Introduction

> Shakespeare expressed [our common] humanity better than anyone. He just didn't always include women in the frame. One of the main purposes behind these [all-female] productions is for all classes of women to feel they own, belong to and have a stake in our history and our culture – and what better place to take that on than in a Shakespeare history play?
>
> Harriet Walter[1]

> It hath been thought the wisdom of some of the best governed Nations in the World, to take a great care of their Histories, by whom and in what manner they were written.
>
> Anonymous pamphleteer[2]

Within the first few minutes of *James I: The Key Will Keep the Lock*, in he swaggers: King Henry V, complete with Laurence Olivier bowl cut and red-and-blue surcoat. Over the course of Scottish playwright Rona Munro's 2014 play, the titular King James I of Scotland is plagued and haunted by Henry: his captor, childhood bully and perverse mentor in the art of kingship – though Henry himself only appears in one full scene, the first, before dying offstage of dysentery. In that scene, however, he proposes a model of kingship that he pushes a reluctant James to live up to in exchange for being released from English captivity, where he has been hostage since he was a child, and returned to the Scottish throne. It is an image of rulership much like the play's picture of Henry himself: short-sightedly aggressive, pragmatic and defined by posturing. In a line from the 2014 National Theatre production that was cut by the time of the

[1] Harriet Walter, 'On the Donmar Stage, All Shakespeare's Players Are Women', *The Guardian*, 15 October 2014. Available at: www.theguardian.com/stage/2014/oct/15/harriet-walter-donmar-shakespeare-women-henry-iv-julius-caesar.

[2] Anonymous, *A Collection of Several Treatises Concerning the Reasons and Occasions of the Penal Laws* (London: Richard Royston, 1678; Early English Books Online). Available at: https://search.proquest.com/docview/2240875337?accountid=11862, A2–A3.

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2017 printed edition, Henry succinctly encapsulates what Henrican kingship means: 'You're a King, this is the job. I can't believe you still haven't mastered the basics. You have to fuck women you don't know and execute your relatives'.[3] Deciding, by the end of the scene, that James is unequal to this model, Henry offers some parting advice: 'Keep reminding them that you're ours, you are England'.[4] Henry's presence, and this advice, loom over the play as a dare to both James and, in some ways, to Munro herself. Conjuring then ignominiously banishing the ghost of Shakespeare's histories in the form of his most iconic hero-king, in his most iconic garb, Munro establishes a guiding conflict for her play that is structural as well as personal: can James escape Henry's advice and define kingship in his own terms – and can *James I* (and indeed, its trio of sequels, collectively called *The James Plays*) escape the English, Shakespearean model of national history?

The play's penultimate scene encapsulates both Munro and James's efforts to do so. After a series of failed attempts to consolidate his power, James is forced into a battle against one of his cousins. As he fights, he is taunted by the ghost of King Henry, until James finally attacks the spectre, unleashing all his long-suppressed resentment: 'You dare! You! I'll show you how to be King! I'll show you! . . . *JAMES is still slashing at the fallen man again and again.* You dare stop me doing my work! You fucking stop me! *The battle is over but JAMES is still hacking*' (84). In the original production directed by Laurie Sansom, this sequence became a full duel between James and Henry. Henry was only revealed as nothing more than a figment of James's imagination, in reality just another random soldier, once an ally came to stop James from hacking apart his fallen opponent's corpse. As James and Henry fought, their combat swirled around an immoveable central set piece: a bed, where James I's English wife Joan was giving birth. The cries of her labour intermingled with the cries of fallen soldiers, and Henry and James I chased one another over, around, and through the bed's four posters. Rather than setting her labour offstage, consigning it to the world of the described but undepicted, Sansom and Munro insisted powerfully on the equal historical importance of the two events: of James I's battlefield victory and of Joan's labour. In the final scene, the baby is revealed not as James I's eventual heir, but as a daughter. And yet, Sansom's staging implies, this does not undercut the

[3] Royal National Theatre Archive RNT/SM/1/744, *James I* Prompt Script, 2014, p. 18.
[4] Rona Munro. *The James Plays* (London: Nick Hern Books, 2016).

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moment's importance. The narrative of history is not only that of male heir to male heir.

This sequence appears to provide an answer to the first scene's dramaturgical questions. James apparently triumphs over the ghost of his childhood rival (though it is a victory that will be short-lived), and Munro sweeps away the emblem of English, masculine, Shakespearean history. Where Shakespeare is stereotypically seen as shunting women and their varied forms of labour offstage, Munro repeatedly invites women into the centre of the picture, here letting Joan's pain literally get under foot as Henry tries to fight. Munro seeks a vision of the British past that can make space for the voices Shakespeare leaves behind, especially those of women – a vision where the violence of childbirth and the violence of war hold the stage on equal terms.

Considering actor Harriet Walter's quotation at the beginning of this introduction, one might argue that what makes a history play feel 'Shakespearean' is such marginalisation of female characters. Walter's comment reflects the enduring impression of Shakespeare's dramaturgy that Munro seeks to combat. The all-female productions Walters alludes to, in which she was appearing at the time of the interview, reflect one of the key ways artists today have sought to correct the gender imbalance presented by Shakespeare's histories: through casting. While Munro's plays seek to reimagine the dramaturgy of a woman's place in history, more common recently are new plays of varying degrees of structural innovation, including *Men on Boats* by Jaclyn Backhaus and *Emilia* by Morgan Lloyd Malcolm, that comment upon the perceived dominance of men in essential roles in history by writing their male characters to be played by women. The West End and Broadway musical *SIX* deploys an all-female company and band to attempt to revise the story of Henry VIII by centring his wives, and in doing so seems to share Munro's goal of reimagining who and what are considered fit subjects for historical drama. But the musical cannot keep from reflexively centring its unseen male lead by considering the characters only in relation to the famous king they married. Though the voices may be different, the shape of the story is the same.

Artists who are working with older texts face a similar challenge when it comes to excavating the potential for female voices in plays that do not seem to be written to fully account for them. Shakespeare companies now regularly cast women in prominent male roles (or in all of the roles) in order to undermine the popular sentiment that, as Phyllida Lloyd said of her acclaimed production of *Henry IV* at London's Donmar Warehouse,

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the history plays are 'by boys, about boys, on the whole for boys to act'.[5] However, this pithy assessment is not as accurate as it seems. While assumptions about the hero-centred, tragic, female-excluding Shakespearean historical mode have deeply marked the cultural style of historical storytelling in the English-speaking world, it is a legacy built on over-simplification. Though female roles in Shakespeare's history plays are indeed limited, they are present – and, as this book will argue, they matter a great deal, in terms that both popular culture and scholarship have not fully recognised.

In the pages that follow, I seek to uncover the essential role of female characters within what I call Shakespeare's 'historical dramaturgy' – the artistic process by which historical material is adapted for dramatic representation. This is not merely a catalogue of what is changed or excluded compared to Shakespeare's sources, but a consideration of the full range of dramatic techniques that are deployed to bring a historically-based story to the stage. Within this dramaturgy, female characters have an essential role to play. I argue that there is a distinctive feminine structural position in Shakespeare's history plays, a facet of his historical dramaturgy that is deliberately gendered and specifically associated with women and feminine men. It is a structural role that is linked to marginalisation and silence, but also to unique linguistic forms that only characters excluded from the centres of political power and from control over the dramatic action can access. Such characters trouble the boundaries between history and other, fictional genres – and thus, through them, we can begin to understand where Shakespeare himself placed the boundaries of the history play, what separates the genre from tragedy or comedy beyond just its subject matter. Male characters can also assume these feminine dramaturgical positions, often at the cost of being perceived as effeminate by other characters and losing their ability to influence history. The threat of such a feminised loss of power runs through both sequential tetralogies of history plays, forming a tension that underpins all of Shakespeare's representations of historical events. Thus, this feminine presence is essential not only to understanding the function of individual roles in Shakespeare's histories, but in illuminating how he actively engaged with history as a dramatist. Fundamentally, gender in Shakespeare's history plays is a story of power, and female and feminine characters are thus not only important to analyse

[5] 'Phyllida Lloyd, Dame Harriet Walter, and Michael Morpurgo', *Arts Show with Claudia Winkleman*, BBC Radio 2, 17 October 2014.

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as a point of interest in their own right, or as part of a feminist project, but in order to understand the history plays overall.

My approach is underpinned by a few key methodologies, in addition to the scholars I will engage with directly in the chapters that follow. In the introduction to the first edition of *Still Harping on Daughters: Women and Drama in the Age of Shakespeare*, Lisa Jardine sought to summarise and define the still-emergent field of feminist Shakespearean scholarship. She expressed her 'tide of personal irritation at the apparent inability of such [feminist] critics to break with the conventions of orthodox Shakespeare criticism . . . Just concentrating on the female characters, or protesting as political feminists at the sexist views expressed by the male characters, will not get us very far with a feminist Shakespeare criticism appropriate to the 1980s'.[6] Her corrective, expressed over the course of the book, was to bring historical context more strongly to bear on the plays: 'criticism has regularly treated Shakespeare's female characters with unconscious partisanship, often because of assumptions which can now be shown to be false about contemporary women's lives. If it has done so, then an alternative "special interest" view such as I offer here ought to broaden the vision of all those who study Shakespeare's plays, and those of his near contemporaries'.[7] Feminist criticism, in her view, is this practise (not, as she notes, really a theory): recovering and investigating the position of 'femaleness' in Shakespeare's plays within their historical context.

Writing almost thirty years later, Phyllis Rackin argued for the continuing utility of such historically informed, political feminist criticism: 'In demonstrating that Shakespeare's countrywomen were not always as marginalised and repressed as we had been taught to believe, feminist historicist scholars gave women – students as well as critics and teachers – the material to contest our own marginalisation as readers of Shakespeare's plays'.[8] While taking more of an ideological stance on the purpose of such work than Jardine does by expressly stating that it is an act of liberation and correction in favour of the cultural position of women, Rackin finds the same purpose at the heart of feminist Shakespearean criticism. This does not mean that feminist criticism is a predominantly historical project to uncover the realities of the lives of early modern women with literary depictions as set-dressing; nor is it a purely literary project with historical

[6] Lisa Jardine, *Still Harping on Daughters: Women and Drama in the Age of Shakespeare* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989), p. 1.
[7] Ibid., pp. 7–8.
[8] Phyllis Rackin, 'Why Feminism Still Matters', in *Shakespeare in Our Time*, ed. by Dympna Callaghan (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 7–13, p. 10.

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anecdotes just tacked on top to add weight. Rather, as Dympna Callaghan puts it, 'canonical representations of women . . . hold a hugely important place. However, they do so only in relation to all manner of noncanonical knowledges and texts. That is, we can only tell what Shakespeare means about gender, sexuality, race, or social relations by reading his texts in the context of the culture in which he wrote them'.[9] To understand a culture and to understand its texts (contemporary or historical) are, naturally, inextricable endeavours, and the project of feminist Shakespearian scholarship is to give equal weight to both.

While decades of feminist criticism that I here emblematise with Jardine and Rackin has considered many of the concepts that will be raised in this book in regards to the symbolic position of women in culture, there has been a failure to consistently apply this idea to the history plays, and to do so in a manner focussed on how this marginalisation operates theatrically. What has been missing, too, from the scholarly conversation is the core of what I argue here: that there is a unified and coherent vision of female participation in Shakespeare's histories, not only individual examples. Working in the spirit of these writers, this book is a feminist project, not only in that it is concerned with female characters, but because it is interested in historicising those characters not as people, but as theatrical roles. The historical context I will use to do so is not primarily of the type highlighted by Jardine and Rackin – pamphlets, guild records, court cases, women's writing – but rather in the vein of Kathleen McLuskie, who wrote in 1989 that

> feminism, as well as making specific interventions in modern political life, has also been concerned to analyse the structures of social and symbolic relations which make oppression of women possible and necessary. A sense of history – of the present as well as the past – is vital for that analysis. The representations of women in Elizabethan drama took place and take place within specific historical contexts in which the development of the theatre, the use of literary and theatrical conventions and the ways of speaking and thinking about women are all important factors in the ways in which the stories are told upon the stage.[10]

If, as second-wave feminists have argued, we can only read Shakespeare's use of gender 'by reading his texts in the context of the culture in which he wrote them', I echo McLuskie's reminder that we can only understand said

[9] Dympna Callaghan, 'Introduction', in *A Feminist Companion to Shakespeare*, ed. by Dympna Callaghan (Malden: Blackwell, 2016), p. 1.
[10] Kathleen McLuskie, *Renaissance Dramatists* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989), p. 24.

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texts by understanding the context of the performance culture for which he wrote them. While the historical realities of the lives of early modern women can provide essential context for questions raised by Shakespeare's plays, this book seeks to return to the fact that Shakespeare's female characters are just that: female roles, not actual women. The rules, conventions, and expectations that guide their appearance onstage originate from a different place than those of actual women and produce results that are not always – or even often – reflective of actual social practice. I therefore aim to uncover not the historical realities of the women who appear in Shakespeare's history plays, but the theatrical practicalities of the characters they inspired.

Henry S. Turner proposes one means of uncovering such practical theatrical practise, seeking to identify how precisely theatre functions as a mode of cultural communication distinct from other forms. His description of this proposed scholarly methodology is worth quoting at some length:

> it will begin by identifying the cluster of mimetic and symbolic techniques, methods, objects, bodies, conventions, signs, or other significant elements for which we do not have a consistent term and which the concept of 'theatricality' conveniently designates. We need what engineers call an 'exploded view' of early modern theatricality, a blueprint that isolates functional parts, magnifies them for analysis, then reintegrates them into the theatrical apparatus. We need it to capture the full 'event' of theater – its codes, its sites, its capacities, its limits.[11]

The work Turner proposes – which he calls 'New Theatricality' – had already begun to be undertaken when he wrote this article, and interest has continued since.[12] I believe that Turner's concept of 'New Theatricality' already exists under another name, fittingly drawn from the world of practical performance that he seeks to illuminate: it is dramaturgy. Michael Mark Chemers, in a guide directed at aspiring dramaturgs, defines

[11] Henry S. Turner, 'Toward a New Theatricality?', *Renaissance Drama*, 40 (2012), 29–35, pp. 33, 35.

[12] Turner himself edited a collection, *Twenty-First Century Perspectives on Early Modern Theatricality,* which offers a sample of some major critics working in this area, including Evelyn Tribble, Jeremy Lopez, and Jonathan Gil Harris. Other examples include Tiffany Stern's work on performance-related texts; Farah Karim-Cooper's work with makeup and gesture; and Ann Jones and Peter Stallybrass's work on clothes, textiles, and objects. See Ann Jones and Peter Stallybrass, *Renaissance Clothing and the Materials of Memory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Farah Karim-Cooper, *Cosmetics in Shakespearean and Renaissance Drama* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006); Tiffany Stern, *Documents of Performance in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

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dramaturgy as 'a term that refers both to the *aesthetic architecture* of a piece of dramatic literature (its structures, themes, goals, and conventions) and the *practical philosophy* of theater practice employed to create a full performance'.[13] It is a union, just as Turner suggests, of literary analysis and consideration of the practical, physical and material requirements of the early modern playhouse and playgoing culture. Many other literary scholars have sought to articulate elements of this form of reading in various ways, from Louise George Clubb's concept of theatregrams to Robert Weimann's theories of *locus*, *platea* and figural position, to the essential work of Alan Dessen.[14] Coming myself from a background in theatrical production, and dramaturgy specifically, it is the term to which I will return throughout this book in order to reiterate that this is not simply a means of literary reading, but an effort to uncover the terms under which these plays were constructed to function onstage as a product of the entire apparatus of early modern theatrical culture. Throughout, I will embed such practicalities into my literary analysis, reading the texts not as products of pure imagination, but as shaped by such demands as the use of boy players, a repertory playing schedule, expectations set by other plays and forms of story-telling, and the physical space of the stage itself that is filled by physical bodies.

As Pascale Aebischer writes, 'bodies that are marginalised in play texts and literary criticism may come centerstage in performance and performance studies' and it is for this reason that such a holistic, material consideration of early modern performance is essential to understanding female characters in particular. Aebischer describes this process as 'negotiated reading', another guiding principle of this study which is therefore worth quoting at length:

> Negotiated readings deliberately seek out opaque signs, empty spaces, silences, marginalised sign-clusters and characters to offer alternate readings that work as far as possible *within* the object under analysis rather than against it, filling the 'empty' spaces with what is always already contained in them and what can be made visible with the help of a spotlight. The point of such negotiated readings is not only the recovery of invisible, lost, forgotten marginalised stories, but also pleasure. Rather than be defeated

[13] Michael Mark Chemers, *Ghost Light: An Introductory Handbook for Dramaturgy* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2010), p. 3.

[14] Louise George Clubb, *Italian Drama in Shakespeare's Time* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989); Robert Weimann, *Shakespeare and the Popular Tradition in the Theatre* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978).

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> by the frustration of finding themselves interpellated by Shakespeare, whether in the play texts or in performances, readers or spectators may [. . . find] enjoyment in the contribution they make to the creation of meaning.[15]

This process of negotiated reading unites the feminist and dramaturgical interests of this project, demonstrating how considering both contemporary and early modern performance can allow characters who have been widely critically overlooked to be viewed in a new light. Inspired by Aebischer, I will also consider modern performance alongside textual analysis and historical performance throughout this book. As Aebischer argues, 'Shakespeare's plays are works that live as much in their written/printed versions as in their performative re-productions and they are therefore most fruitfully examined in both forms side by side'.[16] Contemporary performance provides useful examples of how dramaturgical features of the plays are conveyed or adapted for audiences that lack intimate knowledge of their original context. I will refer throughout to twentieth and twenty-first century performance not primarily as case studies or separate readings but as another means of reading and illuminating the play texts under analysis. In doing so, I hope to reimagine what is considered to be 'evidence' of the workings of Shakespeare's texts, as well as to mimic my own process of coming to understand Shakespeare's plays, in which reading the plays and watching performances of them are inextricably linked. While of course returning to the texts themselves for confirmation, I have always found myself as likely to come to a realisation about a scene or line from watching an interesting performance as from imagining how the plays may have been performed in the early modern period. My aim is not to suggest that contemporary performance is authoritative, but that it can be illustrative. We cannot discover how Shakespeare's plays were originally embodied, how they took in costume and space and spectators and how precisely early modern playing companies chose to present the plays written for their stages to the public, but we can consider how later artists have done so, and what these decisions suggest about the plays' dramatic structures and enduring legacies.

Dramatic artists of all stripes have naturally been challenging the patriarchal, white, Shakespearean mode of historical narrative for generations,

[15] Pascale Aebischer, *Shakespeare's Violated Bodies: Stage and Screen Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 5, 12.
[16] Ibid., p. 13.

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from August Wilson's *Century Cycle* to the radical feminist dramaturgy of Caryl Churchill and her collaborators at the Joint Stock Company, to the genre-bending histories of Jackie Sibblies Drury and the subtler reclamations of Munro's *James Plays.* With this book, I seek to contribute to this ongoing effort to reimagine and reclaim a place for women in how our culture narrates history, not by suggesting that the legacy of Shakespeare must be combatted with more Shakespeare, but by demonstrating that his works offer a stranger and more complex understanding of the past than we have been taught to assume.

Chapter 1 explores some of the most common assumptions about the nature of a history play – that it is tragic, that it is historically accurate, that it relates to a broader nationalistic agenda, and that exclusion of the female is fundamental to the genre – and looks at how reading plays by Shakespeare and his contemporaries through the lens of their most prominent female characters troubles these preconceptions. The first section explores how the sub-genre of romantic or comic histories challenge the assumption that a history play is necessarily concerned with historical accuracy, and how reading Shakespeare's *Edward III* as an example of this genre demonstrates its influence on the rest of his canon. The next section re-evaluates the stereotype that foreign characters – and especially foreign female characters – are always a threat against which the English national identity can be defined by contrast. The third section focuses on Margaret of Anjou in order to consider the importance of reading the plays as theatrical documents, and characters as dramatic devices. The final section looks again to the tone of the plays to unpick how scenes of overwhelming female emotion can be seen as essential features of the history play genre, and part of what contributed to the genre's popularity in the eras when it was most frequently performed. By re-evaluating the assumptions associated with these categories and reading the plays through the female characters rather than assuming that they are marginal to the plays' purposes, I set the stage for exploring how female characters can unlock key features of Shakespeare's historical dramaturgy.

Chapter 2 turns to female characters whose roles in the plays are smaller and more marginal, a position that has led critics to consistently underestimate their contributions to the plays' narratives. This chapter uncovers a pattern of interactions that recur in minor female roles across almost all of Shakespeare's history plays, mirrored instances of attempted disruption of the plot that are unsuccessful. These efforts take the form of attempts to forestall political events, often wars, which frequently point to flaws in the

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male leaders' plans; and resistance to marriages. Drawing upon Philip C. Maguire's concept of the 'open silence', this chapter highlights such inconclusive interventions as moments that demand engagement and interpretation by the audience, inviting the potential for spectators to unbalance the supposed didactic and moral purpose of the plays by attaching their sympathies to the characters out of power rather than the kings who command them. Such imaginative potential is seen particularly clearly in the marginalised figures of lower class female characters and the women whose scenes are dismissed as 'domestic' or 'private' – in truth, simply scenes whose interactions depict the types of events unrecorded by traditional history, but which are essential to the history play as a theatrical genre. It also considers how such creative gap-filling is undertaken by directors who have used casting, particularly all-female productions, to expand the potential female presence in the history plays, and the complicated effect this has on the plays' dramaturgy. The presence of these curtailed or unrecorded incidents, and their thematic importance to the plays in which they appear, suggests that the relationship of the plays to their chronicle sources is – both for Shakespeare and contemporary artists – less one of direct adaptation than of querying and contestation.

Chapter 3 explores how characters narrate history within the plays themselves, particularly when they appear to transgress the boundaries of historical possibility through curses, prophecy, or describing events they have not seen – extra-historical powers enabled by their marginalisation from political power. This chapter proposes the concept at the heart of Shakespeare's historical dramaturgy: that marginalisation from political power allows for other types of insight enabled by the medium of the theatre, a specifically feminine relationship to historical narrative that I call Shakespeare's feminine historiography. Beginning with an analysis of the connection between mourning and cursing, the chapter explores the 'genealogies of loss' that permit female characters to articulate their own versions of dynastic history. I then turn to other ways that female characters are marginalised from the centres of historical power and the clarity of historical vision that their outside position grants them, rendering them simultaneously suppressed and empowered by their exclusion. Finally, this chapter considers how genre itself operates as a force for this exclusion, exploring scenes which seem to defy the tonal and generic boundaries of their plays and, in doing so, suggest that Shakespeare was aware of the limitations of the history play genre for containing certain types of female stories.

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Chapter 4 argues that these processes of marginalisation represent a feminine, not solely female, mode of storytelling by demonstrating that male characters who undergo processes of disempowerment explicitly associated with femininity are endowed with the same historiographical powers as female characters. I first explore male characters whose effeminacy is emphasised by their relegation to feminine forms of history. Hotspur's legacy is famously only carried by his wife, as is Richard II's, but this chapter argues that Falstaff and Henry IV also trace a parallel pattern of feminised disempowerment across the course of the second tetralogy. In contrast are Henry V and Henry VIII, both of whom affirm their masculinised legacies by explicitly avoiding entrusting their histories to female voices. The chapter then turns to Shakespeare's earlier history plays, where male characters follow a less linear path into feminised disempowerment. The shifting gender positions of Queen Margaret and King Henry VI complicate a clear correlation between dramaturgical gender and character gender, and demonstrate how certain characters continually re-negotiate their relationship to masculine history. Finally, I consider the malleable and unstable position of boy characters, whose ability to shift between identification as young men or as feminine boys renders them particularly vulnerable to feminised erasure by history.

I conclude by briefly considering the real-life application of these concepts and the possibilities and limitations of such readings for actors engaged in the practical business of producing Shakespeare's history plays. As quoted from Callaghan in the discussion of feminist criticism, canonical representations of women are an essential element of understanding the position of women in a given culture. And when it comes to Shakespeare in particular, they are vital elements not only of the theatrical and literary culture of his time, but also of our own, given our deep debt to Shakespeare's works. While writers like Rona Munro use nuance and care to find space and voices for women that Shakespeare rarely did, much more of our cultural inheritance is shaped by a perception of what is 'Shakespearean' rather than knowledge of what he actually wrote. This Shakespearean model is what will continue to influence how history is dramatised as long as association with Shakespeare brings such weighty social and cultural capital and as long as that word 'Shakespearean' acts as shorthand for serious, complex and important historical storytelling. Understanding the position of female characters within Shakespeare's historical dramaturgy is, therefore, key to understanding their position in our culture's own habitual structures of historical narratives – and understanding the position we have created for women in the past feeds

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directly into how we see their position in the present. As Callaghan writes, '[f]eminism is about creating the future differently by looking at history differently'.[17] My hope is that this book can contribute to creating the future differently by understanding how the narratives of history that are now so familiar to us were created.

[17] Callaghan, p. 1.

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