
Legitimising Misogyny

Representations of Women in Three Shakespeare Films

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the

requirements for the degree

of Master of Arts in English

in the University of Canterbury

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2014

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Dr Philip Armstrong and Dr Mary Wiles for their patience, encouragement and criticism throughout the process of researching and writing this thesis. Their suggestions and guidance have been greatly appreciated. I would also like to gratefully acknowledge the support and proofreading efforts of my partner Joe.

Abstract

The plays of William Shakespeare have long been considered a source of cultural and educational interest by both academics and filmmakers, and the practice of adapting Shakespeare's works to film has existed for almost as long as film itself. The name "Shakespeare" evokes ideals of cultural legitimacy and importance, and Shakespeare film as a genre is always caught up in questions of fidelity and legitimacy. In adapting Shakespeare to the screen, filmmakers also adapt, whether deliberately or not, the various cultural beliefs that his work is steeped in. Early modern ideas about gender, race and class are reproduced in modern film through the adaptation of Shakespeare, often excused or unexamined in the name of fidelity. This thesis discusses Shakespeare's three plays *Hamlet*, *Richard III* and *The Taming of the Shrew*, all of which deal in some way with gender roles and the place and power of women, whether that power is sexual, political or verbal. I also examine three film adaptations of the plays: Kenneth Branagh's *Hamlet*, Ian McKellen and Richard Loncraine's *Richard III*, and Gil Junger's *10 Things I Hate About You*. All three films serve as examples of the way the misogyny present in Shakespeare's works is reproduced and sometimes magnified through adaptation to the screen. The reproduction of early modern gender hierarchies is naturalised in a number of ways across the three films, including the use of star power, the invocation of Shakespeare as a cultural authority, and specific filmic techniques such as flashback and the cutting and editing of film and screenplay. I argue that in all three films, the faithful adaptation of Shakespearean ideas of gender comes at the expense of both the women characters and those women who make up the films' audience.

Introduction

Despite comprising over half the population, women made up only 29% of major characters and 30% of all speaking roles in the top 100 highest-grossing films of 2013 (Lauzen 1). The above statistics serve as an example of the small amount of roles available to women in cinema today. They also show that little appears to have changed in terms of the simple number of representations of women in popular media since the early modern period. This thesis will examine the process of three different filmmakers in adapting Shakespeare's women to the screen. While Shakespeare is widely regarded as a "timeless educator" (Cartmell 34) who imbues the films that bear his name with cultural legitimacy, I will argue that in adapting Shakespeare one must also adapt the social and political context of his plays accordingly, rather than using this idea of legitimacy to excuse or unquestioningly reproduce the aspects of Shakespeare's work that are no longer acceptable. One practical application of this argument is the large amount of Shakespeare film used as an educational tool at secondary school level in New Zealand (Mayo 65-66). Those students who watch and study Shakespeare film are influenced by these films' representations of gender at an important stage of their development.

I will discuss three Shakespeare plays and three of their respective adaptations to film: *Hamlet* and Kenneth Branagh's film *Hamlet* (1996), *Richard III* and Ian McKellen and Richard Loncraine's film *Richard III* (1995), and *The Taming of the Shrew* and Gil Junger's *10 Things I Hate About You* (1999).¹ I will be focussing on the female characters from the three plays and examining how they are changed, updated or removed in each of the three adaptations. I focus on these specific texts because of the different ways each of the three adaptations deals with its source material. Branagh's *Hamlet* adapts every word that can be

¹ Because two of the three adaptations I will be studying bear the same names as their source plays, I will refer to Shakespeare's plays by their titles and the adaptations by both the title and name of the director. Thus *Hamlet* refers to the play (as it appears in *The Norton Shakespeare* edited by Stephen Greenblatt et al) and Branagh's *Hamlet* to the film.

attributed to the various editorial versions of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, McKellen and Loncraine's *Richard III* makes substantial cuts and edits but still retains the Shakespearean language of its source, and *10 Things I Hate About You* dispenses with Shakespeare's text entirely and replaces it with a new script in modern idiom which takes the inspiration for its plot and characters from *The Taming of the Shrew*. Each approach to the adaptation of a play requires a different engagement with its source and the characters therein. Decisions about the reproduction or cutting of dialogue, characters and narrative elements are all important in adapting Shakespeare's plays, and each approach to this project requires different consideration of the role of women within the narrative structure of the play. In each of the three cases, I will discuss the influence of the female characters within both the play and its film version. I will examine whether the characters and narratives benefit from being translated into a more modern medium and setting, and thus whether it is worthwhile continuing to adapt Shakespeare's women to film without first considering the attitudes towards women that his works inspire.

Critical background

Theories of adaptation discuss the various influences upon filmmakers who create screen versions of written texts. Thomas Erskine and James Welsh's "Drama into Film" (2000) stresses filmmakers' interpretation: they argue that no film or performance is a more "correct" version of its source material as each makes different choices based on individuals' personal responses to the source text. However they view such source material, especially Shakespeare, as essentially better than its filmic counterpart, even going so far as to ask who "would presume to tamper with the unity, balance and harmony of Shakespeare's design" (221)? Such an approach places Shakespeare on a pedestal and demands that his work be admired rather than adapted. It is also misguided in that it ignores the fact that Shakespeare's

plays exist in various versions compiled by modern editors from available sources – prompt books, actors’ memories and foul papers – rather than in single complete copies. Further, Erskine and Welsh argue that while film is able to “transport the audience completely into another world” (230), such transportation requires “men of vision inventive enough to adapt the technology to their goals” (ibid.). This reductive, not to mention sexist approach suggests that only certain productions, those which adhere to what Erskine and Welsh consider to be the essential spirit of Shakespeare, are worthwhile. They give Branagh’s *Hamlet* as an example of an adaptation done well according to this spirit of fidelity.

Deborah Cartmell (1999) also discusses adaptations of Shakespeare on film and argues, too, that (at least in academic circles) a degree of fidelity to the text is necessary in order for a Shakespearean film to be considered worthwhile. She suggests that there is a symbiotic relationship between academics and film audiences and argues that because film versions of Shakespeare have become more accepted in academic circles, they have also become more popular with mainstream audiences. According to Cartmell, adaptations succeed with both audiences and critics “not by rubbishing but by revering the original; the successful adaptation must make clear that it is – and can only be – a pale version of the Shakespearean text” (29-30). Susan Hayward (2013) argues that in the early days of cinema, literary adaptations were used as a way to legitimise cinema as “entertainment-as-art” (9). Film adaptations of Shakespeare are a way to link high-cultural art and mass entertainment in order to legitimise the latter medium, and to bring Shakespeare to a wider audience.

Cartmell argues that many critics and academics view the “successful” adaptation of Shakespeare as fitting two specific criteria: filmmakers must find a way of “enshrining [the text] in high cultural values” and of “depoliticizing” the text (31). Further, adaptations must acknowledge that their efforts are “a far cry from ‘the real thing’” (ibid.). However she does acknowledge that such reverence for the Shakespearean text can create problems in the new

one, citing Allan Bloom's argument for Shakespeare as "the timeless educator of the Anglo-Saxon world" (34) as an example of the way that blind reverence for Shakespeare often forgives the faults of his work, such as the racist themes in *Othello* or *Hamlet*'s misogyny. Following Cartmell, in this thesis I will argue that this reverence for the original permeates all three of the adaptations I will study, and all too often leads to filmmakers excusing or repeating the original's problematic elements in the name of fidelity.

The romanticised vision of adaptation and its natural inferiority to Shakespeare is absent from Imelda Whelehan's discussion of the history of adaptation theory. Whelehan charts several different aspects of adaptations that have been studied since the 1960s. She notes that while fidelity to the source text is a concern among academics, it is less important in the context of a film's financial success. It is rarely fidelity to source material that makes a film successful, and indeed if "a film succeeds on its own merits, it ceases to be problematic" in this regard (Bluestone 114, in Whelehan 8). Also important is the assertion that filmmakers often adapt "characters and incidents which have somehow detached themselves from language and ... have achieved a mythic life of their own" (Bluestone 62, in Whelehan 8). In this way, Whelehan notes, images both from adaptations and from their source texts can transcend their origins and become part of a larger cultural consciousness, to be drawn upon by future adaptations. This leads to assumptions about the level of knowledge or familiarity an audience might have with a character or text, assumptions which are exploited in all three of the adaptations I will study. All three adaptations rely on and exploit assumed knowledge and opinions of their characters as well as of Shakespeare himself.

As well as discussing the way in which filmmakers alter plays in taking them from page to screen, I will also examine their choices regarding the way they translate the 400-year-old system of gender and class that Shakespeare's plays are bound to. A feminist approach to adaptation throws these choices into question. In "Visual Pleasure and Narrative

Cinema” (1975), one of the most well-known and often-cited works of feminist film theory, Laura Mulvey relies on psychoanalytic theory, in order to argue that women’s phallic lack and the subsequent fear of castration it elicits in men is the “lynch pin” of cinema’s phallogocentric system of storytelling (28). Thus although women (or the image of women) must be present in order to give a film meaning, women “exist only in relation to castration and cannot transcend it” (29). This is the basis for Mulvey’s theory that power is enacted through the spectator’s gaze and that such a gaze is manipulated by filmic conventions into occupying a masculine rather than a feminine subject position. Although Mulvey’s original argument has been critiqued by many film theorists, and updated by Mulvey herself, it is symptomatic of the often regressive gender politics of Shakespeare films that the phenomenon she describes in her classic essay can be observed in both the “gaze” and the wider perspective of all three of the films I will discuss: both Branagh’s *Hamlet* and McKellen and Loncraine’s *Richard III* encourage their audiences to identify with a male protagonist who is both casually and violently misogynistic, and *10 Things I Hate About You* places its two female protagonists in a narrative entirely controlled by men.²

Mulvey’s work has been the basis for many other critics who examine the place of women in film and the relationship between the women on the screen and those in the audience. This relationship is important to the films I discuss because in all three cases, I find it difficult to reconcile my subject position as a female, feminist audience member with the films’ perspectives. Building on the binary between male and female within Mulvey’s work, Teresa de Lauretis (1984) argues that women in film act as markers of narrative closure, “representing and literally marking out the space (to) which the hero will cross” (87). She

² For Mulvey’s further thoughts on her original essay, see “Afterthoughts on ‘Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema’ Inspired by King Vidor’s *Duel In The Sun* (1946)”, in Mulvey’s *Visual and Other Pleasures*. Critics who question or examine elements of Mulvey’s original argument include Tania Modleski’s “Femininity By Design: *Vertigo*” (in *Post-War Cinema and Modernity: A Film Reader* ed. John Orr and Olga Taxidou) and Teresa de Lauretis’ “Rethinking Women’s Cinema: Aesthetics and Feminist Theory” (in *Issues in Feminist Film Criticism* ed. Patricia Erens).

argues that women cannot identify with an “inert object” (89) and that women’s spectatorship is thus inherently contradictory. This position is one that is pertinent especially in the case of Branagh’s *Hamlet* and McKellen and Loncraine’s *Richard III*. Both of these films attempt to limit their female characters’ agency in order to better focus on the plights of their male protagonists.

Following de Lauretis, Carol J Clover (1989) argues for a wider theory of cross-gender identification, which arises from her work with slasher films. She argues that in the typical slasher film, there are often no men left standing by the end, and that this phenomenon is familiar enough to film audiences that they recognise the central female character as the protagonist and central character with whom to identify (236). I note Clover’s work here because of her argument that it is possible for filmmakers to encourage cross-gender identification in film. In both Branagh’s *Hamlet* and McKellen and Loncraine’s *Richard III*, audiences are encouraged to identify with the male protagonists and, in *Richard III*, the women who oppose them. In *10 Things I Hate About You*, the two main characters are both female, and the film encourages identification with both the female protagonists and the men who pursue them. However, while Clover’s work shows that it is possible for male audience members to identify with female characters and vice versa, I will argue that in all three of the films I discuss, despite the filmmakers’ efforts it becomes increasingly difficult for a female audience to identify with the films’ male protagonists, who act in misogynistic and often violent ways.

In contrast to the other theories presented so far, Kaja Silverman’s work deals not with the female gaze but the female voice. She argues that female characters in cinema are “denied any active role in discourse” (309). There are two aspects to this argument. First, it is not a lack of female dialogue that Silverman is concerned with but the nature of that dialogue when it is present. Silverman argues that women’s speech as it appears in film is “unreliable,

thwarted or acquiescent” (309) and does not carry the importance or weight of male speech. Secondly, she discusses the role of synchronisation in tying the voices on the film soundtrack to the images of bodies. Men’s voices, Silverman argues, are given power by being featured extra-diegetically, as in voiceover, without being visually linked to a male body. Drawing on Mulvey’s argument that women’s frightening lack is the centre of filmmakers’ desires to control them, Silverman states that there is in film a “concern to construct [the female body] in ways which are accessible to the gaze and to hear it attest in a familiar language to dominant values” (313). Thus women in film have no part in defining discourse but are at the same time entirely subject to it. This is certainly the case in all three films, and I will discuss the ways in which the filmmakers use the legitimising agent of Shakespeare to manipulate their female characters’ dialogue in this way, whether that is through cutting specific lines of dialogue, or through keeping dialogue that supports dominant values and removing dialogue that subverts them.

I will also be drawing on Janet Adelman’s influential study of motherhood in Shakespeare. Adelman discusses Shakespeare’s plays from a psychoanalytic angle, arguing that male subjectivity in Shakespeare often comes at the expense of the mother figure (Adelman 2). Each film specifically engages with motherhood as a way of exploring the relationships between its characters, but each deals differently with the aspects of motherhood present in its source text. Branagh’s *Hamlet* deals specifically with maternal anxiety, while McKellen and Loncraine’s *Richard III* locates its problematic engagement with motherhood in its characterisation of Richard himself. *10 Things I Hate About You* departs from its source in mentioning its protagonists’ mother, who in *The Taming of the Shrew* is unexplainably absent.

Texts and approaches

As discussed above, my argument is based on three different adaptations. Each chapter will focus on one Shakespearean play and its film counterpart.³ Kenneth Branagh's screenplay for his 1996 film version of *Hamlet* includes every word that might have been part of the original play, taken from the two quarto and the folio versions drawn on by editors in their compilation of modern scholarly editions. Thus it can be said to be the most "complete" of the adaptations I will discuss. I will examine the effect that the choice to use the entire text has on the film's representation of the play's two prominent female characters, Ophelia and Gertrude. Much of what is known about the play's women, especially Gertrude, comes not from the women themselves but from what is said about and to them. Thus, in Branagh's film, Hamlet's lament that his mother is "stewed in corruption" (3.4.91) is taken not simply as his opinion but as the truth. The film makes frequent use of flashbacks to show that while Hamlet is constructed within the world of the narrative as being insane, his view of events is the most correct one. No effort is made either to explain or add depth to Gertrude and Ophelia's actions. What is said about both Gertrude and Ophelia is taken as truth, rather than as merely one way of interpreting the characters. In this way Branagh's film ignores the potentially subversive or feminist elements of the two characters in favour of a misogynistic portrayal that relies almost entirely on his assumption that the audience will identify with Hamlet's perspective at the expense of Ophelia and Gertrude.

A similar problem occurs in Ian McKellen and Richard Loncraine's *Richard III*. The film removes characters and extensively cuts and revises Shakespeare's play in such a way that the women's roles are severely limited. While McKellen and Loncraine's film version of the play sets the events not in the Wars of the Roses but in a fictional, fascist England, I find

³ All three plays discussed here exist in various editorial versions as well as in Folio and Quarto versions. The films I will discuss each draw from the various versions of their Shakespearean sources. For clarity's sake, I will refer to the Shakespearean sources as plays, acknowledging that there is no such thing as a complete and unified version of any one Shakespearean work.

that the most notable change to the text is not its setting but the cutting of the female characters' roles and lines. Queen Margaret, described in the original play as a "prophetess" (Siemon 20) who by describing the horrors that will befall Richard helps to ensure them, is absent from the film. Although some of her lines are given to the Duchess of York, Margaret's absence significantly reduces the female presence in the film. Also significant is the inclusion of Princess Elizabeth, who is not present in the play but appears silently in many scenes of the film. She speaks only one line, far less than any other named character. I will discuss the effect that these decisions have on a play which deals with the power or powerlessness of women in politics.

The film is similar to Branagh's *Hamlet* in the way it takes for granted its protagonist's misogyny and the tragic fates of its women. I will discuss this phenomenon through an analysis of the film's dialogue as compared with Shakespeare's play, which discusses the feminine curse and the power of women's words. In his 2009 edition of the play, James Siemon notes that women speak 22 per cent of the original play (18). This percentage is significantly reduced in the film, and the scenes in which the women appear together and speak to one another are so limited as to be almost non-existent. I will examine the dialogue that was cut from the film as well as what was allowed to remain, and discuss what this means for the film's representation of women as a whole.

The final texts I will discuss are *The Taming of the Shrew* and Gil Junger's film *10 Things I Hate About You*. The film is a re-imagining of *Shrew*'s narrative set in a 1990s American high school, repackaged for a teen audience. The film keeps many elements of *Shrew*'s plot but dispenses with Shakespeare's dialogue, replacing it with a screenplay written in modern teen slang. The film's explanation for its main character's shrewishness is that she is an angry feminist who abhors the company of men, while her younger sister is desperate to start dating but is forbidden by their father's house rules. I will discuss the way in which *10*

Things updates *Shrew*'s setting and narrative but keeps the play's undercurrents of misogyny and its adherence to strict gender roles, as well as its depiction of male anxiety surrounding female sexuality and subjectivity.

10 Things does differ from the other two adaptations I will discuss in that it allows for some agency on the part of its female characters. The character of Bianca, in both *The Taming of the Shrew* and *10 Things*, is first characterised as a stereotypically airheaded teenager, but reveals herself to be intelligent and subversive, using her seeming acquiescence to the gender roles placed on her by her culture to subtly ensure that she gets what she wants. *10 Things* is structured in such a way that its main character Kat, the adaptation of *Shrew*'s Katherine, bears the brunt of the film's conservative message while Bianca, as a secondary character, does not. Kat, however, is shackled to a narrative that is completely at odds with the way she is first constructed: she begins the film as a confident, feminist young woman whose defining characteristic is how different she is from her peers, but ends it as a traditionally feminine and traditionally submissive partner in a relationship with the film's Petruchio character.

Such inconsistencies in the modern adaptation of *Shrew* are a result of the previously mentioned practice of adapting Shakespeare without changing the attitudes towards women that his plays and their narratives are informed by, and appear in all three of the adaptations I will discuss. Whether these inconsistencies and contradictions are in dialogue, representations of characters or in narrative structure, all three films show that careful editing and questioning of the Shakespearean text is necessary before applying it to film.

“Thou Shalt Not Escape Calumny”: Kenneth Branagh’s *Hamlet*

The inconsistencies in Kenneth Branagh’s 1996 film, *Hamlet*, largely arise from its filmmaker’s insistence on using, as far as is possible, the full text of the play. The text of *Hamlet* exists in three distinct versions: the Folio version and the First and Second Quartos. Both the Folio and Second Quarto versions of the text are generally considered to be based on the author’s foul papers and the promptbooks used in performance while Shakespeare was alive, whereas it has been argued that the First or Bad Quarto is more likely a product of an actor’s memory (Greenblatt 1074-5). In his film, Branagh uses passages from both the Folio version, which is generally accepted as the version closest “to the play as it was performed in the theatre when Shakespeare was alive” (ibid. 1075), and the Second Quarto, and keeps the same narrative structure and scene order as the Folio. Not content with including every line from these sources, the film also includes a substantial amount of extra filmed material, showing scenes not present in any of the three editorial versions of the play. This extra material is intended to “explain what the play leaves unsettled ... and make elements of exposition explicit” (Keyishian 79). Some of the inserted scenes provide visual illustration of events discussed in the play, for example a filmed version of the Player King’s tale of Pyrrhus and Hecuba, while some of the flashback scenes are invented and added by Branagh.

Branagh’s film is set in Denmark in a period nineteenth century setting, and aimed at a modern audience substantially different from that of Shakespeare’s time. Thus many of the flashbacks Branagh adds are used to help the viewer understand what the characters are talking about – for example, in the film’s opening scene, as Horatio discusses the political climate and impending attack from Norway, the audience is provided with interpolative shots of the Norwegian war-room and of an angry Fortinbras commanding his officers. While the flashbacks are often helpful in providing expository detail to this specific version of the story of *Hamlet*, they also serve to imbue speakers’ words with specific meanings and

significations which help to shape the film's representation of its story and characters. The flashbacks are especially pertinent when discussing the women of the film.

Shakespeare's *Hamlet* contains two prominent female characters: Hamlet's mother Gertrude and Ophelia, daughter of Polonius the advisor. Both these women are considerably less prominent than many of the male characters, and Branagh's film does attempt to rectify this by placing both Gertrude and Ophelia in multiple scenes in which they are not present in the Shakespearean play. On the whole, however, Branagh's treatment of the female characters in his film retains and often magnifies the misogynistic elements of Shakespeare's play. These elements include a focus on Ophelia and Gertrude's sexuality, manifested in different ways for each character, and an adherence to Hamlet's violently misogynist point of view at the expense of a more balanced view of the play's narrative and characters.

This chapter will examine each of *Hamlet's* female characters in turn, exploring their function in Shakespeare's play and in Branagh's film, as well as the way in which Branagh uses flashback and other devices specific to cinema in order to construct both characters. In representing Gertrude, Branagh's film is inherently contradictory, attempting to portray her both as the loving mother constructed by certain readings of the play,⁴ and as the far more threatening and overtly sexual woman described by the male characters. Again, Branagh inserts flashbacks in what may be an attempt to explain what is left unsettled in Shakespeare's play, but his confused and paradoxical construction of the character of Gertrude means that the flashbacks do little to help the audience relate to her difficult position. Rather, Branagh's position as screenwriter, director and star of the film leads to a myopic portrayal of Gertrude which adheres more to Hamlet's own biased position than to a well-rounded adaptation of the text. Further, Branagh's decision to adapt the "whole text" of *Hamlet* undermines his reliance on notions of excess and sexuality that have been

⁴ In arguing this point I rely heavily on Rebecca Smith's analysis of Gertrude's dialogue and stage business. Smith argues that Gertrude's dialogue reveals her to be "soft, obedient, dependent, unimaginative" (194).

traditionally tied to Gertrude through performance and criticism of *Hamlet* because these ideas are in direct opposition to the more demure Gertrude constructed by the dialogue and actions assigned to her in Shakespeare's play.

The film attempts to explain Ophelia's relationship with Hamlet and her eventual descent into madness through the invention of several flashback scenes that show Ophelia and Hamlet having sex. This insertion is not objectionable in itself, but becomes so because of the way the film relies on these extra scenes to justify Hamlet's behaviour towards Ophelia. Branagh attempts to explain Hamlet's misogynistic treatment of Ophelia by contrasting Hamlet's dialogue about the beauty and virtue of women with flashbacks showing Hamlet and Ophelia's tryst. Further, Branagh's depiction of Ophelia's eventual descent into madness is also reliant on the use of flashbacks to this added sex scene. The end of Ophelia's relationship with Hamlet is thereby revealed to be the cause of her madness, meaning that the other angry, inflammatory meanings of her mad discourse, present in Shakespeare's play, are lost. In Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Ophelia's madness sets her outside the hierarchies of class and gender that would usually inform her language, and according to some readings of the play, this allows her to criticise those hierarchies as well as the behaviour of various members of the Danish court, including the King and Queen as well as Hamlet himself.⁵ However, Branagh's film denies Ophelia this power, instead relying on stereotypes of female madness as tragically beautiful and essentially meaningless.

Elaine Showalter's history of Ophelia as she is represented in criticism and performance begins by noting, "For most critics of Shakespeare, Ophelia has been an insignificant minor character in the play, touching in her weakness and madness but chiefly interesting, of course, in what she tells us about Hamlet" (77). However I would argue, as Showalter does, that Ophelia is an interesting and crucial character in her own right,

⁵ Carol Thomas Neely and Marguerite A Tassi both argue for a reading of Ophelia's madness as freeing, allowing her to both protest her situation and uncover truths about other characters.

regardless of her relationship to Hamlet. Branagh's film, on the other hand, consistently ties Ophelia's motivations and actions to Hamlet, and in doing so throws into light many of the negative interpretations of Ophelia that critics have posited.

One way in which Branagh's film connects Ophelia's story wholly to Hamlet's is through the use of the flashbacks, mentioned above, which establish the pair's sexual relationship. Carol Chillington Rutter argues that Ophelia as a character is "disastrously disabled" by the inclusion of the flashbacks (253). While I argue that the inclusion of the flashbacks provides an over-simplified and unnecessary explanation for Ophelia's eventual descent into madness, Rutter's reasoning is slightly different. Her argument centres around a "comfortable misogynistic position that the play's critics have often pandered it to", which is that "not all women are whores; some are Madonnas" (Stanton 167). In other words, within patriarchy a woman may only ever be either an innocent virgin or a whore, and the two women characters in *Hamlet* have tended to represent each side of this binary in popular imagination. Rutter argues that because Ophelia is "neither virgin nor candid ... she ceases to represent any value alternative to Gertrude's" (253). For Rutter, the addition of sex scenes "disables" the character because the scenes make the seemingly virtuous Ophelia into a whore. Rutter's argument is an example of the way in which critics perpetuate the Madonna/whore binary by placing Ophelia squarely in one category or the other. Similarly, this binary is what restricts the interpretation of Ophelia in Branagh's film: she exists merely as a symbol of the dichotomy rather than being able to transcend it.

The film gives credence to Laertes' warnings about "the trifling of [Hamlet's] favour" (1.3.5) and Polonius' instructions to Ophelia to "not believe his vows" (1.3.127) by showing Hamlet's callousness and proving that Polonius' concerns about the dishonourable nature of his declarations of love are well-founded. The virgin stereotype that both Laertes and Polonius encourage Ophelia to emulate becomes an imaginary construct against which both

women in the film are measured and come up lacking. The film's specific construction of this stereotype is present in its depiction of Ophelia's funeral. The funeral scene includes multiple characters' discussions of Ophelia's right to a Christian burial, emphasising that the circumstances of her death were "doubtful" (5.1.209) and that, as a possible suicide, she may not have the right to be buried on holy ground. From this discussion arises the priest's assertion that Ophelia has been allowed her "virgin rites" and "maiden strewments" (5.1.214-5). The disjunction between these specific funereal rites and the film audience's knowledge of Ophelia's sexual relationship with Hamlet forces into perspective the stark contrast between the only two roles it is possible for her to occupy. Branagh's decision to adapt the whole text including this specific mention of Ophelia as a "maiden", combined with his introduction of the lovemaking flashbacks, makes the issue of Ophelia's virginity essential to her character. In doing so, the film removes the possibility for alternative interpretations of the character which are present in Shakespeare's play.

Cartmell argues that "Hamlet's feelings of betrayal are all the more understandable" in light of the film's invention of a sexual relationship between him and Ophelia (36). I would argue however that the film excuses Hamlet's abusive behaviour towards Ophelia rather than encouraging empathy with him. Courtney Lehmann and Lisa Starks note that the film's depiction of the nunnery scene makes Ophelia's rejection of Hamlet the cause of his madness, as opposed to Shakespeare's play in which the end of their relationship is a side effect of Hamlet's efforts to be perceived as mad (para. 8). In the play, Hamlet's dialogue in the nunnery scene, moving rapidly from "I did love you once" (3.1.116) to "I loved you not" (3.1.119) is similar in tone to the verbal tricks he later plays on Polonius, in which a cloud can be simultaneously shaped like a camel, a weasel and a whale (3.2.346-351). This similarity indicates that in both scenes, Hamlet is speaking in nonsense in an attempt to seem less reasonable than he really is. However, in the film Branagh both directs and acts in the

nunnery scene “in a way that links Hamlet's rage directly to Ophelia's rejection of him” (Lehmann and Starks par. 8). His denials of love are delivered as spiteful attempts to hurt her romantically rather than more calculated attempts to seem insane. Thus the physical abuse that Ophelia suffers at Hamlet’s hands – being dragged bodily around the large throne room and slammed against mirrors – is shown to be a result of her romantic rejection of Hamlet and thus partly her own fault.

The film’s flashback scenes perform the additional task of consistently linking Hamlet’s declarations of love to the physical act of lovemaking. The first set of flashbacks is placed early in the film, during Ophelia’s conversation with Polonius in which he instructs her to stop seeing Hamlet. As they discuss the “tenders” of Hamlet’s affection (1.3.99), we are shown images of Hamlet and Ophelia naked in bed together, images that accompany Ophelia’s insistence that Hamlet is “honourable” (1.3.111). The second time we see this kind of extra material is while Ophelia, and then Polonius, read out the love letter sent from Hamlet to Ophelia. As Polonius begins to read the letter, the camera cuts to another scene of Ophelia and Hamlet in bed, this time partially clothed while Hamlet writes the love poem heard in Polonius’ voice-over. The remainder of the lines in the letter are spoken by Hamlet himself in the flashback sequence, rather than narrated by Polonius as they are in the play (2.2.120-123). Again, the use of flashback in this way links Hamlet’s love poem and his gifts of letters to Ophelia explicitly to their physical lovemaking in such a way as to make one stand in for the other. Thus, in the nunnery scene when Ophelia attempts to return her bundle of love letters to Hamlet, the letters act as a reminder of their physical relationship rather than a more meaningful emotional connection.

While some critics argue that the addition of a sexual relationship between the two characters makes Ophelia’s tragedy all the more profound (Cartmell 36, Weiss 168), I argue that the film relies on the invention of such a relationship to show Ophelia’s attachment to

Hamlet at the expense of developing a more emotional attachment between them. Hamlet and Ophelia are only ever shown together in a sexual context – although they appear together in both the nunnery scene and at *The Mousetrap*, both of these scenes are imbued with an undercurrent of sexual tension: the nunnery scene through use of the love letters, and the *Mousetrap* scene through Hamlet’s lewd puns about “country matters” and “groaning” (3.2.105 and 3.2.228). The relationship is reduced to merely a sexual one, and Ophelia is reduced to the “green girl / Unsifted in such perilous circumstance” that Polonius describes (1.3.111-2).

Irene Dash’s analysis of the women in *Hamlet* points to an exchange in the nunnery scene as the most crucial moment in the play for Ophelia’s character. Asked by Hamlet where her father is, Ophelia replies, “At home, my lord” (3.1.131). This, as the audience knows, is a lie, as Polonius is hidden with Claudius to eavesdrop on the conversation. The line shows Ophelia’s struggle between “the self and outside forces” or between loyalty to her father, loyalty to Hamlet, and honesty (Dash 119). In Branagh’s film, however, the line is given a different weight. Hamlet’s line “Where’s your father?” (3.1.129) is spoken in response to a sudden noise made by the hidden Claudius and Polonius, and delivered in such a way that it is clear Hamlet already knows the answer. Thus, Branagh’s Hamlet knows that Ophelia is lying about her father’s whereabouts and the line merely reinforces his belief that all women are liars. His following tirade against women and marriage (3.1.135-148) is spoken as he drags her bodily around the room, searching for the eavesdroppers. Ophelia does not struggle or attempt to escape this abuse, and so her interjection into Hamlet’s speech, “O heavenly powers restore him” (3.1.141), signals a peculiar lack of regard for her own safety; she calls for Hamlet’s reason to be restored, rather than for help or protection. The connection between the lines given to Ophelia by Shakespeare and the way Branagh has chosen to direct this scene is an odd one: Ophelia’s lines, while they are a cry for help of sorts, refer to her desire

for Hamlet, rather than herself, to be saved. Thus while it makes sense for her to cry out as Hamlet attacks her, the fact that she wishes not for her own safety but for his highlights her victimhood and passivity.

It is possible to “read Ophelia’s story as the female subtext of the tragedy, the repressed story of Hamlet” (Showalter 79). Branagh’s film can certainly be read in this vein. Although the film often shows Hamlet breaking down, during his soliloquies, by crying or upturning furniture, he is always alone while doing so. Ophelia, meanwhile, frequently begins to cry in the middle of her conversations with Polonius or with Claudius and Gertrude, and is more often shown looking distressed or upset than she is looking composed. When Polonius’ body is carried into the chapel after his murder, the camera focuses on Ophelia hurling herself against the gates, screaming. Her screams continue on the soundtrack once the image cuts away from her face to a long shot of Elsinore, suggesting that her grief is excessive and public in a way that Hamlet’s is explicitly encouraged not to be: the “unprevailing woe” (1.2.107) that Claudius scolds Hamlet for entertaining is writ large in Ophelia. Once again, in this reading, Ophelia is less a character in her own right than merely a symbolic representation of the excesses Hamlet considers but does not enact. Showalter correctly notes that in endorsing the interpretation of Ophelia as a negative of Hamlet, feminist critics “endorse our own marginality” (ibid.). This interpretation of Ophelia is one which the film capitalises on but which, I would argue, is not validated by Shakespeare’s play. On the contrary, while Branagh’s Ophelia is a study in passivity, Shakespeare’s Ophelia can be read as embodying a particular kind of strength: in her mad state, freed from the expectations of her gender and social standing, Ophelia is able to “promote justice and appeal to others for appeasement” (Tassi 76). However, in choosing to encourage a reading of Ophelia as merely the container for Hamlet’s excesses, Branagh continues a long tradition of marginalising

Ophelia in order to emphasise Hamlet, thus ignoring the potentially subversive and aggressive meanings that she carries in Shakespeare's play.

Ophelia, in being reduced to "the female subtext of the tragedy" (Showalter 79), becomes a metaphor that exposes truths about Hamlet's experience. Traditionally clothed in white, she is often "a transparency, an absence that [takes] on the colour of Hamlet's moods" (ibid. 89). Branagh's film does not entirely follow this pattern; on the contrary, in presenting Ophelia in bright, floral dresses, it conforms much more to Laura Mulvey's argument that women in film "connote *to-be-looked-at-ness*" (Mulvey 33). Ophelia is an attractive and sexual presence in Branagh's *Hamlet* rather than an absence, and as well as reflecting Hamlet's emotional states, she reflects a more subtle and ultimately more damaging aspect of his character: his misogyny. Rutter describes Ophelia, pressed violently against a two-way mirror at the end of Branagh's nunnery scene, as "wear[ing] on her twisted, discoloured flesh the punishment of the two men ... she is trapped between" (254): Hamlet on one side and Polonius on the other. Both physically and symbolically, Branagh's Ophelia is coloured by men's perceptions of her as a liar and as unfaithful.

Deborah Cartmell argues that Kate Winslet's portrayal in Branagh's film is of an Ophelia who is essentially guilty and "feels she deserves what she gets" (37). Her lack of regard for her own safety in the nunnery scene is one example of this. The film's portrayal of *The Mousetrap* is another. Although *The Mousetrap* is ostensibly designed to "catch the conscience of the king" (2.2.582), Janet Adelman argues that it is equally important for Hamlet to discover the guilt of his mother (31), hence the Player Queen's strong opposition to a second marriage should her first husband die. Yet Branagh's Hamlet appears to be less interested in the reactions of Gertrude and Claudius than those of Ophelia. It is generally accepted that Hamlet refuses to sit next to his mother during the performance because if he did so, he would be unable to watch Claudius (Thompson & Taylor 304). Yet in Branagh's

film, in choosing to sit next to Ophelia, Hamlet positions himself in such a way that he cannot see Claudius at all.

Although Ophelia has nothing to do with Claudius' plot to usurp the throne, the main text of *The Mousetrap* barely touches this subject either, and the impact is further lessened in Branagh's filmed version: the dumb-show at the opening of the play is an abstract mime which takes under thirty seconds to perform, and the climactic poisoning of Gonzago by Lucianus is interrupted by Hamlet himself, who runs onto the stage and snatches the player's prop vial of poison. In fact the only scene that is performed in full before Claudius calls for a halt to the play is a discussion between the Player King and Queen about the wisdom of marrying a second husband. Cartmell argues that the Player Queen's lines in this scene are "an exemplification of female inconstancy" (37). The film signals this inconstancy through the Player Queen's heavy makeup, linking her to the "paintings", or use of cosmetics, which Hamlet decries as one of the flaws of the contemporary woman (3.1.142). Camera shots consistently link the image of Ophelia with the voice of the Player Queen, as well as that of the Player King, most notably at the line "what we do determine oft we break" (3.2.169). Ophelia appears uncomfortable and nervous throughout the scene, a fact that "clinches her guilt" (Cartmell 38). Despite being forced into a situation wherein she must betray Hamlet against her will, this Ophelia appears to shoulder the blame for her actions, and as a result becomes a symbol of the film's pervasive implication that all women are liars.

The defining aspect of Ophelia's character, whatever the production, is her descent into madness and death. Although no clear answer is given in the play as to the cause of Ophelia's madness, critics over the years have analysed the songs and dialogue in her mad scene (4.5) in attempts to discover it. Feminist critics are divided over whether Ophelia's madness is a result of "her liberation from silence, obedience and constraint or her absolute victimisation by patriarchal oppression" (Neely 80). There is evidence to support both

arguments: Ophelia sings songs of loss and mourning which can be traced to her grief at her father's death, but she also sings of sexual desire and of young women betrayed by men. Neely argues that Shakespeare uses madness as "a means to illumination and self-knowledge" (80), as for example in *King Lear*. While Ophelia's madness may not be illuminating for her, her mad discourse does invite interpretations that are thematically crucial for the other characters in the play.

Marguerite Tassi argues that Ophelia's mad discourse and her presentation of flowers to the other characters "displays ritualistically a potent and poignant laying of blame at the feet of the powerful" (80). The flowers Ophelia distributes among Laertes, Gertrude and Claudius all have symbolic meanings representing flattery, unrequited love and both fidelity and infidelity (Thompson & Taylor 387-88; Greenblatt 1146). Ophelia herself is clearly aware of the meanings of her flowers, explaining that pansies are "for thoughts" (4.5.174) and instructing the watching characters to wear their rue "with a difference" (4.5.179). Whether or not Ophelia is aware of the ironies of presenting Claudius and Gertrude with flowers whose symbolic meanings are linked to their perceived or actual crimes, her madness is "intended to be devastating and transformative in the watching characters" (Tassi 79). Ophelia's behaviour incites Laertes to plot revenge against Hamlet when he sees how deeply Polonius' death has affected her, and her open and unconfined grief for her father highlights the injustice of his secret burial. In her madness Ophelia is free to criticise the Danish court and hold the King and Queen accountable for their actions.

Branagh's *Hamlet*, however, portrays Ophelia's madness in a way that is much closer to the "absolute victimisation" by patriarchy that Neely states is a common feminist interpretation (80). The audience is first introduced to Ophelia in her mad state through a peephole into a locked and padded cell. She is further restrained through use of a straightjacket. Tassi argues that in Shakespeare's play, Ophelia's anger is directed at the

powerful in her society, namely the King and Queen (80). In Branagh's film Gertrude is sympathetic to Ophelia's plight; although at first she refuses to speak to her, upon seeing her face to face she soon becomes more understanding and even unbuckles the straps holding Ophelia's arms, allowing her to move more freely. By contrast, as Ophelia dances and runs around the throne room singing, Claudius attempts to restrain her and to strap her arms again. Dressed in a dark military uniform, Claudius is an example of the way Branagh's *Hamlet* "relies upon military conquest ... as an image of masculinity" (Pittman 19). As the head of both the state and the military, Claudius is the ultimate figure of the militaristic and patriarchal Danish government that the film portrays. Both in this and the other scenes in which Ophelia appears, she is shown kindness by women and used as a pawn by men; thus, as she runs from the room to escape Claudius' attempts to confine her, she bids "good night" to the "ladies" present and does not acknowledge the men (4.5.69). In this way Branagh's film does briefly acknowledge readings of the play that emphasise Ophelia's victimisation by the male-dominated culture of Elsinore.

Ophelia's songs can be used to show her anger and frustration at the emphasis placed upon virginity as the defining trait of a young woman – two of the four songs she sings before her first exit in 4.5 are about young couples engaging in premarital sex. However, as in earlier scenes, Branagh's film uses flashback to disempower Ophelia and to reduce what could be a powerful moment of female defiance to another comment on her sexual relationship with Hamlet. As Ophelia sings, "Quoth she 'Before you tumbled me, / You promised me to wed.' / So would I 'a' done, by yonder sun, / An thou hadst not come to my bed" (4.5.61-64), she lies on the floor, simulating sex with an unseen partner. During the song, the camera cuts from Ophelia to repeated shots of her and Hamlet in bed, seen earlier in the film when Polonius questions Ophelia about their relationship. Thus Ophelia's madness is linked explicitly to her loss of virginity, and to the end of her relationship with Hamlet.

Ophelia earlier escapes Claudius' attempts to restrain her by violently thrusting into his side while shouting, "By Cock they [men] are to blame" (4.5.60). "Cock" was used as slang for "God" (Greenblatt 1143), but the obvious pun on "penis" is used as the primary meaning in Branagh's film. By rooting Ophelia's songs in their sexual meanings rather than using them as songs of protest, the film again makes her a sexual object and the other potentially unsettling meanings of her mad discourse – the "outrage" at her situation "that must be answered" (Tassi 81) – are lost.

Furthermore, when Ophelia returns for the second part of her mad scene, the anger that characterised her previous entrance is gone. Kate Winslet's performance as Ophelia, which becomes quiet and reflective, signals a change in Ophelia's mood and in the way her madness is portrayed – as does her costume: on her second entrance, the straightjacket is gone and replaced by a white nightgown, which she wears for the remainder of her appearances in the film. From this point, then, the film follows the long tradition discussed above – that of clothing Ophelia in white and thus characterising her as an "absence" (Showalter 89). By the end of her mad scene, Ophelia has lost all the angry momentum with which she began it, to the point that her exit from the scene consists merely of walking back into her padded cell, where she stands facing the wall. Just as it has been argued that Ophelia "has no story without Hamlet" (Edwards 36, in Showalter 78), it seems that Branagh's Ophelia has no purpose outside of delivering her lines and then fading once more into the background.

Neely states that the representation of Ophelia in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* "implicitly introduces conventions for reading madness as gender-inflicted" (82). Branagh's film, to some extent, relies on these conventions. Neely's argument rests on the idea that "the reading of madness's self-representation aestheticizes the condition" (ibid.), making it seem natural and linking the feminine with the mad. Laertes' comments on Ophelia's appearance and

behaviour – “Thought and affliction, passion, hell itself / She turns to favour and to prettiness” (4.5.183-4) – are an example of the way in which the characters in *Hamlet* acknowledge the aesthetics of Ophelia’s discourse rather than its content. Gertrude’s poetic description of Ophelia’s death is another. Laertes connects his tears at his sister’s death with both the water in which she drowns and with the weaker or more feminine parts of his nature: “When these [tears] are gone, / The woman will be out” (4.7.160-1). Thus, Ophelia’s gender and her madness and death are conflated. Branagh’s film follows this pattern in its representation of Gertrude’s speech describing Ophelia drowning. Rather than cutting to a visual representation of what Gertrude describes, the camera stays fixed on Gertrude herself as she delivers the description. The film shows Julie Christie’s Gertrude as seemingly less upset by the news she is delivering than charmed by its prettiness.

This conjunction of madness and prettiness continues in the remainder of Branagh’s interpretation of the mad scene. Ophelia, after her initial outburst, returns to the throne room in a white nightgown, with loose hair and bare feet. She sits quietly on the floor, alternately laughing and crying, and mimes weaving and handing out flowers, before singing a final song of mourning and leaving the room. In contrast to her earlier songs, which were jaunty but tuneless, this final song is sung to a haunting tune that is repeated in the film’s soundtrack as Ophelia exits. The “prettiness” that Laertes sees is shown in the film to be an aspect of Ophelia’s madness, and the film’s reliance on the visual representation of Ophelia as tragically beautiful undermines her unsettling and potentially transformative presence. Similarly, the flowers that Ophelia distributes in Shakespeare’s play are nowhere to be found in Branagh’s film: Ophelia offers imaginary flowers to Laertes, Claudius and Gertrude, none of whom move to take them from her. If Gertrude and Claudius do not physically take the flowers Ophelia offers them, they do not need to acknowledge and thus are not accountable for the actions the flowers’ symbolic meanings call to mind. Without physical objects that

can be distributed, Ophelia's attempt to hand out the imaginary flowers becomes just another mime which shows her distracted state but effects no transformation in the watching characters other than pity. Similarly, without any context from the scene itself or from the characters' reactions, the flowers' meanings are lost on a modern audience not familiar with Elizabethan herb-lore.

Both in the original play and in Branagh's film, Ophelia's speech is described before it is heard: it is "nothing, / Yet the unshaped use of it doth move / The hearers to collection" (4.5.7-9). Alison Findlay argues that Ophelia "does not have the speech and writing which Hamlet uses to cope with mental crisis" (197) and thus cannot discuss her suffering in order to relieve it. Similarly, Kaja Silverman notes that in film "the female subject is defined as insufficient" through her relationship to discourse (309). Shakespeare endows the mad with "a special sort of speech" (Neely 79), one that echoes their history as functioning members of society and is "socially enacted, [and] gender- and class-marked" (ibid.). Thus, rather than being able to communicate in her own voice, Ophelia uses songs and snatches of speech which echo her social position before her madness: Christian legends, songs of mourning, and multiple rhymes in which the main character is a betrayed maid. In Branagh's film she uses gesture and physical movement in an attempt to convey the meanings which she cannot articulate verbally. Together these two forms of meaning-making create a portrait of a woman who has important things to say but cannot say them in a way that moves her hearers to any significant action.

The madness of women and that of men are starkly differentiated in both *Hamlet* and Branagh's film, through the differences between Hamlet and Ophelia. The primary difference between Hamlet's performance of madness and Ophelia's affliction is the content of their speech. As discussed above, Ophelia speaks in a specific and coded discourse which Hamlet is not bound to. Hamlet acts out a "fashionably introspective ... melancholy" which is

“politicised in form and content” (Neely 83). The other characters’ ability to distinguish between Ophelia’s genuinely afflicted state and Hamlet’s feigned one stems from the differences in their language, hence Claudius’ assertion that Hamlet’s speech in the nunnery scene, “though it lacked form a little, / Was not like madness” (3.1.162-3). Thus, because of the power Hamlet wields through language – a power denied to Ophelia – his false madness stemming from Claudius’ usurpation of the throne must be dealt with more swiftly than Ophelia’s medical condition, because Hamlet’s madness threatens the powerful in Elsinore whereas Ophelia’s is considered tragic but ultimately harmless to anyone but herself. Here, again, Branagh’s decision to adapt the entire text of Shakespeare’s play privileges the character of Hamlet above any other. Branagh shows Hamlet’s outbursts being taken seriously by the characters around him: Rosencrantz, Guildenstern, Polonius and Claudius all listen to and seriously consider Hamlet’s various outbursts whereas the responses to Ophelia’s mad discourse vary between attempted restraint and pity. Branagh’s film implies that Hamlet’s “mad” discourse is of more import than Ophelia’s, emphasising that Ophelia is a tragic but ultimately unimportant figure.

Branagh’s film is set “somewhere in the final decades of the 19th century” (Weiss 144), and its treatment of the mad Ophelia is true to the time period. In the late Nineteenth Century, madness “became firmly conceptualised as mental illness, under the scrutiny and control of the rising medical establishment” (Ussher 64). Branagh’s film shows Ophelia in a padded cell, wearing a straightjacket, and presided over by a doctor. All of these symbolise that Ophelia’s madness is a recognised illness and is thus dealt with according to the medical practises of the time. The film also gives clues as to the poor treatment and understanding of the mentally ill which is commonly associated with the period: Ophelia’s straightjacket is designed to confine her rather than treat her, and rather than being treated with care she is kept in a cell and instead of bathing is sprayed with a large hose. Rather than speaking truths

to the other characters, Ophelia is contained and silenced, and the rhetorical power that her speech carried for an Elizabethan audience is lost on the audience of the film.

The film is not concerned with presenting an entirely accurate portrait of Nineteenth Century psychiatry, however. Samuel Crowl notes that to some extent, the film's large cast is ethnically diverse, regardless of whether this is accurate to the period, because Branagh wishes for his films to "belong to the world" (228). For the same reason, two of the smaller roles which in the play were written for men are played by women in the film. One of these roles is the anonymous Gentleman who first introduces Ophelia in her mad state, in the film re-imagined as Ophelia's female doctor. The casting of a woman as Ophelia's doctor, somewhat counter-intuitively, serves to limit the film's minimal attempts to promote a feminist reading of Ophelia's condition. Ussher notes that in the late Nineteenth Century, a "woman doctor or psychiatrist was unthinkable" due to widely-held misogynist beliefs that women were too weak-minded to carry out the kinds of study necessary to advance in the medical profession (Ussher 68). Female mental illness in this period was poorly understood precisely because of this lack of female professionals. Madness was "synonymous with womanhood" (ibid. 64): the very fact of being female led, it was believed, to a variety of maladies for which there was no cure. By casting a woman as Ophelia's doctor, Branagh ignores this specific historical context and ensures that this particular barrier to effective treatment for Nineteenth Century women – the lack of doctors or psychiatrists who understood what it was to be female – is not relevant to his depiction of mental illness and its treatment. Thus the film again obscures or undermines the possibility of seeing the cause of Ophelia's madness as a product of her mistreatment by patriarchal forces and further reinforces the idea that it results from the death of her father and the loss of her virginity.

Much as the film's setting and flashback material limits the meanings that can be drawn from Ophelia's mad speech and her other appearances, its portrayal of Gertrude is

similarly limited by the use of flashback and by Branagh's decision to incorporate the full text of the play. Branagh's film is characterised by a certain anxiety about the relationship between its mother figure and her son. Gertrude, much like Ophelia, is largely constructed in terms of her sexuality, and much of the fullness of her character is lost through the film's attempts to portray both a textually accurate Gertrude and every word of the various misogynist diatribes launched at her. Like Ophelia, Gertrude is caught at the heart of a contradiction – and similarly, that contradiction is bound up in questions of her sexuality and its power.

Janet Adelman's influential psychoanalytic analysis of *Hamlet* pinpoints Gertrude as the play's central figure. Hamlet's anxiety about his mother's marriage and sexual appetite absorbs him even more than his grief at the loss of his father, Adelman argues (17), and it is this anxiety that permeates both Shakespeare's play and Branagh's film. Yet this particular adaptation differs from others in that, unlike other notable adapters such as Laurence Olivier, Branagh chooses to ignore the possible Oedipal readings of the play famously discussed by Freud and often explored in film adaptations (Lehmann & Starks para. 3). Branagh's Hamlet shows no signs of harbouring a secret sexual desire for his mother, and avoids the "erotic romantic caresses" and "lewd movements suggesting sexual intercourse" which have appeared in other recent film adaptations (Lehmann & Starks note 30). Ironically, however, in pointedly ignoring these readings of his source material, Branagh's film "repress[es] the maternal body with a vengeance" (ibid. para. 1), much like the Oedipal reading of Hamlet which he vehemently opposes.

Branagh's *Hamlet*, then, is "consciously and actively positioned against psychoanalysis" (Lehmann & Starks para. 4), avoiding any interpretation that might show either Hamlet or Gertrude as anything other than healthily heterosexual or, in Gertrude's case, completely chaste. Branagh's Gertrude is never seen in any overtly sexual situations or

even shown behaving in a particularly sensual manner. Although during Hamlet's tirade against Danish drunkenness, Gertrude and Claudius are briefly seen running to their bedroom and jumping on their bed, both are fully clothed and, as far as it is possible to tell before an attendant discreetly closes their bedroom door and blocks the camera's view of the room, they lie still and appear to be collapsing into a drunken sleep.

Rebecca Smith's analysis of the character of Gertrude constructed by the play reveals a "soft, obedient, dependent, unimaginative woman" caught between her affections for her husband and her son (194). Smith looks solely at Gertrude's own dialogue, which often contains questions and forms only 3.8 per cent of the total lines in the play (Smith 199). In Branagh's *Hamlet* Gertrude speaks all of the lines ascribed to her, including the short speech in Act 5 Scene 1 in which she reassures Laertes regarding Hamlet's madness (5.1.269-273), a speech which is sometimes attributed to Claudius (Greenblatt 1158). Smith argues that "Gertrude is never seen in the play inducing anyone to do anything at all monstrous" (199), and this is true of Branagh's film too: even the extra-textual flashback scenes show Gertrude to be a loving wife to both her husbands, one who follows their lead rather than controlling their behaviour.

Despite this textual reality in regard to Gertrude's characterisation, Jacqueline Rose argues that a "notion of excess" (95) is attached to Gertrude in *Hamlet* and this idea has been many critics' focus in analysing the play. This notion of excessive sexuality is also one that is repeatedly attached to Gertrude in adaptations – see, for example, the 1969 Tony Richardson film in which Gertrude and Claudius gorge themselves on sticky food in their marriage bed (Smith 195), a visual metaphor for the other appetites also satiated there. Rose further argues that Gertrude's perceived "impropriety ... produce[s] an image of sexuality as something unmanageable which cannot be held in its place" (97). Shakespeare's play provides evidence

to both support and refute this idea, through the dialogue attributed to Hamlet and the Ghost as well as through Gertrude's own lines and stage directions.

Rose's argument is that an idea of unmanageable sexuality has been attached to the character of Gertrude by critics who rely on the decades of similar criticism and on assumptions about *Hamlet* as a text. This assertion is similar to George Bluestone's suggestion that often "what [the adapter] adapts is a kind of paraphrase" of his or her chosen source (62). Bluestone asserts that many filmmakers who adapt written texts look not at the language itself but at "characters and incidents which have somehow detached themselves from language and ... have achieved a mythic life of their own" (ibid.). Although Bluestone's construction of a filmmaker who disregards the language of his or her source text is at odds with Branagh's full-text *Hamlet*, which by definition engages with Shakespeare's language more fully than any adaptation before it, the way in which Branagh's film portrays its female characters (and, to a lesser extent, its male ones) relies on assumptions much like those which Bluestone and Rose describe.

Although in Branagh's film Gertrude is not explicitly shown in a sexual light, the excess with which she is so frequently associated is signalled in other ways. Gertrude and Claudius' physical relationship is symbolised by their constant hand-holding or other physical contact such as hugging. Even this, however, is far from the "reechy kisses" (3.4.168) which Hamlet begs Gertrude not to accept. Gertrude is physically close to and familiar with other characters in the film, including Hamlet himself, Ophelia, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. She often clasps the hands of people she is conversing with, and is the only character in the film who consistently touches those she is speaking to. Flashbacks in the ghost scene show Gertrude hugging and touching both Claudius and Old Hamlet as evidence of her adultery. Her physical closeness to other characters is used as a sign of her inconstancy

and decreases markedly after Hamlet confronts her in the closet scene and insists she be ashamed of her apparently voracious sexual appetite.

The film does have some difficulty in representing Gertrude: she behaves in a way that is both innocent and non-threatening, and the violently misogynist rhetoric used by both Hamlet and the Ghost to describe her is completely at odds with this portrayal. Part of this difficulty comes, I would argue, from the lack of information about her that can be gleaned from Shakespeare's play. It is, as Adelman points out, "striking how little we know about Gertrude" (15); she speaks little and seems to support T. S. Eliot's critique that she is "not sufficient as a character to carry the weight of the affect which she generates" in Hamlet and in the other men of the play (Rose 96). Because there is so little unbiased information about the content of Gertrude's character, her motivations for marrying Claudius, and even the extent of her involvement in her first husband's death, she is "one of the hardest roles in Shakespeare for an actress to play" (Stubbs 35).

The contradictory nature of the character is most apparent in Branagh's version of the closet scene, wherein Hamlet confronts his mother about her marriage to Claudius. Julie Christie's Gertrude begins the scene matching Branagh's frantic anger with her own outrage, even attempting to physically restrain him as she threatens to "set those to you that can speak" (3.4.17). However, much as he has done earlier with Ophelia, Branagh's Hamlet responds with violence and forces Gertrude into a chair before Polonius' cry for help distracts him. After the murder of Polonius, as Gertrude kneels next to the body in shock, Hamlet forcefully takes her arm and hurls her onto her bed to "wring [her] heart" (3.4.34). After each physical assault, Gertrude becomes more and more compliant, finally relenting and swearing, "I have no life to breathe / What thou hast said to me" (3.4.182-3). Julie Christie as Gertrude appears wholeheartedly to accept Hamlet's descriptions of her marriage bed as being akin to a "nasty sty" (3.4.83). The "powerful first-person force" (Smith 204) of Hamlet eclipses all

other perspectives, to the extent that Gertrude agrees with and weeps over his descriptions of her disgusting sexuality – even despite the wealth of visual evidence the film presents to the contrary. In adapting every word that can be ascribed to a version of *Hamlet*, Branagh creates a paradox: his version of Gertrude is chaste and gentle, in accordance with her own lines and business in the play, yet somehow still merits – and agrees with – long speeches by both young and Old Hamlet in which her sexuality is compared to a beast that “prey[s] on garbage” (1.5.57).

The contradiction between Gertrude’s actual behaviour and the vitriol she triggers in Hamlet and his father is heightened by the film’s portrayal of Gertrude’s marriage and her relationship with Claudius. Gertrude’s remarriage is shown in both the play and the film to be devastating to both Hamlet and the ghost of his father. Gertrude herself never reveals her reasons for marrying Claudius, although she does acknowledge that her “o’er-hasty marriage” (2.2.57) may be the cause of Hamlet’s madness. The play does, however, suggest that there may be political reasons for the marriage: Claudius, in his speech at the beginning of the play, describes Gertrude as “th’imperial jointress of this warlike state” (1.2.9) and acknowledges the “better wisdoms” of the courtiers to whom he is speaking, “which have freely gone with this affair along” (1.2.15-16). Both of these comments imply that the marriage was approved of by both Gertrude and the government of Denmark, and that it was a politically shrewd move. Claudius also mentions that the potential threat from Young Fortinbras comes in part because of the Norwegian supposition that Denmark is “disjoint and out of frame” due to Old Hamlet’s death (1.2.20). This, combined with Gertrude’s position as “imperial jointress”, suggests that the marriage between her and Claudius has returned the state to order and made it stronger against its enemies. The reactions from the courtiers surrounding Claudius suggest that his claims are true – they applaud in response to his gratitude for their support of his marriage.

The way in which Branagh's film interprets the legitimacy of the marriage departs from the associations that would have been drawn when the play was first performed: Claudius' marriage to Gertrude, his brother's widow, parallels the marriage and subsequent divorce of Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon, who had been married to Henry's elder brother. Henry's decision to divorce Catherine after eighteen years of marriage was "authorised by the text of Leviticus, which he interpreted as a divine prohibition" against marrying a brother's widow (Rosenblatt 357). The legitimacy of the divorce, and hence of Henry's subsequent marriage to Anne Boleyn, the mother of Elizabeth I, were therefore fundamental to Elizabeth's claim to the throne. Thus, when the play was originally performed during Elizabeth's reign, its audience had strong reason to believe that Claudius' marriage was not in the interests of Denmark's "better wisdoms" at all. But Branagh's film, reaching a modern audience, detaches the text of *Hamlet* from its historical context by setting the story in a quasi-Victorian time period rather than an Elizabethan one. In taking Claudius' argument for the political expediency of his marriage at face value, Branagh's film presents the relationship between Claudius and Gertrude in a more positive light than it would have been received by an Elizabethan audience. In the film, the only (living) person who objects to the marriage is Hamlet himself.

The only factor in Branagh's film which validates Hamlet's position is the power of Branagh's own performance as director and star; thus the contradictions that emerge in the film's construction of Gertrude are occluded by Branagh's assumption that his audience will share his – and by extension Hamlet's – point of view regarding her. By the time Branagh's *Hamlet* was released in 1996, Hollywood was seeing a "revival of creative and commercial interest in Shakespeare as a source for films", sparked by Branagh's own adaptation of *Henry V* in 1989 (Crowl 222). *Hamlet* is Branagh's third of four film adaptations of Shakespeare plays, following *Henry V* and *Much Ado About Nothing* (1993), and rides on the coattails of

the previous two films' success. Branagh was considered an authority on the combination of Shakespeare and box office success, and his *Hamlet* relies on this reputation as an authoritative and inspired translator of Shakespeare's plays to the big screen.

Branagh's *Hamlet*, then, uses Branagh's position as lead actor to encourage audience identification with Hamlet's perspective, especially in relation to Gertrude. Despite the opening scene in which the audience may be convinced that Gertrude's decision to remarry is a sound one, for the rest of the film Hamlet's perspective is taken for granted as the truth and the representation of Gertrude is structured around his biases. At several points, the combination of specific lines of dialogue and camera shots which focus on Gertrude blame her for various crimes or misdeeds committed by other characters. The most arbitrary of these occurs just before the scene in which Hamlet meets the Ghost for the first time. Hamlet explains the noises coming from the castle thus:

The King doth wake tonight and takes his rouse,
Keeps wassail, and the swagg'ring upspring reels,
And as he drains his draughts of Rhenish down
The kettle-drum and trumpet thus bray out
The triumph of his pledge. (1.4.9-13)

This custom of wild drinking and dancing, according to Hamlet, is the reason why other nations consider Denmark to be a land of drunkards. In Branagh's film, as Hamlet discusses the King's "wassail", the audience is shown images of Claudius and Gertrude dancing down a hallway lined with attendants, laughing and clapping as they both down several glasses of drink before running into their bedroom and collapsing on the bed. Gertrude is the only woman in this gathering. Her presence, and the fact that the wassail ends with Claudius leading her to bed, links their drunkenness with sexual appetite, and in turn links that appetite with Hamlet's assertion that such activities make Denmark "traded and

taxed of other nations” (1.4.18.2). This scene is immediately followed by the ghost scene, in which the Ghost denounces Gertrude’s marriage and condemns her behaviour. Both of these scenes serve to implicitly link the image of Gertrude with ideas of lechery and sexual misdeeds.

Similarly, in Gertrude’s first scene in the film, specific camera shots are used to condemn her and her behaviour. The audience first encounters Claudius and Gertrude on the day of their wedding, and Gertrude’s first lines are delivered as she kneels in front of Hamlet and pleads with him to “cast thy nightly colour off” (1.2.68) and end his period of mourning for his father. Gertrude’s and Hamlet’s faces are alternately filmed in close-up as they speak to each other. When Claudius joins their conversation and begins his lengthy speech encouraging Hamlet to end his mourning, he too is filmed in close-up, with the camera occasionally cutting to Hamlet’s face or Gertrude’s as they listen. Worth noting are the specific lines at which the camera shows Gertrude’s face, rather than Hamlet’s or Claudius’. The camera cuts to Gertrude twice during the first part of Claudius’ speech, before the three characters rise and the camera moves back into mid- or long-shots: at Claudius’ line “a will most incorrect to heaven, / A heart unfortified” (1.2.95), and again at “A fault against the dead, a fault to nature” (1.2.102). These shots, which link the visual image of Gertrude to the description of incorrectness and disrespect for the dead, invite the audience to associate Claudius’ accusations with Gertrude rather than with Hamlet, to whom they are addressed. The film thus aligns itself with the perspective of Hamlet and of the Ghost, condemning Gertrude’s behaviour rather than attempting to explain it. Further, these shots lay the blame for the adulterous marriage with Gertrude rather than with Claudius.

The linking of Gertrude with sexual misdeeds is continued in Branagh’s version of the ghost scene. Despite Hamlet’s assertions that the Ghost is an “honest” one (1.5.142), Shakespeare’s play does not provide any proof of this in the ghost scene itself, leaving the

Ghost's origins and thus the veracity of his stories in doubt until his accusations can be proved true by Hamlet's performance of *The Mousetrap* and by Claudius' overheard prayers in 3.3. Some important points can be immediately discerned, however: one of the clearest is that the Ghost shares Hamlet's disdain for Gertrude's remarriage. Just over a quarter of the Ghost's 87 lines in this scene refer to Gertrude, and describe her as adulterous, lecherous and bestial. Smith points out that the Ghost only pauses in his attack on Gertrude and Claudius' relationship and "returns to a brief description of the actual murder" because he senses that morning is near (Smith 197). He bemoans that his murder occurred when he was "in the blossoms of my sin" (1.5.76) and instructs Hamlet, "If thou hast nature in thee, bear it not" (1.5.81). Hamlet is encouraged not only to avenge his father's murder but to "Let not the royal bed of Denmark be / A couch for luxury and damned incest" (1.5.82-3), and this seems to be the more important task. Hamlet's assumptions about the evils of his mother's behaviour are confirmed by the Ghost's descriptions of her. In order to verify the truth of the Ghost's claims, however, it is important to first understand the context in which he appears.

The Ghost as he appears in Shakespeare's play is stern and serious, and seems to care far less for his son than Hamlet does for his father. In Hamlet's first soliloquy, he describes his father as "So excellent a king, that was to this [Claudius] / Hyperion to a satyr" (1.2.139-140), whereas the Ghost merely finds Hamlet "apt" (1.5.32). Similarly, although Hamlet states that Old Hamlet was "so loving to my mother / That he might not beteem the winds of heaven / Visit her face too roughly" (1.2.140-142), David Leverenz notes that the Ghost's "love can be fully summarised not be [sic] feeling but by 'vow' or public ritual" (298); his one description of his love for Gertrude is that it "went hand-in-hand even with the vow / I made to her in marriage" (1.5.49-50). All of this suggests that the Ghost, regardless of whether he is truly a vision of Hamlet's father, appears to care little for the son he induces to violence and the wife he seems so offended by. Jean Betts describes such a father and

husband in her feminist adaptation of *Hamlet*, *Ophelia Thinks Harder*. In Betts' play, Gertrude describes the dead king as "an ignorant bully, a cowardly cheat, a bloodthirsty killer, a thoroughly useless husband and a damaging and dangerous father" (Betts 53). In Shakespeare's play Gertrude does not discuss her husband at all; indeed the only person who speaks of Old Hamlet in any detail is Hamlet himself. The Ghost presented in 1.5 is unfeeling and seems only concerned with presenting himself in the best possible light and abusing both Claudius and Gertrude. If this is how he was in life, it becomes easy to see why Gertrude might be drawn to Claudius, who refers to her as "sweet Gertrude" (2.2.30) rather than "my most seeming-virtuous queen" (1.5.46). Branagh's film, too, shows the Ghost as a distant and stoic figure, clad entirely in metal armour and speaking in a husky monotone.

Ghosts, in the Elizabethan period, were a controversial topic. They could be the true spirits of the dead returning to speak to the living, or alternatively they might be "devils sent to lure humans into sinful actions" (Greenblatt 1070). In *Hamlet*, the origin of the Ghost is left ambiguous, although he states he has come from Purgatory, of which Elizabethan Protestants "vehemently denied" the existence (ibid.). The Ghost's true purpose, rather than to incite Hamlet to just revenge, may be to encourage him to murder. Until the audience is privy to Claudius' prayers and his confession of the murder, the truth of the Ghost's tale is left ambiguous. Regardless of his purpose, however, the Ghost is not the "noble father" that Hamlet describes (1.2.243): he freely admits to committing "foul crimes" (1.5.12) in his lifetime and compares the afterlife to a "prison-house" (1.5.14). Again, the play shows that Hamlet's earlier descriptions of his father as almost godlike in his goodness are false. The only reason Hamlet seems to have to believe the Ghost – before his suspicions are confirmed by Claudius' reaction to *The Mousetrap* – is that the Ghost's descriptions of Gertrude reinforce Hamlet's belief that his mother's sexuality is sinful. These complexities and potential contradictions cannot help but infuse Branagh's *Hamlet*, since his determination not

to cut any lines from the play precludes the possibility of making the various characterisations less ambivalent through cutting.

At the same time, several directorial decisions influence the preferred representation of Gertrude in Branagh's *Hamlet*, specifically in his version of the ghost scene. One of the most pertinent of these is the decision to include flashbacks during the Ghost's dialogue. These flashbacks first show extreme close-ups of blood seeping from Old Hamlet's ears as he reveals that he was murdered, and then, between shots of the Ghost speaking and of Hamlet looking horrified, a flashback plays out which shows a scene from Old Hamlet's life wherein he, Hamlet, Gertrude and Claudius are curling in one of the hallways of Elsinore. As the Ghost describes the "traitorous gifts" that helped Claudius to secure Gertrude's love (1.5.43), the film shows Claudius handing Gertrude a curling stone and helping her to slide it across the floor. The Ghost's lamentation of Gertrude's "falling off" from her marriage vows (1.5.47) is accompanied by an image of Old Hamlet sitting while Gertrude stands with an arm around him and Hamlet kneels at his feet. The Ghost's comparisons between lust and virtue (1.5.53-57) are accompanied by a moment which occurs chronologically immediately after the Gertrude's curling throw, wherein she straightens and hugs Claudius in celebration at her successful attempt at the sport. This chaste image is immediately followed by an extreme close-up of the laces of a woman's corset being undone.

The flashbacks are a way in which the film, following the play, constructs Hamlet as "a powerful first-person force" (Smith 204) whose perspective on the events and characters surrounding him is always the dominant one. Alain Bergala, in his work on identification in film, notes that the "film audience's relaxed vigilance allows it to identify with almost any character if the narrative structure leads it to do so" (220). Through the use of flashback as well as extensive soliloquy, the film encourages the audience to see the characters and events Hamlet encounters from his point of view – especially the female characters. The curling

flashbacks are structured as Hamlet's memories or at least as products of his imagination: the film cuts from the images of Gertrude, Claudius and the two Hamlets to images of Hamlet's face, linking the two and suggesting that the flashbacks originate from Hamlet's mind. This access to Hamlet's memories, coupled with the Ghost's accusations, hammers home the point that Gertrude was unfaithful. Bergala argues that "it is the situation ... and the manner in which it is presented to the spectator" that will "determine the spectator's identification" with a particular character (222). It is Hamlet's mind through which the audience is presented with the images of Claudius and Gertrude; his perspective is the dominant one and the one with which the audience is led to identify regardless of its misogynist roots.

In her study of the theory of flashbacks in film, Maureen Turim discusses the way in which flashbacks can be used to create a "logic of inevitability" wherein "certain types of events are shown to have certain types of causes without ever allowing for other outcomes than the one given in advance" (Turim 17). This is certainly true of Branagh's *Hamlet*: the Ghost's story, which centres on his murder and the consequences of it, is accompanied by a flashback which primarily revolves around Gertrude's friendship with Claudius. By showing a memory that is not about the political or personal reasons Claudius may have had for murdering Old Hamlet, the film reinforces the perspective of the play in which "Claudius becomes the passive victim of Gertrude's sexual will; she becomes the active murderer" (Adelman 25). Similarly, in cutting from an image of Gertrude and Claudius embracing as friends to a shot of a corset being unlaced – a shot which stands in for a more explicit depiction of sex – the film implies that the consequences of Gertrude's friendship with another man will inevitably end in infidelity, whether to her husband while he is living or to his memory.

Turim, in her discussion of *Citizen Kane*, notes how "the narrative within the flashback cheats" in order to present a version of the past that is not "the cinematic

actualisation of what we surmise the narrator might have witnessed” (114). In Branagh’s film, it is not clear from whose perspective the flashbacks are shown, as both Hamlet and Old Hamlet are shown to have their backs turned while Claudius and Gertrude are curling, meaning it is impossible for either of them to have seen this event and thus remember it. Turim also argues that flashback scenes which are supposedly from one specific character’s point of view can be constructed in such a way as to go against “how the narrator most likely would have represented him or herself” (ibid.). This is true of Branagh’s *Hamlet* as well, in that the curling flashbacks show Old Hamlet resting in a chair, “appearing almost worn by the exertions of the sport” (Pittman 34) rather than the powerful and physically adept Old Hamlet described by Horatio in the film’s opening scene.

Turim states that the dissonance between a character’s perspective and the content of a flashback supposedly narrated by that character is the “product of a larger authorial purpose” – in the case of *Citizen Kane*, this purpose is to make the film a more unified whole rather than a series of disjointed parts (114). In Branagh’s *Hamlet*, that authorial purpose is not merely to link the flashbacks stylistically but, I would argue, to assert the truth of both the Ghost’s story and the assumptions it makes about Gertrude. As discussed above, the ambiguity surrounding the Ghost’s story, and his origins, is an important aspect of the character and of the play, and explains Hamlet’s need to prove the Ghost’s words through his performance of *The Mousetrap*. Branagh’s film removes this ambiguity through its use of flashback. L. Monique Pittman argues that the flashbacks prove the Ghost’s story to be true “because the son’s mind recreates it” (36). The Ghost’s words confirm Hamlet’s suspicions about his mother, and similarly the film confirms the Ghost’s words through the interpolations during his speeches. By creating a film that includes every line from every source version of Shakespeare’s play, Branagh is unable to avoid the contradictions inherent in those lines by editing them out, as other adaptations might. He thus includes flashback

material such as that present in the ghost scene of his film, but in doing so often emphasises the very contradictions he is attempting to clarify. Such is the case with his representation of Gertrude.

Gertrude, then, is constructed through the film's dialogue and through various camera shots and flashbacks as a monstrous woman whose sexual appetite and manipulative behaviour have brought her country to the brink of ruin – and this despite the fact that Julie Christie's portrayal of the character shows merely a gentle and slightly overwhelmed mother and wife who nevertheless seems to acknowledge the accusations of lechery hurled at her by her son as the truth. Ophelia is made into a sex object by flashbacks which consistently underline the physical nature of her relationship with Hamlet. The power with which her speeches and songs can be imbued is lost in Branagh's version of the mad scene, which reduces the social and political resonances of her words and actions to reflections on the loss of men in her life. In this respect Branagh's construction of Gertrude replicates, quite non-ironically, the warning that Hamlet gives Ophelia about the dangers of being a woman: "be thou as chaste as ice, as pure as snow, thou shalt not escape calumny" (3.1.136-137). This paradox certainly holds true in Gertrude's case.

The film's problems in representing its women characters ultimately fall to its obsession with their sexuality. Although none of the three differing versions of the *Hamlet* text which Branagh uses as the source material for his screenplay contain explicit mention of a sexual relationship between Hamlet and Ophelia outside Hamlet's sexualised wordplay and allusions, Branagh invents and films one; though there is no firm evidence to suggest that Claudius and Gertrude carried on an affair during Old Hamlet's lifetime, Branagh's film insinuates one. There is a constant emphasis on female sexuality throughout the film and this emphasis comes at the expense of a more rounded characterisation of either Ophelia or Gertrude.

To be female and sexual in Branagh's *Hamlet* is to be at best a victim and at worst a monster. In attempting to create a film containing the entire text of *Hamlet*, a film that attempts to honour Shakespeare's play through faithfully delivering all of its lines, Branagh has created a film that does a disservice to both the original work and to his audience, by suggesting that the women created by Shakespeare are so much less than the fully rounded characters they have the potential to be. Such weakened women also appear in Richard Loncraine and Ian McKellen's film *Richard III*, although where Branagh uses specific filmic techniques to mitigate the multiple different interpretations presented by the abundance of text in his film, McKellen and Loncraine's film minimises its women's power through a specific lack of text.

“Shallow, Changing Woman”: Ian McKellen and Richard Loncraine’s *Richard III*

In the preceding chapter, I argued that Kenneth Branagh’s film version of *Hamlet* (1996) adapts not only every word of the varying editorial versions of his source play, but also the contradictions and confusions inherent in those versions. Further, Branagh’s cinematic constructions of *Hamlet*’s characters do not necessarily match up with the way in which those characters are represented in Shakespeare’s play, and this leads to a contradictory film rather than a cohesive whole. One of the ways in which Branagh’s film attempts to legitimise its particular interpretation of *Hamlet* is through an over-investment in the authority of Branagh’s perspective as director, star and protagonist. This investment in a single point of view also comes to the fore in Ian McKellen and Richard Loncraine’s film version of *Richard III* (1995). McKellen and Loncraine’s film is adapted in a different way to Branagh’s *Hamlet*; the film uses a screenplay which, while based on Shakespeare’s *Richard III*, is significantly cut and edited to a fraction of the play’s length.⁶ McKellen and Loncraine’s *Richard III* shows how editing choices can reflect the filmmakers’ opinions and perspectives on their source material, and thus influence their representations of the women in their chosen source.

The screenplay for Loncraine’s film was written by Ian McKellen, who plays Richard in the film, and it is based on a stage production, directed by Richard Eyre, in which McKellen also starred. The film’s setting departs from that of its source and places the action in an alternate 1930s wherein Richard is a fascist ruler who comes to power after an English civil war. The dialogue of the film, too, has been adapted to be more appropriate to this new setting. McKellen uses the dialogue of Shakespeare’s *Richard III* as a starting point but edits out many scenes and characters, as well as changing the order of some events in the play and altering the context of some lines or scenes. I will be relying on the notes to McKellen’s

⁶ Like *Hamlet*, *Richard III* exists in both Folio and Quarto version (Greenblatt 598). McKellen’s screenplay contains material from both.

published screenplay, available on his official website, to illuminate some of the choices made in adapting the play to the screen.

Richard of Gloucester is one of Shakespeare's most vocal characters; his lines dominate the Shakespeare's *Richard III* and many performances work with a text that has been edited in a way that draws even more attention to him⁷. Criticism of the play, too, tends to focus on Richard, while neglecting the play's other characters. Loncraine's film is one in a long line of adaptations that cuts down secondary characters' dialogue and even removes certain characters and scenes altogether in order to focus more intently on Richard and the story of his rise and fall. While Richard is a fascinating and compelling character, and one who provides many opportunities for an actor to show his talent, focussing on Richard in this way limits the agency and the narrative power of the other characters, especially the play's women.

My main focus for this chapter will be on the way in which Loncraine and McKellen's film emphasises Richard's perspective at the expense of the surrounding characters. Shakespeare's play shows the multifaceted nature of Richard's character through his multiple soliloquies and asides to the audience, allowing him to be viewed as funny and charming while at the same time ensuring that his actions are condemned. Deborah Willis notes that Shakespeare's play can be seen to "invite sympathy with Richard's misogyny and also interrogate it" (Willis 196), but such interrogation is lacking in McKellen and Loncraine's final film version. The majority of the speeches condemning Richard's actions, of which there are many in Shakespeare's play, are removed in the transition to the screen, and the film is structured to invite sympathy with and understanding of Richard's various acts of violence.

⁷ Colley Cibber's 1700 text, for example, famously removes many lines from Shakespeare's play and adds original ones, and one of the most famous screen Richards, Laurence Olivier, similarly cuts many of *Richard III*'s secondary characters (McKellen 23-24).

McKellen's screenplay contains several comments on the way he hopes or believes the audience will react to the film at various points. Such commentary is valuable for its seeming lack of insight into how a female audience member might react to McKellen's insidiously misogynistic portrayal of Richard. This disconnect between what McKellen believes the audience will see and what is actually occurring on screen exposes his perspective on the film as a whole. McKellen's screenplay, and thus the final film, privileges Richard's point of view, and contains an identification with Richard that only comes through a long association with the character. It is impossible for a film audience to develop such a nuanced understanding of Richard within *Richard III's* one hour and forty minute runtime. The belief that the audience will understand Richard's motivations as clearly as McKellen himself leads to a film that prioritises Richard's perspective over a more nuanced portrayal of those who might oppose him.

The majority of the characters from the play who oppose Richard are women. In this chapter, while I will focus largely on the women characters of the play and how they are empowered or disempowered by the play's narrative, I will also discuss directorial and editing choices in Loncraine's film that echo the play's misogynistic structure. Janet Adelman writes that Shakespeare's *Richard III* is structured in such a way that the women characters, although they appear regularly throughout the first three acts, slowly begin to disperse in the latter part of the play and eventually move "off the stage altogether" (9). This is a dramatic contrast to Shakespeare's earlier history plays, in which women play active and often violent roles in the story – for example, Joan la Pucelle in *Henry VI Part 1* or Margaret Anjou in *Henry VI Part 3*, both of whom lead armies in battle and kill their enemies. In *Richard III*, by contrast, the women's roles are domestic: they mourn the losses of their husbands and sons, and are useful to the male characters only as marriage partners. There are no women present in the climactic Battle of Bosworth Field, nor at the close of the play in

which the victors celebrate their success. The structure of the first four history plays as a whole, from *Henry VI Part 1* to *Richard III*, moves women from positions of power and authority to domestic roles, and eventually removes them completely from the history the plays present by removing them from the stage. This practice of removing women from the history that concerns them is one that is also very often continued and exaggerated in the adaptation of *Richard III* to stage and screen, in which the women's roles are edited down and sometimes cut altogether – as is the case in Loncraine's film.

Those women who do appear in the play are powerful not in terms of their military or political strength but in terms of the structural and narrative importance of their speech. The women of *Richard III* speak in curses and laments, mourning their losses and damning those who are responsible for them. Like Lady Capulet in *Romeo and Juliet*, the women of *Richard III* act as voices “of elemental justice ... reminding the male authority of his ethical responsibilities” (Tassi 56). Further, their dialogue is an example of the power of cursing in early modern England. As Tassi argues, curses were considered a powerful use of language with concrete physical consequences (72), and these consequences are explored in *Richard III*: the women's curses have real-world consequences, enacting revenge for Richard's actions or “actually shap[ing] the future” as Queen Elizabeth does in promising her daughter to Richmond (Tassi 73). The removal of parts of the women's speeches in the process of adaptation robs them of the one remaining power that they hold over the male characters and the play's narrative as a whole. McKellen and Loncraine's film substantially cuts the lines spoken by women and in particular removes many of their cursing outbursts, and this cutting has an effect on the film's condemnation of Richard's actions as well as on the power of the women's words.

One of the other “most significant aspects of women's roles in the history plays” is motherhood (Dillon 72). All of the women characters in *Richard III*, with the exception of

Anne, are mothers and all have lost or lose their children during the course of the preceding plays in the tetralogy. *Richard III* dwells on the relationship between mothers and sons, and the characterisation of Richard in Loncraine's film is heavily based on the relationship between Richard and his mother, the Duchess of York. The play's treatment of motherhood is steeped in the cultural norms and beliefs of Shakespeare's time, some of which are translated into Loncraine's updated version. Loncraine's film locates much of the blame for Richard's evil with his mother, translating the play's Renaissance values into the more modern setting of the film and, in doing so, diminishing the character of the Duchess to a simple catalyst for her son's wrongdoing, rather than a character in her own right.

In adapting the play, Loncraine and McKellen have focussed their attention on the character of Richard to the detriment of the other characters and points of view that are offered in Shakespeare's play. Of course, Richard is also the main character of the play, appearing in almost every scene and speaking more lines than any other character: he is the play's protagonist if not its hero. Yet, throughout the play, reminders of Richard's villainy appear through other characters' denunciations of him and their reactions to his misdeeds. Women's voices are the only opposition to Richard's actions for the majority of the play, until the full-scale rebellion after he is crowned (Rutter 247). The scenes in the play in which the women lament their losses are crucial to its structure: they "tease out the strict eye-for-an-eye logic of the action" (Greenblatt 596) and constantly remind the audience of the losses the women have sustained through Richard's attempts to seize the crown. During the course of *Richard III*, Richard himself is shown to be responsible for the deaths of all of Queen Elizabeth's sons, as well as that of his own brother Clarence. In *Henry VI Part 3*, Richard is also involved in the murder of Prince Edward, Margaret's son. The women's laments in *Richard III* particularly emphasise familial relations, in order to emphasise the way Richard's ambition has led to the destruction of families: for example the Duchess of York and Queen

Elizabeth, widow of Richard's brother Edward IV, repeatedly refer to the dead brothers Edward and Clarence as "son", "husband" and "father", and to themselves as "mother" and "widow" (2.2). Such dialogue places the women at the moral centre of the play, reminding the audience of Richard's evil and the cost his actions exact on others.

The women's position as victims strengthens their claim to moral superiority over the protagonist Richard, and this claim is authorised in a number of ways throughout the play. One important way in which the women's point of view is legitimised is through their social position and their behaviour as it would have been perceived by Shakespeare's audience. Nina S. Levine writes that the women of *Richard III* act according to "what many Elizabethans would have considered an acceptable model for female heroism" (101). They do not act in ways which contradict the behaviour seen as acceptable to their gender as other Shakespearean heroines do, such as *The Taming of the Shrew's* Katherine Minola or the *Henry VI* plays' Joan la Pucelle. Like *The Taming of the Shrew's* Bianca – discussed in my next and final chapter – the women of *Richard III* adhere to the roles placed upon them by their gender and class. Similarly, they do not seek to enter the political sphere, as Margaret Anjou does in the earlier history plays. Richard treats women as "the marriage partner[s] who will strengthen his claim to the throne and guarantee its succession" (Levine 98), and indeed the women themselves appear almost solely in contexts which emphasise their domesticity and their roles as wives and mothers. While such political passivity limits the women's power and makes them helpless to stop the atrocities Richard commits against them, it does mean that, in the eyes of a Shakespearean audience, their adherence to traditional gender roles would have strengthened their claim to moral superiority.

The second way in which Shakespeare constructs the women as morally superior to Richard is through their association with the overall historical narrative dramatized by Shakespeare, as embedded in the structure of *Richard III* itself, which, despite its similarity to

later tragedies such as *Macbeth*, follows on from and functions as a sequel to the three parts of *Henry VI*. As a group, these four plays tell the story of the Wars of the Roses, which ended with the (purportedly) successful union of the York and Lancaster factions. This union is mentioned in the closing scene of *Richard III* when Richmond, crowned as King Henry VII after Richard's defeat, announces, "let Richmond and Elizabeth, / The true succeeders of each royal house, / By God's fair ordinance conjoin together" (5.8.29-31). This marriage led to the eventual birth and reign of Elizabeth I, Henry VII's granddaughter and the reigning monarch at the time Shakespeare wrote *Richard III*, and is thus the ending that the histories are designed to represent as preordained. The plays lead up to the marriage of Richmond and Princess Elizabeth as part of their support for "the desired conclusion of the historical plot, the foundation of the Tudor dynasty" (Rackin 37). All of the women of the play support this historical conclusion: they denounce Richard and throw their support behind Richmond. It is even a previous Queen Elizabeth who makes the play's ending possible, by consenting to let her daughter, a princess also named Elizabeth, marry Richmond.

McKellen writes that the film is "centred on the living moment and then looks forward" (17), as opposed to Shakespeare's play which is a recreation of the past. In changing the film's outlook in this way, McKellen and Loncraine also abandon much of the historical context that gives strength to the women's dialogue. Loncraine's film does away with most of the scenes which deal with remembrances of the past, and constructs the events of the film as being in the present tense with the title cards of its opening moments: "Civil war divides the nation ... Edward's army advances". Loncraine's film is concerned with the events of *Richard III* and how they influence its characters' futures, rather than with how the characters' past experiences have affected the events of *Richard III*. Thus, one of the major distinctions between the film and its source is that Princess Elizabeth appears on screen and is seen marrying Richmond under the watchful eye of her mother. This is a departure from the

play, wherein Princess Elizabeth is only mentioned and never seen, and her marriage takes place offstage after the close of the action. Despite including this marriage, however, the film removes the events of its source from their original historical context in the Wars of the Roses, and thus removes the links to the past that give strength and righteousness to what remains of the women's dialogue.

The choice to include the marriage onscreen would seem to return some of the lost importance to the women of the film, who in Shakespeare's play declare their support for Richmond over Richard. In the film, Princess Elizabeth's marriage compensates for the removal of these explicit declarations. In his screenplay, McKellen describes Queen Elizabeth as "the principal survivor" of the film (272), as it is she who finally manages to outwit Richard. Yet, although Queen Elizabeth's victory is shown onscreen in the film, her role is significantly cut elsewhere, including in her confrontation with Richard wherein he attempts to convince her to pledge her daughter to him. Similarly, although Princess Elizabeth appears in the film and is even given a line ("How have you slept, my lord?", usually spoken by an unnamed lord in Richmond's camp), her addition comes at the expense of the play's most vocal female character, Queen Margaret. Margaret is one of the few remaining members of the Lancaster family, and appears in the play despite historically having been banished to France (Levine 102). Margaret's role in the play, according to her dialogue, is to make "repetition of what thou hast marred" (1.3.165) and to remind the Yorks of the wrongs they have done to her and her family. Margaret's dialogue consists mostly of curses and of reminders to the other characters of their past deeds, especially Richard's. She acts as a symbol of the past that *Richard III* has been created from and, eventually, as a symbol of strength that the other women characters in the play learn from. She is the only character who consistently decries Richard's actions and never appears to be in agreement with him.

There is a long history of cutting Margaret from theatrical and filmed productions of *Richard III*, a tradition which is congruent with “muting the effect of the widows” and their lamentations (Tassi 71).⁸ Loncraine’s film follows this tradition by cutting Margaret who, after Queen Elizabeth, is the most vocal woman in the play, and replacing her with the Princess Elizabeth, who stands in each scene silently and is led about by her mother, showing no emotion or agency of her own. Similarly, the film substantially cuts the dialogue of Lady Anne, the widowed daughter-in-law of Henry VI. Although many of Anne’s lines are cut she, too, appears silently in several scenes next to Richard after she agrees to marry him. Margaret, however, is the only main named character who is cut entirely. McKellen addresses this decision in his screenplay for the film, arguing that “even theatre audiences are confused by her persistent litany of revenge” (17) and that the removal of characters such as this “throws emphasis and clarity onto the main action” (16).

McKellen cites Richard Eyre’s stage production of *Richard III*, upon which the film is loosely based, as another example of the common practice of cutting certain characters and lines. Although McKellen does acknowledge Margaret as a “powerful presence”, he further argues that such a presence “would not compensate for the time spent in explaining who she is and has been” (17). This is in spite of the fact that the first five minutes of the film are given over to explaining, through the use of title cards and establishing shots, the backstory of the film and characters. Using these title cards, the long history of *Richard III* is summed up in a few sentences in the film’s opening moments, without any spoken dialogue or any lines borrowed from the play: “Civil war divides the nation. The King is under attack from the rebel York family, who are fighting to place their eldest son, Edward, on the throne. Edward’s army advances, led by his youngest brother Richard”. This explanation for the events immediately leading up to *Richard III*’s opening scene is simplified, but keeps the

⁸ As mentioned above, Laurence Olivier’s *Richard III* film cuts Margaret (McKellen 24); so too does Cibber’s much-performed abbreviated text (Siemon 88).

essential elements of two warring families both attempting to retain control of the country. Margaret would in fact have fitted quite easily into this familiar structure, as both a general of past battles and a widow of the ousted king.

Moreover, Loncraine's film includes many adapted lines from the play that could be considered confusing to an audience that knows little about the story's history – for example, after imprisoning his brother Clarence, Richard announces to Queen Elizabeth that “Clarence is imprisoned by your means” in order to cover his own scheme. McKellen admits in his notes that the reason why “Queen Elizabeth might be accused of antagonism toward Clarence is lost in the mist of the Wars of the Roses” (110). In contrast, Margaret's own dialogue in the play as well as that of characters she encounters provides ample clues as to her history and involvement with the conflicts of the past: “A husband and son thou ow'st to me, / And thou a kingdom, all of you allegiance” (1.3.167-8). Richard repeatedly reminds her of the crimes she has committed against him and his father during previous battles. The film itself opens with the death of the old King Henry, Margaret's husband. In his introduction to the published screenplay, McKellen provides excerpts from several early drafts of the film's opening scene in which Margaret is present at the assassination of her husband at Richard's hands, a situation which would further clarify her presence in the film and her relationship to the other characters.

Margaret's presence is important to the play because it increases the number of women present on the stage, as well as their vocal opposition to Richard. More than that, however, she is important to the play's narrative structure. In her first scene, Margaret curses not only Richard but the other assembled characters, including Queen Elizabeth, Hastings and Buckingham. In doing so, she provides “structure to the play's cycle of retribution” (Levine 103). Tassi writes that curses such as Margaret's “were granted supernatural power in early modern England, as they were in ancient Greece” (72). By cursing those around her,

Margaret not only lists the wrongs that she believes have been done to her, but foreshadows suitable punishments for those responsible. Both Hastings and Buckingham make note of Margaret's curses before their deaths: "O Margaret, Margaret! Now thy heavy curse / Is lighted on poor Hastings' wretched head" (3.4.92-3) and "Thus Margaret's curse falls heavy on my neck" (5.1.25).

In this respect Margaret provides not only reminders of the past but also a foreshadowing of the future of the play's characters and their ultimate fates. She recognises the wrongs that have been done to her and reminds the other characters, and the audience, of the war that has just passed, representing "the necessity for ... large-scale retribution to heal the multitude of wrongs that plague the kingdom" (Tassi 133). She also serves as a reminder to the audience of Richard's capacity for evil, warning both Queen Elizabeth and Hastings that he will eventually betray them. Although Margaret serves as a symbol of the need for retribution, she also reminds us that this retribution does not come in the form of Richard. Margaret considers the words of her curses to be divine; she tells Buckingham that "they ascend the sky / And there awake God's gentle sleeping peace" (1.3.285-6). Margaret's dialogue constructs a binary between herself and Richard, wherein Richard is referred to as "the devil" (1.3.296) and Margaret is considered holy. This binary is crucial to the eventual switch of audience sympathy from Richard to his opponents. Marilyn French notes that just as "Satan is the proof of God's right, Richard is the proof of the rightness of those who oppose him" (66). Margaret, in opposing Richard, "lends fuel to [the] expectation" that "retributive justice will rule the day" (Tassi 134), and the audience is secure in the knowledge that such an expectation is justified through the binary opposition of Richard and Margaret.

Despite her importance to the play, Margaret is eventually removed from its narrative, just as she is often excised from productions and adaptations. The last scene in which she physically appears is Act Four Scene Four, and after Act Five Scene One, wherein

Buckingham bemoans his lack of foresight in not listening to her warnings, Margaret is not even mentioned again. Following her exit, “aesthetic control of the play passes into the hands of the benevolent God who works through Richmond” (Adelman 9), rather than the divine retribution Margaret calls upon. In fact, following Margaret’s exit and Queen Elizabeth’s confrontation with Richard, both of which occur in Act Four Scene Four, there is not another living woman on the stage for the rest of the play (although the ghost of Lady Anne briefly appears to torment Richard for eight lines in Act Five Scene Five). As mentioned above, Adelman argues that Richard’s violence and his misogyny are “replicated in a dramatic structure that moves women from positions of power authority to positions of utter powerlessness” and finally removes them from the stage (9). This structure is similar to that of the film. Although Loncraine does make an effort to increase the women’s visibility through the addition of Princess Elizabeth’s wedding, no women appear onscreen in the final eight minutes of the film. This is a symptom not only of Shakespeare’s play itself but of the attitude of those adapting it: McKellen writes that the scenes in which the widows lament their losses, the only times when they speak freely amongst themselves, were “judged alien to our film” (180). In fact, the four women characters of the film – Anne, the two Elizabeths and the Duchess of York – appear on screen together for a total of one minute and twenty seconds, in two separate scenes. This short time, according to McKellen, “may be a consolation for anyone expecting to hear their long, later scenes of rhetoricised grief” (ibid.).

Yet the omission of most of these ensemble scenes for the women characters represents a greater loss than McKellen suggests. Levine notes that the play explicitly shows the women gaining strength from each other’s company through its structure. Richard confronts three female opponents throughout the play: first Anne, then Margaret and finally Queen Elizabeth. Each of these confrontations “develops out of a scene of lamentation” (Levine 102). Richard walks away from the first as the victor, having convinced Anne to

marry him “with curses in her mouth, tears in her eyes” (1.2.220). His second confrontation, with Margaret, has powerful resonances through the rest of the play, but in its immediate aftermath appears to be nothing more than another scene in which Richard shows off his rhetorical talents. Margaret leaves the scene vowing that her enemies will eventually realise that “Margaret was a prophetess” (1.3.299), while Richard is careful to avoid joining the others in cursing those responsible for Clarence’s capture, noting in an aside that “had I cursed now, I had cursed myself” (1.3.317). This caution is neglected in the final confrontation with Queen Elizabeth: Richard announces outright, “myself myself confound” (4.4.330), and in revealing his plan to marry Princess Elizabeth, allows Queen Elizabeth to outwit him and ensure that the princess is instead married to Richmond.

This final confrontation, like the others, occurs directly after the women bewail their losses – the difference being that before Queen Elizabeth speaks to Richard, she and the Duchess of York turn to Margaret to ask for and receive help in cursing him. Before speaking with Richard, the Duchess encourages Elizabeth to “go with me, / And in the breath of bitter words let’s smother / My damnèd son” (4.4.132-4). Following this instruction, the Duchess curses Richard to a shameful and miserable death. Tassi notes that in both early modern England and ancient Greece, a parent’s curse upon their child was especially “understood as a powerful, damning use of language meant to crush, disown or even destroy a child” (72). Thus Richard is dismissed by his mother and outwitted by the woman he hopes will become his mother-in-law. The women succeed in their attempts to curse and shame Richard in this scene because they have received help and support from one another, rather than turning on each other as they do in Act One Scene Three when confronted by Margaret, or being alone as Anne is when she is convinced to marry Richard.

As with many other scenes in the film, Loncraine’s adaptation of Act Four Scene Four makes substantial cuts and changes to its source, removing many of the women’s lines and

changing the order of those that remain. In Loncraine's filmed version of this scene, the Duchess curses Richard without help from the other women of the film, and is next seen departing for France (in the play it is Margaret who returns to France). As she climbs into the helicopter that will transport her out of the country and out of the film, the Duchess speaks the lines that in the play come from Margaret: "Think that thy babes were sweeter than they were, / And he that slew them fouler than he is" (4.4.120-121). It is this instruction which prompts Queen Elizabeth to confront Richard. In changing the order of these lines, McKellen and Loncraine remove the structural importance of the women's gatherings by changing the causes and consequences of the women's actions and dialogue. In the film, the Duchess needs no support in cursing Richard, and, having done so, is not seen again for the remainder of the film. Her few lines of advice to Queen Elizabeth are all that remain of the play's several scenes in which the women comfort each other (Act Two Scene Four, Act Four Scene One and Act Four Scene Four).

By cutting the women's roles and scenes in this way, Loncraine's film recreates the misogyny apparent in Richard's dialogue. Madonne M. Miner describes Richard's opening soliloquy as setting up an "antithesis" between men and women (37): Richard describes men as being militaristic and uses a male pronoun to refer to "grim-visaged war" (1.1.9), while women are referred to as "wanton" (1.1.17). Richard states that the men who fought the wars of the past now spend their time "in a lady's chamber" (1.1.12). This distinction blames women and their sexual desirability for the "idle pleasures" (1.1.31) that now take up the nation's time. Richard states that his deformity prevents him from taking pleasure in such pastimes, and argues that because he can thus serve no useful purpose he will "prove a villain" (1.1.30). Miner states that the soliloquy, as well as setting up an initial cause for Richard's villainy, shows his "exclusive identification with one side of the antithesis and his determination to obliterate those who represent the opposite" (37). Richard characterises war

as masculine and peace as feminine, and, in doing so, reveals his desire to eliminate the feminine altogether.

Loncraine's film clearly illustrates this antithesis by setting the soliloquy in two different locations. It begins at a ball to celebrate the Yorkists' victory, with Richard delivering the film's opening lines to an assembled crowd of well-dressed supporters in a lavish ballroom decorated by flowers and elaborate pillars. He is set apart from the other principal characters by his costume: while his brothers Edward IV and Clarence wear red sashes and medals over their tuxedo jackets, Richard wears a khaki jacket similar in colour and style to the one he wears in the film's opening scene as he shoots and kills Henry VI. His costume is also decorated with several medals, notably more than Edward's, emphasising Richard's military aptitude and his pride in it. Richard's speech begins as a triumphant celebration of the end of the war, with the camera cutting between him at the microphone and the applauding audience. However the film quickly turns the soliloquy into a muttered complaint delivered as Richard relieves himself in the men's toilet. The camera cuts abruptly away from an extreme close-up of Richard's mouth halfway through a sentence: he is shown speaking the words "instead of mounting barbèd steeds / To fright the souls of fearful adversaries ..." (1.1.10-11) in front of a microphone, and after the camera cuts away from his mouth, he is shown completing his sentence as he enters the toilet: "... he capers nimbly in a lady's chamber / To the lascivious pleasing of a lute" (1.1.12-13).

By cutting the soliloquy in this way, Loncraine emphasises the different connotations Richard attaches to the masculine and the feminine: while the masculine war and its associated actions are praiseworthy, talk of the feminine and of sexual activity is deserving of scorn and must be spoken of in private rather than public. McKellen and Loncraine's film emphasises that this new era of peace is characterised by dominance of the feminine over the masculine by showing all of the members of the York family, except for Richard, dancing

together prior to Richard's speech. Both Richard and, to a certain extent, the film itself represent women as "powerfully erotic, capable of seducing and thereby subverting masculine authority" (Levine 111). This is at the heart of Richard's opening soliloquy: he constructs the "weak piping time of peace" (1.1.24) as feminine and thus inherently dangerous and in need of destruction.

Both the play and Loncraine's film contain a scene "that in many ways authorises Richard's misogyny" (Levine 105): the wooing of Lady Anne. In the play, Richard confronts Anne at the funeral procession of the late King Henry VI, her father-in-law. Loncraine's film sets the scene at a mortuary over the corpse of Henry's son Edward, Anne's husband. This makes Anne's unlikely capitulation at the close of the scene even more improbable. She is won over by Richard's appeals to her vanity – he frequently refers to her beauty and addresses her as "divine perfection of a woman" (1.2.74) – as well as his continual verbal and logical leaps which place him in a position of moral superiority, despite all evidence to the contrary. The film simplifies and cuts many lines from this scene, but keeps the crucial moment at which Richard, kneeling, invites Anne to kill him if she cannot love him. In doing so, Richard places himself in an apparent position of vulnerability, assuming the role of victim which is rightfully Anne's. McKellen's Richard states that "it was [Anne's] heavenly face that set me on" to murdering her husband and father-in-law. This is of course a lie, but Anne cannot prove it beyond her suspicion that Richard's "heart" is "false". Richard distracts her from this suspicion by attempting to cut his own throat, forcing her to stop him and thus fall into the trap of marrying him, as per his instruction to "take up the blade again – or take up me". Kristin Scott Thomas portrays Anne as uncertain, realising she has been outwitted but unwilling to concede defeat. Her lines reflect this uncertainty: when Richard asks if he may "live in hope", referring to his hope that she will accept his proposal of marriage, she

chooses to ignore the meaning of his words and simply responds, “All men, I hope, live so”, and in taking Richard’s ring she reminds him that “to take is not to give”.

Despite Anne’s reticence, Richard celebrates his success at the end of the scene by skipping through the hospital, accompanied by jaunty music on the film’s soundtrack. He beckons to the camera to follow him as he confides that although he intends to marry Anne, he will “not keep her long”. Thus the film audience is drawn into Richard’s scheme. Richard’s charm, his soliloquy which directly includes the audience and the musical accompaniment all collude to construct this moment as a happy and successful one, despite the trickery Richard has just enacted. Although the film removes some of the lines Anne speaks in Shakespeare’s play, including her agreement to do Richard’s bidding with “all [her] heart” (1.2.207), it nonetheless paints a similar picture of Anne’s behaviour and its effect on Richard: in agreeing to his outrageous demands, “Anne’s behaviour reinforces Richard’s contempt for the worldly and intellectual powerlessness of women” (French 66).

Because the film’s audience is invited to join Richard’s private moments of reflection, they are also invited to agree with his assessments of the situations and characters around him. This first wooing scene is an example of the way in which, much like Branagh’s *Hamlet*, McKellen and Loncraine’s film is structured around a first-person perspective that privileges its male star – who in this case, is also its screenwriter – over its other characters. Levine notes that in Shakespeare’s play, although Richard is eventually shown to be a monster and his behaviour thoroughly discredited, his misogynistic views do not necessarily receive the same treatment, arguing that “when the women violate their supposedly natural roles as mothers, the play’s censure is most resonant” (113). Anne, in violating her role as a grieving widow by agreeing to marry another man before her husband is buried, also violates the image of the lamenting woman which the other female characters fall into so neatly. Further, by cutting the women’s later scenes of lamentation from his film, Loncraine

emphasises Anne's violation of her role as grieving widow without providing the contrast that exists in the play.

The wooing scene demonstrates a tactic that Miner identifies as key to Richard's success: "an allocation of guilt along sexual lines so that women are invariably at fault" (37). Miner's argument is that *Richard III* consistently associates women with sexuality and thus with a lack of innocence. McKellen and Loncraine use a slightly different tactic in their film, although the result is the same. Rather than allocating guilt to women through their sexuality, the film characterises Richard as an unloved son. James N. Loehlin argues that "McKellen's Richard isn't motivated by nationalism, racial ideology or a military-industrial complex, but by a lack of maternal affection" (179); thus the film shows that Richard's mother, rather than Richard himself, is ultimately to blame for his actions. Although I would argue that McKellen portrays Richard's lust for power as his most obvious motivation, he does make note several times in his screenplay of "the verbal and emotional abuse which from infancy has formed [Richard's] character and behaviour" (McKellen, n.p.). In *Henry VI Part 3*, Richard locates the origin of his deformity in his mother:

Why, love foreswore me in my mother's womb:
 And, for I should not deal in her soft laws,
 She did corrupt frail nature with some bribe,
 To shrink mine arm up like a wither'd shrub;
 To make an envious mountain on my back,
 Where sits deformity to mock my body ... (3.2.153-158)

Adelman argues that Richard's construction of his own selfhood defines "masculine violence – indeed, masculine survival – as a turning against the maternal body" (3). Richard finds the source of his aggression in his mother's womb. In Shakespeare's *Richard III*, this sense of

blame is reversed through the women's linking of their ability to bear children with the capacity for grief.

For the Duchess of York especially, "accepting 'motherhood' means accepting responsibility for 'all these griefs', for the losses sustained by Elizabeth and by Clarence's children" (Miner 42). In describing herself as the "mother" of Queen Elizabeth's grief the Duchess also emphasises that she feels her remaining living child, Richard, is a source of grief and shame rather than comfort. McKellen and Loncraine's film uses this line to make the Duchess' feelings explicit and public, at the end of the scene wherein Queen Elizabeth and the Duchess of York, in the company of Richard and his allies, mourn the death of Edward IV, Queen Elizabeth's husband and the Duchess' son. The Duchess states outright of Richard: "I, for comfort, have but one false glass that grieves me when I see my shame in him". She speaks this line within the hearing of Richard and the assembled lords, whereas in the play it is a private comment spoken only to Queen Elizabeth (2.1.53-54).

Changes such as this serve to decontextualize the dialogue as it appears in the source material. McKellen's screenplay reveals that he and Loncraine intend for their adaptation of the Duchess to be a hateful, if not outright abusive mother to Richard: McKellen notes that it was perhaps "from his mother that Richard learnt how to hate so fiercely" (236). The scene described above is the principal moment in the film in which Loncraine and McKellen attempt to place the blame for Richard's actions not on Richard himself but on his mother. Lisa Hopkins' analysis of the scene argues that it proves the Duchess of York has less "consideration for Richard's feelings" than either Catesby or Hastings, neither of whom is "depicted elsewhere as a particularly sensitive soul" (57). Following her assertion that she sees only her "shame" in him, Richard approaches his mother and asks for her blessing. Her response – "God comfort you – and put meekness in your breast; love, charity, obedience and

true duty!” – is delivered by Maggie Smith in the role of the Duchess as a rebuke rather than a blessing, and Richard appears visibly hurt by it.

The cultural context in which the Shakespeare’s play was written does bear out Loncraine and McKellen’s attempt to show the Duchess of York as a hateful mother: early modern English society held “cultural beliefs that often did locate the cause of a child’s deformity in the maternal body” (Willis 196-7). This was not a medical belief but one that explicitly blamed the mother and her behaviour for any disfigurement in her child, rather than considering the both parents’ genetic predispositions. Richard especially “directs his rage ... at the mother’s womb and women who become associated with it” (ibid. 195). Richard believes his bodily deformity prevents him from “prov[ing] a lover / To entertain these fair well-spoken days” (1.1.28-9), leading him instead to become “a villain” (1.1.30). If his mother is responsible for his body, she must also be responsible for his actions. This logic is supported by the Duchess’ own dialogue, in which she decries her “accursèd womb, the bed of death” (4.1.53), placing the source of her consternation within her own body.

The Duchess of York is the character in *Richard III* for whom motherhood is most painful. Her role as mother is “an especial cross to bear” because she “has not only lost sons and grandsons, but ... has also produced the very Richard who killed most of them” (Dillon 73). This difficult position is described by her line, “I am the mother of these griefs”, which as discussed above is used in Loncraine’s film in a very different context. The Duchess’ assertion is twofold: she is both the mother of the dead Edward IV and the mother of Richard, who is the cause of most, if not all, of the grief in the play and film. However, McKellen asserts that the Duchess’ poor emotional treatment of Richard is what ultimately leads to his villainy. The film thus attempts to construct the Duchess as a cold and unfeeling mother to Richard.

The Duchess and Queen Elizabeth are linked explicitly by their roles as mothers; however the film endorses its source's implications that Queen Elizabeth's position as the princes' biological mother – emphasised by Rivers' advice to her to “think ... like a careful mother of the Prince of Wales, your son” – is considered unimportant when compared to Richard's legal position as Lord Protector of the two princes. The “protection” Richard provides the princes of course is false – once the princes arrive in London and are placed under Richard's guard, they both agree to stay in the Tower and thus agree to their own imprisonment. Once there, they are barred from seeing their mother and are both murdered on Richard's orders shortly afterwards. This sequence of events occurs in both Shakespeare's play and McKellen and Loncraine's film. In all known versions of Shakespeare's *Richard III*, Queen Elizabeth is not present in Act Three Scene One, the scene in which the princes arrive in London. Similarly, she is not present in the equivalent scene in McKellen and Loncraine's film. Stage directions in Shakespeare's play specify that both Richard and Buckingham are present along with a Cardinal, and while the stage directions allow for the presence of “others” (3.1), Queen Elizabeth is not among them, having in the previous scene requested sanctuary at the church (2.4.65). This request does not occur in the film. Thus while Queen Elizabeth's absence at the arrival of her son is explained in Shakespeare's play, her absence in the film is not commented upon – indeed, Prince Edward, Queen Elizabeth's elder son, complains that he wants “more uncles here to welcome me” (3.1.6) but completely ignores the absence of a mother. The film proves that the presence of a mother is little protection “for a child denied a father and other more powerful guardians” (Dubrow 184). By removing certain elements of the play's plot that account for Queen Elizabeth's absence from her son's arrival in London – her request for sanctuary at the church – and by creating a script that does not comment on this absence, McKellen implicitly endorses the idea that legal processes and male authority are of more import than biological motherhood.

The scene in which Queen Elizabeth attempts to visit her sons in the Tower provides further evidence of the dialogue that the filmmakers considered important enough to include in their final product and thus the ideas and themes of *Richard III* that they considered important to the film. McKellen's screenplay includes two noteworthy lines that are not present in the final film: as Queen Elizabeth entreats Brackenbury to let her into the Tower to see her sons, she is aided by both the Duchess of York and Lady Anne, who both invoke their familial relationships to the princes as reasons for their being allowed to enter the Tower. Queen Elizabeth asks, "I am their mother, who should keep me from them?" followed by the Duchess' line "I am their father's mother. I will see them" and Anne's "I am their aunt. Then bring us to their sight" (McKellen 211). Like the longer lamentation scenes in Shakespeare's play, this scene reinforces the women's relationships to each other and to those they have lost. However, in the film itself, the Duchess' and Lady Anne's lines are both missing, leaving only Queen Elizabeth to plead for the right to see the princes. Despite this cut, however, the scene as it appears in the final film does function, in a limited way, as an example of the way the women's grief and empathy places them apart from the men around them. Elizabeth's pleas leave Brackenbury unmoved, and he cites the "oath" he is "bound by" as his reason for denying her entry. The scene as it appears in the final film emphasises Queen Elizabeth's weakness and the seeming unwillingness of the other women to help her plead for her rights. This is a marked change from both Shakespeare's play and McKellen's original screenplay, and serves as an example of the filmmakers' eventual priorities: like the women's lamentations and Margaret's curses, a show of female solidarity in the name of motherhood was not deemed important enough to make the final cut.

The film makes a brief allusion to the play's more explicit instances of female collectivity by showing that the women's grief is not only a way to separate them from the men but a way to ally them together. In Shakespeare's play, long scenes of lamentation are

used to show the women coming together to mourn their common losses. The first major scene of lamentation occurs after the death through sickness of Edward IV. While Elizabeth mourns the loss of her husband, the Duchess grieves for both Edward and Clarence, her other son whom Richard has murdered. Clarence's children also appear to mourn their father. The scene shows the two women and the children describing their losses, with the Duchess concluding that she has the most cause to weep: "Their woes are parcelled; mine is general" (2.2.81). Thus her line "I am the mother of these griefs" is a reference to the fact that her two sons have died, and that she has more cause than either Queen Elizabeth or Clarence's children to lament as she has lost two dear relatives where they have each only lost one. In McKellen and Loncraine's film, Clarence's children as well as much of Act Two Scene Two are removed, but the Duchess' line remains. Loncraine stages Queen Elizabeth's trimmed-down mourning speech in front of Richard, Buckingham, Hastings, and Rivers, moments after Edward's death. Elizabeth is shown to be so overcome that she cannot walk unaided. The Duchess guides her to a chair and informs her, "Alas! I am the mother of these griefs. On me pour all your tears; I am your sorrow's nurse". These words of comfort simultaneously remind the audience that the Duchess is Edward's mother, and frame the two women together as bound by their grief: as the Duchess speaks, she takes Queen Elizabeth's arm and leads her away from her brother Rivers. The men in the room appear unaffected by Edward's death while both the women weep. Although the film does not include the long scenes of dialogue which in the play serve to illustrate that the women's grief brings them closer together, shots such as this one are a limited attempt to serve the same purpose.

This scene serves as an example not only of the film's single instance of female solidarity in mourning, but also of the causal way in which male characters in Loncraine's film ignore the women characters, both in person and on a wider political level. As Queen Elizabeth weeps on a couch in front of Richard and Buckingham, they encourage her to be

comforted by the fact that “though we have spent our harvest of this King, we are to reap the harvest of his son”. This comparison bears an eerie resemblance to Richard’s later promise to Queen Elizabeth that, although he has killed her sons, “in your daughter’s womb I bury them” (4.4.354). Both Richard and Buckingham substitute one member of Queen Elizabeth’s family for another, indicating that they can both perform the same function because, in Richard and Buckingham’s eyes, Queen Elizabeth and her children are simply pawns which can be moved in Richard’s favour. The discussion continues as the men decide to have the young Prince of Wales brought to London to be crowned King, without the explicit permission of his mother, who remains still and silent for the rest of the scene. Levine argues that the emphasis in the play on succession and marriage exposes “the myth of patrilineal succession in which power is imagined as passing from father to son as if no women were involved” (99). This scene in Loncraine’s film, however, does the opposite of this. Buckingham describes the Prince of Wales not as Queen Elizabeth’s son but as Edward’s, and Rivers agrees that her “comfort lies” in the crowning of her son, suggesting that the Prince can directly replace Edward both as ruler and as Queen Elizabeth’s “lord”. McKellen and Loncraine thus take for granted the myth that Shakespeare’s play directly exposes.

The question of succession and of women’s place in the political sphere is one that is revisited again in McKellen and Loncraine’s film after Richard is crowned King. Needing to consolidate his claim to the throne, Richard intends to marry Princess Elizabeth, the daughter of Queen Elizabeth and Edward IV: “I must be married now to young Elizabeth, or else my kingdom stands on brittle glass”. Levine notes that in Shakespeare’s play, Richard defines his fight for power and for the crown as “a quest to restore order to a world perverted by unnatural female domination” (97) and that in doing so he simultaneously depends on women as enemies and as marriage partners (98). The manoeuvres Richard undertakes in order to become king hinge on two acts: either murdering his male enemies or marrying his female

ones. Women are only useful to Richard as potential claims to power; thus, until he needs to marry her daughter, Richard remains “completely impervious” to Queen Elizabeth and she does not act as “a dramatic antagonist for him” (French 69). This is in contrast with McKellen’s assertion that in his film, Queen Elizabeth acts as Richard’s “most challenging rival” (252). The film’s representation of Queen Elizabeth is closer to French’s analysis than to McKellen’s, as she verbally engages with Richard only twice in the film: once when he accuses her of having been “sympathetic to the enemy” during the war, and once when he attempts to convince her he should marry her daughter. In their first argument, Queen Elizabeth quickly becomes upset and resorts to insulting Richard, who does appear impervious to her, as French suggests he is in Shakespeare’s play. Their conversation ends as Queen Elizabeth is called away to her husband, leaving Buckingham to note that she has said “nothing that I respect”.

In comparison with Shakespeare’s play, Richard and Queen Elizabeth’s second confrontation is, like the rest of the film, significantly cut, with many lines from the play removed. Including all lines from both the Quarto and Folio versions of *Richard III*, the confrontation between Richard and Queen Elizabeth in Act Four Scene Four runs to 220 lines. McKellen’s screenplay keeps some vestiges of its Shakespearean origins, like the dividing of dialogue into lines of verse. Yet its adaptation of Richard and Elizabeth’s confrontation in Act Four Scene Four is only 82 lines long, under half the length of the original even without the added Folio text. The version of the scene that appears in McKellen and Loncraine’s film is a simplified, stripped-down version of Shakespeare’s play, which shows Queen Elizabeth contradicting and arguing against each of Richard’s attempts to win her over. Shakespeare’s play has Richard attempt to swear that he is telling the truth about his love for Princess Elizabeth, only to have Queen Elizabeth demand that he “Swear ... by something that thou hast not wronged” (4.4.304). The film omits the crucial moment in which

Richard, with nothing left to swear on, declares, “myself myself confound, / ... if with dear heart’s love, / Immaculate devotion, holy thoughts, / I tender not thy beauteous, princely daughter” (4.4.330, 334-336), turning his words back on himself in the same way that, earlier in the play, he turns Queen Margaret’s curses back onto her.

McKellen and Loncraine’s film removes all of the dialogue surrounding Richard’s attempts to swear to the truth. Instead, using the continued theme of Richard’s military prowess and aggressive nature, their filmed version of this scene hinges on Richard’s lines: “Without her follows – to myself and thee, / Herself, the land, and many a Christian soul – / Death, desolation, ruin and decay” (4.4.338-40). Richard threatens that if he cannot marry Princess Elizabeth, the war that his usurpation of the throne has caused will continue unabated. It is this that appears to win Queen Elizabeth over, and she quickly resolves to “win my daughter to [Richard’s] will”. R. Chris Hassel argues that Shakespeare’s Queen Elizabeth remains “incredulous, obstinate even in the face of physical violence” during this scene (66). However, the lines he reads as incredulous – “Shall I be tempted of the devil thus?” (4.4.349) and “Shall I go win my daughter to thy will?” (4.4.357) – are delivered by Annette Bening in McKellen and Loncraine’s film as serious questions. It appears in this case that Queen Elizabeth is persuaded into giving up her daughter. Again, the adaptation of this scene from play to film emphasises Queen Elizabeth’s weakness and attempts to ensure that the film audience is aligned with Richard’s perspective.

As discussed above, Loncraine’s *Richard III* shows Princess Elizabeth’s marriage to Richmond, an event which Shakespeare mentions but does not show in his play. McKellen writes that the marriage scene was included in order to “complete [Queen Elizabeth’s] story with one last glimpse of her revenge” (272). As Richmond and Princess Elizabeth kiss after being officially married by a priest, the camera moves between them to focus on Queen Elizabeth smiling and sighing in relief. It can be argued that in directing the wooing scene as

he does, Loncraine sets up the surprise of Princess Elizabeth's marriage more effectively: if Queen Elizabeth appears to acquiesce to Richard's demands, the revelation that she has in fact done the opposite is more effective. Thus there is a cinematic reason for the denial of Queen Elizabeth's agency in the wooing scene: the creation of the grounds for a later surprising twist. This reasoning is in line with McKellen and Loncraine's decision to change the emphasis of the film's plot from that of its source, to keep it "look[ing] forward" rather than backwards to the past. By creating the role of Princess Elizabeth and filming her marriage to Richmond, Loncraine changes the way in which Richard's downfall is portrayed. Rather than the gradual loss of control that appears in the play, Loncraine's Richard appears in control until Queen Elizabeth betrays her word to him and denies him what he wants. It is the marriage of Princess Elizabeth and Richmond that tips the scales in Richmond's favour, and is the first sign that Richard's rule is failing.

However, this plot twist is constructed at the expense of Queen Elizabeth's character. While in the play Queen Elizabeth arguably "corrects the faults of her predecessor" Anne when confronted by Richard (Levine 108), in the film she behaves almost identically. It is only after the scene's conclusion that Queen Elizabeth's duplicity and thus her strength in defying Richard is revealed. She first accuses Richard of a multitude of wrongs, announcing that he has killed her sons, her brother and his wife. She does differ from Anne by "cataloguing ... all of [Richard's] atrocities against her family as seals of his love" (Hassel 64) and thus denying him the ability to do the same as he did with Anne. Yet the scene quickly becomes, again, another triumph of Richard's oratorical skills, and Queen Elizabeth finally appears to capitulate without ever explicitly agreeing with Richard, much as Anne does: while Anne emphasises that "to take is not to give", Queen Elizabeth assures Richard that he will "understand from me [Princess Elizabeth's] mind", without specifying what the younger Elizabeth might say. Finally, each scene ends with Richard turning to the camera and

inviting the audience to share in his triumph. However, where his celebration of Anne's agreement is jaunty and self-congratulatory, his denunciation of Queen Elizabeth as a "relenting fool! Shallow, changing woman!" is much more malicious. In wooing Anne, Richard does not attempt to touch her until he lifts her hand to place his ring on it; with Queen Elizabeth, he asks that she bear his "true love's kiss" to her daughter, and presses her against the door of his train carriage to administer it. In his screenplay McKellen notes that by this point in the film, "the audience might just believe that [Richard's] conscience is beginning to get the better of him" (250), but Richard's obvious joy at besting Queen Elizabeth through both wits and physical force suggests otherwise. It seems hard to believe that Richard's "conscience is beginning to get the better of him" when presented with his physical assault of Queen Elizabeth, as well as his disturbing and incestuous desire to marry the young Princess Elizabeth. The scene is constructed to show Queen Elizabeth's capitulation with Richard's instructions and to invite the audience to participate in Richard's gleeful celebration of violence against her.

The film's version of this final wooing scene again emphasises the way McKellen and Loncraine prioritise the character of Richard and the potential for audience members to sympathise with him over the misogyny he clearly and consistently demonstrates. This priority is most clearly exposed throughout the film through the cutting of the play's cast of female characters and the removal of Margaret, but can also be seen in the women's remaining dialogue. Although the Duchess of York does speak some of Margaret's lines and teaches Queen Elizabeth how to curse Richard, her character is severely limited and her dialogue repurposed to prove McKellen's belief that emotional abuse in Richard's childhood lead to his bloody adulthood. The women of McKellen and Loncraine's *Richard III* barely appear together, a dramatic change from the multiple occasions in Shakespeare's play when they are able to gather and discuss their losses. The women's lamentation and cursing, which

provides the play with structure and with a moral centre, is mostly excised. Overall, McKellen and Loncraine's film enacts the very misogyny that the women of the play condemn.

Although some small effort is made to update and strengthen the film's female roles, such as the introduction of Princess Elizabeth, ultimately the film and its creators are unconcerned with interrogating the misogyny inherent in their chosen source. The film audience is encouraged to identify with and find pleasure in Richard's manipulative skill and thus his misogyny, leading to the encouragement of identification with comments such as Richard's "shallow, changing woman". A character such as Lady Anne, whose behaviour supports and justifies Richard's misogynist beliefs, is translated from text to screen without any thought as to how she and her behaviour affect the underlying politics of the film. McKellen and Loncraine's attitude to the women in their film is best summed up by an anecdote McKellen supplies in his screenplay:

Our analysis of this scene [in which Richard woos Anne] in rehearsal was inconclusive – RL [Loncraine] uncertain whether Anne's submission could be believable; I convinced that it could; and Kristin listening, head on one side, and grimacing wryly that perhaps a woman knew best. (82)

Given the limited material with which the women present in Loncraine's film were able to work, and given McKellen and Loncraine's willingness to transpose the antiquated patriarchal structures of an early modern English play into their contemporary film without questioning or altering them, it is unsurprising that the final version of the wooing scene does not settle this debate. Much like the film as a whole, the scene takes for granted the way in which Shakespeare's play silences and suppresses women in support of a larger, historically

determinist plot. The women of *Richard III* may “know best”, but they are required to keep that knowledge to themselves.

“Love, Fair Looks, and True Obedience”: *10 Things I Hate About You*

Whereas Loncraine and McKellen’s *Richard III* does its best to silence the women of its source material, my final chapter will discuss one of Shakespeare’s most famously vocal women, Katherine Minola, and *The Taming of the Shrew*. The two texts I will discuss here are *Shrew* and Gil Junger’s 1999 adaptation, *10 Things I Hate About You*. While Branagh’s *Hamlet* and Loncraine’s *Richard III* are both period dramas, *10 Things* is a teen comedy. The film not only occupies a different genre but represents a different mode of adaptation: rather than adapting the specific language of Shakespeare’s play, as both Branagh’s *Hamlet* and McKellen and Loncraine’s *Richard III* do, *10 Things* keeps only Shakespeare’s narrative. I discuss it here because *10 Things*, as a film, achieves a different aim to either of the other two adaptations: rather than using the adaptation of Shakespeare’s language as a shorthand for the legitimacy of its project, *10 Things* abandons the Shakespearean language of its source but simultaneously focuses on Shakespeare himself as a figure of authority. Junger forgoes the adaptation of the Shakespearean text of *Shrew*, replacing it with an entirely new script in modern dialect. *10 Things I Hate About You* keeps elements of the Shakespearean play’s story while updating others to fit the film’s modern-day context and language. The film signals its relationship to Shakespeare’s play through character and place names – the Padua of *Shrew* becomes Padua High School in Seattle, while Shakespeare’s home town of Stratford-upon-Avon becomes the last name of the film’s two main characters, Kat and Bianca Stratford.

While Loncraine’s *Richard III* cuts many of its female characters’ lines and reduces their roles in the narrative, *10 Things I Hate About You* attempts to update its source to be more inclusive of a female point of view. Like *Richard III*, *The Taming of the Shrew* features women who are aware of their roles within the hierarchical groups of gender and class that dictated early modern social structures, and who strive to gain power within those structures.

Unlike Loncraine's *Richard III* and Branagh's *Hamlet*, *10 Things I Hate About You* does not focus on a single male protagonist but is based around an ensemble cast of teenage boys and girls. This influences the way in which the film deals with the gender roles and politics of its source and also ensures that, at least for the most part, the female characters are more equally represented than those of the previous two adaptations I have discussed.

The Taming of the Shrew is one of Shakespeare's earliest comedies and remains one of the most adapted. Notwithstanding the various critical arguments for or against the ironies inherent in the play's narrative and dialogue, the events of Shakespeare's play show, in very clear terms, the violent threatening of a woman until she becomes subservient to her husband. In adapting the play, filmmakers must inevitably deal with its themes and moral. Penny Gay rightly notes that it is "worth questioning whether *The Taming of the Shrew* would still be in the dramatic repertoire if it did not have the magic name 'Shakespeare' attached" (86). In adapting *Shrew*, filmmakers tend to reproduce its misogynistic narrative while at the same time legitimising that misogyny through the name of Shakespeare.

Diana E. Henderson's analysis of *10 Things* argues that the film "grapples with the contrary impulses of reproducing Shakespeare ... and crafting a narrative amenable to its putatively enlightened post-feminist viewers" (2003:135). Thus while the story of *10 Things* is loosely based on *Shrew*'s narrative, there are several alterations to fit the film's modern setting and teen audience. Rather than dealing with marriage, as *Shrew* does, *10 Things* uses dating as a stand-in for the acceptable heterosexual coupling that must take place by the end of the narrative. Shakespeare's Baptista Minola becomes Dr Stratford, an overprotective father who has forbidden Bianca to have a boyfriend until her older, boy-hating sister Kat has one. Thus in order for Bianca to get what she wants, a suitable boyfriend must be found for Kat.

Kat's loud, angry Riot Grrrl⁹ feminism and Marxist rejection of stereotypical high school rituals such as the prom pit her squarely against Bianca's more traditionally feminine, seemingly shallow personality. By the end of the film, however, Kat appears more mild-mannered and happily enters into a relationship with Patrick Verona, the film's Petruchio, while Bianca punches the school bully at the prom before leaving to go sailing with her boyfriend. As the main character of *10 Things*, the character of Kat bears the brunt of the film's attempts to update Shakespeare's misogynistic narrative. In both *Shrew* and *10 Things*, shrewishness is a trait of particular women who appear angry, loud and belligerent, and are considered unattractive and unmarriageable. In *10 Things*, Kat's feminism and her shrewishness are often conflated, leading to a messy and anti-feminist construction of her character which is somewhat obscured by the film's nods to the girl-power aesthetic of the 1990s. In both texts, Bianca maintains a degree of agency that Kat in *10 Things* and Katherine in *Shrew* are both denied, and her actions are legitimised not only through her stereotypically feminine gender presentation but through other characters' responses. She is consistently allowed to act in ways that contradict the messages of the film and the play and defy their inherent gender stereotypes. Thus it is Bianca, rather than Kat and Katherine, who functions as the truly subversive female presence in both texts.

The plot of *Shrew* is not the only nod *10 Things* makes to Shakespearean authority. The film's plot revolves in part around Kat's English class, wherein one of the "dead white guys" the students study is Shakespeare. The class is given an assignment to create their own version of Shakespeare's Sonnet 141, "In faith I do not love thee with mine eyes" (see appendix). Kat's English teacher Mr. Morgan, one of the few competent authority figures in the film, raps the opening lines to the sonnet in an attempt to show the class – and by extension the film's teen audience – that Shakespeare is still relevant, that he "knows his

⁹ "Riot grrrl" was a term coined in the 1990s to refer to a growing movement of youth feminism. Julia Downes writes that the movement "rewrote feminism and activism into a punk-rock rebellion and youth-centred voice that was felt to be missing from forms of feminism available in the 1990s" (26).

shit". Towards the end of the film, Kat reads her version of the sonnet, "10 Things I Hate About You", to the class. In a rough analogue to Katherine's final speech in *Shrew*, Kat's poem shows that she "capitulates to conventional adolescence and finds voice through the authority of William Shakespeare" (Pittman 112). Kat's poem is a description of the reasons she both hates and is attracted to the film's Petruchio, Patrick Verona. Thus *10 Things* is able to authorise both the adaptation of Shakespeare and the resolution of the romance plot that underpins the film. *10 Things* uses Shakespeare to legitimise its narrative, much as *Shrew* uses Renaissance gender roles to legitimise its misogyny. As Marilyn French notes, in *Shrew*'s use of the taming plot, legitimacy "is 'naturally' conferred in accord with hierarchical assumptions seemingly too basic to be questioned" (329). Given the historical changes that have occurred in the intervening four hundred years, then, it is disappointing to note the extent to which these basic assumptions about the place of women continue to underpin *10 Things*' adaptation of Shakespeare.

The legitimacy of *Shrew*'s assumptions about gender hierarchies and roles is troubled by the play's structure, which differs from any of Shakespeare's other plays. *The Taming of the Shrew* features an Induction, or prologue, which takes place before the main action of the play and constructs that action as explicitly artificial. The Induction features a drunken tinker named Christopher Sly, who is tricked into thinking that he is a great lord who has been merely dreaming he is a tinker. The unnamed lord who plays this joke on Sly provides him with new clothes, food and wine, and instructs his page Bartholomew to dress up in "all suits like a lady" and pretend to be Sly's wife (Induction 1.102). *The Taming of the Shrew* is presented to Sly as entertainment before he sleeps. In presenting *Shrew* explicitly as a "pleasant comedy" (Induction 2.125) that is performed by a group of travelling players, Shakespeare encourages his audience to distance themselves from the play's narrative. The Induction draws attention to the artifice of the theatre through its emphasis on role playing

and costuming – showing Bartholomew dressed as a woman draws attention in turn to the fact that all the female characters in *Shrew* as it was originally performed would have been men dressed as women.

The Induction encourages audiences to place themselves at a distance from *Shrew*'s narrative, and in so doing it also opens up the possibility of reading the play's misogynistic content from multiple perspectives. *The Taming of the Shrew* has the potential to be read as an anti-misogynistic work that satirises the attitudes towards women's behaviour that were prevalent in Shakespeare's time; however it can also be read as an endorsement of the methods Petruchio uses to tame his bride and of Katherine's eventual capitulation to patriarchal values. This duality is something that is notably lacking from *10 Things I Hate About You*. Junger's film dispenses with the Induction and makes no reference to it, instead presenting the events of the film naturalistically. Indeed, as Laura Mulvey has argued in regard to cinema in general, the conventions of traditional narrative film attempt to "eliminate the intrusive camera presence and prevent a distancing awareness in the audience" (39). Thus film as a medium generally functions in the exact opposite way to the Induction of *The Taming of the Shrew*. Junger's film, rather than encouraging an ironic distance from the main narrative, obscures the possibility of that distance through its structure. Similarly, the film imagines a much more homogenous viewing experience than Shakespeare's; the eventual unity of Kat and Patrick in a heteronormative relationship that conforms to the film's gender norms is presented as a happy ending, and Junger leaves the more troublesome aspects of this plot unexamined.

Peter Berek argues that because "Shakespeare's plays are 'canonical', we want to associate them with our most deeply held beliefs" (92); thus there is some critical anxiety about *Shrew*'s message. However I argue that, rather than wishing to associate *Shrew* with their own beliefs, the makers of *10 Things* use the authority Shakespeare's name commands

to legitimise the aspects of their source material that modern audiences might find distasteful. As Gay argues, *Shrew* “offers the audience the chance to revel in and reinforce their misogyny while at the same time feeling good” (86). The film shows three main male characters – Cameron, Michael and Joey, loose adaptations of *Shrew*’s Lucentio, Tranio and Hortensio – attempting to find a man for Kat so that her more desirable younger sister becomes eligible to date. The film endeavours to show that this is a worthy aim, a notion legitimised by the film’s use of Shakespeare as the apparatus by which Kat is able to find herself and reveal her true feelings for Patrick. Without the framing device of the Induction, which draws attention to the farcical nature of such a plot, *10 Things* loses the potential to provide multiple different ways of understanding its own narrative. Similarly, the film does not encourage audiences to consider the ironies of its plot, as *Shrew* does.

Examining one particular subject position in relation to *Shrew*, Shirley Nelson Garner argues that the play is uncomfortable to watch or read regardless of its ironic potential, simply because of its subject matter. As a woman, and therefore as a person “outside the community for whom the joke [of the play] is made”, Garner writes that she does not “participate in its humour” (106), which relies almost entirely on a woman’s subjugation. She cites a moment towards the end of the play as an example of its point of view towards its women characters: “when Bianca, so praised and desired ... rejects Hortensio, he immediately denounces her as a ‘proud disdainful haggard’ (4.2.39). This sudden reversal suggests that the men see women only in relation to male desires and needs and describe them accordingly” (110-111). This is a position which is carried through to *10 Things*. Kat, as the film’s version of Katherine, is constructed as an angry, outspoken feminist whose politics are the sole reason she is considered undesirable by the boys of Padua High School. In one of the film’s earlier scenes, Cameron and Michael, the film’s rough equivalents of Lucentio and Tranio, gather together a small group of their classmates in an attempt to find someone

willing to date Kat. The boys' reactions to the question, "Would any of you be interested in dating Katerina Stratford?" range from derisive laughter to screams of terror. One even responds, "Maybe if we were the last two people alive, and there were no sheep", going on to ask hopefully, "Are there sheep?" The segment clearly illustrates that Kat's refusal to participate in normative teenage traditions such as dating is abhorrent to the male population of her high school, inspiring both fear and disgust.

The film's representation of Kat's feminism, while an admirable attempt to update the story of *Shrew* for a more modern audience, leaves much to be desired. Not only are Kat's feminist beliefs the reason for her lack of popularity amongst her peers – both male and female – but they are often set up as laughable or false. Henderson notes that the film has so little investment in the ideals that Kat holds that her "anger at patriarchy can become a running joke" rather than a sincerely held belief that the filmmakers take seriously (2003:135). Just as Kat's father Dr Stratford's warnings about teenage pregnancy are revealed through his daughters' mockery to be exaggerations, Kat's own denunciations of the Padua High social scene are shown to be repetitive and boring by the mocking interruptions of Bianca and her friend Chastity. As Kat begins a diatribe about the party Bianca hopes to attend, declaring it "a lame excuse for all the kids at our school to drink beer and rub up against each other in the hopes of distracting themselves from the pathetic emptiness of their meaningless consumer-driven lives", the two younger girls mockingly speak the last few words of Kat's sentence with her. It is obvious from this exchange that Bianca and Chastity have heard all of Kat's complaints before. Rather than using her own words to describe her disgust at the patriarchal culture she inhabits, Kat speaks in repetitive, key-word phrases like "antiquated mating ritual" and "patriarchal values that dictate our education", phrases that suggest she is merely parroting, rather than fully engaging with, the feminist literature she apparently adores.

In constructing Kat's feminism as simply a series of repeated assertions, Junger ensures that Kat departs significantly from her Shakespearean counterpart. Katherine Minola, the titular shrew of Shakespeare's play, is a threat to the dominant hegemony of her society not only because she is loud and overbearing; she "troubles and threatens other characters through a constellation of self-assertions" (Henderson 2006:11). Katherine's outbursts are always based in her own conceptions of self; she is vocal not for political reasons but because she cannot, as a thinking and feeling subject, remain silent: "My tongue will tell the anger of my heart, / Or else my heart concealing it will break" (4.3.77-78). Katherine's dialogue shows how dissatisfied she is with the way she is treated as property, by her father and by Petruchio; she chides Baptista for believing that she "knew not what to take and what to leave" (1.1.103-4) and reminds Petruchio that she is "no child, no babe" who cannot think for herself (4.3.74). Katherine's discourse is one of female subjectivity rather than of explicit feminism, as Kat's is. Her concern is with proving to those around her that she is a subject in her own right, and not just an object to be married for money.

By contrast, Kat's political opinions are revealed to be more or less empty slogans as they turn out to be "predictable personal responses to her own emotional vulnerability" (Henderson 2003:136). In a scene shortly before the film's dramatic climax, for which there is no direct corollary in Shakespeare's play, Kat confesses to Bianca her reasons for going along with their father's scheme and rejecting the company of boys. She admits to having dated and slept with Joey Donner, the popular boy who wants to take Bianca to the prom. Kat states that after having sex with Joey, she decided she "wasn't ready" and didn't want to do it again. She states that the incident made her vow to "never do something just because everyone else is doing it" and that she hasn't since. In attempting to provide "an explanation of Kat's anti-social behaviour" through her feminist outlook and her relationship with Joey (Pittman 101), *10 Things* essentially removes the legitimacy of Kat's various pronouncements

by showing that her anger stems not from a genuine dissatisfaction with the place of women in her culture but from an unhappy sexual encounter.

Of note when discussing the source of Kat's misanthropy is the absence of her mother. Kate and Bianca's mother does not appear in *The Taming of the Shrew*, and is not mentioned anywhere in the play. By contrast, the separation of Kat and Bianca's parents in *10 Things* is presented as an important aspect of the sisters' relationship and of their home life. Several mentions are made of the girls' mother throughout the film, often during scenes which show the rift between Kat and Bianca. One such scene shows Bianca modelling a pearl necklace in their shared bathroom mirror, explaining to Kat that she found it in their mother's drawer. Kat's reaction, informing Bianca that the pearls don't look good on her and storming from the room, is an example of the way the film subtly links Kat's misanthropic behaviour with the loss of her mother. This link is further emphasised by Kat's revelation of her previous relationship with Joey. Kat states that she had sex with Joey "just once, right after Mom left". Again, the source of Kat's anger is linked to her mother's choice to leave the family.

10 Things suggests that once Kat is able to find happiness with Patrick, she will no longer need the crutch of feminism to help her express her pain. Indeed, at the end of the film it is revealed that Patrick has used the money given to him by Joey, used to bribe him into dating Kat in order to fulfil Dr Stratford's dating rule, to buy Kat a new Fender Stratocaster guitar. In previous scenes, Kat is shown at a music store playing on a guitar similar to the one Patrick gives her, and reveals to Patrick that she wants to be in a band. This aspiration, coupled with her insistence upon attending the women's college Sarah Lawrence once she leaves high school, signals Kat's non-conformity. L. Monique Pittman writes that "the guitar's presence assures audiences that Kat has found a balance between threatening non-conformity and utter subjection to high school group identity pressures" (113). Through her

relationship with Patrick, Kat has been ‘tamed’ into accepting the strictures of her environment. Her change of heart is shown through a costume change as well as through her reading of her poem to the English class. Rather than the darker colours she favours for most of the film, the final scenes of *10 Things* show Kat in a floral feminine blouse and skirt. She fits in aesthetically with her other female classmates, and her assimilation is completed by the film’s final shot: the camera zooms out from Kat and Patrick’s final kiss to encompass first the surrounding parking lot and then the rest of the school, continuing to zoom out until Kat and Patrick are entirely indistinguishable from the other students of Padua High.

The separation of Kat’s political statements from her personality as established by the end of the film is, I would argue, Junger’s way of dealing with the male anxiety about women’s speech that is rampant in *The Taming of the Shrew*. Katherine’s supposed proclivity for speech is what brands her a “shrew”; she is “famous for a scolding tongue” (2.1.250). In fact, however, Katherine is no more verbose than many of the men of the play, nor any more vulgar or insulting. She and Petruchio’s wits are evenly matched, as evidenced by their long exchange of banter in Act Two Scene One. Katherine responds to each of Petruchio’s lines with a variety of puns and witticisms:

Pet. Come, come, you wasp, i’ faith you are too angry.

Kat. If I be waspish, best beware my sting.

Pet. My remedy is then to pluck it out.

Kat. Ay, if the fool could find it where it lies.

Pet. Who knows not where a wasp does wear his sting?

In his tail.

Kat. In his tongue.

Pet. Whose tongue?

Kat. Yours, if you talk of tales, and so farewell. (2.1.207-213)

The above exchange shows that Katherine is both as intelligent and as vulgar as Petruchio. Her willingness to engage in a sexually charged conversation of double entendre based on tongues and tails shows that she is not afraid to stand up to the men around her. Even her final speech, despite its misogynistic content, is eloquent and poetic: “A woman moved is like a fountain troubled, / Muddy, ill-seeming, thick, bereft of beauty, / And while it is so, none so dry or thirsty / Will deign to sip or touch one drop of it” (5.2.146-149).

It is Kate’s gender that is her undoing: because she is a woman, “her verbal independence is read by her father and suitors as a sign of shrewishness” (Howard 123). The men of *Shrew* are unable to take Katherine seriously as an independent person because she is a woman, and labelling her a shrew is one way to label her outbursts as unimportant. Once she comes to accept the limitations placed upon her speech by the men in the play, Katherine is accepted by them as a changed, and tamed, woman. Katherine’s longest speech, and indeed the longest speech in the play, is her final paean to the place of women and to their merits as meek and obedient. It is this speech which proves to the men of the play that she has been tamed and will no longer be “wonderful froward” (1.1.69) but instead will offer “love, fair looks, and true obedience” to her husband (5.2.157). She turns her power of speech against the other women present, chastising the wives for disobedience to their husbands, rather than using her wit to mock Petruchio or rebel against her father, as she has done previously. The speech ends with Katherine offering to place her hand beneath Petruchio’s foot in a sign of respect and subservience (5.2.181-183).

10 Things I Hate About You, in adapting this final display of female obedience, alters both the content and meaning of Katherine’s speech significantly, while keeping a few surface similarities. Kat, in reading her sonnet to her English class, turns her skill with words towards a revelation of her feelings for Patrick rather than her previous denunciations of the “patriarchal values” at work in the classroom. Like Katherine, Kat reads her poem to an

assembled group of her peers, including Joey Donner and Patrick. However, there are notable differences between Kat's poem reading and Katherine's wedding speech. Most notably, Kat volunteers to read her poem to the class, after Mr. Morgan asks whether anyone would like to share their work. This voluntary action is something that does not occur in *Shrew* – Petruchio's instruction to Katherine to "tell these headstrong women / What duty they do owe their lords and husbands" (5.2.134-135) is what prompts her to begin her speech. In contrast, Kat's offer to share her assignment with the group is a continuation of the film's characterisation of her as engaged with and enthused about her education.

The second crucial difference between Kat's poem and Katherine's speech is that Kat's poem is far from the eloquent speech that Katherine delivers. Even when she has been tamed, Katherine's final speech shows a wit and skill with words that is noticeably lacking in Kat's poem. When Mr. Morgan first gives the assignment, to re-write Shakespeare's Sonnet 141, Kat asks if he would like the finished product in iambic pentameter, showing that she is at least aware of the technical requirements of the task. She also assures Mr. Morgan that she thinks the assignment is "really good" and that she is looking forward to completing it. Kat's final poem, however, does not fit with the intelligent way she approaches the project:

I hate the way you talk to me, and the way you cut your hair.

I hate the way you drive my car, I hate it when you stare.

I hate your big dumb combat boots and the way you read my mind.

I hate you so much it makes me sick, it even makes me rhyme.

I hate the way you're always right, I hate it when you lie.

I hate it when you make me laugh, even worse when you make me cry.

I hate it when you're not around, and the fact that you didn't call.

But mostly I hate the way I don't hate you,

Not even close, not even a little bit, not even at all.

Despite her questions about the assignment, which show at least a basic understanding of its requirements, Kat's finished poem is not in iambic pentameter, nor does it fit into the prescribed fourteen-line structure of the traditional Shakespearean sonnet, and although it begins, roughly, in a logical and flowing meter, it quickly loses rhythm.

In contrast to Katherine's final speech, it is the quality of Kat's speech at this point, rather than the content, which shows how she has changed. Henderson notes that "*10 Things* remains true to the dynamics – that is, the jarring disjunction – of Shakespeare's final scene" (2003:136). The film presents Kat's poem as her authentic voice, through which her true feelings can be revealed. However the most notable aspect of Kat's 'true voice' is its blandness, and lack of her previous rhetorical flair. The film's ending presents a wholly different character from the Kat who, in previous scenes, reads *The Bell Jar* for fun, wants to attend a prestigious women's college and spends her spare time in bookstores. All of these are markers of intelligence used by Junger to show Kat's intelligence and her taste for complex, feminist ideas. The comparison with the Kat who pens the above poem is certainly jarring. Resolving the film's romantic plot and ensuring the happiness of Kat and Patrick as a couple "means temporarily erasing her intelligence and sarcasm, and replacing them with emotional submission" (Henderson 2003:137) through Kat's poem reading.

Kat is constructed as vulnerable and thus requiring Patrick's affection in order to achieve self-actualisation. As her anger and vulnerability are based on her unhappy relationship with Joey, Pittman argues that this addition to the character of Katherine "serves to underscore the quiet misogyny of the plot" of *10 Things*, given that Kat's anger and her refusal to participate in "normal" teenage rituals such as the prom are shown to be the direct result of an unsatisfying sexual encounter (101). Further, Pittman argues that the "taming" Kat undergoes before finally reuniting with Patrick at the film's close is largely sexualised, "consistently" locating Kat's vulnerability in her sexuality (109). When this location of

humiliation in sexuality is paired with Dr Stratford's dire warnings about being "up to [his] elbows in placenta" as a direct result of teenagers' dating, *10 Things*' attitude towards its female characters seems to have more in common with Katherine's paean to the subjugation of women than it does with the feminist slogans Kat espouses. However, on closer inspection, much like Katherine's final speech, *10 Things* again appears to condone more than it rejects.

Writing about female characters within Shakespeare's plays, Paula Berggren notes that "the central element in Shakespeare's treatment of women is always their sex" (18). This holds true in the case of *10 Things*, with the two central female characters both constructed as, primarily, female romantic partners. Yet the crucial difference between Pittman's analysis of the female within this particular narrative and Berggren's discussion of Shakespeare's women is that Berggren notes that female sexuality is constructed as a "mythic source of power ... that arouses both love and loathing in the male" (18). This is certainly true, especially of Kat, who is loathed by the male students of Padua High simply because she appears to have no interest in sleeping with them. While Kat and Bianca are both limited in certain ways by their father and by the construction of the film's narrative, both are awarded a degree of power simply by virtue of being female. Kat, much more than Bianca, uses her sexuality and her body as a source of power in a world where it is often the only option available to her.

While Melissa Jones and Pittman both focus on Kat's reading of her love poem to Patrick as a site of humiliation (Jones 139; Pittman 112-3), their arguments fall short of an acceptable argument against Kat's behaviour. Despite its lack of literary merit, Kat's teary declaration of her feelings for Patrick does not entirely function as an updated version of Katherine's demands that the women around her obey their husbands. Jones' argument that the poem reading functions as a taming ploy by humiliating Kat rests on the assumption that it is embarrassing and painful for Kat to publicly acknowledge any form of emotion other

than anger, even going so far as to call Kat's romantic feelings an "unendurable weakness" (139). I would argue, however, that the true moment of humiliation comes several scenes earlier, at Bogey Lowenstein's party, where a drunken Kat dances provocatively on a table, to the delight of the surrounding guests. This humiliation, true to Pittman's argument (109), is located in Kat's sexuality and in her body - yet crucially, it is only when Kat's body is beyond her control, when she is drunk, that it becomes a site for humiliation and vulnerability.

The change in Kat's demeanour which occurs in the film's final scene is, as discussed above, further signalled by a change in costume: whereas many of her previous appearances in the film have shown her in dark, muted colours, in the final scene of the film Kat wears a white blouse covered in light blue flowers. The character that this costume suggests is a marked contrast with the Kat who, in the film's opening moments, is shown sneering derisively at a car full of girls in similar attire. Kat's conversion to a more traditionally feminine appearance is a change similar to the one that occurs in Katherine, once again repackaged in a more subtle way for the film's modern audience. Rather than openly discussing the place of a woman in her marriage, *10 Things* shows Kat choosing a more traditionally feminine style of dress in order to suggest that she is becoming more like her sister and her classmates in her engagement with femininity. Pittman notes that the changes in Kat's costume "signify Kat's subjection to the pressures of high school conformity" (113), and that this conformity comes at the expense of her "previously established manner" (112) including her feminist and anti-conformist leanings. However, Kat's costume in the final scene is not as sudden a change as Pittman argues. Although Kat does begin the film wearing dark greys and greens, her costume actually subtly changes across the course of the film. Indeed Kat's most striking costume change is not in the film's final scene but even earlier, when she attends the prom. In the prom scene Kat is dressed much like her peers, in a long

blue dress with her hair pulled up. Even earlier, when she speaks to Bianca about her relationship with Joey, Kat's hair is pulled back in a similar style to the way she wears it at the end of the film, and she wears a green cardigan covered in flowers.

I note these changes of costume because they point to an aspect of *10 Things* which is entirely absent in *Shrew*: the development of a positive relationship between the two sisters. Towards the end of the film, Kat and her father discuss the influence Kat has had on Bianca, and Dr Stratford says that he is "impressed" at the way Kat's behaviour has rubbed off on Bianca. However, no mention is made of the way Bianca has influenced Kat. Kat's gradual changes in costume follow the gradual mending of the sisters' relationship. This is a development that emphatically does not occur in *Shrew*: even when Katherine has been tamed into a milder, quieter mode of behaviour, she is still in conflict with the other women of the play. Indeed, her final speech begins with the lines, "Fie, fie, unknit that threat'ning, unkind brow, / And dart not scornful glances from those eyes" (5.2.140-141), directed at Bianca and the widow who marries Bianca's unsuccessful suitor Hortensio. Katherine's speech denouncing her fellow women's behaviour is, moreover, not her own initiative; she is instructed to perform it by Petruchio. As Frances Dolan writes, marriage appears to amplify the conflicts among the women of the play, rather than resolving them as it does among the men: by the play's final scene, "Katherine is as much or more at odds with other women" than she is at its beginning because "she is encouraged to be so" (33). Obeying her husband's will means remaining on poor terms with the other women in her life.

By contrast, *10 Things* makes an effort to show a positive change in the relationship between Kat and Bianca. They begin the film bickering and insulting each other: Bianca is convinced that Kat is "a particularly hideous breed of loser" while Kat informs their father of Bianca's disregard for their house rules – "no dating 'til you graduate" – in order to avoid arguments about her choice of college. Although Kat does not tie Bianca up and beat her, as

Katherine does in *Shrew* (2.1), she does comply with their father's new dating rule – “Bianca can date when [Kat] does” – in order to ensure that Bianca stays away from the company of boys. In *Shrew*, by tying Bianca's hands and beating her, Katherine becomes “a woman visiting on Bianca the same identical patriarchal control, based on superior physical strength and social custom, which she resists being imposed on herself” (Henderson 2006:49). A different but in some ways equivalent complicity with patriarchal control is at work in Kat's cooperation with Dr Stratford's dating rule, which is based on his seemingly pathological fear of his daughters' becoming pregnant. By telling Dr Stratford when Bianca gets driven home by Joey Donner and encouraging him to refuse her permission to go to the prom, Kat collaborates with Stratford's plan to control his daughters.

The turning point in Kat and Bianca's relationship occurs after Kat reveals her reasons for trying to protect Bianca from a relationship with Joey. After showing their conversation, the camera cuts to a shot of Kat lying on her bed, slowly moving in closer as she gets up to look out her window. From over her shoulder the camera shows Bianca sitting in a tyre swing in the back garden. The film then cuts to a shot of Kat's face through the window, looking down at Bianca. The next time the camera shows Kat, she is leaving the house in her prom dress. This sequence of shots makes it clear that, from looking at Bianca and seeing her distress, Kat has changed her mind about attending the prom. Once they arrive at the prom, the camera emphasises the two sisters looking and smiling at each other, in order to show that their differences have been set aside for now. It is this scene that shows how much the sisters have influenced each other as well as how much their relationship has changed, and that sets *10 Things* apart from *Shrew*. Healthy, positive relationships between female characters are rare in cinema and indeed they are missing from both Branagh's *Hamlet* and Loncraine's *Richard III*; indeed, the latter specifically removes elements from its source that could be

read in this light. By contrast, *10 Things*' adaptation and alteration of Kat and Bianca's relationship is crucial to both its narrative structure and to its representation of women.

The film's positive treatment of the relationship between Kat and Bianca is supported by its expansion of the role of Bianca herself. Even in Shakespeare's play, Bianca can be read as a more subversive character than Katherine. The audience's first view of Bianca in *Shrew* occurs in the play's first scene, and from her very first entrance, Bianca is compared favourably with her sister. She displays "[m]aids' mild behaviour and sobriety" (1.1.71) by virtue of her silence and by acquiescing to her father's wishes. Yet even in her first appearance, Bianca's actions undermine the seeming obedience of her words. Her dialogue suggests that she is completely subordinate to the will of her father: when Baptista instructs her to go into the house, Bianca responds that she will "humbly ... subscribe" to his command (1.1.81). Yet a short time later, Baptista repeats himself: "Go in, Bianca" (1.1.91). This suggests that, rather than complying immediately with her father's wishes, Bianca merely gives the appearance of consent. Further, in her footnotes to the Arden edition of *Shrew*, Barbara Hodgdon notes that some versions of the play do not include a stage direction indicating when Bianca should exit (Hodgdon 166), leaving open the possibility that she does not follow her father's orders at all, and stays to watch the unfolding conflict between Katherine and the sisters' various suitors.

This pattern of behaviour continues in Act Three Scene One, a scene which Patricia Parker notes is "crucial in relation to the trajectory of Bianca within the play" (205). The scene shows Bianca's two suitors Lucentio and Hortensio, both disguised as tutors, attempting to win her over through their lessons. Yet it is Bianca who controls this scene, and who sets the tone and the content of it. Bianca's control of the men around her is subtle enough that it is often missed, even by feminist scholars: Parker argues in her analysis of the tutoring scene that Bianca is a very different character from that which "the assumptions and

constructions of otherwise astute feminist readings” make her out to be (206). Bianca’s strength is in recognising the acceptable behaviours for the situations she finds herself in, and using those behaviours to her advantage. The most obvious example of this aptitude comes in her discussion with Lucentio about a particular Latin passage: Lucentio assures her that “Aeacides / Was Ajax, called so from his grandfather”, to which Bianca responds, “I must believe my master; else, I promise you, / I should be arguing still upon that doubt” (3.1.50-53). Bianca’s acknowledgement that she should, as a student, follow what her “master” dictates is instantly thrown into doubt by her second statement. She wishes to avoid a drawn-out argument, rather than to show that she is an obedient student. Further, the polite way in which she registers her disagreement ensures that she continues to act in a way that is acceptable for someone of her gender and class, rather than drawing attention and punishment on herself as Katherine does. While such behaviour is not exactly a radical feminist’s dream, Bianca’s subtle machinations *within* the system that Katherine so obviously abhors return much more positive results: while Katherine is forced into a marriage and an ideology that she initially despises, Bianca is free to marry the suitor of her choice and thus gain a further degree of independence.

Not only does Bianca’s polite disagreement with Lucentio suggest that she is capable of using her supposedly subordinate position to her advantage, but it also provides evidence to suggest something few critics have discussed: her intelligence. Parker argues that Bianca’s refusal to accept Lucentio’s version of the Latin text shows that she is “clearly the better scholar”, as she is able to pick up on Lucentio’s dubious translation and consider alternate versions (204). Lucentio and Bianca discuss two different extracts from Lucentio’s chosen text, and in both cases, Bianca proves she is just as capable as Lucentio, if not more so. The first, as discussed above, proves Bianca’s ability to think critically; the second shows her aptitude with the language itself. Although both Lucentio and Bianca’s “translations” of the

passage they are working on are little more than thinly veiled disguises for discussions of their feelings, even in this context Bianca is shown to be more aware of the language from which she is borrowing. Lucentio's translation fragments the original sentence and uses it for his own purpose:

Hic ibat, as I told you before; *Simois*, I am Lucentio;
hic est, son unto Vincentio of Pisa; *Sigeia tellus*,
disguised thus to get your love; *hic steterat*, and that
Lucentio that comes a-wooing; *Priami*, is my man
Tranio; *regia*, bearing my port; *cela senis*, that we
might beguile the old pantaloon. (3.1.31-36)

Bianca's translation, on the other hand, "at least keeps the Latin clauses logically together" (Hodgdon 221) and is more poetic than Lucentio's attempt:

Hic ibat Simois, I know you not; *hic est Segeia tellus*,
I trust you not; *hic steterat Priami*, take heed he hear
us not; *regia*, presume not; *celsa senis*, despair not.
(3.1.40-43)

Thus Bianca shows a more sound understanding of the material she is studying, as well as ensuring that she remains in control of both the lesson and Lucentio's wooing.

In *10 Things I Hate About You*, the scene that most closely corresponds to the play's tutoring scene shows Cameron and Bianca meeting in the library in order for Cameron to tutor Bianca in French (a subject he has never studied himself). This scene shows the modern Bianca's ability to use others' desires to her advantage. Her warning to her tutors that she will "not be tied to hours nor 'pointed times, / But learn my lessons as I please myself" (3.1.19-20) is replaced in the film with a request to "make this [lesson] quick" as "Roxanne Corinne and Andrew Jarrett are having a horrendous public breakup on the quad". Neither Bianca nor

Cameron speaks French throughout the scene, and their conversation quickly moves from learning to dating, and more specifically to the rule that Bianca is allowed to date only when Kat does. Bianca is quick to use Cameron's infatuation with her to her own advantage. After hearing about Dr Stratford's dating rule, Cameron suggests the possibility that he can find someone for Kat to date, thus freeing Bianca from her father's constraints. Bianca places her hand on his arm and asks sweetly, "You would do that for me?". This flattery ensures that Cameron, already enamoured with Bianca, will continue to try and please her, thus setting in motion the film's major plot: the scheme to find Kat a boyfriend.

Later in the film, another tutoring scene proves that Bianca, much like her Shakespearean counterpart, is a quick learner and is much more adept at language than her supposed tutor. Cameron reads some French questions directly from his textbook, the content of which make it clear that he is reading them verbatim rather than attempting to engage in conversation ("May I offer you a parsnip? Have you seen my uncle's pencil?"). Bianca replies to each without reading from her own book and with direct reference to her current feelings and situation: in answer to Cameron's questions about his uncle's pencil she responds quickly and fluently, "I don't know, maybe it is up your ass? Let me ask you a question, Cameron. When are you going to ask me out?"

Robert York argues that *10 Things*' Bianca is "not far removed from her Shakespearean counterpart" (72), and although his argument is merely rooted in the belief that both Biancas are "superficial" and "trivial" (ibid.), it does hold true in that both characters at first appear to fit the mould of a seemingly stereotypically feminine, airheaded young girl, however that mould may be shaped by its particular place and time. In fact, both the Shakespearean Bianca and her more modern counterpart are intelligent and perceptive as well as being stereotypically beautiful and occasionally shallow. This distinction is one that seems to escape many critics in regard to the film; a false dichotomy is often set up between the two

sisters wherein only one of them can hold a correct opinion. Neither seems to be a satisfactory example of how a young, feminist woman should interact with the world around her. This binary opposition is one exploited by Jones, who argues that Kat's Marxist insights into teenage life are rendered "more silly than savvy" by her "notably shallow" sister's "mockery" (Jones 142). This kind of argument pits the sisters against each other in a negative, anti-feminist reading of the film in which only one sister, or more often neither, can be right. Jones, and to a lesser extent York, cannot acknowledge both Kat *and* Bianca's intelligence, much less their positions as differing, but not altogether different, portraits of different kinds of femininity. Both York and Jones suggest that because Bianca is more concerned with her Skechers and Prada backpack than she is with dismantling "the oppressive patriarchal values which dictate our education", as Kat appears to be, that she cannot therefore be of any worth either as a character or as a woman.

On the contrary, however, *10 Things*' Bianca acts not only as a symbol of the power of femininity but as an example of one half of a much healthier relationship than any of those portrayed in the film or indeed the play. While *Shrew*'s Bianca uses Lucentio's infatuation and subsequent willingness to elope as merely a way to ensure a secure social position, *10 Things*' Bianca slowly becomes genuinely interested in Cameron, recognising that her other potential suitor, Joey Donner, is both boring and bullying. While *Shrew*'s Bianca does purport to love Lucentio, her primary reason for marriage is to gain greater independence, as seen in her behaviour in the wedding scene, which has become anything but "sacred and sweet" (1.1.175). *10 Things* shows a Bianca who is just as cunning, but whose selfish reasons for encouraging Cameron's feelings give way to feelings of her own.

By the end of the film, Bianca and Cameron appear to be in a happy, and more importantly equal, relationship. They are comfortable enough with each other's company that Bianca asks Kat to join them on a date, again showing the improvement in the sisters'

relationship as well as emphasising the happiness of Bianca's romantic one. This, too, is a departure from the film's Shakespearean source, wherein Katherine's final speech encouraging the subservience of women is in part a rebuke of her younger sister's behaviour. Both of these changes are important in recognising the difference between the two texts' versions of Bianca. *10 Things* provides Bianca with a boyfriend, an improved relationship with her sister, and a father who, while he does not understand her life, will at least relinquish his control over it. That Bianca is in a relationship by the film's end does not weaken her agency any more than her feminine appearance limits her feminist capabilities.

Bianca's feminism, while of a radically different breed from Kat's, and indeed never named as such, is presented much more subtly, and this subtlety is what has led many critics to deny its existence. Bianca states clearly and explicitly that she wants to be able to make her own mistakes, and does not wish to be protected from the world either by Dr Stratford *or* by Kat: she becomes frustrated with Kat for "not letting me experience anything for myself" and even more so with Dr Stratford's refusal to let her experience "normal" teenage behaviours such as dating and parties. Bianca's anger at her sister comes from a resentment of her sister's perceived freedom, a freedom that Kat denies Bianca by adhering to their father's dating rule. While Kat's response to Bianca's outrage is "I guess I thought I was protecting you", the two major events which Bianca is permitted to attend – Bogey Lowenstein's party and the prom – are both crucial in Bianca's trajectory from a self-absorbed "snotty princess" to a self-aware and empowered young woman. Bianca's desire to be able to experience the world for herself in order to make her own choices is thus validated by the film's narrative arc.

It is at Bogey Lowenstein's party that Bianca first becomes disillusioned with Joey's posing, and begins to realise that while he may be attractive and popular, his personality leaves something to be desired. It is Cameron's impassioned plea that Bianca think about other people that interests and attracts her enough to want to kiss him, something that she

emphatically does not do with Joey. In fact in most of their scenes together, Bianca appears less than enthused about Joey's company and, most notably in the party scene, often tries to pull away from him when he initiates physical contact. At the prom, the film's rough equivalent of *Shrew's* wedding banquet, Bianca finally comes into her own by punching and kicking Joey, in retribution for the harm he has inflicted throughout the film.

Jones argues that Joey's "very public unmanning" is merely an attempt by the filmmakers to prove that his bullying was harmless, as "he was never a real man at all" (Jones 148) – presumably because "real men" are incapable of sustaining physical injuries inflicted on them by women. However, this argument stems from an inability to see Bianca as a capable woman and indeed as a capable character. Because she is stereotypically feminine, popular, and agreeable, she cannot also be physically aggressive, gender-fluid, or indeed feminist. Her attack on Joey is not an attempt by Junger to show that Joey is not a "real man" but an indication of how much Bianca has changed over the course of the film – she has become more confident and more aggressive (more like Kat, as Kat later points out). The scene endeavours to show that not all of Kat's posturing and supposed hatred of the status quo has been in vain, and it also indicates that it is not all a bad thing – Bianca uses some of the more violent, stereotypically masculine strength embodied in Kat to defend herself, her choices and her boyfriend. This attack is what ultimately removes any complications in the relationship between Bianca and Cameron, proving that being in a loving relationship with a boy does not make Bianca any weaker or any less intelligent or worthy.

Also noteworthy in this scene is the extent to which Bianca owns up to her responsibility for her actions when compared to Kat. Bianca's attack on Joey mirrors an earlier, although unseen, attack by Kat on another student. Earlier in the film, when Kat is sent to the school counsellor's office, she is reminded of an incident wherein she kicked another student in the testicles, and her response, notably, is, "I still maintain he kicked

himself in the balls”. Bianca, on the other hand, allots specific meaning to each of her blows on the unfortunate Joey: one punch is for Cameron, the other for Kat, and the final blow, a kick in the balls much like Kat has delivered in the past, is defiantly labelled as “for me”. Bianca takes control of her actions and their violence in a way that Kat does not. Bianca’s attack on Joey is also legitimised by the reaction of Mr. Morgan, who is constructed throughout the film as a voice of reason and cultural legitimacy. His response to Joey’s bruised face is merely to laugh and continue with the lesson. Bianca herself is not punished for her actions, either by the school or by her father, who tells Kat that he is “impressed” at the fact that Kat has influenced her sister in this way. Thus, Bianca’s attack on Joey is shown to be not only warranted but morally unobjectionable. In much the same way as *Shrew*’s Bianca manages to escape the taming inflicted on her sister and become “the only rebel to patriarchy in the play” (Mikesell 111), *10 Things*’ Bianca escapes the narrative punishment inflicted on Kat for similar actions.

Another role in *10 Things* which is expanded and changed when compared to *The Taming of the Shrew* is that of Baptista Minola, reimagined in *10 Things* as Dr Stratford. Kat and Bianca’s father is the source of the dating rule around which the film revolves, and acts as a blocking mechanism similar to Baptista, albeit working in slightly different ways. Phyllis Rackin notes that in *The Taming of the Shrew*, “none of the women have any trade at all or any means of economic support” that is not provided by a man (56). This “wistful fantasy” (ibid.) similarly pervades *10 Things*: even Patrick’s eagerness to take payment for wooing Kat – seemingly because he has no other income – is thrown into doubt in the film’s final moments when he uses his ill-gotten gains to buy Kat an expensive guitar. The film is set in an upper-class neighbourhood among upper-class teenagers, and thus while Kat and Bianca’s ability to go out to parties or go sailing is not limited by a lack of money, their agency is curbed in a slightly different way. Their father, much like Shakespeare’s Baptista, is the

breadwinner of the family, and thus controls the sisters' lives in more important ways. Kat's desire to attend Sarah Lawrence College is curbed by a lack of her own income with which to pay tuition fees, a problem happily resolved by Dr Stratford's change of heart in the film's penultimate scene. Dr Stratford's willingness to pay for his daughter's study at a college on the other side of the country is shown as a happy ending for both parties, because it allows Kat more freedom at the same time as mending the relationship between father and daughter.

In the absence of Kat and Bianca's mother, Dr Stratford is their only parental figure, meaning he has total control over the rules of their household. Dr Stratford's motivations, both in forbidding his daughters from dating and in paying for Kat's first year of college, differ entirely from those of Baptista, who wishes nothing more than to rid his home of Katherine. York sums up Dr Stratford's reasoning in imposing the dating rule thus: "he would likely have the same fears concerning Kat's dating, but he is so certain that with this arrangement and [Kat's] seemingly irreversible hatred of boys, he's got all the bases covered" (73). Stratford's rules are clearly based in a desire to protect his daughters and to keep them at home with him for as long as possible, the complete opposite of Baptista's feelings. Both fathers attempt to limit their daughters' agency through limiting their romantic engagements, a practice that aligns perfectly with Pittman's description of the central teen film formula: the film "works through a crisis of independent selfhood and self-expression towards an affirmation of the whole self ... the teenager eventually achieves both peer validation *and* independence" (99, original emphasis). Both Kat and Bianca experience limited agency through limitations on their romantic lives, whether self-imposed or imposed by others. Both fathers ensure that by denying their daughters involvement in "communal activity" (Pittman 99), they also deny independent agency. Kat and Bianca are thus limited by their father's will in two specific ways: financially and romantically.

Dr Stratford's ban on romantic involvement logically extends to sexual involvement, which is shown to be his real fear. Both girls' bodies are explicitly sexualised by their father's insistence that they think about the consequences of becoming involved with boys. Dr Stratford, whose work seems to revolve solely around delivering babies to teenage girls, consistently links dating and pregnancy in his conversations with his daughters, at one point expressing a desire to experience "the deep slumber of a father whose daughters aren't out getting impregnated". Stratford's strangest parenting technique involves "the belly", "a ponderous vest that simulates a pregnant woman's stomach and breasts" (Jones 151). The belly embodies the connection between dating and pregnancy and thus enforces its importance on Kat and Bianca, lest they suffer the same fate as Stratford's patients. By appealing to the girls' vanity, showing them what it would look and feel like to suffer through an accidental pregnancy, Stratford reinforces his abstinence-only message in the most literal way he can. His message, too, is tired and over-articulated: his story about a fifteen-year-old mother telling him "I should have listened to my father" is quickly exposed as a lie, and his daughters' reactions indicate that this kind of story has been told many times before. While reproductive politics and the idea that a man should be in control of the reproductive and sexual choices of the women in his life are still an issue today, Stratford is a comically benign version of this form of patriarchal oppression. Overall, he appears as a bumbling, harmless blocking mechanism, whose love for his daughters ensures that their wishes will ultimately be granted. This change comes, in part, from the film's specific genre: as a romantic comedy aimed at teenagers, it distances itself from the darker elements of *The Taming of the Shrew*. Baptista's disdain for Katherine is absent from *10 Things*; Junger ensures that Stratford's love for both his daughters is obvious. I would argue, however, that in rendering its most obviously patriarchal figure essentially harmless, *10 Things* paradoxically reinforces its patriarchal message by ensuring that the feminist slogans Kat espouses, often specifically

evoking the word “patriarchy”, are rendered irrelevant by the seeming lack of any truly authoritarian patriarchal figures in the film itself.

Pittman argues that the film’s very narrative limits the girls’ ability to act as independent selves, as it “confirms socially compliant selfhood achieved by means of Shakespeare” (Pittman 102). However, as discussed at length above, Bianca is ‘socially compliant’ only when it suits her, being quite happy to use her perceived compliance to gain advantages, or to break out of the mould entirely should the situation require it. Kat, as the main character, is more shackled by the film’s ideology and by the lack of agency that this requires. Pittman’s argument that agency is limited by the film’s insistence on placing romantic love at the fore holds up when applied to Kat: she “achieves self-actualisation through love” but only after heartbreak and humiliation (Pittman 114). Bianca, on the other hand, acts as the dominant partner in her relationship with Cameron, initiating their first kiss and attacking Joey in order to protect Cameron. While Bianca may achieve “self-actualisation through love” (ibid.), she does not lose herself in her desire for a fulfilling relationship, but uses the relationship to bolster her own confidence. Again, this difference in the narrative’s treatment of the two sisters is based in the fact that Kat is the main character and thus enacts the film’s dominant, conservative ideology, while Bianca, as the seemingly less important character, is able to slip through the cracks in the film’s mythic construction of selfhood.

Bianca’s last appearance in *10 Things* shows her leaving her father’s house to go sailing with Cameron. While she does not appear in the film’s final scenes, the last mention of her is in conversation between Kat and Dr Stratford, where both approve of her attack on Joey at the prom. After this conversation, Kat goes on to read her sonnet to her English class and to enter into a relationship with Patrick. Both *10 Things* and *The Taming of the Shrew* end on a final note of submission by their lead female characters, yet leave the subplot, that of Bianca and her suitors, much more open. In her last line in *Shrew*, Bianca “chides [her

husband] for her disobedience”, and thus “rebukes the ‘punch line’ of the wife-taming joke” (Mikesell 112). When Lucentio complains to Bianca that her disobedience to him has lost him a bet, she responds, “The more fool you for laying on my duty” (5.2.133). The wife-taming joke, as Mikesell argues, relies on the unquestioning obedience of the wife; by disobeying her husband and pointing out his foolishness in attempting to control her, Bianca subverts the neat resolution of *Shrew*’s plot. While *10 Things*’ Bianca does not appear in the film’s final scene, her ending in the film is a happy one; she has removed the problematic Joey from her life, her relationship with her sister is mended and she has finally managed to avoid the curbs on her freedom placed by her father and begin a relationship with Cameron. She has gained more than she has lost, and she is not bound by the same narrative strictures that Kat is. All in all, Bianca’s narrative within the film proves that it is possible to be a woman who is strong and capable as well as sexual without being punished for this identity, something that is difficult to accomplish even in reality. *Shrew*’s Bianca also manages to escape her father’s overbearing rule and gains independence, continuing her pattern of subtly controlling the men around her to her own ends.

The Taming of the Shrew is the story of a woman violently and abruptly brought into line with the dominant views of her culture about what a woman should be. While *10 Things I Hate About You* makes an effort to avoid the overtly misogynistic events of its source material, the very act of adapting *Shrew* shows that Junger and his team of filmmakers find something of worth in its story and message. By legitimising the film’s plot and its final taming of the explicitly feminist Kat through the use of Shakespeare as the ultimate authority on love and education, *10 Things* proves that in Hollywood, the mere name of Shakespeare works as a panacea to the many problems and inconsistencies to be found in his works. The parts of *10 Things* that are most successful in avoiding the misogyny of *Shrew* are those which, in Shakespeare’s play, are already progressive: the role of Bianca, as a traditionally

feminine but cunningly subversive figure, works in *10 Things* largely because of the film's focus on Kat and Patrick as the bearers of its unfortunately conservative message. In sticking so rigidly to the resolution of *Shrew's* plot by ensuring that Kat's happiness can only come from entering into a relationship with Patrick, Junger misses the opportunity to make *10 Things* a truly modern take on its source material. *10 Things* engages with ideas of feminism only to shrug them off by making them laughable and transforming its single, feminist-leaning female protagonist into someone who seems to be just like everyone else, happily coupled up in a heteronormative romantic partnership in which she is emotionally and physically submissive.

Despite *10 Things's* steps in a more progressive direction, it remains an example of the damaging way of thinking that also pervades Branagh's *Hamlet* and Loncraine's *Richard III*: it assumes that anything in Shakespeare must be justified and worth adapting unexamined. By removing the original Shakespearean language of *The Taming of the Shrew*, *10 Things* also removes the most obvious marker of its narrative's historical context. Unlike Branagh's *Hamlet* or Loncraine's *Richard III*, *10 Things* does not attempt to place its narrative in an aesthetically nostalgic past, instead propelling the early modern class and gender roles of its source into a modern context that leaves the problematic aspects of *Shrew* unquestioned while simultaneously touting Shakespeare as the ultimate authority on love and relationships. Thus the misogyny of *The Taming of the Shrew* rears its head in *10 Things I Hate About You*, and thus the violent taming of Katherine is repackaged and delivered to a new generation of viewers.

Conclusion: “We Have Been Here Before”

Writing of the emotional and physical submission that is offered up as a happy ending for Kat in *10 Things I Hate About You*, Diana E. Henderson notes, “we have been here before” (137). Indeed we have: *10 Things* is one film in a long succession that chooses to adapt the misogynistic elements of Shakespeare’s work without question. In the preceding chapters, this thesis has examined three different approaches to adapting Shakespeare to the screen. In all three cases, I have examined the various ways in which the female characters of *Hamlet*, *Richard III* and *The Taming of the Shrew* have been updated, edited or cut entirely from film adaptations of their source texts. Branagh’s *Hamlet*, Loncraine’s *Richard III* and Junger’s *10 Things I Hate About You* all carry some vestiges of the gendered language and attitudes that are a part of Shakespeare’s work, and the varying ways in which women are represented in these films are influenced by the differing approaches to adaptation taken by each filmmaker.

In both Branagh’s *Hamlet* and McKellen and Loncraine’s *Richard III*, the lead actor’s star power and influence over the film’s screenplay and direction is used to naturalise the film’s dominant perspective. Kenneth Branagh as Hamlet and Ian McKellen as Richard III had both previously played their film roles in theatre productions, and both also wrote the screenplays for their respective films. Branagh has even further power over his production of *Hamlet* as its director. Because of the power Branagh and McKellen have over the screenplays and direction of their respective films, and because of their long associations with their characters through previous performances, both Branagh’s *Hamlet* and McKellen and Loncraine’s *Richard III* are biased towards the perspectives of their male leads. This bias is most noticeable in relation to the way both films represent their female characters: Branagh’s film attempts to confirm Hamlet’s own construction of Gertrude as a bestial and sexually aggressive figure despite adapting textual evidence to the contrary, while McKellen’s notes to his *Richard III* screenplay indicate that he has very specific ideas about the way in which an

audience will respond to the film, ideas that rely on the audience's identification with Richard above (and against) any of his female opponents. McKellen's portrayal of Richard in the film's two wooing scenes exemplifies this position: his notes reveal his belief that the film's audience will identify and empathise with Richard even as he manipulates and assaults the women around him.

Both Branagh's *Hamlet* and McKellen and Loncraine's *Richard III*, then, rely on their lead actors' star power to naturalise the potentially alienating aspects of their protagonists' behaviour. *10 Things* however performs the task of naturalising its events in a different way: it does so through the practices of film itself. By removing the Induction, *The Taming of the Shrew*'s framing device that draws attention to the artifice of the play, *10 Things* sets its narrative in a realistic, naturalised environment where characters speak in a modern, if slick and occasionally stylised, idiom. By removing, for the most part, the language of *Shrew* in favour of contemporary language, as well as removing those aspects of Shakespeare's play that encouraged an ironic distance in its audience, *10 Things* naturalises its narrative of traditional gender roles and heteronormative coupling in a more insidious and unnoticeable way than the other two adaptations I have discussed.

The three adaptations also share a desire to see Shakespeare as a legitimising agent: by associating their films with Shakespeare, the filmmakers implicitly associate their work with high-cultural values of legitimacy and respectability. These connotations are used in all three films to excuse or cover up the more problematic aspects of the source texts. Branagh, in adapting every word of *Hamlet* for his film, thereby shows that he believes every word of *Hamlet* is worth adapting without examining the play's attitudes or cultural context. His film is contradictory and paradoxical in parts precisely because he has chosen to use all of the text available. McKellen notes that one of his reasons for adapting *Richard III*, despite its notable cutting and editing of its Shakespearean source, was to bring the play and his interpretation of

it to a wider international audience. By updating the film's setting from the play's original medieval context to a fictional 1930s Britain, McKellen signals his belief that the play's content is relevant to a modern audience. *10 Things* uses its ties with Shakespeare to prove that the project of its narrative is a worthy one, because it is doubled in *The Taming of the Shrew*. Shakespeare appears explicitly in *10 Things* as an agent of romance and of language.

By using Shakespeare as a legitimising agent all three adaptations cover up the way in which they rely on traditional gender roles – based on the Renaissance hierarchies of gender and class present in Shakespeare's plays – in order for their narratives to make sense. Because of its close relationship with the romantic comedy genre, of which the main goal is to see two (usually) heterosexual protagonists in a romantic relationship by the film's end, *10 Things* deals with gender and gender roles more explicitly than Branagh's *Hamlet* or McKellen and Loncraine's *Richard III*. The film creates a contrast between Kat and Bianca through their personalities and relationships with boys, and in doing so draws attention to the ways in which each girl accepts or rejects the roles placed on her due to gender. Bianca's subtle machinations within the system of gender hierarchy she is a part of, in both *10 Things* and *The Taming of the Shrew*, is an example of the way women who outwardly conform are often able to be more subversive. Similarly, McKellen and Loncraine's *Richard III* shows women who are confined to their roles as wives and mothers, and who can find some limited sources of power in those roles without setting foot in what is usually seen as more masculine territory. Branagh's *Hamlet*, on the other hand, subscribes wholeheartedly not only to the traditional gender roles seen in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* but to the dichotomy of virgin or whore which so many critics have consistently used to categorise Ophelia and Gertrude. The three films show a slow movement from acceptance of gender hierarchies to a potential upsetting of them, but even *10 Things*' subversive moments – Kat's feminist discourse and Bianca's

ability to use her culture's gender role to her advantage – are undermined by its overall conservatism.

An example of such conservatism is the anxiety that all three adaptations take from their source material about women and women's speech. In Branagh's *Hamlet*, this anxiety manifests itself in the repression of the maternal body, denying Gertrude's sexuality while at the same time denouncing its power. The film further reduces the power of women by removing the subversive undertones of Ophelia's mad discourse. McKellen and Loncraine's *Richard III* removes many of the women's curses that appear in its source, placating its anxiety about the women characters by removing Margaret, who in Shakespeare's play acts as a symbol of feminine bitterness and witch-like power. Finally, *10 Things I Hate About You* showcases a familiar lack of empathy with its female characters by ensuring that Kat, who is elsewhere shown as eloquent and filled with a justifiably feminist anger, shows her true feelings in a poorly written poem that removes her agency and intelligence in order to pair her off with an acceptable male partner. In making these changes to their sources, the filmmakers of all three adaptations reproduce and in some instances add to the misogyny present in Shakespeare's plays.

Another anxiety that these films portray is to do with motherhood. This is illustrated most clearly in Branagh's *Hamlet*, where Hamlet's fear of and desire to repress his mother's sexuality is writ large in the film itself which takes pains to avoid showing Gertrude in a sexual light. In avoiding any depiction of Gertrude's sexuality, allowing her only a propensity for holding hands with Claudius, Branagh's film highlights the absurdity of much of Hamlet's maternal anxiety while at the same time encouraging audiences to subscribe to it. McKellen and Loncraine's *Richard III*, similarly, constructs the Duchess of York as a cold, unfeeling mother towards Richard, and implies that her emotional distance is the reason for Richard's violent desire for power. In doing so, the film places the blame for Richard's

actions, including the murder of his mother's children and grandchildren, onto the Duchess herself. Finally, *10 Things I Hate About You* departs from its source material by mentioning Kat and Bianca's mother, who in *The Taming of the Shrew* is absent, presumably dead. *10 Things* shows the two girls discussing their mother, and suggests that their differences and frustrations come, at least in part, from a lack of a maternal figure. All the associations with motherhood in these films are negative and motherhood is often synonymous with a lack of control, for example Queen Elizabeth's lack of control over her sons' in McKellen and Loncraine's *Richard III*. Further, in representing their female characters solely as mothers and romantic partners, and in representing motherhood as essentially negative, these films reinforce a construction of women and femininity as lesser.

While *10 Things I Hate About You*, and to some extent McKellen and Loncraine's *Richard III*, attempt to update and strengthen the roles of their female characters as defined by their source material, they are still ultimately concerned not with the plights of their women but with their men. *10 Things* remains the story of how Patrick/Petruchio and Cameron/Hortensio woo their respective loves, ending when they are successful. McKellen and Loncraine's *Richard III* shows the toll that Richard's lust for power takes on Richard himself, and shies away from adapting the scenes in which the women of the play wail their losses and use the limited language they have available to them to enact revenge upon their wrongdoers. Finally Branagh's *Hamlet* makes little to no attempt to gain any insight into the plights of Gertrude and Ophelia, preferring to remain wholly entrenched in a male perspective which paints the women as jilted lovers and sexual objects rather than as fully rounded, if flawed, human beings.

This investment in a male perspective is, I think, the crux of the problem when it comes to adapting Shakespeare's women to the screen. All three of the directors of the adaptations I have discussed have less insight into the subjectivity of women than did

Shakespeare himself. While he wrote in a very different era held up by rigid gender hierarchies, Shakespeare used the same power of language that gives Hamlet and Richard III such complex inner machinations to imbue Ophelia's dialogue with frustration at the patriarchal system that confines her, to give Margaret, Elizabeth and the Duchess of York the power to curse their enemies, to show Bianca's knowledge and manipulation of her role as a young unmarried woman, and to allow Katherine to passionately argue for her own subjectivity. In adapting, changing and removing these aspects of Shakespeare's works, adapters such as Branagh, McKellen, Loncraine and Junger do a disservice not only to their source material but to the audiences of their finished adaptations.

Maya Angelou wrote that she knew Shakespeare was a black woman (Erickson 111), because his Sonnet 29 expresses what she felt as a young lower-class black woman (see appendix). Angelou's identification with Shakespeare is an example of the way in which Shakespeare's works can be read in a variety of different ways and related to a variety of different subject positions. In identifying with Shakespeare and with the women characters he created we recognise their struggles and, often, compare them to our own. When these women are translated into film adaptations, often poorly or not at all, that identification is lost. It is this loss that permeates Branagh's *Hamlet*, McKellen and Loncraine's *Richard III* and Junger's *10 Things I Hate About You*. In being adapted by male film directors, Shakespeare is always transformed into a "dead white guy", as he appears in *10 Things*. Yet this dead white guy is expected, still, to stand in as a symbol for universal truth. In adapting Shakespeare without examining or questioning the way in which his female characters are presented, or the way in which they will be perceived by a modern female audience, filmmakers deny that audience the ability to see themselves represented on screen as they are in Shakespeare's plays.

The statistics that opened this thesis showed that female characters were woefully underrepresented in cinema in 2013, comprising only 30% of all speaking characters in the year's top 100 films. While this bleak landscape is slowly changing, these statistics appear to hold somewhat true for film adaptations of Shakespeare. Women in Shakespeare are certainly present, but through processes of editing and adaptation, are often marginalised and weakened by the time they reach the screen. Kenneth Branagh represses and denounces Gertrude and defangs Ophelia; Ian McKellen and Richard Loncraine remove Queen Margaret entirely and subdue Queen Elizabeth and the Duchess of York's curses; Gil Junger allows Bianca limited agency but curbs that of Kat. These three films are all examples of the way Shakespeare's women are treated in modern cinema: the perspectives of men are always privileged above those of the women themselves. Until this attitude changes, Shakespearean adaptation will be the worse for it. Shakespeare's women must be adapted with the full power, agency and subjectivity they possess in their original plays, and filmmakers must find ways of adapting Shakespeare without reproducing the constraints upon these women's power and subjectivity that arise in his works. Shakespeare was able to write passionately and eloquently about women's power and subjectivity, despite the patriarchal culture in which he lived. Only when filmmakers are able to overcome the enormous cultural authority of Shakespeare's name and work to remove those aspects of his work that limit the power and agency of his women can any Shakespearean adaptation be said to be truly faithful to its source.

Appendix

Sonnet 29

When, in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes,
 I all alone beweepe my outcast state,
 And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries,
 And look upon myself and curse my fate,
 Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,
 Featured like him, like him with friends possessed,
 Desiring this man's art and that man's scope,
 With what I most enjoy contented least:
 Yet in these thoughts myself almost despising,
 Haply I think on thee, and then my state,
 Like to the lark at break of day arising
 From sullen earth, sings hymns at heaven's gate;
 For thy sweet love remembered such wealth brings
 That then I scorn to change my state with kings.

Sonnet 141

In faith, I do not love thee with mine eyes,
 For they in thee a thousand errors note;
 But 'tis my heart that loves what they despise,
 Who in despite of view is pleased to dote.
 Nor are mine ears with thy tongue's tune delighted,
 Nor tender feeling to base touches prone;
 Nor taste nor smell desire to be invited
 To any sensual feast with thee alone;
 But my five wits nor my five senses can
 Dissuade one foolish heart from serving thee,
 Who leaves unswayed the likeness of a man.
 Thy proud heart's slave and vassal-wretch to be.
 Only my plague thus far I count my gain:
 That she that makes me sin awards me pain.

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