.v.26) disarms her, so that the state she has imposed upon Artégall is in fact a mirror of her own dispossessed condition (V.vii.25). The besieged turned besieger turns besieged again. Spenser seems to have assimilated into his

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<sup>100</sup> See sonnets 10, 20, 29, 43, 50 and 51 in particular in Edmund Spenser, *Edmund Spenser's Poetry. A Norton Critical Edition*, ed. Hugh Maclean and Anne L. Prescott (New York: Norton, 1968).

<sup>101</sup> Spenser, *Poetry*, pp. 600, 619. Also see Spenser, *Shorter Poems*, pp. xiv, 204, for editorial introduction and headnotes.

allegory the dialogical use he makes of siege imagery in successive sonnets of *Amoretti*.<sup>102</sup> In sonnet 14, the poet-lover is the besieger, while in sonnet 57, the poet-lover, at the receiving end of the “sweet warrior”’s “incessant battry”, pleads for peace. More importantly, the repeated role reversal implicitly mirrors the bipartite, reciprocal pattern of confrontation that the military siege actually entails.

Notably, then, the term “siege” tends to be used invariably in contexts that are bound to lend it the negative connotation of enervating protraction, as in the “long siege” in Book II (ix.12), or embarrassing capitulation, as in Radigund’s “siege” (V.v.51) of Artegall. Indeed, Radigund employs the coercive strategies of cutting off water and food supplies, typically used by military besiegers to bring the besieged to their knees. The besieged Artegall, however, is an erstwhile besieger, now located within her castle. This peripeteia is supremely embarrassing for a hero like him. However, the memory of Hercules’ temporary subjection to Omphale is also a tacit assurance that Artegall will eventually overcome this humiliating siege and carry on in the role of a successful military besieger against the last bastions of tyranny in and around Faeryland.

Spenser is at pains to convince the reader that Artegall’s capitulation to “womens snare” is a routine distraction for heroic men who eventually reassert their rightful sway over women (V.vi.1). Spenser duly provides for Artegall’s embarrassing “uxoriousness” a classical parallel, Antony, Julius Caesar’s commander, and a Biblical parallel, Samson (V.viii.1-2).<sup>103</sup> His principled fidelity to Britomart even amidst captivity (V.vi.2) is meant to suggest that his corruption is relatively venial. Elsewhere in *The Faerie Queene*, Spenser makes Amavia excuse her husband Mordant’s capitulation to Acrasia on the ground that male lust is ubiquitous: “For he was flesh: (all flesh doth frayltie breed)” (II.i.52).<sup>104</sup>

Other extenuating factors are consistent with the book’s anxiety to show war and justice in a proactive role. One is the fact that Artegall is disarmed not by a debasing attraction for indolence and lust, but by admiration of Radigund’s beauty in course of a martial encounter. At least in part, he is acting upon the chivalric principle that knights should protect and not

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<sup>102</sup> Spenser, *Poetry*, pp. 587-623.

<sup>103</sup> Cf. C. S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1936), p. 348.

<sup>104</sup> Tasso writes: “Thus women know, and thus they use the guise,/To enchant the valiant, and beguile the wise.” (IV.86).

harm beauty (“No hand so cruell, nor no hart so hard, / But ruth of beautie will it mollifie.” (V.v.13). He is “empierced ... with pittifull regard” (V.v.13). Susceptibility to beauty, celebrated so enthusiastically in *Amoretti*, is eminently more pardonable than the call of lust and idleness, particularly in a knight whose personal beauty, according to M. Pauline Parker, “is more dwelt upon than that of another of the knightly heroes” in *The Faerie Queene*.<sup>105</sup> One needs only turn to the *Four Hymns* for instances of Spenser’s enthusiastic encomia of beauty. To quote from *An Hymn in Honour of Love*, Verse 17:

For sure, of all that in this mortal frame  
Contained is, nought more divine doth seem,  
Or that resembleth more the immortal flame  
Of heavenly light, than Beauty’s glorious beam.<sup>106</sup>

It is perhaps fitting in Spenser’s scheme of things that this paean to beauty should figure in the hymn to love and that he should again evoke the integral relationship between love and beauty in *An Hymn in Honour of Beauty*, Verse 3:

Thereto do thou, great goddess, queen of Beauty,  
Mother of Love and of all world’s delight, ...<sup>107</sup>

Irrespective of their separate weaknesses, then, Faery knights betray a shared susceptibility to erotic temptation. In that sense, the reverse siege is focal in Book V, but one of the underlying themes of all the constituent books. In Artegall, a passing spell cast by beauty, posing only a modest threat to marital commitment, is used by unnatural feminine lust for power to disempower justice. The intended and attained effect is of temporary martial enfeeblement. *An Hymn in Honour of Beauty*, Verse 20, proves instructive. Artegall’s naivete, perhaps, lies in assuming that

Therefore, wherever that thou dost behold  
A comely corpse with beauty fair endued,  
Know this for certain: that the same doth hold  
A beauteous soul, with fair conditions thewed,  
Fit to receive the seed of virtue strewed.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> M. Pauline Parker, *The Allegory of The Faerie Queene* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960), p. 205.

<sup>106</sup> Edmund Spenser, *Selected Shorter Poems*, ed. Douglas Brooks-Davies (London & New York: Longman, 1995), p. 120.

<sup>107</sup> Spenser, *Shorter Poems*, p. 341.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 347.

Sexual vulnerability is a universal challenge to masculine enterprise, and the challenge becomes more menacing if the reigning sovereign uses such charms to keep her courtiers in her thrall. Radigund uses her beauty as a ruse to gain advantage over her opponent.<sup>109</sup> The fact that the mask of beauty is essentially a product of Radigund's guile tacitly exonerates Artegall of at least part of the blame. Radigund's elaborate sartorial preparations for the duel, symbolically equated with her city-dwelling ("So forth she came out of the citty gate, / With stately port and proud magnificence", V.v.2, 3, 4) betrays her dependence on the feminine lure. In this, Radigund recalls Duessa, Una's deceptive double in Book I and Lucifera, Queen of the Palace of Pride in the same book. In this, conversely, she differs fundamentally from Una, the True One, and Britomart, Artegall's betrothed.<sup>110</sup> In *An Hymn in Honour of Beauty*, Verse 25, the poet counsels:

Loath that foul blot, that hellish firebrand,  
Disloyal lust, fair Beauty's foulest blame, ...<sup>111</sup>

Spenser's disgust at feminine martial enthusiasm is comparable to Vives's objection to women taking an interest in martial affairs. Britomart is spared this disapproval because she takes up arms, appropriately, in order to free her husband.<sup>112</sup>

Allegorical imperatives create a situation in Book V where one siege must necessarily lead to another. Artegall, who volunteered to lay siege to Radigund, is besieged so comprehensively that he may not unshackle himself without external help. Having turned into a woman, Artegall cannot but emulate Alma or Belge or Irena in seeking succour from outside. However, when a man yields himself to unnatural bondage, a woman has to step in, and Britomart does exactly so. Spenser points to the unwelcome reversal of roles by comparing the

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<sup>109</sup> Cf. Tasso's more indulgent description of Armida's beauty: V. 29-32. See Torquato Tasso, *Jerusalem Delivered* ed. and transl. Anthony M. Esolen (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000).

<sup>110</sup> Tancredi is similarly smitten by "that fierce virago" Clorinda's beauty when he takes off her helmet. See Tasso, *Gerusalemme*, III.21.

<sup>111</sup> Spenser, *Shorter Poems*, p. 348.

<sup>112</sup> Other martial women are not spared. The inexorable Talus casts Munera over the Castle wall (V.ii.27) and razes her castle with ruthless efficiency (V.ii.28). The "troupe of women warlike dight", who mob Artegall when he confronts them about their cruelty towards a knight (V.iv.21, 23) is also treated with unmitigated cruelty (V.iv.24). It is worth noting that the legendary British queen Boadicea, who led a rebellion against the Romans, was used in Renaissance political discourse as a prime exemplar of the aberrations of direct female involvement in martial affairs. Jodi Mikalachki, *The Legacy of Boadicea: Gender and Nation in Early Modern England* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 129. For other martial women and Amazons see Penthesilea (I:592-95) and Camilla (XI, 766-82) in Virgil, *Aeneid*, trans. Robert Fagles (London: Penguin, 2007), pp. 64, 346; Marfisa in *Orlando Furioso* (XXVI.59) and the warrior women celebrated by Tasso in *Gerusalemme*, XI.58.

victorious Britomart, as she enters the bower where Artegall is languishing in captivity, to Ulysses's long-suffering wife Penelope (V.vii.39). Hadfield sees the role reversal between Britomart and Artegall as symptomatic of "the narrative surrogacy" habitual in *The Faerie Queene*.<sup>113</sup> I suggest that it is an allegorical compulsion.

The reverse siege creates a situation where Britomart has to lay an actual military siege to Radigund. Thus, instead of two men or groups of male combatants fighting over a besieged city or castle, two women must fight. As in the 1<sup>st</sup> c. A.D. Roman poet Prudentius' *Psychomachia*, it is the allegorical figure of Chastity who overcomes Lust, "the cursed whore".<sup>114</sup> Spenser weaves other dimensions into the sexual allegory, so that Britomart stands for political, moral, as well as martial integrity, while Radigund represents antithetical values, and is, typically, liable to punishment by siege. The duel between Britomart and Radigund is a graphic allegory, laced with authorial disgust, of the contest between the two opposed notions of female sexual ethic, married chastity and promiscuous predatoriness. This contest is literalised in terms of a grotesquely feline contest in which the women neither spare each other's "dainty parts" (V.vii.29).

Britomart does not believe in the kind of love that entails woman's domination of man and the resultant emasculation of the lover. While Radigund forces her male captives to wear female attire, Britomart is disgusted with "that lothly uncouth sight ... "of so vnmanly maske, in misery misdight." (V.vii.37). This is Spenser's notion of an ideal relationship between the sexes, one in which the heroic mission and vision of the chivalric male is selflessly shared by the ideal female companion without any attempt on her part to participate in it directly. Britomart frees not only Artegall but all the other captive knights too (V.vii.43).

Artegall's historical counterpart is Spenser's aforementioned employer, Lord Grey. As Lord Deputy of Ireland between 1580 and 1584, Grey served both as chief civil government and supreme commander of the Queen's armed forces in Ireland.<sup>115</sup> It is entirely possible that Artegall's release from Radigund's captivity wistfully envisions the Queen lifting all

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<sup>113</sup> Andrew Hadfield, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Spenser* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 187.

<sup>114</sup> *Prudentius with an English Translation by H.J. Thomson*, 2 vols., ed. Jeffrey Henderson (London: William Heinemann), 1949, I, p. 283.

<sup>115</sup> West, 'Spenser's Art of War', p. 665. Pauline Parker, *Allegory*, p. 202, sees Artegall's captivity to Radigund as an allegory of Lord Grey's "early sympathy for Mary Queen of Scots".



bureaucratic and financial curbs on the Irish project and giving Grey the green signal he requires for initiating a decisive campaign of pacification. After all, Elizabeth herself was often iconised as an Amazon.<sup>116</sup> In a deliberately contradictory allegorical message using split personifications sure to be decoded by the queen of intrigue, Elizabeth is advised to emulate the positive aspects of the Amazon legend by supporting Leicester and Essex's war projects in Ireland and the Low Countries, and avoid the negative dimensions of the same legend by not interfering with the tactics and logistics of such projects.<sup>117</sup>

Following Artegall's release from captivity, Spenser uses siege action to suggest positive, decisive and successful military intervention. Artegall's first major military project en route to Grantorto's castle is the deliverance of Lady Belgae, an allegorical personage representing the Low Countries. The idea of a helpless land and nation is here epitomised by a matronly mother figure, who mourns

My cities sackt, and their sky-threatening towres  
Raced, and made smooth fields now full of flowres? (V.x.23)

In a further quintessentially Renaissance conflation of issues and causes engendering a siege, the crime that Prince Arthur sets out to redress is at once social, economic, political and religious: a widow is dispossessed of her castle and city and an idol is sacrilegiously placed in her chapel.<sup>118</sup> At the end of their victorious siege of Belgae's usurped castle, the two Princes lead her back into her rightful residence (V.x.39).

The successful recovery of Belgae's castle and her reinstatement therein does not end the troubles for Arthur and Artegall. The Tyrant retaliates by "sternely" marching before the Castle gate, "Vnto the Castle, which they conquerd had." (V.xi.3). The victory over the Tyrant is then followed by the fight with the monster that guards the idol in the chapel (V.xi. 26-34). The two remaining armed confrontations are, as it were, surrogate sieges. They employ siege imagery, setting and terminology, although technically, they are not sieges.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> According to Paul E. J. Hammer, *Elizabeth's Wars* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 110, Elizabeth's aversion to "systematic campaigning" actually increased the cost and the suffering. Also see W.T. MacCaffrey, 'England: The Crown and the New Aristocracy, 1540-1600', *Past and Present* 30 (1965), pp. 52-64, JSTOR edition; King, *Women in the Renaissance*, p. 159.

<sup>117</sup> Cf. David Norbrook, *Poetry and Politics in the English Renaissance* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984), pp. 128, 136.

<sup>118</sup> Cf. Rodomont's desecration of the church at Paris in *Orlando Furioso* XIX.39.

<sup>119</sup> See also Spenser, *Faerie Queene*, V. xii.17 and V.xi.46, 47.

Spenser's allegory of the siege in Book V is relatively well-rounded. He presents the siege both in its negative sense of subjection and inaction and in its positive sense of successful resistance and successful assault. However, the repetitive use of the siege as action ultimately prevents the positive sense from emerging as the dominant one. By association, then, the issue of inappropriate romantic or sexual entanglement acquires a negative dimension. Spenser's use of the reverse siege as an allegorical design connoting male sexual subjection to a beguiling female is symptomatic of a pervasive sense of embarrassment about strong affective heterosexual relationships in Renaissance English literature. Such subjection purportedly alienates the male individual from his duties to society and the state.

The use of the military siege as a trope for such subjection points towards the persistent equation in Renaissance military discourse between such effeminising subjection and martial effete-ness. Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* may be read as a case in point. The one event that must have contributed to the shared authorial choice of a siege situation is the Spanish Armada. The memory of the attempted siege by the Spanish Armada and the fortuitous rather than hard-earned victory of the English against it inevitably drove English writers to exploit the lingering fear of an imminent, even more menacing, siege. The fear was, of course, stronger precisely because England had not really faced any siege other than the Armada encounter.

The cultural configuration of a city as a woman and the notion that cities are natural military targets yield as a corollary the customary equation between the siege of a city and the rape of a woman. Henry V's ultimatum to the governors of Harfleur in Shakespeare's eponymous play is replete with the displaced threat of "fresh fair virgins", "pure maidens", "shrill-shrieking daughters" being raped by "the fleshed soldier", "the blind and bloody soldier" (III.iii.88-115).<sup>120</sup> In *The Rape of Lucrece* (1594), for instance, Shakespeare exploits this equation in reverse. Instead of presenting the sack of a city in terms of a rape, he uses the sack as a conceit in the context of a rape:

His hand that yet remains upon her breast –  
Rude ram, to batter such an ivory wall –  
May feel her heart, poor citizen, distressed,  
Wounding itself to death, rise up and fall,

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<sup>120</sup> See William Shakespeare, *The Norton Shakespeare*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt et al. (New York and London: Norton, 1997).

Beating her bulk, that his hand shakes withal.  
This moves in him more rage and lesser pity  
To make the breach and enter this sweet city. (463-69)

The equation is reiterated when a deranged Lucretia turns to the “skilful painting made for Priam’s Troy” (1367). What we constantly note across a wide spectrum of late Elizabethan literary writing and not just in Spenser and Shakespeare is the actual and hence integral presence of women characters in imagined sieges.

For another Shakespearean example, we may turn to the 1599 play *Henry V*, where military triumph culminates in the successful wooing of the vanquished princess (V.ii.344-67). This matrimonial conquest is implicitly political in its calculations but overtly sexual in its rhetoric. The sexual conquest of Catherine, deferred beyond play-time but anticipated in the wooing (V.ii.98-260), is fittingly prefixed by the capture of the effeminised, hence martially ineffectual, French nobility (III.vii), who failed to protect her.<sup>121</sup> Catherine’s arch-enemy and conqueror, Henry, emerges as a better protector than her knights in their now rusty armour of chivalry. There is at once parity and a disparity between the fate of Catherine, lucky enough to be coerced into an honourable bargain and that of Cressida, who is cruelly manhandled by the Greeks before she submits to the reality of her circumstance by allowing herself to be wooed by Diomedes.<sup>122</sup> While the former proposition is relevant to the centrality of the female presence in represented sieges, the latter may help explain the habitual equation of siege and rape discussed below.

The siege of Angiers in Shakespeare’s *King John*, a much earlier play, is throughout conducted by the rival nations vying for the city in terms of a direct or oblique rape threat to the “city/woman” aimed at extracting voluntary sexual submission. *King John* presents the spectator and reader with a double harangue, one each by the two besiegers—King John of England and King Philip of France. In the first harangue, King John warns the citizens of

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<sup>121</sup> Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 58-59, also acknowledges the fact that in *Henry V* the French aristocracy’s “military impotence” is “explicitly thematized as sexual impotence” and that the successful English invasion is “graphically figured as a rape.”

<sup>122</sup> Nina Taunton, *1590s Drama and Militarism: Portrayals of War in Marlowe, Chapman and Shakespeare’s Henry V* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), p. 217, notes the Renaissance prejudice against women in army camps. They “were perceived as undermining the discipline of soldiers’ daily lives” and “defilers of space consecrated to masculinity”.

Angiers against the unmitigated violence that would swamp them unless they foreswore their allegiance to him, their rescuer. The upshot of King John's speech is that Angiers can save itself from a violent rape only if it allows its legal guardian and husband/king entry voluntarily. Protection against an assailant can only be guaranteed, ironically, through a capitulation to another assailant, whose claim is that he has rights to the "woman" that the assailant does not. The reference to corporeal insults (spitting, defecation), to disrobing and defilement of the woman city, to the use of sudden physical force against an unsuspecting, and hence, helpless victim—all insinuate rape. Such an eventuality can only be forestalled if the citizens "let us in ... whose laboured spirits ... Craves harbourage within your city walls." King John advises them to let the English in, lest others force themselves in. When it is King Philip's turn to issue a counter-warning, he uses the idea of sacrificing blood for the sake of the rights of the young prince. The message is that much blood may be conserved on either side if the town of Angiers would simply pay up the tribute that is due to Arthur, failing which the "messengers of war" will mow down the walls and the inhabitants inside, notwithstanding the presence of the English protector. That the besiegers essentially echo each other becomes clear after the first round of combat between the French and the English, when both return to the gates of Angiers with the same plea, "Open your gates and give the victors way." The resilient city/woman—Angiers—accomplishes something of a tactical victory in turn by successfully negotiating dissolution of the siege through an honourable and mutually convenient matrimonial alliance (II.i.206-234, 244-266, 300-311, 324, 446-455).<sup>123</sup>

In conclusion, such gendered perception of cities in Spenser, Shakespeare and other Elizabethan writers reflects two central concerns of the period. Firstly, the allegory points to a widespread preconception about the allegedly feminine nature of the vices fostered by urban life that pose a threat to patriarchal and national interests; secondly, it indicates the male tendency to re-cast war reductively in terms of a sexual contest. In the age of England's long reigning virgin queen it is significant that Spenser's heroine Radigund is said to rule over a city and its subjects (*FQ* V.iv.35) with a combination of aggression, voluptuousness, meretricious finery and guile.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> That the marriage alliance was an "often-used expedient in peace-making" is also confirmed by Jocelyne G. Russell, *Peacemaking in the Renaissance* (London: Duckworth, 1986), p. 85.

<sup>124</sup> In *Orlando Furioso*, Astolfo also sees "goodly cities" ruled by Amazons (XIX.39) and great Cities overthrown by "foule serpents with faire womens faces" (XXXIV.78). Jan Karel Kouwenhoven, *Apparent Narrative as Thematic Metaphor: The Organization of "The Faerie Queene"* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 195, compares Radigund's distracting role to Dido's.