

Renaissance Performance Practices

on Modern Stages

by

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ABSTRACT

The original-practices movement as a whole claims its authority from early modern theatrical conditions. Some practitioners claim Shakespeare in many ways as their co-creator; asserting that they perform the plays as Shakespeare intended. Other companies recognize the impossibility of an authorial text, and for them authority shifts to the Renaissance theatre apparatus as a whole. But the reality is that all of these companies necessarily produce modern theatre influenced by the 400 years since Shakespeare. Likewise, audiences do not come to these productions and forget the intervening centuries.

This dissertation questions the new tradition created by using early modern performance practices, asking how original-practices theatre is situated and arguing that though the desire to rediscover the past fueled the movement, the productions actually presented are in negotiation with modernity. The dissertation begins by looking at the rhetoric surrounding the original-practices movement, then at the physical aspects of early modern performance recreated for modern stages and the desire for material authenticity. This project also explores the ways in which race and gender play key roles within Shakespearean texts presented on stage, and argues that while gender occasionally has attention called to it, race is nearly always ignored to the point of whitewashing. I argue that because these companies insist on the universality of Shakespeare, they need to examine and deal with the racism and sexism inherent within the plays. Finally, this project explores the influence original-practices productions exerts upon audiences, including aspects such as attendees' expectations, architectural spaces, and performance, and argues that together, these elements lead to a far more cohesive and responsive

audience than that which is found at traditional theatre performances. This interactivity and group mentality can lead to thrilling theatre, but can also pose dangers in the form of positive responses to xenophobic, racist, or misogynist elements within the texts, acting as early-modern audiences did and reifying those negative stereotypes and prejudices.

While original-practices theatre includes the danger of being something only of historical interest, it also presents opportunities for exciting, progressive theatre that reaches audiences who do not typically go to see Shakespeare or other performances.

DEDICATION

To the memory of Ellen Jane and Paul Steigerwalt, my wonderful grandparents whom I miss every day.

And to my parents, Pamela and Thomas Steigerwalt, without whom I could not have begun this project, let alone finished it; I am continually grateful for their love and support.

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Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

On the evening of July 30th, 2011, intrepid playgoers gathered in a Maryland field and settled on blankets and lawn chairs around an antique farm truck. All manner of items, including a birdcage, a weathervane, a dressmaker's dummy, and many dozens of books, had been attached to the truck's cab, while the bed was empty, save for a cloth strung up as a curtain and painted to read "Stillpointe presents... Titus Andronicus." And as the sun set behind the truck and the rolling hills, while cows lowed nearby, a band of actors and musicians clad in clothes somewhere between steampunk and goth, performed a fast-paced, grimly-funny production, the first full-length show of any kind for this new performance group.

That same day, in a small Virginia town, an audience sat in an auditorium designed and built to replicate a sixteenth-century London indoor playhouse. In this space, audience remained undifferentiated from the actors as they performed in universal lighting. The actors were nearly in the round in this modern-built Elizabethan theater, on this day performing *Hamlet* in clothes styled after the Late Georgian period. This production was the sixth *Hamlet* by the American Shakespeare Center in their then twenty-two year history, and it starred an actor who had by then performed in more than 85 productions for the company. That evening, the same actors performed *The Importance of Being Earnest* on the same bare stage.

Farther south, in Atlanta, in a space designed to be a tavern and a playhouse filled with modern equipment and an Elizabethan feel, the Atlanta Shakespeare Company presented *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)*, a fitting show for a

company that had just recently finished producing Shakespeare's entire canon. At the northern end of the east coast, in a tent with a semi-permanent stage within it, actors performed *The Venetian Twins*, a new play heavily inspired by *The Comedy of Errors*, for families visiting Shakespeare & Company. In a college campus blackbox theatre that same night, actors of the Pennsylvania Shakespeare Festival, with no director or designers and only five days of rehearsal time, took to the stage in *The Two Noble Kinsmen* wearing an eclectic variety of most-twentieth-century dress. To the west, in Michigan, Pigeon Creek Shakespeare offered *Cymbeline* that night in a community center, while in Utah, the Grassroots Shakespeare Company performed a matinee of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in a park. On the other side of the Atlantic, theatergoers could see varying companies of actors at the recreated Globe playhouse perform *All's Well that Ends Well*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, and *Doctor Faustus* over the course of the weekend.

No one with an interest in theater can deny the continuing popularity of Shakespeare productions. Indeed, the nine companies mentioned above form only the tiniest percentage of theatres which regularly produce the bard's works. However, despite the obvious differences, the productions described above share more than their relationship to Shakespeare; all of them share aspects of original practices, a diffuse, amorphous, ever-evolving theatre concept.

Original Practices' Definition(s)

Any attempt to set precise parameters on what constitutes an original-practices production would fail; even those companies that self-identify as doing such

performances disagree as in their definitions. Of the nine example companies above, only four identify their productions mentioned as original practices. Others suggest their productions were original-practices inspired, or they eschew the term altogether.

For this dissertation, I have chosen an inclusive definition of original practices. For example, by the Globe's official designation, they have not performed an original-practices production since 2005, with the exception of 2012's remounted *Twelfth Night*, originally staged in 2002. But because all of the Globe's productions include universal lighting, direct audience address, their replica space, and their usually bare thrust stage, I consider them original practices, despite the "inauthentic" performance aspects most productions include, such as actors entering and exiting through the yard. There are more than a dozen characteristics that the use of, in my inclusive definition, could make a production "original practices," although no single one is enough. Similarly, while the criteria are not contradictory, no company or production has ever attempted all of them at once.

Furthermore, not every staging aspect, particularly those concerning rehearsal, is readily discernible to an audience, such as actors' focus on scripts and language, rehearsal time, and whether a director has been in charge of the production. When a group like the Pennsylvania Shakespeare Festival attempts early modern rehearsal practices, such as providing actors cue scripts rather than full texts, using no director, and rehearsing together for only a very short time, the production certainly feels different than a traditional contemporary performance. Often actors' energies are up, because they are uncertain and have not had time to settle into routines, and their movements on stage are more natural and dictated by the text, because there is no director to tell them when to

move in order to make a particular stage picture. The audience, however, is unlikely to recognize the background reasons for these aspects of performance if they are not informed by pre-performance materials. Similarly, actors who know the meaning of their lines generally perform a clearer, more exciting play, but most spectators will likely not discern a first folio text from a script taken from a modern edited edition. These caveats are not to suggest that these practices therefore inherently provide no value; on the contrary, they can provide not only performance dynamics but also discoveries about multiple meanings and can lead to significant performance choices. However, audiences may simply be aware of vibrant theatre, rather than "original practices" theatre.

Some performance aspects of original practices, on the other hand, are entirely obvious, particularly to an audience used to a darkened proscenium auditorium. Whether or not spectators recognize practices such as doubling, cross-gender casting, universal lighting, and bare and/or stages as Renaissance performance techniques, they are likely to notice them as at least unusual. Productions which make use of fast pace and various kinds of direct audience address will, in fact, probably be considered quite modern by any theatre attendees not familiar with original practices, as both aspects fit in well with twenty-first century entertainment. The only aspect of some original practices productions that stands out as hearkening back to early modern precedents, to an audience without prior experience, is recreated stages.

Original Practices' Evolution

Trying to delineate the movement's history is as impossible as pinning down an accurate definition, as the "original practices" concept has evolved several times in both

form and language. While the original practices' basic tenet is that theatre artists look to recreate Renaissance drama as its originators—namely Shakespeare—did, by trying to replicate the sixteenth century theatrical conditions, the attempts to do so stem from a variety of precedents and just as many reasons.

Although the current incarnation of the theatrical concept generally called original practices has had its name for ten years and the concept has been produced or attempted for about twenty-five, the impulse to return to Shakespeare's plays' origins has been around far longer. When looking for a direct ancestor to the current original-practices movement, historians often turn to William Poel, who, at the turn of the previous century, advocated for and produced Shakespeare's work in ways which refuted the then prevailing style of extravagant, picturesque performance by looking back to what was known about Elizabethan staging. Poel created a "Fortune fit-up," a moveable wood and canvas structure meant to mimic some aspects of early modern playhouses, and based predominantly upon de Witt's Swan drawing (Falocco 9-10). He also experimented with thrust staging and had costumes produced to replicate Renaissance drawings. These preferences of Poel and his Elizabethan Staging Society led to both his contemporaries and modern critics to consider him nothing but an adherent of antiquarianism (Worthen 157).

In his book, Joe Falocco works to recuperate Poel's theatrical productions as experimentation and not simply attempts to reconstruct the past and package Shakespeare as "banal nostalgia" (7). Instead, he argues that Poel's fascination for the revival of Elizabethan-style productions, however imperfectly he understood them, was actually done for the sake of crafting modern productions for his contemporary audiences, an idea

shared by most proponents of the current original-practices movement, who face the same criticisms of antiquarianism.

Poel's and the Elizabethan Staging Society's influences on theatre practitioners can be traced through the twentieth century, which Falocco does, through productions by directors who chose to present Shakespeare via Renaissance means. These early and mid twentieth-century attempts illustrate the continued desire of some for Shakespearean-style staging, as does the success and popularity of Elizabethan-esque spaces, such as Stratford Shakespeare Festival in Ontario and the Allen Pavilion, often referred to as the Elizabethan stage, at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival. But it was a confluence of studies and events that came together at the right time to enable the modern approach to original practices. This very mixed parentage of multiple disciplines with differing goals perhaps adds to the instability of a definition for original practices.

Paul Menzer argues that the Anglo-American nostalgia and desire for recreation, seen elsewhere in projects like Colonial Williamsburg, led in large part to the building of both the current London Globe and Staunton Blackfriars, and he cites the long history of American Globes as evidence (99). Menzer further links the American bicentennial to the "Shakespeare Revolution" of the 1970s, which turned attention from a purely literary Shakespeare to one that not only belonged on stage, but on *Shakespearean* stages (100). From this point then, theatre historians and their focus on the physical playing spaces of Elizabethan London began exerting influence, particularly when teamed up with the charismatic Sam Wanamaker and his seemingly impossible goal of authentically recreating Shakespeare's Globe on London's Southbank. Expanding on E. K. Chamber's work, scholars like John Orrell, Andrew Gurr, and Franklin J. Hildy focused their

attentions on the now-lost physical realities of early modern theatres, work which directly influenced the creation of the Globe replica and forwarded understanding of how those lost theatres worked in the creation of drama. The 1989 discovery of the buried remains of the Rose playhouse, and subsequent uncovering of a tiny portion of the Globe's foundations later that year, provided further fodder to the interest in reconstruction, as well as valuable archeological information.¹

The term "original practices" arose from the reconstructed Globe project; however the desire to perform Shakespeare using early modern staging practices came not only from theater historians, but also from textual studies and new historicism. Jeremy Lopez argues that "critiques of new historicism through the late 1980s and the 1990s helped [to] create a critical climate in which original practices could begin to flourish" but that in arising as an antithesis to new historicism, original practices was also problematically influenced by those theories ("Partial Theory" 303). At the same time, even as scholars such as Margreta de Grazia and Peter Stallybrass made clear just how unstable Shakespearean texts are, from their lost theatrical origins; the multitude of play quartos, folios, and reprints; the variety of compositors; and so on, interest remained in exploring the text for clues to acting the plays. For some, the text provides the only jumping off point remaining from the Renaissance, for others, the text holds full instructions, with every punctuation mark and capital letter an embedded stage direction (see Tucker; Weingust).

¹ For more information about the archeological discoveries of the Rose and Globe, please see chapter seven of *The Archaeology of Shakespeare*, "The Rose and Globe Excavations" by Jean Wilson.

² By this I mean the term. Shenandoah Shakespeare, for example, founded as a traveling company in 1988,

By the time the Globe project neared its inaugural season in 1997, a small touring group called Shenandoah Shakespeare Express had been performing for almost ten years. Created in 1988 by an English professor named Ralph Alan Cohen and his former student, Jim Warren, the company tried to bring lively Shakespeare productions to audiences based on a thorough grounding in the text and a few Elizabethan-style techniques. In those early days, Shenandoah Shakespeare Express, which later dropped the "Express" and then changed its name altogether to the American Shakespeare Center, focused on direct audience address and universal lighting, to the point that their slogan for many years was "We do it with the lights on." They also performed in Converse sneakers and neutral contemporary clothes and used only the props that could travel in a van with them. Their frequently irreverent productions punctuated by pop music performed acoustically by the actors themselves shared many thematic similarities to staging aspects of early modern companies, but they were on a different path from Poel's Fortune fit-up. The touring arm of the American Shakespeare Center still exists, and even with the resident troupe in their permanent home in a replica playhouse, the company advocates for experimentation with playing practices to create productions for modern audiences rather than antique museum theatre. The American Shakespeare Center adopted the term "original practices" when the Globe did, around 2001, yet despite the term and the replica playhouses, productions at the two companies can differ enormously. As ideas and opinions change, and in response to another company copyrighting the term "original practices," the American Shakespeare Center now tends to prefer phrases like "early modern staging practices."

The company which copyrighted the term "original practices," the Atlanta Shakespeare Company, traces its history to a one-week performance of *As You Like It* performed in a tavern by a reading group in 1984. On a limited budget, much like the early days of Shenandoah Shakespeare Express, the Atlanta Shakespeare Company chose to focus on the text of Shakespeare's plays. As their website states, "What emerged over time was a company of artists dedicated to a radically pure approach to the text. Each syllable is examined and reexamined for clues as to form, meaning, and original intent." Beyond textual fidelity, this company chose a kind of visual authenticity for their definition of original practices, eventually building a performance space that is part dinner theater, part Elizabethan-esque playhouse.

The basics of original practices were in place by the early 1990s. The concept got its name circa 2001. By 2006, some groups already eschewed the term. For example, the Shakespeare and the Queen's Men Project, which performed three plays from the 1604 repertoire of the Queen's Men, in "conditions that approximated those of the original company" with a "rehearsal process...based on our current understanding of Elizabethan production practice," chose not to use the terms "original practice," "reproduction," "recreation", or "reconstruction" in any of their materials. Their website insists on the importance of categorizing their work as a "research experiment," in order to acknowledge the unknowable past. Other companies, especially the Globe, frequently clarify that even if they do produce original practices, they are not museum theatre; they face the same criticisms of antiquarianism as William Poel. For example, when discussing a pop-culture laden performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at Oregon

Shakespeare Festival in 2008, art and culture critic Bob Hicks contrasted it to how he thinks of original practices and opined

I really don't think of myself as an uptight defender of the Elizabethan ruffle-collared faith. I can't advocate original practices because, for one thing, that would mean no women in the casts, and for another, things would be likely to drag on and on until they felt a little like a kabuki show, with people wandering in and out of the theater for lunch and drink and other diversions. We are not Elizabethans, and we shouldn't wish we were or pretend to be. (qtd. in Johnson)

Hicks' comments sum up many critics' opinions and assumptions about original practices, particularly if they have not seen an OP production. Quite contrary to the slow-paced "museum theatre" that Hicks and others fear, many original-practices companies are actually engaged in experimentation. Some productions are research experiments of the kind that the Shakespeare and the Queen's Men Project describe, looking to historical knowledge to try to (re)discover what works and in doing so, potentially making discoveries about the playtexts as well as their original staging conditions. Other producers of original practices experiment with early modern staging techniques to find out what makes modern, engaging theatre, with less emphasis on authenticity or historical exactitude. Stillpointe Theatre's *Titus Andronicus*, described in the beginning of this introduction, is of this latter category. The company wanted to find a way to make the play work for modern playgoers, and did so by taking their inspiration from Elizabethan touring companies and the audience interaction of modern original practices (Webber).

The Project

The original-practices movement as a whole claims its authority from early modern theatrical conditions. Some practitioners claim Shakespeare in many ways as

their co-creator; the Atlanta Shakespeare Company, for example, assert they perform the plays as Shakespeare intended, suggesting a direct line from the playwright to the Tavern stage with their brand of original practices as the conduit. Other companies recognize the impossibility of an authorial text, and their authority shifts to the early modern theatre apparatus as a whole. Shakespeare, the reasoning seems to be, was influenced by his playing company, as well as by his building and its playing conditions, so by recreating what is possible of those and acknowledging the rest, modern productions can simply look to the whole Renaissance theatrical creation process for authority. But the reality remains that all of those companies necessarily produce modern theatre, or at the very least theatre influenced by the 400 years since Shakespeare's time. Likewise, audiences do not come to these productions and forget the intervening four centuries; as Bob Hicks points out, "we are not Elizabethans."

Even writing in 1989, long before the new Globe would see its first audiences, Andrew Gurr explained that what the replica space would bring forth would not be early modern stagecraft reborn, but "a new tradition" influenced by the challenges of the space (*Rebuilding* 46). This dissertation questions this new tradition, asking how original practices theatre, not just at the Globe, is situated, and arguing that though the desire to rediscover the past fueled the movement, the productions actually presented must be in negotiation with modernity. In trying to avoid accusations of museum theatre or cultural tourism, the Globe may have hastened itself on the path to various modern experimentations within its space, but even its original-practices productions, which had all of the visual trappings of Renaissance material authenticity, were always in

conversation with current, contemporary theatre-goers and thus took authority from them as well.

To explore this negotiation between the theatres of early modern London and the current theatres that seek to recreate them, I begin by looking at the rhetoric surrounding the modern original-practices project. Because the movement gained traction and an identity with the Globe, chapter one starts by looking at the impetuses surrounding that undertaking. I consider how the aspiration of authenticity goaded historians on to new discoveries and garnered support for the space but then ultimately became enmeshed with accusations of museum and heritage theatre, leading to the change of terminology to "original practices." The chapter is indebted to the work by Rob Conkie on the Globe's early years and his identification of how the ideal of authenticity has silently clung to that theatrical space, despite the banishment of the term from its official literature. I argue that those who market original practices have adopted the appeal of authenticity, keeping it silently present, and using it in addition to the cultural cachet of Shakespeare.

In chapter two, I look at the visual aspects of original-practices theatre, again beginning with the most obvious visual signifier, the recreated Globe playhouse. The Globe defines original practices for its own productions as requiring recreated *clothing* for its actors, not costumes and certainly not any garment of a period other than the Renaissance. I maintain, however, that costumes are only one aspect of what can constitute an original-practices production, and an insignificant one at that; any costume concept, including modern dress, can be justified as original practices. However, because the original-practices movement is indebted to a desire for material authenticity, and

because costumes provide such a noticeable signifier, companies that identify as original practices must work their costume choices into their company identities and ideologies.

Chapter three looks to some of the ethics of original-practices theatre, specifically the ways in which reproducing early modern playing practices may reify the misogyny and racism of present within the texts, since to produce them as Shakespeare's actors would have done would necessarily relegate the plays to the sole domain of white men and boys. What original-practices companies do instead tends to ignore race as a factor at all and put heavy emphasis on the performance of gender. I argue that because these companies insist on the universality of Shakespeare, they need to examine and deal with the racism and sexism inherent within the plays, beginning with conversations and casting and then continuing on to working within their education departments.

Theatre reviews of the Globe, since its opening, have routinely included commentary on the audiences, often unflatteringly. The final chapter looks at the influence original-practices productions exert upon these attendees, via aspects such as expectations, theatre spaces, and performance aspects, and is indebted to the work on theatre audiences by Susan Bennett. I argue that the use of original practices creates audiences that are not only interactive but also ones that are homogenous in their response to what is on stage. This responsive audience, particularly in the Globe's early days, created anxiety not only for the reviewers who critiqued them but on the part of the Globe performers as well, who felt they had to wrestle with the spectators for control of their productions. The chapter concludes by looking at the roles the audiences play in original-practices productions and the dangers of a positive response to xenophobic, racist, or misogynist elements within the texts.

In all of the chapters, I include a great deal of focus on the new Globe. This attention stems from two reasons. The first is ideological; the recreated playhouse, particularly in its earliest seasons, provided a testing ground for original practices on a grand scale. As I have tried to demonstrate above, companies began doing "original practices" before the Globe and before the concept had a name, but the Globe became a focal point for theatre historians and practitioners, and its influence spread outward. The second reason is practical. The Globe garnered attention, positive and negative, from every manner of writer, because of its high visibility and drawn-out creation story. Thus the materials available about the Globe, such as in-house documentation in the form of the Globe Research Bulletins, reviews from the London newspapers, and analysis by Shakespeare academics worldwide, far outnumbers materials from any other theatre company. I have tried to keep other companies' differing approaches to original practices in mind when making generalizations, and to make specific observations and extrapolations about other theatres whenever possible.

Currently there exist two main strains of original-practices theatre. The more established theatres, the Globe, the Blackfriars, the New American Shakespeare Tavern, each roughly around the same age, have found their identities and how they use the staging techniques of the early modern theatres. They have institutionalized their own brands of original-practices productions. Hopefully they will continue to create lively productions and discover new historical items, perhaps in conferences or workshops if not in full productions. The other strain is not yet so established. These are the companies which perform on modified antique trucks parked in cow pastures or in a blackbox with

no budget, no designers, and no rehearsal time, but with a zeal for performance and experimentation. The companies of the latter category may not make any groundbreaking discoveries about Elizabethan theatre, but in adapting what is already known of early modern playing practices to fit their needs, and using them to engage audiences, this latter kind of company can create exciting, vivid performances.

Throughout this dissertation, I advocate for an open-minded and open-ended approach to original practices, for productions that engage spectators directly and which experiment with early modern techniques, but which are not bound to them to the point of the inability to create theatre that speaks to current audiences. Jeremy Lopez criticizes that original practices are inextricably linked to pedagogical pursuits and that the enjoyment is in "quest" for historical information (307). Certainly there can be pleasure in discovery. But rather than making historical (re)discoveries only, I suggest original-practices adherents be ever mindful of the potential for modern discoveries as well, and of the kind of theatre that they can make with these techniques for their current audiences who come seeking a theatrical experience.

Chapter 2:

THE RHETORIC OF ORIGINAL PRACTICES

The creation myth of the International Globe Shakespeare Centre is well known: in England to film a movie, American actor Sam Wanamaker wished to pay his respects to the immortal bard. He was disappointed to discover that only a small plaque commemorated where the Globe Playhouse had once stood on London's Southbank. Wanting to rectify this apparent travesty, the myth would have you believe, Wanamaker immediately set out to recreate the playhouse in its Elizabethan entirety, a completely reconstructed and working theatre, direct from the past. Decades later, as it neared completion, after struggles for support and funding, the recreated playhouse's founder would tragically pass away before its official opening. "Always, though," writes Andrew Gurr of the project, "Wanamaker's own principle of 'authenticity' in the end caught and caged the participants" ("Staging the Globe" 159). Academics, traditional craftsmen, and theatre practitioners all flocked to the idea, and today the Globe stands in all its glory again as though the intervening 400 years never happened.

Like all good myths, this story contains grains of truth as well as oversimplifications. Perhaps most important, Wanamaker originally planned only a theatre that contained elements of Elizabethan stage architecture as part of an enormous complex of buildings. Not until theatre historians became involved with the project did "authenticity" become the by-word, at least in part as a defense against criticism that the reconstruction would be a Disneyfied, theme-park version of Shakespeare. Critics of the Globe then turned on the term "authenticity," as well, and Artistic Director of the Globe, Mark Rylance, compromised by substituting the term "original practices", a concept

which spread beyond the Globe to other theatre companies and productions.² The term, then, and its deliberately vague definition, is a sign of the schism between the Globe's many stated goals, and between its academics and practitioners. The term's flexibility makes it both a useful marketing tool and mission-statement style goal for many Shakespeare companies.³ The language of original practices grew from the rhetoric used to justify the recreations of Elizabethan theatres, just as original practices themselves were created with an emphasis on the space in which Shakespeare is performed but grew beyond them. This chapter begins by looking at the desire for authenticity, which culminated most clearly in the new Globe, both as a physical space and in the debates which surrounded the project. Still focusing mainly on the new Globe, the chapter then explores the changes of rhetoric as the replicated playhouse found its theatrical footing, which then led to the adoption of the "original practices" term. From there, it looks at how the original-practices concept has been utilized by various companies and argues that the silent specter of "authenticity" continues to authorize this theatre-making in a variety of ways, even with practitioners' understanding that authenticity is an unreachable, and perhaps undesirable, goal. Finally, the chapter examines what original practices and authenticity means for non-Shakespearean texts.

² By this I mean the term. Shenandoah Shakespeare, for example, founded as a traveling company in 1988, was already performing using some Elizabethan staging conditions such as universal lighting, direct address, and thrust staging. They, and other theatre companies, adopted the term "original practices" after the fact. The Atlanta Shakespeare Company went so far as to trademark the term.

³As a marketing tool, original practices is particularly useful for theatre companies seeking student and educational patronage. Jeremy Lopez traces the connection between original practices and pedagogy in his 2008 article.

Justifying Elizabethan Reconstructions

Shakespeare and 'his' theatre possess such cultural capital that people have tried to rebuild the Globe practically since it was pulled down in 1644, but a desire to stage plays as the Elizabethans did came to the fore with William Poel around 1900. Although he was never successful with his desire to build a replica playhouse, Poel's staging ideas as a response to the slow, crowded productions of the Victorian theatre spawned what became known as the Elizabethan Revival.⁴ His experimentations with Elizabethan staging conditions, such as producing *Twelfth Night* at Middle Temple Hall and creating the Fortune Fit-up, a façade placed within contemporary performance spaces to approximate Elizabethan ones, became the forefather to Wanamaker's Globe, and thus to original practices. Looking back at Poel's conventions with a modern perspective, they now seem quaint, but many of them carried forward to future attempts at building replica Globes and staging Renaissance plays.

The now-infamous journey to build the Globe which currently stands on London's Southbank belongs to Sam Wanamaker. Like most origin stories, one could argue his path began any number of times and places: acting in a small replica Globe at the 1933/34 Chicago World's Fair; finding the small Shakespeare plaque on the Courage Brewery wall in 1949; or twenty years later, when his brother suggested that if Wanamaker was so interested in a new Globe, he should build it himself. Initially, as part of an enormous development project for the entirety of Southwark, Wanamaker proposed, a modern theatre "which simply reflected the *form* of Shakespeare's Globe" described as a square, modern, brick building with a "Tudorised" gallery within (Day 32,

⁴ For more on Poel and the Elizabethan Revival, see chapter one of Joe Falacco's *Reimagining Shakespeare's Playhouse*

emphasis original, 126). Authenticity did begin to be of interest early on, as by late 1970 Wanamaker described a reconstruction built as closely as possible after the original—although including a plastic roof to use in times of bad weather.

The idea to build a replica faced scrutiny and criticism from the start. Although historians met in a 1971 conference and agreed that a Globe reconstruction could be a useful space, there were substantial doubts. Peter Monro, advisor to the arts council in regards to new theatres, brought up three main points. First, not enough was known about the historical Globe to be able to recreate it. Second, even were it possible to know enough and thus build the playhouse, it would be unworkable for both modern audiences and actors as a theatrical facility. Third, it could only amount to a tourist attraction. He concluded his argument to Wanamaker by stating, "I can see no future in faking the past" (qtd. in Day 67). Wanamaker received this letter in 1973, but these same criticisms would plague the Globe project for more than two decades, lasting even after the theatre finally opened. The arguments form the basis of what the rhetoric of original practices attempts to combat.

Writing of the new Globe ten years after it first opened, Franklin J. Hildy says of its "complex heritage," meaning both the expectations it inherited from its theatrical forefathers and its concomitant diversity of goals:

From Poel, the Globe inherited the notion that this could be a laboratory for the exploration of Shakespeare's dramaturgy. From the Folger the Globe inherited the notion that such projects have an educational responsibility. And from the Stevens Globe it inherited the belief that it could make Shakespeare popular, offering an alternative to the established theatre of its time. Remarkably, Shakespeare's Globe has tried to do all these things and has succeeded beyond the expectations any of us had for it. (22)

While this may read as after-the-fact summary, it actually parallels precisely what Globe proponents called for from the start, as well as reflects the language used to respond to critics. Whether discussing Wanamaker's proposal or other desired replica Globes,⁵ these three items- research, education, and working theatre- comprised the rhetoric to justify the expense and effort.

Admittedly, not even all Globe proponents advocated all three goals. There were always uncertainties about whether modern playgoers would want to repeatedly stand in the yard for three hour productions, and even such staunch supporters as C. Walter Hodges voiced this concern, suggesting that the best use for the space would be as an occasional-use auditorium (*Shakespeare's Second Globe* 95). Others, such as John Russell Brown, proposed all the modern trappings of a theatre accompany the rebuilt Globe, but with the ability to remove them at will for authentic performances.⁶ But for Sam Wanamaker's Globe, at least, the idea that the space be a working theatre was always intrinsic. As with so much of this theatre's decades of planning, the justification for another performance space often hinged on its authenticity, despite the seeming incompatibility of the two goals. To lose either goal risked categorizing the project— as it often would be anyway— as either superfluous or a mere tourist site.

The argument for authenticity in this working theatre was not just marketing; it was instead inherently wrapped up in the project's other aim, the one most touted by

⁵ When the proposed London Globe took years to find support and funding, academics supported other Globe projects, most notably a replica to be built in Detroit, announced in 1979 in a partnership with Wayne State University. For more on this proposal, see Hodges, C. Walter, S. Schoenbaum, and Leonard Leone, ed.

⁶ Brown includes the dimensions of the tiring house and lighting as two aspects that ought to be modernized but removable. He is speaking specifically about the proposed Detroit Globe but mentions that this should be the case be the playhouse in Detroit or London.

academics— research and experimentation. Speaking in 1979, Brown argued that while various pseudo-Globes already existed, which he called "toys and compromises," they were not "good enough" (J. Brown 17). He summed up the need for accuracy in dimensions, building materials, lighting, even audiences⁷ and proximity to brewhouses. This reconstruction, he claimed, "will give us a real and a fuller knowledge of the original building as well as an opportunity to experiment in the staging of Shakespeare's plays and so, perhaps, to discover more about those plays..." (21). This language of experimentation is echoed again and again throughout the justifications for the rebuilt Globe.

The laboratory metaphor was used most often and continues to be used in the rhetoric of original practices, but it was far from the only image to suggest that building the replica Globe would give instant access to knowledge about theatre production in early modern England. Brown compared the rebuilt playhouse to a wife one needs to live with to get to know, a house whose quirks of dimension and acoustics must be lived in to be understood, and the natural habitat for the plays which researchers had, until the Globe could be restored, only seen in zoos. Andrew Gurr most often used the laboratory metaphor but also called the replica Globe a factory for productions and a computer on which to run existing software— again, the existing plays. C. Walter Hodges suggested that a replica Globe would be an instrument, like a harpsichord, which would best play the music of its time (*Globe Restored* 101).⁸ These metaphors all hinge on accuracy and authenticity to make their arguments. The (play)house and instrument must be of the

⁷ The inability to create "authentic" audiences is covered the final chapter.

⁸ The early music movement was often used as a parallel for recreated theatre. The difference, critics point out, is that early instruments, such as harpsichords, still exist, unlike early modern playhouses which exist *only* in replica.

same materials as the original in order to recreate the acoustic qualities; the computer must be accurate to run the software without glitch.

According to academics, an authentic reconstructed Globe would lead to advances in historical knowledge; building the past would mean simultaneously discovering it. Looking back at Renaissance playing conditions would not only advance historical knowledge, the claim went, but also further modern theatrical practices. While Gurr flatly declared that a rebuilt Globe and recreated Shakespearean performance could not "be expected to replace or even to seriously to alter the kind of performance offered by the Royal Shakespeare Company or the National Theatre, the new Globe's new neighbours," he still pointed out modern actors would "rediscover the art of acting in front of large crowds crammed into a small space, many of them watching and listening while on their feet, unable to ignore the people around him..."⁹ suggesting that new techniques could be learned. Other advocates were more optimistic about the influence and importance that a modern recreation could have; Brown, for example, insisted, "Let the Globe be rebuilt for the sake of the theatre that we and others are making now, all over the world" (J. Brown 25). He went on to explain that a replica would be a benefit as it would make modern theatre practitioners question themselves and their tactics for creating productions, and contemporary playwrights would benefit most of all by being challenged to look past current stage accoutrements, such as lighting and special effects, which can be used as a crutch (Brown 25-27). Sam Wanamaker was less specific but no less adamant. Andrew Gurr describes Wanamaker calling the plan to rebuild the Globe "a novel way to make the old and new, and to give the classics back their frightening novelty by renewing the

⁹ In the years since the Globe began operation, other Shakespearean theatres have begun to move towards a more interactive kind of performance and build thrust stages.

original stage and staging" and to create "new and disturbing Shakespeare" (qtd. in Gurr "Shakespeare's Globe" 32). The idea of new theatre made by looking to the authentic past would carry into the rhetoric of original practices as well.

The rallying cry for authenticity eventually got the Globe built, even if it had to bow to modern safety requirements (more and larger exits, plus signs to illuminate them), modern sanitation (there are toilets), modern human sizes (the space accommodates about half the audience its Elizabethan predecessor did), modern animal husbandry (goat hair had to be used in the plaster because cow hair is now too short), and is overall "as faithful to the original modern scholarship and traditional craftsmanship can make it... neither more nor less than the 'best guess'" (*Shakespeare's Globe*). But while authenticity promised so many benefits, it also opened the door to criticisms of "museum theatre" and claims that what was to be presented on the authentic stage would be dry, boring, and have nothing to say to contemporary audiences. In response, academics warned against this very thing, advocating, instead, as above, for the shock of the old. The term "museum theatre" still haunts the Globe project even ten years after it opened, appearing in several articles of *Shakespeare's Globe Rebuilt: A Theatrical Experiment*.¹⁰ But the criticism, coupled with the very real point that authenticity is inherently unachievable, influenced a change of rhetoric. By 1998, Artistic Director Mark Rylance started referring not to authenticity but to original practices.

¹⁰In his article for the book, "The 'Essence of Globeness': Authenticity, and the Search for Shakespeare's Stagecraft," Franklin J. Hildy went so far as to try and reclaim the term, pointing out that "museums are places where world-class authorities share their expertise with the general public in exciting and dynamic ways, 'museum theatre' should be a term theatre companies strive to embrace." 17.

Authenticity/Original Practices

Writing of the new Globe's first years, Rob Conkie identifies authenticity as a binary (6). Productions either adhered to *all* available scholarly knowledge of Elizabethan theatre or they were not authentic, according to Conkie's definition. Specifically, for the new Globe, authenticity focuses on the materiality of early modern theatre. No one knows how Elizabethans performed but with the new Globe's opening, they now had the space and stage and could craft the costumes in replica as well. So a production like the very first in 1997, *Henry V*, which had an all-male cast, rushes on the stage, music played on period instruments, and meticulously handcrafted period clothes, would be authentic according to Conkie. In contrast, 2001's *Macbeth*, in which the playhouse was boarded over and the (mixed-sex) actors wore black leather, would not only be inauthentic but in fact "anti-authentic," in that it used a concept and the trappings of modern theatricality. Conkie traces the authentic/inauthentic binary over the early years of the new Globe as it moved into a new binary of authentic/original practices. However, understanding original practices might be better achieved by backing up and investigating this authenticity binary.

As everyone involved with the Globe project understood from the time when it was only a plan made of shoeboxes by Sam Wanamaker,¹¹ building the Globe was a best-guess project, no matter how meticulously researched and crafted, and one which also needed to cede to certain aspects of modernity. Even if the "nature of the [first and second] Globe audience" could be cultivated, with standing tickets, alcohol availability, and minimal entrance fees, as John Russell Brown hoped, and "willing to endure

¹¹ Rather than architect's model, Wanamaker first presented potential backers with a model made of shoeboxes. Eventually, architect Theo Crosby joined the project and made official models.

Elizabethan audience discomforts," as described by Andrew Gurr, the audience can never be authentic; they act and are treated as a contemporary audience, albeit one in a novel theatrical venue (Brown 20; Gurr *Rebuilding* 43).¹² Less often discussed, but no less important, is the notion of acting. While a lit audience surrounding an actor on three sides undoubtedly changes that actor's acting choices, and performing in the replica space can suggest a great deal of how things *may* have been done in general, the rebuilt playhouse cannot duplicate how an Elizabethan or Jacobean actor moved or spoke.

Experimentations in original pronunciation and gestural movement have been done, but with so little known about either, there have been no conclusive results.¹³ The point in mentioning the above shortcomings in the Globe's accuracy is not to denigrate the playhouse or its missions. Instead, the limitations simply prove that authenticity is inherently a chimera. The potential for discovery that can result from chasing the goal of authenticity is enormous; just building the Globe resulted in advances in understanding Elizabethan theatre architecture because actually building it focused inquiry.¹⁴

Authenticity is a useful goal, simply an unobtainable one.

In addition to the inability to achieve authenticity, which would necessarily put all productions into the inauthentic category, there is the question of variables. Conkie admits that his proposed binary breaks down at times, and he concedes to four categories, a "hierarchy according to their relative degrees of authenticity" from "most authentic", which necessitates all-male casts and period clothes, to "anti-authentic" which has

¹² For many critics, the lack of authentic audiences became a go-to point for demonstrating the futility of the Globe's project of authenticity. The question of audiences will be addressed in the last chapter.

¹³ In 2004, the Globe had its first original pronunciation performance, a production of *Romeo and Juliet*.

¹⁴ As Gurr wrote: "Without having tried to reconstruct the original shape we should know far less than we do at the present time about Shakespeare's Globe. The huge labour of turning the fragments of evidence into a full-scale practical piece of architectural design has already revealed far more about the original design than any study of the fragments alone could have done." *Rebuilding Shakespeare's Globe*. 42.

"incongruous and declamatory design, more arbitrary casting," and is "sometimes concept-driven" (Conkie 247). The categories in between are defined mostly by their use of mixed-gender casts and occasional not-authentic practices. Whether one agrees that an all-female cast, such as the Globe's 2003 production of *The Taming of the Shrew*, makes an otherwise authentically-staged production further from the authentic ideal than a mixed-gender cast that uses the yard for staging scenes, as in 1999's *As you Like It*, however, illustrates the problem with this judgment call.¹⁵ Conkie puts emphasis on clothing and casting, but since these are only two aspects of material authenticity, and any production might pick and choose a myriad of staging aspects to which to aspire to authenticity, even this modified binary, or hierarchy, breaks down for categorizing productions.

Because of the inherent difficulties embedded in the idea of "authenticity," Conkie traces the shift of language at the Globe from "authenticity" to "original practices" as beginning almost as soon as the space opened for performance, starting with Artistic Director Mark Rylance who positioned himself against scholar Andrew Gurr in the press (Conkie 190). From there, original practices eventually became a compromise of sorts between academics and practitioners, and just as importantly, marketers. For example, there is no historical reason to provide an intermission during a production, and a 1995 conference of academics for the Globe decided against them; from a commercial perspective, however, those intermissions provide time for playgoers to purchase food and drink and perhaps souvenirs, all of which help keep the playhouse financially

¹⁵ At first glance, an all-female cast does seem 50% further from "authentic" than a mixed sex cast. However, original practices companies sometimes justify this kind of choice by pointing out that it's still actors of only one sex playing all of the roles, and thus is closer to the Elizabethan original than a mixed-gender cast.

solvent. Intermissions, however inauthentic they may be, remain. Conkie defines original practices against authenticity in another binary with the former winning out for commercial reasons.¹⁶ He specifies that original practices theatre is concrete, "not chased after; what is known is employed, but in the service of creating theatre which is present, both in the sense of time, now, and place, here... original practices are aspects of the past applied to the present" (Conkie 201). Perhaps this application of the past to create new theatre best fulfills Sam Wanamaker's goal for a popular Shakespeare theatre. After all, the Globe routinely plays to over 90% percent capacity and has become part of the London theatrical scene.

Haunted by Authenticity

In some ways Conkie is right that original practices is the application of what is known, and that is certainly how original practices can be received when theatre practitioners pick and choose which aspects of Elizabethan theatre they wish to apply to a production rather than chasing the pipe dream of authenticity. This becomes particularly clear when no two companies provide the same original-practices experience because the umbrella is wide and includes more than just the material authenticity that Conkie identifies; original practices can also contain performance practices such as having no director and performing from scrolls rather than scripts.

But Conkie's definition is at odds with the realizations that Jeremy Lopez came to when investigating original-practice companies in 2008. Lopez writes

¹⁶Not only for things like providing intermissions or fearing audiences would not respond well to original pronunciation productions, but also as an attempt to avoid the "theme park" connotations of authenticity.

Original practice... is not really about nailing down the specificity of actual historical practice, but simply the quest for this kind of information – and the infinitude of the quest as it is presented here suggests that finishing it, actually *finding* what you're looking for, is neither necessary nor desirable. (307 emphasis original)

He bases this assertion largely upon his reading of Megan McDonough's now-defunct website, originalpractices.com.¹⁷ Lopez characterizes the language of this website as the rhetoric of the pedagogue, enjoying the pleasures of scholarly work, and this does echo the scholarly reason espoused for building the Globe long before its bays began to rise in Southwark: the language of discovery. That said, even the originalpractices.com website, not affiliated with a theatre company,¹⁸ took pains to recall to readers that original practices is a *theatrical* movement. Even in the snippet that Lopez quotes, McDonough wrote that exploring original-practice aspects is innovative and "changing the way that theatre is made" (307). As with the rhetoric of the early Globe scholars and the desires of Sam Wanamaker, this is looking back to move forward, to create theatre and not just test theories about how long-dead actors might have played to long-dead audiences.

Jeremy Lopez finds the language of original-practice academics and practitioners to be unabashedly pedagogical, even at companies which possess no educational departments or affiliations. However, the rhetoric of these companies is united in another fashion as well, although to discover it one must read between the lines. Visitors to the companies' websites or playgoers perusing programs will not find the term "authentic"

¹⁷ Megan McDonough is a former graduate student of Ralph Alan Cohen, founder of the American Shakespeare Center. Much of Lopez's article traces the pedagogical connections between various practitioners of original practices, because several small Shakespeare companies with original-practices aspects were founded by former ASC actors or students from the ASC's collegiate partnership with Mary Baldwin College.

¹⁸ Lopez points out that McDonough worked as associate director of education for Maryland Shakespeare Festival, which at that point was an original-practices company. However, McDonough began the site as a personal project before her tenure at MSF.

within either, presumably for all the reasons hypothesized above in the Globe's cessation of use of the term. However, authenticity is the hidden buzzword implied in all the companies' self-marketing. Rob Conkie writes that authenticity is the "spectre" that "has steadfastly refused to be completely banished from the new Globe" (227). While this is less true for the Globe since Dominic Dromgoole took over as artistic director, authenticity remains the specter that haunts original practices, and the companies welcome it to varying degrees.

A glance at the Atlanta Shakespeare Company's website reveals the ghost of authenticity hidden in the rhetoric that original-practices companies inherited from the Globe's goals of research, education, and popular theatre. On its homepage, in a highlighted blue box, a headline asks "What is Shakespeare Tavern®?" which it then attempts to answer in the most commercially appealing way possible.¹⁹

The New American Shakespeare Tavern® is unlike other theaters. It is a place out of time; a place of live music, hand-crafted period costumes, outrageous sword fights with the entire experience centered on the passion and poetry of the spoken word. With an authentic British Pub Menu and a broad selection of Irish ales and premium brews, the Shakespeare Tavern® is a place to eat, drink, and nourish the soul.

Setting aside the company's claim to uniqueness, an important marketing strategy but likely not enough on its own to convince playgoers to attend, the rhetoric here hinges on the appeal of the past, the supposed historicity of Atlanta Shakespeare's productions. The Tavern is "a place out of time," suggesting that it had been plunked in downtown Atlanta direct from Shakespearean London, even though a tavern for performing plays with a

¹⁹ I do not mean to judge this or any other companies for its marketing; anything that gets people into a theatre is to be commended. The *way* companies choose to market and describe themselves, however, demonstrates the ways in which the idea of authenticity still haunts original practices, even in non-replica theatres.

purpose-built, Globe-inspired stage never previously existed. The next sentence, speaking of costumes, sword fights, and music, although it does not contain the words original practices or authentic, enumerates the company's gestures toward material authenticity. Variations of the phrase "hand-crafted period costumes" appear on the Shakespeare Tavern website in several other places as well, showing how much emphasis the company places on that particular aspect of original practices.²⁰ The claim, however, says less than it seems to. Its vagueness is a rhetorical move that invokes a claim to authenticity—these costumes look like Shakespeare's did—without actually promising that authenticity. The site provides no further information as to the construction of these period costumes, whether they use modern fastenings, such as Velcro, or include the many layers of undergarments that Elizabethans would have worn. What kind of garments these are—clothes based on early modern patterns with all the requisite details or costumes made to look Elizabethan but utilizing modern conveniences—does not actually matter to the average playgoer without an in-depth knowledge of Elizabethan clothing as he or she would perceive the two items in the same way. The difference does matter, though, when the company's mission statement advocates "using this space as a laboratory for the exploration of Elizabethan stagecraft and theatrical techniques" (*New American Shakespeare Tavern*). The lack of information points to careful management of visitors' expectations by carefully, silently, invoking the authenticity of their theatre practices.

²⁰ The phrase "hand-made period costumes" appears on the page "Atlanta Shakespeare Company's Mission", and "Elizabethan style costumes" appears on "About Original Practice." I talk more about the relationship between original practices and material authenticity in chapter three.

In contrast to the Atlanta Shakespeare Company's material approach to original practices, some companies and productions focus on the performance conditions of early modern theatre. Research, with Tiffany Stern's at the forefront, has revealed that Elizabethan playing companies approached their preparations for performance in radically different ways than modern companies do. While a lot of aspects remain unknown and scholars disagree as to specific details, it is clear that early modern actors had far fewer rehearsals, perhaps as few as three group rehearsal or maybe none at all.²¹ Either option is a far cry from the weeks of rehearsal that generally happen before the openings of modern professional productions. While these days a professional company might rehearse for a month and then hope for a run of the same play for three to nine months, early modern companies put up several new plays per week, only repeating a show if it had been financially successful, with performances of the same play often happening months apart.²² Other early conditions include the makeup of the company: generally they were composed of a core group of actors who worked together over a period of years, which helped with performing on such a short amount of rehearsal time. Also, Elizabethan theatre companies had nothing equivalent to a director. Scholars have argued that either lead actors or bookkeepers took on some directorial responsibilities, but no evidence remains for anyone acting in a separate capacity with all of the authority modern directors generally possess. Finally, early modern actors did not have the benefit of a full script. With a new production opening every few days at a company's busiest, the time and money necessary for scribes to copy out full playtexts for each actor would

²¹ For more information on how many rehearsals early modern companies may have had, and what those rehearsals might have consisted of, see Stern.

²² Most scholars point to Philip Henslowe's *Diary* as the primary evidence for this kind of schedule.

have been prohibitive. Instead, actors received only their own lines and a few words, between three and seven, to cue them. These parts, or scrolls, were to be memorized by the actor independently.²³ While no company has attempted all of these conditions, productions and experiments have adopted, and adapted, some aspects for performance. And, as with modern companies' use of replica materiality, the use of original rehearsal practices provides marketing fodder that appeals to the silent buzzword of authenticity for its effectiveness.

The Pennsylvania Shakespeare Festival provides an example of the kind of production which seeks authority from rehearsal authenticity. This festival began in 1991 as a small eastern Pennsylvania answer to Stratford, Ontario, with a spin-off professional company from the theatre department of DeSales University, a small Catholic college (Schubert). The Festival runs during the summer in two performance spaces, one a large proscenium and the other a smaller blackbox generally set up in a three-quarter thrust configuration. Typically the Festival directs the blackbox productions in a less lavish style than those on the proscenium stage but until 2011 there had never been any experimentation with original practices. According to Producing Artistic Director Patrick Mulcahy, because PSF chose that season to put two of their main stage shows, *Hamlet* and *Pride and Prejudice*, into repertory, the company was left with their small theatre open for a few weeks (Mulcahy). Rather than risk the budget of a full show, which Mulcahy admits the current patron base might not yet support, they chose to stage this low-risk production of *Two Noble Kinsmen* "in an Elizabethan rehearsal mode"

²³Consider the rude mechanicals in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* being told to learn their parts and then return. For more on early modern rehearsal, see Tiffany Stern's *Rehearsal from Shakespeare to Sheridan*.

(*Pennsylvania Shakespeare* 11). Nearly every aspect of producing the play was about theatrical convenience, from reusing the set created for *Comedy of Errors*, done earlier that season, and the lighting from the children's show still being performed, to turning the cast loose in PSF's costume stock for an hour and a half. Mulcahy did have some prior familiarity with original practices from the Shakespeare Theatre Association, and he said that the decision to experiment was influenced by the American Shakespeare Center's Renaissance Season. Furthermore, once the idea got started, actor Miriam Donald, alumna of DeSales University's theatre department, six seasons with Pennsylvania Shakespeare Festival, and a long-time actor with the American Shakespeare Center, shared her experiences of original practices with the PSF cast. The *Two Noble Kinsmen* production came to include three main rehearsal aspects: actors received only their parts which they memorized before coming to rehearsal, they had only five days to rehearse, and they had no director. In this fashion, the production became a kind of third-hand experiment, using some original practices rehearsal techniques as learned not from their own research but from another modern theatre company, a case-study in the influence looking back to the past can have on modern theatre.²⁴

For all that the production was born of opportunity, the Festival promoted it with the same kind of rhetoric used by other, more intentional original-practice productions, with an emphasis on education and theatricality. Before every performance, actor Andrew Kane met with any early-arriving audience members in a "prologue" to give them a quick history lesson of the play, including its authorship and original performances, the play's plot, and this particular production's rehearsal methods. This

²⁴ In an interview, Patrick Mulcahy specifically said that it would be a stretch to call this "original rehearsal style Shakespeare", saying rather it "shares some things with what we know."

prologue was not a feature of any other 2011 production. Then, just before the play began with the entire audience in their seats, the Education Director gave the usual pre-show announcements about cameras and cell phones and finished by reminding the audience that what they were about to watch was different than Pennsylvania Shakespeare Festival's usual fare. The first night I attended, she called the production "close to traditional Shakespeare" and described the experience as "closer to the spontaneity and excitement you might have felt at Elizabethan Shakespeare" (Pennsylvania Shakespeare Festival). The next night she ended her speech by asking, "Shakespeare did it this way, why shouldn't we?" *Two Noble Kinsmen* was also the only play to have a "Producer's Note" in the Festival's program; each play had a brief synopsis as well as its cast list, but *Two Noble Kinsmen* also explained the attempt at its "presumed Elizabethan rehearsal method" ("Producer's Note"). The production even included several scheduled actor talk-backs after performances and impromptu ones nearly every night.

All of this speaks to insecurities about audience reception of a semi-obscure play done in a sparse style that might lead to line flubs.²⁵ But beside these potential worries remains the silent partner of "authenticity" as evidenced in the question, "Shakespeare did it this way, why shouldn't we?" The empty theatre space could have been put to profitable use without turning to early modern rehearsal tactics— the actors could still have had no

²⁵ According to the talk-back (3 August 2011), for the first few performances, actors had the option of calling for lines by saying "Prithee", a term that the American Shakespeare Center uses during its Renaissance Season. At the second performance I attended, the actor playing Palamon, Thomas Matthew Kelley, did lose his lines. Although it was clear that this had happened, he remained in character, as if emotional, saying "It's hard to say." The actor playing Arcite, Spencer Plachy, broke character and responded with "I'd help you, but I don't know it." This break from the world of the play did not seem to trouble the audience and it fit with some of the performance's other metatheatrical and direct-address moments.

Despite the seeming insecurity of reception to their experiment, audience reaction, according to Mulcahy, was very positive and PSF repeated this kind of performance with *King John* in 2012. The prologues and actor talk-backs also remained.

director and been told to do *Two Noble Kinsmen*— as a modern experiment. But calling on the power of historical precedent— especially *Shakespearean* precedent— gave the Pennsylvania Shakespeare Festival a ready-made marketing strategy and a framework in which patrons could place their expectations. PSF has never been a particularly experimental theatre company; their productions tend towards straight renditions, be they of Shakespeare, Shaw, or Coward. In the case of 2011's *Two Noble Kinsmen*, and 2012's *King John*, a claim to authenticity even if never explicitly uttered, opened a space for a different kind of theatre. These original-practices related productions are not the laboratory theatre looked for by scholars championing historical replicas but instead are the evidence that original practices is "changing the way theatre is made," as claimed by McDonough on the originalpractices.com site.

Authorizing Original Practices

Of course, all this has been about *how* things are staged, from choices in material authenticity to Elizabethan rehearsal techniques, but not *what* things are staged. If original-practices productions receive their rhetorical effectiveness from appeals to an ever-changing idea of authenticity, they get their authority from the playwright and his historical and theatrical milieu. And in many ways, even if the playwright in question for a specific production is Middleton or Fletcher, the authority for original practices overall comes from Shakespeare.

The first and second Globes did not host only Shakespeare's plays and the Bard only owned a share of the company, and yet the new replica is *Shakespeare's* Globe. In fact, although more is known about the second Globe, built in 1614, Sam Wanamaker

and his advisers rejected the idea of recreating that one because Shakespeare had written for the 1599 playhouse. The rhetoric used to convince donors and scholars and politicians to build the replica was often about new discoveries for Shakespeare's plays; far fewer people would be won over by the tantalizing prospect of new findings about the staging of plays by John Lyly, for example. When other playwrights' works are produced, they're often authorized by their proximity to Shakespeare: *Doctor Faustus* influenced *The Tempest*; *The Spanish Tragedy* was a precursor to *Hamlet*, and so on. Even the theatre companies themselves take their authority from the bard; every company discussed in this chapter uses "Shakespeare" in its name.²⁶

Granted, Shakespeare's plays themselves have their own hierarchy of attraction. For every *Coriolanus*, a company is likely to stage several *Hamlets*. The Atlanta Shakespeare Company, for example, has performed all of Shakespeare's extant plays at least once as part of their canon completion project— and there is cultural cachet in staging the entire canon— yet a glance at their twenty-four year production history will show preferences for certain plays over others. *Romeo & Juliet* has been produced fifteen times, including every February beginning in 2000. The next most popular plays for this company are *Much Ado About Nothing* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, each having been produced eight times. In contrast, the three parts of *Henry VI* were only ever staged once, all three together in repertory, in just the month of November 2008. Every Shakespeare company will show similar disparities, although not necessarily for the same plays. Many companies have not staged the entire canon at all, yet they've mounted

²⁶ To be fair, original-practices companies share this point with most companies that mainly produce Shakespearean productions. Also, there are companies, such as Stillpointe Theatre Initiative and The Hidden Room, which have produced original-practices style productions of Shakespeare without his name in theirs.

multiple productions of some plays. It is hard to blame the companies for wanting to fill seats; there is difficulty in trying to explain to potential ticket buyers why they should want to see *Coriolanus* when they do not even want to pronounce the title.²⁷

Beyond marketing ups and downs, the "Shakespeare" these original-practices companies mean, what authorizes and sustains their productions, is the text. With generally little or no design concept to be overlaid onto original-practices productions, directors speak of the playtext telling them what to do. When interviewed for the *Globe Research Bulletin*, Lawrence Olivier spoke this way about directing his 1997 *Henry V*. "I love trying to draw out the best of a piece of really good writing. I think this is a space that allows that to happen in a very pure way. ... There was a sense in which I just wanted to allow what was there to come out and not dress it up. To see what *is* there" (Kiernan 34).

Allowing Shakespeare to emerge from theatrical trappings, freeing him, can be seen even in company slogans, like Pennsylvania Shakespeare Festival's "Shakespeare Untamed!" for its Elizabethan rehearsal style *Two Noble Kinsmen*. This desire to place authority in Shakespeare's language, in the written text even for a performance, occurs commonly, as W. B. Worthen points out "in the English-speaking theatre, precisely because the verbal text of Shakespeare's drama is prized so highly" (Worthen 33). In original-practices performances, that desire and dependence on the text goes to companies' very identities. Consider, for example, American Shakespeare Center's description of their approach: "a commitment to Shakespeare's text and to the mission of connecting that text to modern audiences" (*American Shakespeare Center*). This concern

²⁷ Having worked in the American Shakespeare Center's box office during their 2003 production of *Coriolanus*, I speak from experience on this one.

for the text informs the ASC's rehearsal methods as well; although actors are expected to be "off book" before arriving for their first rehearsal, even during the regular season, the full cast typically spends a week's worth of rehearsal time doing "tablework," exploring the text as a group for clarity and meaning, and working with a text coach throughout the rehearsal process. The company certainly includes movement, fight choreography, and costuming in their productions, but it all stems from an intense focus on the text.

Atlanta Shakespeare Company clearly identifies the writer as their authorizing force. In their mission statement, they include "...all of our work is guided by a single clarion principle that ASC reveres above all others: the voice of the playwright. This is true whether the company is presenting an original piece, an American classic, or a timeless masterpiece by William Shakespeare" (*New American Shakespeare Tavern*). Note that Shakespeare is the only named playwright. This company's adherence to text goes so far as to assume that despite 400 years of cultural changes, the question of how much of what Shakespeare wrote made it to the printers, and countless editorial hands,²⁸ that they can access "the voice of the playwright." And not just Shakespeare's voice, in fact, as their explanation of original practices explains that they "use the script [they] think Shakespeare approved for use in his own company "and that their audiences are "experiencing the play in a manner consistent with its creator's original intent." The rest of the Atlanta Shakespeare Company's website makes similar assurances about language. On their "How it Works" page, they focus almost entirely on Shakespeare's text, admitting that it can be difficult on the page but promising to provide "actors with a real connection to Shakespeare's text" doing their jobs, which "is to communicate the

²⁸ For an overview of the problems of accessing the author in renaissance texts, see Stephen Orgel's "What is a Text."

playwright's message to you the listener in as clear and engaging a way as possible." Of course, the plays at the New American Shakespeare Tavern are hardly the only productions to be so heavily invested in the authority of the text; the Atlanta Shakespeare Tavern is just the most vocal about it.

Patrick Tucker, founder of the currently dormant Original Shakespeare Company, went so far as to codify precisely how he believes early modern actors used Shakespeare's text to direct them, particularly as he believes that not only did they have no director but also no full-cast rehearsals at all. Tucker advocates working directly with the First Folio and rather than attempting to create a psychologically consistent character, to use the text as a kind of musical score. Instead of reading notes and key signatures, First Folio actors under Tucker's tutelage play meter, verbal conceits, modes of address, even capitalization, spelling, and punctuation.²⁹ As a method founded on the First Folio's text, mediated as it was by multiple early modern actors, scribes, and compositors, it has its detractors,³⁰ to whom Tucker responds that it always works for him, and also "that if it isactable, then it is worth trying" (*Acting* 229). Independent of whether the text—punctuation, capitals, and all—is entirely Shakespearean, the Original Shakespeare Company's attention to it is the most extreme example of the authority that it provides to original practices.

Other theatre practitioners, including those who favor original practices, generally scoff at Tucker's precise valuations for each vagary of the text.³¹ However, their

²⁹For a complete description of how this technique works, see Tucker's book *Secrets of Acting Shakespeare: The Original Approach*.

³⁰ In *Acting from Shakespeare's First Folio*, Don Weingust describes an "important textual scholar" declare a proponent of First Folio acting to be "the devil," so the vitriol against this kind of Folio use is harsh.

³¹Mark Rylance, for example, declined to invite the OSC back to the Globe for a fourth performance, writing, in an October 1999 letter, that he was "'unconvinced' by the OSC's methods." Weingust, 210.

dedication to the text overlaps with Tucker's approach. In his "Directing at the Globe and the Blackfriars: Six Big Rules for Contemporary Directors," Ralph Cohen leads off with "BIG RULE I. HAVE ACTORS ATTEND STRICTLY TO THE WORDS," which he describes as necessary for any good production and requires paraphrasing and verse scansion at the very least (Cohen 213). He admits that scholars debate "the extent to which metrics, rhetorical figures and even orthography may have signaled acting choices to early modern actors," but points out that, as Patrick Tucker does, on a tight rehearsal schedule and only cue scripts, early modern "actors relied more heavily on clues in the text than modern professional actors are accustomed to do." Cohen's argument for the text does not quite hang on every comma, but it still places all authority in the text calling it "a cultural treasure" (214). "Big Rule II" speaks to the primacy of the playtext, requiring that director be faithful to the author's stagecraft, such as in-text stage directions and shared lines. Cohen here is specifically writing about directing in the replica theatres, but the 'rules' about text apply generally to original-practices companies.

Despite their commercial and academic reliance on Shakespeare, original-practices companies do make forays into other early modern playwrights' catalogs. Rarely are these main stage shows that possess the same status as the marquee Shakespeare productions. When they do, it is typically because of their apparent proximity to Shakespeare or to the appeal of authenticity. For example, the American Shakespeare Center (then still named Shenandoah Shakespeare) opened their replica Blackfriars Playhouse with *The Alchemist* because scholars have evidence it was performed by the King's Men in 1610 in the original, early modern playhouse. Similarly, the American Shakespeare Center has mounted *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* twice

(in 2003 and 2010), because it also takes its authority from having been performed in the London Blackfriars, albeit by the Blackfriars Children, the boys company which preceded the King's Men in performing in their indoor playhouse. Since 2005, the American Shakespeare Center has been staging lesser known works (generally alongside one Shakespeare play) during their Actors' Renaissance Season. As mentioned above, this unusual two month mini-season experiments with using Elizabethan rehearsal techniques, such as having only a few days of rehearsal for their first show in the repertory,³² no directors, and actors receiving only cue scripts. Ironically, although this method of staging means that the performers have only the text to fall back on, the rehearsal schedule does not allow for tablework, which some actors, such as René Thornton, Jr., veteran of both regular and Renaissance seasons, feel is detrimental (Thornton, "René Thornton talks"). Thornton is not alone; writing about the first Actors' Renaissance Season, Jeremy Lopez agrees that the actors had difficulty with the non-Shakespearean texts noting that playwrights such as Beaumont and Fletcher "require a different style of acting, a different method of approaching individual scenes, a different manner of speaking, and a different attitude toward the audience," which the actors, despite their "too-well-honed Shakespearean instincts," could not achieve ("Theatre Reviews" 110). Patrick Tucker agrees, in theory, that non-Shakespearean texts require something different, as in an interview he admitted that he had never achieved results comparable to those of his Shakespearean productions when using cue scripts for plays by other playwrights (Personal interview). Of course, play reception is subjective, and the

³² Generally, actors have 2.5 days to rehearse the first show, then a bit more for each following show. But since the plays are put up and performed in repertory, they are rehearsing new shows while performing the first ones.

American Shakespeare Center's Actors' Renaissance Seasons have also received favorable reviews and since many actors return for multiple seasons, they continue to learn what works most effectively.

Other than this specialty season at the Blackfriars Playhouse and the occasional main stage show by various original-practices companies, non-Shakespearean texts are generally relegated to student productions and staged readings. Of the latter, original-practices companies often have series for these. The American Shakespeare Company has "Bring 'Em Back Alive," and the Globe has "Read Not Dead." The implications of these titles is that without the companies' intervention, the lesser-known playwrights of early modern England would continue to slide into obscurity and die; these plays need *Shakespeare* to authorize their twentieth and twenty-first century existence.

The creation of original practices is as convoluted and complex as trying to pin down a definition for the concept. Those to whom original practices appeal, either to experience as a performer or audience member, likely have an equally varied spectrum of personal explanations for their approval, from audience participation to the ownership an actor feels when there is no director to call the shots. Yet it seems clear that for all the attempts at avoiding terms like "museum" or "tourist", and assurances that the productions are not "some academic experiment in antiquated theatre" its primary, driving authority—although not its value— comes from its proximity, real or imagined, to an impossible, unknowable, authentic Shakespeare ("Actors Renaissance Season").

Chapter 3:

THE VISUALS OF ORIGINAL-PRACTICES SHAKESPEARE

For almost ten years, on the second floor of the Blackfriars Playhouse, in its very modern upper lobby, stood a dress. Tucked along a wall that held the lobby's only other adornment— prints of Hollar's "Long View of London"— the dress stood since 2002, an artifact awaiting playgoers and theatre visitors ever since the actor playing Olivia removed it after *Twelfth Night* closed. The black and gold dress on its headless dummy "performed" several times a week, when actors gave tours of the playhouse. It provided a visual for Elizabethan clothing and costuming, and it remained an artifact of its own production. Susan Pearce points out the power of objects to "carry the past into the present by virtue of their 'real relationships to past events'" (24). In the case of this dress, viewers can perceive a connection to the twenty-first century production from which it came. It serves as a metonym for the entire production's wardrobe and also for the authentic costuming endeavor as a whole. Pearce argues that replicas possess the same power as the originals, thus the dress also recalls the clothing and costuming of Elizabethan England, even though it is 400 years newer and not a precise copy. From the dress's hand-sewn, reproduction fabric, and specially forged metal buttons, guests could imagine the distance between their visit to a recently built theater in Staunton, VA and both life and performances in the Blackfriars Playhouse of Jacobean London. Guests on the playhouse tours were likely to see other costume pieces backstage, either in the shop or just returned from laundering, yet at the front of house, only this dress stood on display, a physical, visual manifestation of the most common conception of Shakespearean performance and original practices.

On average, when people think about plays being performed in the way that Shakespeare and his fellow players did them, what comes to mind is Tudor half-timbering, slash-and-poof pumpkin pants, and a guy proclaiming something to a skull. While these ideas are almost entirely historically inaccurate, they are also primarily visual. Regardless of whether Elizabethans attended the theatre to principally hear a play, as scholars such as Andrew Gurr have argued, modern audiences put predominance on the visual aspects of theatre (*Playgoing* 1). In post-performance chats, attendees may reference the show they saw by who starred in it, but just as frequently, particularly if there were no big name stars, they will reference a production by visual concepts such as "post-war France *As You Like It*" or "Antebellum south *Much Ado About Nothing*." While "original practices" is also a performance concept, its flexible definition means that visuals such as costumes and stage apparatus vary, and in fact can be completely unrelated to the idea of original practices. Visitors to the Blackfriars who saw the carefully created dress and equated it with original practices and thus who expected to see more of the same from the actors of the American Shakespeare Center were likely disappointed. The company has never done another replica-clothing style production, mostly due to cost, and only one of each season's productions is guaranteed to be in Elizabethan or Jacobean-style costume. So why do visitors and companies alike insist on emphasizing replicated material culture when considering original practices?

Elizabethan-style clothes and sets in original-practices productions accrue importance to audiences because of the way this performance concept takes its authority from historical precedent. Original practices grew from the most recent desire to recreate the physical aspects of Elizabethan performance—the playhouses—which itself was

influenced by concurrent strides in studies in material culture. Sam Wanamaker's initial goal for London's Southbank was a working modern theatre with superficial similarities to Shakespeare's playhouse. The project gained traction first with theatre historians, such as Andrew Gurr, Franklin Hildy, and C. Walter Hodges, and gathered into it a goal of material authenticity. Little wonder, then, that the performance movement that grew from the reconstructed Globe would frequently be conflated with Elizabethan-style visuals.³³

Despite this tendency of companies and critics to define a production by its visual aspects, this chapter argues that props and costumes form the least important criteria when defining original practices and in no way need to be Renaissance-style. However, due to costume's high visibility, both literally and metaphorically, original-practices companies must adopt stances regarding their costuming choices into their identities and ideologies.

This chapter begins by looking at the Globe's officially-designated original-practices productions and how their approach to costumes mirrored the replica playhouses's project as a whole. These productions influenced many opinions on costuming for OP performances, but they also reveal insecurities about the value of seen and unseen authenticity. From there, I look at other kinds of Renaissance-style costuming and specifically how it forms a large part of the identity of Atlanta's New American Shakespeare Tavern. Not all original-practices productions are in Renaissance-period dress, of course, and the chapter examines the ways OP companies justify non-Renaissance style costumes. Costumes on stage, when successful, can convey a wealth of

³³ For more information on the history of reconstructing Shakespeare's theatres, see Joe Falocco's *Reimagining Shakespeare's Playhouses*. For more on the connection between original practices and theory, in particular the theatre movement's struggles with New Historicism, see Jeremy Lopez's "A Partial Theory of Original Practices."

meaning to audiences. In the case of a theatre concept so undefined and flexible in its visuals as original practices, the idea of costumes also accrues meaning, just as the physical object of the *Twelfth Night* dress in the Blackfriars lobby did.

Material Authenticity

After years of construction on London's Southbank, following more years of fundraising, research, and debate, some critics were disappointed to find the actors of the Globe's prologue season, 1996, wearing modern dress in their production of *Two Gentlemen of Verona*. According to the critic for *The Daily Telegraph*, the choice to set the play in contemporary Italy was "perverse" (qtd. in Smith).³⁴ The following year's inaugural season's "authentic" *Henry V* costumes more than made up for any disappointment in the modern dress of *Two Gentleman of Verona* and far overshadowed critics' comments on the simultaneously running *Winter's Tale*, which used "clothing and properties of a mythic world" (Carson and Karim-Cooper 239).

The program notes for *Henry V* made prominent mention of the replica clothing used in the production, as well as the care and effort that had gone into creating it. The program quotes costume designer Jenny Tiramani at length, and she explains that for this production, "it is vital that the clothing is a faithful copy of the original rather than a superficial interpretation." She makes the distinction here between costumes, the "superficial interpretation," and clothing, "the faithful copy of the original." The clothing is still a recreation, but it is one done without bowing to modern conveniences. The program impresses upon readers the labor and skill that went into the process as well,

³⁴ Other critics, particularly those who were already wary of the Globe as theme-park Shakespeare, found Rylance's choice for this production reassuring.

calling it "painstaking" and providing details about how much material might, for example, go into a single ruff, and thanking an enormous number of people for their help in such things as "knitting hose using hand spun wool." This kind of information is necessary because to the average playgoer, the differences between the clothing for this production of *Henry V* and most store-bought Elizabethan costumes simply are not immediately apparent. While the average theatre attendee may have a basic knowledge of various eras' silhouettes,³⁵ they are probably unable to distinguish a hand-sewn seam from a machine-sewn one, even from as close as the edge of the Globe's stage. In part, this insistence on labor parallels, as I will show below, the overall message of the Globe project, particularly in those early years. However, this *insistence* on the work and skill of the clothes also betrays an anxiety about the project. Craftsmanship and labor add value to a material object; Pearce calls this a "frozen investment" in an object in which much skilled work has been spent, but if it goes unrecognized by the audience, then the return on that labor is negligible (33).

The program goes on to proclaim, in large red type: "Extensive research has gone into the clothes that will be worn for this production. No Calvin Klein underwear here, the actors are entirely dressed in recreated clothing of the period." Much was made of these authentic, yet invisible, undies, in reviews of the play and scholarly articles, some wondering at their necessity. A few reviews use the underwear as a narrative hook, a curiosity, like in "The New Globe: The Smell of the Crowd," which introduces the new theatre space to the curious just as much as it reviewed the play (McCrum). Others, like

³⁵ In an email interview with American Shakespeare Center costume designer Erin West, she states "I think that most of our audience aren't going to come in with vast costume history knowledge, but I think it is important not to assume they are ignorant of basic silhouettes or historical fashions." I think that this is a pretty good basic guideline in regards to *average* audience expectations of historical accuracy in costuming.

"The Bard Comes Full Circle," use it as a bit of a joke, even while offering praise: "It has an all-male cast (Toby Cockerell makes a graceful, wholly convincing princess) in period doublet and hose and, we're told, Elizabethan undies" (G. Brown). The replica underwear also became a site exemplifying the difficulties of placing modern actors and audiences beside attempted Elizabethan material authenticity, as well as an exemplification of touristy, museum theatre. As Ralph Berry wrote in his review, "The actors must have felt authentically uncomfortable" (Berry "Shakespeare for the Tourist"). Later, Rob Conkie used the *Henry V* underwear as a synecdoche for all of the attempts at authenticity by the Globe in its early years, suggesting that elements such as the underwear, or similarly, cleaning costumes with vodka and rosewater, verge on the gimmicky (1-14; 232-233).³⁶

There is logic to the idea that the Globe would begin its run with a production costumed in clothing created in the same method as the building itself; after all, it was the attention to material authenticity which enabled Wanamaker and his supporters to raise the interest and money to build the playhouse in the first place. Just like the playhouse's builders, Tiramani and her team created the clothes by using Elizabethan and Jacobean techniques and materials that would have been available 400 years ago. When writing about the first ten years of costuming at the Globe, Tiramani explains that for the Elizabethan dress productions, their "starting point was the architecture of the new Globe and the way it had been researched, shaped and constructed" (63). The justification for these choices likewise parallels the overall Globe project. Tiramani's program notes explain "We want the actors to wear realistic sixteenth century clothes in order to experience the effects these have on movement and behaviour and thus inform us about

³⁶ What Conkie may not realize is that modern companies still frequently use vodka as a way to clean delicate fabrics and costumes, not because it is an "original practice" but because it works.

the reality of Elizabethan theatre" (*Henry V* Playbill 3). As with the building, the artists at the Globe use the language of experimentation and discovery; by using the recreated material objects, in this case clothes, they planned to learn how actors can move as they perform Shakespeare.

Indeed, an actor in a corset and multiple layers of that authentic underwear does move differently than one in jeans and a t-shirt, and the required adjustment to the clothes led to some discoveries for actors. In an interview, Toby Cockerell, who played Princess Katherine in 1997's *Henry V*, said, "after two weeks I had the real costume to try out. It was so precisely made it forced me to move in a certain way – I would just glide across the floor. You can't walk fast at all" (qtd. in Kiernan *Staging* 129). Similarly, Yolanda Vazquez in 2004's *Much Ado About Nothing* had difficulty at first with her corset, dress, and overcoat. She "realized [she] could not quite breathe in the same way on lines" and had to rethink her line delivery, particularly when Beatrice became "a little more passionate" (Rylance, Vazquez and Chahidi 200-201). The actors also received instruction on how to wear the clothes and behave in them "in the appropriate manner," according to Tiramani (61-62). The designer gives an example of such instruction in the case of when Elizabethans would have worn hats, which was at all times, a piece of cultural knowledge that the material reality of the clothes themselves could not convey to the actors. The recreated clothes and cultural knowledge—just as the recreated building and historical knowledge—laid the foundation for potential discovery.

However justified this reliance on the material may be for the Globe's opening season, and indeed for future performances as well, it became the overriding definition for "original practices" at the recreated theatre. In *Shakespeare's Globe: A Theatrical*

Experiment, edited by Christie Carson and Farah Karim-Cooper, the latter Lecturer in Globe Education at the time of its publication, productions are labeled "original practices" if they have "an all-male cast and OP approach to period clothing." Similarly, designations exist for OPF and OPMG, meaning "'original practices' approach to period clothing" but with a female or mixed gender cast (239). An "original practices approach to period clothing" does not simply mean Elizabethan or Jacobean-style, as productions have a separate designation for that (RP or Renaissance Period); instead it requires the handmade, replica clothing. Of 2000's OP-designated *Hamlet*, Tiramani writes, it

is listed [in *Shakespeare's Globe: A Theatrical Experimentation's* appendix] as an 'original practices' production, and yet the musicians played modern music, in modern clothes, and there was a mixed-gender cast. The only 'original practices' feature of the production was that the actors were in Elizabethan dress and such categorisation reflects the widespread tendency today to define a theatre production by its visual appearance. (58)

Her point seems mainly to be that *Hamlet* does not belong on the list because only the actors' clothes were authentic. Earlier in her article looking back at early-modern costuming in the first ten years of the Globe, she writes,

Because of the nature of the building, the public often assumed that any Shakespeare production presented there was 'how it would have been performed originally'. Although the public perception was that the Globe was doing 'original practices' performances all the time, ...the opposite was true. (58)

The Globe staff can certainly define their productions as they wish and using whatever criteria they prefer. As explained previously, every company that does original practices does their productions differently. Yet I would argue that the public perception that Tiramani identified, that the Globe "was doing 'original practices' performances all

the time," was actually correct. While costuming can be part of original practices, and is often the first aspect thought of, it is not the most important feature, nor even a necessary one. Tiramani herself points out that even the Globe's officially-labeled original-practices productions "cherry-picked particular...elements" to use, and likewise the non original-practices productions include practices that Shakespeare's company would have used. The Globe does not currently produce original-practices shows by their own definition, with the exception of 2012's remounted production of 2002's *Twelfth Night*. However, every Globe production uses universal lighting, acoustic sound, a thrust stage, and direct audience address. Most also use a bare stage and actor-doubling. The very building in which audiences stand (or sit in galleries) dictates that while original-practices productions may be on a spectrum of authenticity, whatever they see within the playhouse includes important aspects of original practices, regardless of how its producers choose to categorize the shows.

This equating of original practices with costumes is not limited to the Globe. There is a long history and a logic to doing Shakespearean productions in Renaissance dress, regardless of the authenticity of the clothes and whether the production is original practices or not. Director Ralph Berry identifies the benefit of this choice as reflecting "the language, the concerns and the assumptions of the text" (Berry *On Directing* 14). This benefit seems simple, but the consequences spread throughout any production of an early modern play. The staged world of the play includes every object or person mentioned in the text, be it an on-stage weapon or an offstage political situation, because the visuals reflect the playtext. The producers of a play performed in Renaissance dress need not make any translations of things like Malvolio's cross-garters or Osric's hat; the

stage denies nothing in the text. W. B. Worthen identifies the potency of Renaissance settings for Shakespearean plays as "arising from this openly rhetorical gesture of fidelity to the text, from the encoding of what we now imagine to be the historical circumstances of Shakespeare's stage" (64). This connection of visuals and language appeals to the original-practices mentality which situates authority in the text and historical production. The material objects of Elizabethan London theatre are easier to recreate than audiences, boy performers, or rhetorical acting gestures.

The New American Shakespeare Center, which identifies itself as an original-practices company to the extent of having trademarked the term, emphasizes this costuming aspect. Their website references their handmade, period costumes multiple times³⁷ which suggests that the company feels this choice to be an audience draw as well as crucial to their identity. Although the site does not go into details about what constitutes these garments, the theatre's Education Director, Laura Cole, clarifies it as "one way of poetically describing, for example, a remarkably Renaissance style garment with lacing and boning in the bodice, snaps on the insides of the skirt placket, Danskin tights, not hand-woven wool hose, and period-neutral shoes and boots." In other words, these are not Elizabethan clothes or Tiramani's "faithful copy of the original,"; they are costume interpretations made to mimic them, with the ease of modern conveniences like hidden snaps and store-bought tights. The New American Shakespeare Tavern's website explains that they choose to always perform in the author's period so that "a modern audience experience[s] the play in a manner consistent with its creator's original intent."

³⁷New American Shakespeare Tavern Website. The "Home," "About Original Practices," "Mission Statement," "Teachers' Guide," and "A Message from Jeff Watkins" all reference the handmade period costumes, although the phrasing changes slightly to be "Elizabethan" on some pages.

Cole explains further, saying "a King has GOT to look like a King. Not a businessman in a really nice suit, or any variation of dress not grounded in what a King looked like to the Elizabethan audience that watched Henry V (sic) when it premiered way back when." For the Atlanta Shakespeare Company, appearance is enough. In fact, Cole thinks that spending money in order to be "slavishly devoted to archeological realism or reality" is not only beyond the Tavern's means but also not "necessarily very OP when it comes right down to it." For Cole and the Atlanta Shakespeare Company, "the real original practices comes in terms of it not costing too much," so their use of original practices is to emulate Elizabethan playing companies financially, as they "did what it took to earn money and succeed." Costumes and a fidelity to the text are Atlanta Shakespeare Company's hallmarks of OP. Their stage has a very slight thrust and is designed to look "Elizabethan" but is not a replica, and their actors double, however they use lighting effects with a darkened auditorium and this necessitates a lack of direct address. So, just as early Globe productions aimed for material authenticity in their Renaissance staging to fulfill their, at the time, mission of a historical laboratory, the Tavern fulfills its original-practices definition by way of the financial choice of period-looking, less expensive costumes.

A few states north, in Staunton, Virginia, the American Shakespeare Center takes yet a different approach to original practices and costuming, one that seems to straddle those taken by the Globe or Tavern. Despite the black and gold *Twelfth Night* dress that stood for so many years in pride of place in the Blackfriars' upstairs lobby, the American

Shakespeare Center has not attempted another "authentic" production.³⁸ While one out of every Summer/Fall season's productions and one out of every touring company's shows are always done in Renaissance-style costumes, these are not attempts at authenticity. American Shakespeare Center costumer Erin West explains that they design all of their costumes, whether or not they are Renaissance-style, for unassisted quick changes, as the company does not employ dressers, and for "modern bodies and modern movement." So while there may, for example, be a corset in a costume, it will be built directly into the dress, and actors will still be able to change in and out of the dress quickly when doubling parts. The average theatre-goer, without a program to tell him or her about construction techniques and Renaissance materials, will not know if these costumes are authentic or not, much like at the New American Shakespeare Tavern.

With only one show in repertory required to be in Renaissance dress, the rest of the American Shakespeare Center's productions run the gamut of staging possibilities. Like at the Tavern, the reasoning for their costume choices stems from the company's original-practices ideology, but the application of it differs. West explains the choice "relates to the founding ideas of the company— that Shakespeare's players would have used any and all resources within their reach to produce their shows, so we do, too." Despite performing in a replica space, material authenticity in the form of Renaissance clothes is not a requirement for the American Shakespeare Center's definition of original practices.

³⁸ The clothes for this *Twelfth Night* were not quite authentic, either, according to costume designer Erin West, who says that real Elizabethan clothes would have had still more stuffing and support. The fast-paced repertory of the American Shakespeare Center, along with the enormous cost of attempting hand-made authentic costumes, has precluded them from experimenting further in this regard.

Some of the American Shakespeare Center's acceptance of non-period costuming likely comes from their early years as Shenandoah Shakespeare Express, a touring company which performed in converse sneakers and neutral modern clothes. From the start, this company placed its interest less in the visible material aspects of theatre production and more in audience interaction. The traveling arm of the ASC still brings little with them in the way of props and costumes, but it insists all of its venues provide universal lighting and a thrust stage configuration, even if they have to create it themselves by placing chairs for audience members on a proscenium stage.

Like the New American Shakespeare Tavern, the American Shakespeare Center includes information about costuming and its relationship to their brand of original practices on their website. First, they explain the Elizabethan use of costumes, as visual interest, character identification, and for ease of audiences understanding a production. Next, the site explains that "Shakespeare and his fellows" did not use costumes in a mimetic way, so the ASC does not either. Instead, "For them, as for us, the play always spoke to the present. That's why we use costumes that speak to our audiences in the most familiar language possible while staying consistent with the words in the play." This argument leaves the door open for all categories of staging, not just the Renaissance-style costumes.

Performing Renaissance Texts in Other Periods' Clothes

By 2005, eight years after the globe opened, the playhouse had become established in the London theatre scene and cleared of most accusations of heritage theatre. Some critics, however, remained antagonistic to the original-practices project,

such as Alastair Macaulay's reaction to *The Winter's Tale*. The *Financial Times* critic declares the production to be "thoroughly mediocre," before going to comment on the costuming.

And the damned authentick-costumes (sic) authentic- practice production just makes it more mediocre, more anodyne, more utterly devoid of imagination. ... Paul Jepson, as the jealous tyrant Leontes, looks especially harmless, with his extra-stout hose apparently inflated by helium. ... Played like this, period- dress Shakespeare feels about as serious as those cute books about ballet where roles are played by mice. Imagine Paddington Bear in doublet and hose, and that's Jepson's Leontes - only less touching.

Not all of Macaulay's ire is directed toward the clothes, but he returns to criticizing the period costumes throughout his review even when praising other performance aspects. This reaction to an original-practices production occurred despite only fifteen total productions in the years leading to 2005. Even discounting both international productions and staged readings, this would leave less than 38% of the Globe's productions as original practices.³⁹ The Globe's other productions in those years, and in all of them since, fall into three categories: modern dress, specific period, and of a "mythic world," which can be considered akin to Ralph Berry's designated category of eclectic, which this chapter will touch on later (Carson and Karim-Cooper 239). All three of these options can be done, just like Renaissance-style costuming, as traditional productions, but they accrue different kinds of meanings and require justifications by OP companies when they are layered atop an original-practices show.

W. B. Worthen writes of performing Shakespeare in Renaissance-style dress, that it is always "silently eclectic" (64). This is to say that while the clothes are of the style of

³⁹ The percentage goes up if Renaissance-style costumes are also included in the calculations. Numbers taken from Carson and Karim-Cooper 239.

sixteenth-century England, the rest of the theatrical apparatus, from the building to the acting, the lighting and microphones, is twenty-first century. Taken to its logical extreme then, any production not performed on a modern stage in modern costume is eclectic, presenting a mixture of periods, historical or mythical, to its audiences. Yet in the case of the replica playhouses, the opposite is true. While the two current replicas are modern creations, as will be the Globe's forthcoming indoor playhouse and the two planned American outdoor theatres should they be built, they have been crafted carefully enough that visitors are able, for the span of a play, to forget that the space is a recreation. Thus, when anything actors present anything *other* than Renaissance-style clothes on these stages, the production becomes "silently eclectic." A Renaissance play produced on a replica Renaissance stage, performed for a modern audience by modern actors in modern clothes presents that audience with two temporal lenses through which to view the play. The same scenario but with the actors dressed in costumes neither modern nor Renaissance adds another lens to interpretation. Productions such as the Globe's *Julius Caesar* in 1999, which included plebeians in modern dress planted in the audience while the rest of the cast wore Elizabethan garb, experiment with blurring these lines in order to facilitate other aspects of original practices. For this *Julius Caesar* and a similar *Knight of the Burning Pestle* at the American Shakespeare Center, in which the grocer and his wife wore modern clothes in contrast to the circus-style costumes of the rest of the cast, the modern costuming choices were geared toward furthering audience interaction and participation, the cornerstone of original practices at the American Shakespeare Center.

Modern dress can seem anathema to original practices, or "perverse" as the *Daily Telegraph* critic wrote of the Globe's first *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, but the choice

brings several benefits that parallel original-practice goals. Jean MacIntyre defines the basic use of costume in early modern theatre as providing essential information as to the "wearer's sex, rank, occupation, and often his age and marital status" (13); for modern audiences, modern clothes more easily convey similar information. Given the sumptuary laws of Renaissance England, early modern clothes offered more specificity of meaning to original audiences than modern clothes do now, but the average spectator cannot decode the more esoteric historical meanings of Renaissance-style clothes.

Berry suggests that the logic of staging Shakespeare in modern clothes stems from a desire for the playwright to be universal and thus in the same time and place as the audience's experiences. Updated visual choices can break through an audience member's hesitation at equating sixteenth-century life with one's own (Berry *On Directing* 14-15). Original-practice productions have a particular interest in piercing that potential mental barrier in order to facilitate the audience-actor connection as that sustains the OP concept. Original-practice productions which use modern clothing justify this choice by pointing to their Renaissance predecessors; early modern actors also wore clothes on stage which reflected the styles and fashions of their own contemporary audiences.

While the aim of modern staging is generally to enable audiences to connect their lives to current events in the world of the play, such a choice on a replica stage can actually heighten the disconnect to the long-dead playwright. Even the smaller replica of the Blackfriars Playhouse is an imposing structure simply for being so different from contemporary, modern, proscenium-arch theatres. With no darkness to obscure the woodwork and faux-marble, and no spotlight to direct attention where a director might wish, the replica stage remains a visual aspect throughout the performance. The more

familiar an audience member is with the replica, the more likely she is able to consider it a neutral space— even without additions to hide or transform the space. However, the stage is always in use in performance, and early modern plays often call attention to the physical stage in metatheatrical moments, which remind the audience of the details of the space. The visual of the early modern stage fights with that of contemporary clothing on actors and can augment the temporal dissonance between the setting and the play's language.

When writing of the 1996 Globe prologue season's modern-dress *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Jenny Tiramani says, "there was no connection between these people [actors or audience] and the (unfinished) architecture of the Globe itself" (59). In general, Tiramani continues, an actor in modern dress can appear "diminished" by the imposing Globe stage. Further, because the Globe is so highly decorated in the early modern style of faux marble, murals, and ornate tapestries, actors in modern dress can seem out of place. Frequently, directors at the Globe faced with this dual problem of diminished-seeming actors and the potential disconnect between modern audience and play, will attempt to neutralize the early-modern features of the space with temporary boards or fabric. The first of these productions, 2001's *King Lear*, dismayed original-practices purists but found favor with many of London's critics. In his review, Charles Spencer calls the playhouse "lurid" and "visually distracting," and writes that director Barry Kyle has "solved" that problem by covering the stage with wooden planks.⁴⁰ Artistic Director Mark Rylance did not try to justify the choice as an original-practices one; there were no original-practices productions that entire season. While some considered the choice to

⁴⁰It is ironic that Spencer's review is titled "Lear and the Globe do each other justice," as such intrinsic elements of the space have been covered up to provide Spencer his enjoyment of the play.

cover up the recreated stage unfortunate, it does not negate the production as an original-practices one because so many vital aspects of an OP production were still in use.

This 2005 *King Lear* is categorized as "mythic" by Globe archivists; others might call it eclectic. The two are not, however, necessarily the same, as eclectic staging need not be a cohesive creation of a world for the play. "Eclectic" is a kind of catch-all category and includes, among other options, using a *mélange* of periods and styles throughout a production, mixed on a single actor or spread throughout the cast; cohesive, specific visuals that change from scene to scene; a production unified in a particular historical moment but incorporating anachronisms; and created worlds specific to no historical experiences but cohesive within itself.

Unless a company strives for material authenticity, eclecticism easily fits within the original-practices ideology. If, as costumers from both the Atlanta Shakespeare Company and American Shakespeare Company have declared, original practices is about using available resources, then eclecticism can fulfill that mandate by using whatever is in a company's wardrobe stock. If a company strives for historical—not material—authenticity, or in other words, how Shakespeare did it, then eclecticism answers that as well. Remaining evidence, such as the Peacham *Titus* drawing, suggests that eclecticism is a very Renaissance concept. Andrew Gurr and other scholars interpret the Peacham drawing as showing the Elizabethan actors' disregard for historical accuracy (*Shakespearean Stage* 198). In the image, only one character wears a toga, as would be appropriate for the setting of the play; the others are dressed as soldiers of Elizabethan London. Elizabethan actors used individual costume items as signifiers. Modern eclectic

staging does the same, choosing signifying pieces from any historical or cultural moment, as long as it helps to tell the story.

Pennsylvania Shakespeare Festival's 2011 *Two Noble Kinsmen* provides an example of this signifying eclecticism. While the production ended up looking rather cohesive, this came as a surprise to everyone, including the cast and the Festival's Artistic Director, because the actors chose their costumes out of the wardrobe stock with no supervision and only ninety minutes.⁴¹ Instead of aiming for a cohesive look, the cast decided to choose clothes that clarified who their characters were and what the story was, particularly as they knew audiences were likely unfamiliar with the seldom-performed play. Because they had no constrictions on era or place when costuming the sisters, actors Lauren Lovett and Eleanor Handley chose to show differing elements of femininity in the clothing of Hippolyta and Emilia. Hippolyta had a buzzcut and wore army fatigues throughout; even in the first scene, the Amazon queen wore an ammunition belt and combat boots with a short white dress, the latter a nod to her wedding to Theseus. By contrast, Emilia wore a flowy modern dress and sandals that looked to be Grecian inspired. These choices clarified Hippolyta as a warrior queen and Emilia as the stereotypical beloved fought over by the titular kinsmen. Other characters had likewise pieced-together costumes. Over nondescript shirts and slacks, the cousins wore vaguely similar nautical-inspired jackets, marking them as different from the Athenian court and thematically, as well as textually, related to each other. The jailer's daughter wore a peasant skirt and corset, which set her apart visually from everyone else, as befits the character. Given the production's compressed rehearsal time of only five days and the

⁴¹ The actors were given only one guideline, which is that they should not go entirely Elizabethan. In the production, one character wore a corset, which is the closest the show ever came to Elizabethan. Mulcahy.

relatively unknown playtext, the cast focused on items that conveyed important information to the audience about the wearer's position within the world of the play, even if that world was not a conventionally cohesive one.⁴²

One category remains for the staging of Shakespeare, what Berry calls "period analogue," and the Globe refers to as having "clothing and property of a specific period" (Berry 15; Carson and Karim-Cooper 239). Either way, this means productions set in a specific time and place, but one that is neither modern nor Renaissance.⁴³ W. B. Worthen suggests the benefit for this kind of staging is to make a play more familiar to an audience than it would be in a Renaissance setting, and yet still place it in a historical realm (67). However, it is impossible to know what an average playgoer might recognize about costumes, and at what point clothes just seem generically "old" to them. Furthermore, period analogue includes the same potential drawbacks as modern staging; whatever textual references do not match the chosen period must be removed, altered, or ignored.

While period analogue can certainly work as an overlay to original practices, there is no OP justification for choosing it. No evidence remains for an early modern company setting a play in anything but their own period. Period analogue can be implemented as either a concept, in which the chosen "particular set of national and historical circumstances" highlight specific "affinities" in the text or it can be "décor," meaning that it is a "cosmetic way of dressing up the text" and has no significant impact

⁴² In post-show talkbacks, the actors confirmed that clear storytelling was their primarily motivation for costume choices.

⁴³ Berry groups medieval and Roman, if one is the setting of the play in question, with Renaissance staging. Since it is clear that Elizabethan actors did not attempt historical accuracy, I would argue that they rightly belong in the period analogue category. Because the plays themselves are often anachronistic, such as having clocks in the ancient Rome of *Julius Caesar*, staging the plays in the textual setting does not entirely avoid the trouble of period analogue, either.

upon the audience's interpretation (Berry *On Directing* 6). Either way, using a specific period runs the risk, if audiences recognize the historical period as not Renaissance, of confusing the production with too many concepts. The Globe side-steps this question by simply not calling those productions original practices. Attention then is drawn to the visual concept, although the production still has universal lighting, direct address, a thrust stage, and so on. These aspects become divorced from the idea of "original practices," however, allowing the audience to focus on the production's visual concept.

This separation of period analogue and original practices, however, is not the case for the American Shakespeare Center, which tries to fold all costuming choices into their definition of original practices. When asked about staging productions in periods other than modern or Renaissance, ASC designer Erin West wrote that they "strive to create a visually interesting season for ourselves and our audiences," and "We like to have variety in what we do for ourselves and our audiences." This answer suggests that the choice is mostly one of décor. She goes on to say, "We don't choose time periods to add extra meaning to the plays. We think that Shakespeare was a pretty smart guy, and his plays don't need our help to make them better or more interesting." Because the ASC performs four or more plays in repertory at a time, it is understandable that the artists and actors would wish for more options than just Elizabethan and/or modern costuming. However, by using historical fashion as a décor, no matter how cohesively done, audiences can be left wondering if there was a deeper meaning to the choice, or a message that the director meant to convey.

In 2011, the American Shakespeare Center staged *Hamlet* in Regency-style clothing. Despite the claim that, "we use costumes that speak to our audiences in the most

familiar language possible while staying consistent with the words of the play," this production's ghost had no beaver to raise, nor Hamlet a doublet to unbrace, although both references remained in the production (*American Shakespeare Center* website). When writing about modern clothes, West points out that the ASC is "comfortable with calling a suit jacket a doublet," and undoubtedly this is the same kind of expectation for period analogue choices. But in the case of the ghost, the Regency setting meant he had no armor to wear and thus nothing to be the parallel of a helmet. This choice is not indicative of the ideals of clear storytelling, and without pre-performance apparatuses, such as an explanation in the program, audiences are left to wonder if they are missing a connection. However, the fact that décor concepts can be layered on top of an original-practices production, and theoretically become intrinsic to the production itself, as designers like West do design with story and character in mind,⁴⁴ emphasizes that while costume is incredibly important to any given production, it is not intrinsic to the definition of original practices.

The Fear of Museum Theatre

Despite the education programs at the larger companies, no original-practices actor or director wants to make "museum theater" or edutainment. The Globe faced such accusations for years as it struggled to find its identity between scholarly laboratory, tourist destination, and working artistic venue. The officially-designated original-practices productions, with their replica clothes, eventually became a victim of the fear of

⁴⁴West writes, "What I hope comes across in my designs is the story- as intended by the playwright and brought to life by the actors and director. ... I hope that I create a design that enhances the story, and feels like "of course! That is how these people look!" as if it is a reality. I feel like it should make so much sense in the moment that it is hard to envision it another way." Email interview.

heritage theatre. Even now such fears haunt companies. When writing about Renaissance-style productions at the Blackfriars, designer West was quick to specify, "we are also not interested in creating museum theatre" and perhaps that is part of why Olivia's black and gold dress was finally retired in 2011, when the upper lobby of the Blackfriars Playhouse became a lounge. If companies remain committed to experimenting with Elizabethan staging, however, replica dress is one item that should stay a possibility, although never a requirement. With the recent revival of 2002's *Twelfth Night* at the Globe, perhaps future endeavors will include replica clothes again, complete with authentic underwear.

Chapter 4:

PERFORMING GENDER, IGNORING RACE

350 years after women began legally acting on England's professional stages, reactions to a comment by director Phyllida Lloyd, made when speaking to Radio 4's *Today* program, illustrated that controversy remains over casting female actors in Shakespearean productions. No one argues that women should not be permitted on stage, but Lloyd made headlines when she declared:

I do think it's absolutely iniquitous that the RSC [Royal Shakespeare Company] for example puts together a company at the beginning of a year that has so few women in it on the basis that, well, there are only these roles in Shakespeare plays, when actually what they should be doing, and probably the European Union will legislate soon ... They should be just told that they have to have a 50/50 employment spread, then work out how to do the plays. If that means some gender-blind casting, some all-female, some all-male, it's not rocket science, and I think they could have some fun. (*qtd. in. Rojas*)

The idea of legislating the casting for theatrical productions understandably upset some listeners and readers, but few commenters on *The Telegraph's* website used the argument of artistic freedom when expressing their displeasure. Instead, they chose to slam Lloyd's comments via misogynistic slurs and fears of "feminazism"— which perhaps illustrates the very need for more equality in the theatre, as elsewhere. Many of the more than 250 comments decried the current culture of the European Union generally, and England specifically, as politically-correct fascism, which would interfere with Shakespeare done "right." Comments frequently used a specious slippery-slope argument as well, wondering that if productions were mandated to cast gender equally, would they then also be required to fulfill quotas for race, disability, and sexual orientation? While it is impossible to know the race or gender (or ability or sexual orientation) of these

anonymous internet commenters, these posts illustrate a white patriarchy fearing a loss of power and prominence. It is unlikely that many of the people commenting on Lloyd's suggestion set much personal store in Shakespeare or theatre; in fact, many posts insulted the Royal Shakespeare Company as an institution and theatre as a whole. Instead, posters felt the need to defend their idea of acceptable Shakespeare as their symbol against those who might appropriate his works.

The next day, *The Telegraph* quoted Professor Michael Dobson of the Shakespeare Institute in response to Lloyd. Speaking from a place of more culpability than the anonymous internet commenters, Dobson disagreed with Lloyd for two reasons. He first asserted artistic license, stating that there ought to be exemptions in employment law for this kind of endeavor, although he did concede that there could be more women working backstage. The second part of his argument, however, centered on realism:

Not all productions are going to be in aesthetic range that will welcome cross-gender casting. Casting more women to play men could make it incoherent to a mainstream audience. People going to see a Shakespeare play expect realism and expect men [playing male roles.] This should be about realism. (qtd. in Peacock)

That day, US-based website *The Mary Sue*, which bills itself as "A Guide to Geek Girl Culture" picked up the story. Susana Polo pointed out the lack of "realism" for Elizabethan audiences who accepted men portraying women in every performance, not to mention the many non-realistic things which happen in Shakespeare's plays. She also made the distinction between actor genders and character genders and trusting the audience to see them both simultaneously without confusion. However, both Polo and Dobson make the point that the Royal Shakespeare Company, as an institution, caters to mainstream audiences, separate from those which might attend Phyllida Lloyd's all-

female *Julius Caesar* set in a prison, for which she was on the radio to promote. Polo opines that the RSC "feels it has some dedication to a traditional staging of the Bard's work," here equating "traditional" with casting actors of the same gender as the play's characters, rather than as the plays were first produced⁴⁵ or any other casting choice.

What Polo calls "traditional," Elizabeth Klett identifies as what any current culture will deem "legitimate ('true to Shakespeare')" as opposed to "illegitimate ('not Shakespeare)" (*Cross-gender*, 15). Shakespeare's cultural cachet means that playgoers frequently want what they consider "real Shakespeare," a shifting and unknowable definition that, judging from comments by the readers of *The Telegraph*, does not seem to currently include cross-gender casting.⁴⁶

Generally, original-practices productions are considered neither traditional nor experimental. Instead, their rhetoric situates them somewhere in between, as hearkening back to early modern England and Shakespeare for authority but playing to modern

⁴⁵ In response to Lloyd, the RSC's Artistic Director, Gregory Doran, argued that the company in Stratford has cast actors in differing gender roles for many seasons and has future plans to do more. Qtd. in Rojas.

⁴⁶ A note on the terminology of "cross-gender" and "actor": I have elected to follow Elizabeth Klett's usage of "cross-gender" to describe casting in which an actor plays a role that differs from his or her perceived physical sex, including when the role has been changed to match the actor's sex. Using generally accepted, simplified terminology, then, actors have a physical sex and the more difficult to define gender identity, while characters, until embodied, can only have gender. What appears on stage then is not only an actor's performance of a character's gender through his or her own physical body, but also the reception of both by an audience member, filtered through that spectator's experiences and expectations. How transgressive an actor of one (perceived) sex and gender playing a character of a different gender is depends on such factors as the spectator's knowledge of the play (some roles can change gender without changing much within the play, and someone unfamiliar with the text might never notice), the spectator's perception of an actor's sex (there are, for example, reports of audience members at the Globe who never realized that the 1997 *Henry V* was performed by an all-male cast), and whether the spectator views gender (in general) as a heteronormative binary or as a far more fluid spectrum. The term cross-gender, then, must serve as a catch-all for non-traditional gender casting.

As for "actor," I choose to use the term as a gender neutral one, encompassing any performer. Like "stewardess" or "authoress," the term "actress" makes an unnecessary and potentially patronizing distinction based upon an archaic and limiting view of gender as a binary. When an actor's physical sex is important for a point, I will use the terms male actor and female actor for clarification, with the understanding that this terminology regards the perception of someone's physical sex and the actor may have a preferred, different gender identity to which I am not privy.

audiences and frequently creating something different than productions that can be seen at the RSC and other "mainstream" venues. Rather than only permitting the white men and boys who would have first performed in Shakespeare's plays, the appeal to Renaissance playing practices for authority opens up a unique opportunity for casting in original-practices productions that is non-traditional in terms of both gender and race.

Only occasionally, however, do these companies take up the possibilities for meaningful non-traditional casting choices. Too often, cross-gender casting for women as men is limited to minor characters, such as messengers, guards, and servants, while men seem to play female characters almost only for comedic effect. The fear seems to be that gender is so marked on the actor's body that either the actor cannot overcome it or an audience cannot ignore it. Yet in the case of racial non-traditional or color-blind casting, audiences are generally expected to ignore an actor's skin color, which too-frequently leads to sweeping race under a metaphorical rug and not addressing it as even a potential concern. If these companies truly believe that Shakespeare's plays still have something to say to modern audiences, then they need to reconsider their casting choices and face head on the misogyny and racism inherent in early modern plays, using the opportunities provided by their unique situation as "original practices."

This chapter begins by looking at the ways which original-practices theatres have used cross-gender casting, and how critics and reviewers have received these productions. As the only space which has professionally produced single-sex productions under the guise of original practices, focus for this section is on London's Globe and the conversations about gender which their productions generated, particularly around 1999's *Antony & Cleopatra* and 2003's *Richard III*. Attention then shifts from gender to race and

jumps across the Atlantic primarily to the American Shakespeare Center. Because all original-practices companies "colorblind" cast, and none of them are having conversations about race, the 2007 repertory at the Blackfriars Playhouse provides a case-study for trouble caused by pretending audiences are colorblind even when Shakespeare clearly was not. Finally, the chapter concludes by considering the possibilities of original-practices theatre for actually entering the conversation of race and gender and the options that could open up if companies changed the ways they looked at these categories.

The Gender Gap

In any theatrical production, the audience's visual focus is the actor's body. As Carol Chillington Rutter writes, "the body bears the brunt of the performance; it is the material Shakespeare's text works on, works through" (xii). On the empty stage of the original-practices production, this becomes even more evident; frequently in smaller companies a production will consist of a bare stage and some actors in plain clothes who perhaps utilize a few signifiers in the form of basic props and accessories. Thus, an actor's physical self must, along with spoken text, create the play's meaning. All aspects of the actor's physical self begin, for an audience, as sites of potential meaning, signs in a vast onstage system. These aspects include, of course, perceived race and gender, although, since both can be altered to various extents via costumes and makeup, these signs are not necessarily inherent to the actor's body but may belong to the character or somewhere in between.

How these bodies become cast in roles is complex and depends on a variety of practicalities. Of course one hopes that a director will always choose the best actor for a

role, but "best" is subjective. Not only will people disagree on the amount of talent any one actor has, but "best" encompasses more than simply acting skill. If a production is being performed in repertory, multiple directors will need to agree on every actor. Producers of touring companies must take into account personalities to fit together well on the road. Unusual productions, like the American Shakespeare Center's Actors' Renaissance Season or Pennsylvania Shakespeare Festival's two experiments with Elizabethan rehearsal techniques, may require casting based around actors' experiences with a certain style or simply having worked well together before. And, of course, there is the artistic vision so worried over when Phyllida Lloyd made her comments about forcing the RSC to cast gender equally. A director's vision, be it conceptual or aesthetic, may require actors of any number of specific physical characteristics. Even once cast, practicalities come back into the question. A Shakespeare play may have only three female roles, and if the production uses doubling, female actors in those parts will likely need to play other roles as well. While Lloyd's call for mandated gender-equal casting is unlikely to ever come into existence, she suggested it in response to a real problem actors face: to be taken seriously as a classical actor, one must perform Shakespeare, but there are very few roles for women in the canon.

When talking about cross-gender Shakespeare productions, the historical examples of Sarah Bernhardt and Sarah Siddons are frequently trotted out as reminders that women portraying Shakespearean heroes is nothing new. More recently, people cite Fiona Shaw's title role in *Richard II* and Helen Mirren's Prospera as great female actors taking on great Shakespearean roles. And yet these are really the exceptions that prove the rule; other than occasional experimental productions and star turns, Shakespeare

companies – neither original practices nor traditional – are doing much cross-gender casting in either direction, and when they do, the production becomes almost solely about that choice.

When the Globe replica opened in 1997, it did so with an all-male cast in *Henry V*, led by Mark Rylance. That particular single-sex production was unusual in that it staged so many things differently from traditional modern productions that men-playing-women did not get remarked upon as much as it might have otherwise; casting needed to share review space with groundlings, circular/open-air architecture, acoustic vocals, and the then-omnipresent fear of Disneyfied Shakespeare. Still, Toby Cockerell's Katherine did frequently elicit comment and praise.

The next three all-male casts at the Globe⁴⁷ continued to elicit comments about supposed authenticity in casting. Male-character heavy productions like *Julius Caesar* received minor comments about the cross-gender casting, such as calling Toby Cockerell, who this time played Portia, "the most effective gender-bender" in the production, a back-handed compliment that suggests the author's discomfort with cross-gender casting (Curtis). When productions with more prominent female characters were staged, gender came to the fore-ground of reviews. For example, then-Artistic Director Mark Rylance's 1999 portrayal as Cleopatra began making news even before he hit the stage that season. The role of Cleopatra is, of course, one coveted by many female actors, and one well-known even to people who are not fans of Shakespeare, thus the idea that Rylance would take the role caused a stir less because of its cross-gender casting and more because the role requires, as Paul Webb wrote, "living up to audience expectations of great beauty."

⁴⁷ *Julius Caesar* 1999, *Antony & Cleopatra* 1999, *Twelfth Night* 2002

Reviewers worked hard to normalize the cross-gender casting choice, which further evidences how uncomfortable some critics and potential audiences might have been about the prospect of the great love story enacted by men, and performed for mainstream and tourist playgoers. Even though this was the Globe's third all-male production, many articles before and during the production's run reminded readers of Elizabethan casting conventions, in order to provide a historical quasi-authenticity which may have deflected some criticism. Yet overall, the fear that haunted 1999's *Antony & Cleopatra* was drag and camp; "Drag queen barges on," proclaimed one example headline from *The Observer* (Holden). In his pre-opening piece, Webb explained further, calling the danger of the production that it might be "written off as high camp" or "essentially a drag act." Even a spokeswoman from the Globe, when talking to *The Guardian*, defended the choice to cast an all-male *Antony & Cleopatra* by referring to 1997's *Henry V*, saying that it "didn't come across in any way as camp or as someone in drag." Some concern over 'drag' Shakespeare may be due to the (intentionally) over-the-top style of camp, and thus a potential expectation of sequins and feather boas. Another worry may have been that of femininity defined by a man in the (again, intentionally) highly artificial manner of drag queens. But more likely, the code words of camp and drag really stood for "gay." Reviewers seemed to be reassuring readers that despite men playing all of the roles, this production is not homosexual or drag, it is cultural and therefore safe. Even when critics admitted they never forgot Rylance's (male) sex, they focused on the character's gender. Eventually, the production, and specifically Rylance's performance, won most reviewers over, and paved the way for future single-sex casts at the Globe, although each still elicited a great deal of anxious commentary.

Regardless of reception, the Globe has pioneered in original-practices single-sex performances; these few that they have produced are more than any other OP company. While cross-gender casting happens frequently out of necessity in student and community productions, even there it tends to be female actors in secondary male roles for pragmatic purposes, rather than primary parts or full-cast. In professional OP companies, cross-gender casting remains more unusual than one might expect. The Atlanta Shakespeare Company and the American Shakespeare Center both only cross-gender cast in a hesitant kind of way. Because their casts are small, doubling is a necessity (and for the American Shakespeare, one of the original practices they identify as key to their identity). This choice means that from a purely practical point of view, female actors take on minor male roles, often messengers and servants. Writing of the Atlanta Shakespeare Company, Director of Education and Training, Laura Cole, states that for them, cross-gender casting "almost without exception it is women playing men" and that "We don't cast women as men in the largest male roles..." She went on to give an example from directing *Macbeth*. In a recent production, she cast a female actor as Ross, but she would not cast one as Malcolm, "since he speaks about sex, lust, etc. in the England scene. Makes sense." Thus, for Atlanta Shakespeare, casting female actors in male roles without changing the characters' sexes only works if the text does not call overt attention to the character's sexuality. When Malcolm references his "voluptuousness" and claims that no amount of women, "your wives, your daughters/ Your matrons and your maids" could slake his lust, audiences would, in the opinions of Atlanta Shakespeare, be reminded of the actor's gender not matching the character's, to the detriment of the play (*Macbeth* IV.iii.62-64).⁴⁸

⁴⁸ This is a strange example for Cole to have used, as, in a scene where Malcolm is lying in order to try

As far as gender in casting, the Atlanta Shakespeare Center seems only interested in a mimetic approach, and with their extreme emphasis on the authorial text, the company does not change characters' genders, either.

The American Shakespeare Center includes gender as one of its "What We Do" tenets, along with other original practices like universal lighting, no sets, acoustic music, etc, and pointedly broaches the topic on its home page and in its programs. The website specifically says:

Because we are committed to the idea that Shakespeare is about everyone – male and female – the ASC is not an all-male company, but we try to re-create some of the fun of gender confusions by casting women as men and men as women.

But despite this explanation, cross-gender casting of any roles of substance at the American Shakespeare Center remains rare. One notable exception is 2004's *Midsummer Night's Dream* in which the roles of Titania and Oberon were doubled with Theseus and Hippolyta, in itself not an unusual move. As humans of the Athenian court, the roles were performed by actors whose physical bodies matched the genders of the characters. They then switched to play the character of the perceived opposite gender in the magic of the woods. This casting is not one of practicalities, but because the cross-cast characters are magical beings, neither does it require significant acceptance from audiences more comfortable with traditional casting. Instead, this choice simply further marked the fairy court as Other, separate from the Athenians, mirrored in the doubling yet still appreciably different. Similar "magical" casting choices, such as a male actor playing a witch in *Macbeth*, have been done at the Atlanta Shakespeare Tavern as well.

Macduff, this seems like the perfect opportunity for a disconnect between actor and character.

One of the few major male roles that the American Shakespeare Center has given a female actor is Richard III, in 1998, when the company was still known as Shenandoah Shakespeare Express and had no permanent theatre space. Kate Norris performed the title role while all of the other major parts were cast traditionally. One review explained that Norris played Richard "because she can" and went on to clarify to its readers:

Since the SSE is about make-believe, as opposed to lavish pageantry and technical illusions, it's not hard to imagine that Miss Norris' Richard is indeed a man. The tall, lean actress keeps her voice in its lowest register, sports a short blond mannish haircut and wears a 20th-century-style black suit. (Pressley)

Because the American Shakespeare Center's staging concept already requires more audience imagination than more traditional companies, the reviewer suggests that a woman playing a man is just one more thing to believe, along with costumes and sets, which mirrors the ASC's statement on gender and being able to see everyone, universally, in Shakespeare's plays. The reviewer certainly seemed to accept Norris's portrayal, writing "Such drag is fine, but what really makes her Richard work is her cocksure, grinning approach and a purr that's just this side of evil." In other words, Norris excelled at portraying the essential characteristics of Shakespeare's hunchbacked king; the ASC cast the best actor regardless of gender.

Yet the fact that Norris played Richard III as opposed to almost any other male title character should not be overlooked. Regardless of historical accuracy, Shakespeare wrote Richard III as disabled, described variously as "deformed", "elvish-mark'd, abortive, rooting hog," and "hunchbacked toad" (I.i.201; I.iii.225; I.iii.240). So while Shakespeare made his Richard III hypermasculine, he also wrote him as Othered. Norris's female body simply reads as a part of Richard III's deformity, something to overcome as

wooer and warrior. Kate Norris, despite her "mannish haircut," may not have portrayed an audience's expectations of masculinity but then neither does Richard.

Five years after Norris's turn as Richard, Kathryn Hunter took the role in an all-female cast of the play for the Globe, in a season of four single-sex casts. As with many of the Globe's less-orthodox choices, articles about the "Season of Regime Change," and the all-female *Richard III* in particular, began appearing well in advance of opening. Many articles focused on the 'fairness' of having an all-female cast and on the lack of Shakespearean roles for women— much as Phyllida Lloyd's more recent comments about the RSC do. One article, "Richard redresses gender imbalance," quotes Rylance as protesting that the choice is "not a stunt," as well as lamenting the lack of women's roles (qtd. in Brooks). While true, addressing this practicality does not necessarily make for strong theatre. The same article solicited a comment from the then-chairman of the Richard III Society, Phil Stone, who mourned the perceived loss of realism, saying that he thought the casting choice "very odd" because "There is ...a lot of sexual chemistry, with Richard making it out with several women. He's a very hetero chap." Although couched in terms of heteronormativity, Stone's qualm seems to be that Hunter's portrayal of Richard would not be masculine enough. When the play finally opened, reviewers generally seemed pleased with Hunter's performance, both for endowing Richard with humor and charm, and because "you entirely forget that she is a woman playing a man" (Gardner).

After mentioning the novelty of the production, most reviewers made it a point to mention how little it mattered that the production had an all-female cast. Reviews generally praised Hunter's portrayal of Richard, then reassured readers that they would

forget women were playing all of the roles. Most reviewers seem to suggest that making audiences forget about gender was the pinnacle of an actor's art, much as they did for Toby Cockerell's portrayal of *Henry V*'s princess. The most critical reviews, such as the one by Charles Spencer for *The Telegraph*, considered it a "perversely modish exercise in political correctness," in language that prefigures that of the protests over Phyllida Lloyd's later comments, and assumes that Rylance created the production due to guilt and feeling "morally obliged to give the chicks a chance" (Spencer "Sex-change").

In mainstream reviews, the most forward-thinking thing said about the production, in terms of all-female casting, was that "The language of power, ambition, and hate belongs equally in the mouths of men and women. The more expressively it is used ... the less we think about gender" ("Regime Change"). But in the end, reviewers seemed to find no statement made or opinion changed due to the casting choice; the reception of this production generally reified the status quo of gender, which falls very short of the lofty goals initially stated by Mark Rylance and Kathryn Hunter about the distance between character and actor causing audiences to think more about gender roles. When initially asked why she would take the role, Hunter said, "It's a way of both actors and the audience reassessing a familiar situation" (qtd. in Brooks).

By contrast, scholar Elizabeth Klett seems to have read the cross-gendered productions at the Globe in ways closer to the stated intent of encouraging audiences to rethink the well-known plays and their gender roles. She argues that cross-casting can provide more than a novelty or a few more roles onstage for women. "When used strategically," Klett writes, "women's cross-gender performance can change our ideas about what gender and Shakespeare can or should look like" ("Re-dressing" 167).

According to Klett, as for Rylance and Hunter, the important aspect is the gap between actor and character, made visible by the gender signifiers of both. For Hunter as Richard, these included the actor's stature, face, and hair, compared with the character's clothes, dialogue, and actions.

This gap between actor and character has been interpreted by reviewers, in some cases, as the *character* also being an actor. For example, with Richard III, called "Shakespeare's most thesper hero" by one reviewer, Hunter called the critics' attention, to Richard's performance of not only charm and seduction but also of masculinity (Clapp). Hunter's apparent physical lack influenced perception, which carried over to the character; Richard, too, must perform maleness. Klett describes the actor's performance as showing Richard as unsure of his masculinity:

...in order to counter the limitations of his crippled and stunted body, he was constantly striving to perform the part of a swaggering, cocky, sexually successful man. He continually stroked his codpiece when talking about women... he leered at a young woman groundling standing near the stage... (*Re-dressing*, 167)

While cross-gender casting does not inherently challenge notions of gender, roles with which audiences are already familiar, or which are represented as specifically, textually, (heteronormatively) gendered, present the gap through which spectators can reconsider ideas about gender as intrinsic rather than performative. But of course audiences do not always respond to intent as theatre artists might wish. The insistence of critics that cross-gender casting does not make much difference to a theatre-goer's experience, coupled with praise for actors, like Janet McTeer as Petruchio or Mark Rylance as Olivia, that they have been particularly successful at believably playing a character of the opposite gender, suggests just how uncomfortable people remain when considering anyone who

does not fit within their expected gender binary. This impression is strengthened by reviewers who make it a point to mention things like how the princes in the tower are "ideal roles for ladies" or describing the climactic battle scene as staged less interestingly than "a hen-night fight with handbags" (Fisher; Spencer).

Like Richard III, Cleopatra also exemplifies as a Shakespearean character who spends her time performing. Mark Rylance's cross-gender portrayal of the Egyptian queen brought this aspect of the character to the forefront for many reviewers, frequently linking acting to gender. For example, Paul Taylor's two sentence review of the production spent one-third of its length describing this version of Cleopatra "as an elusive actress who enjoys drunken gender-bending games with her lover" (Taylor). For *Theatre Journal*, Kristen E. Gondrow compared Rylance's Cleopatra to "a child playing dress-up" and called her a "consummate actress." Michael Billington's review for *The Guardian* also picked up on the "erotic fun of cross-dressing," and called Cleopatra "a consummate actress to the last" ("Comedy of Lovers"). In focusing on this queen's "capacity for self-dramatisation," Billington specifically links Rylance's success to gender. He writes,

the chief gain of having a man play the roles is not any spurious
"authenticity" but the way it highlights the character's histrionic excess.
Cleopatra is a born performer who likes to theatricalise the state of love...

He does not, however, further explain why a male actor playing Cleopatra succeeds in drawing attention to the performativity of the role's character rather than attributing it Rylance's skill. The missing answer seems to be the gap identified by Klett between the actor's and character's perceived genders. Rylance claimed he was "playing a role, which happens to be a female one, not impersonating a woman" (qtd. in Webb). But audiences— and critics— cannot, and perhaps should not, quite so easily make that

distinction. And in the case of actorly roles like Cleopatra and Richard III, the gap between actor and character draws focus to the performance of gender, by *both* actor and character- even if gender performance is not specifically written about. But the question remains, if denaturalizing gender roles is a cross-gender production's goal, how can it be done so that it *is* commented on, even in roles that are less actorly? Original-practices performances offers some avenues of exploration for performing gender and Shakespeare, to which traditional contemporary theatres has less access.

The Invisibility of Race

When companies choose to cross-gender cast a major role or an entire production, it becomes the initial focus of the performance and of critics, even if it only becomes later dismissed as not significantly affecting the play's meaning. Non-traditional racial casting, on the other hand, now nearly always goes unremarked. One might optimistically assume this silence signifies colorblind audiences and a successful diversity of theatrical performances. However, audiences are not colorblind, Shakespeare and other early-modern plays assume the universality of whiteness, and the silence in most theatre companies is due to fear of giving offense.

None of the major companies that can be considered "original practices" are taking race into consideration in any systemic way. Neither Shakespeare's Globe nor the New American Shakespeare Tavern, for example, include any statement regarding race on their websites. The American Shakespeare Center states on its website "to ensure that everyone in the audience can see themselves in the plays, male and female actors of all races are considered for all roles." This declaration assumes a universality to

Shakespeare's plays which may not be obtainable, particularly as directors and actors admit that no one talks about race during the rehearsal or performance process.

For an example of the endemic silence, when asked about her casting practices, director Kathleen Powers, whose *Winter's Tale* played at the Blackfriars Playhouse in 2007, credited "Joe Papp for starting the tsunami wave that is now scarcely a ripple, even in more conservative parts of the country." Similarly, another ASC director, Jaq Bessell, wrote, "I am a color-blind caster. I wouldn't consider a white man for Othello or Aaron the Moor, but that is about it" ("Re: Questions"). While non-traditional casting is certainly embraced more fully than it has been in the past, Powers's assertion that it is now "scarcely a ripple" is both untrue and symptomatic of the dilemma still facing non-traditional casting. "Colorblind" casting can elicit comments that are at best confused and at worst racist. For example, the director Ralph Berry wrote about responses to what he called "colour-casting," including critical responses to the 2000 Royal Shakespeare Company casting of David Ojelowo, an actor of Nigerian descent. An angry letter writer insisted that casting Ojelowo as the historical Henry VI was an "obvious untruth" and a "distracting irritation throughout the performance" ("Shakespeare and Integrated Casting"). The audience member could not separate race from her perception of a historical personage; she was only aware of the gap between actor and character.

When not protesting historical inauthenticity, audience comments on race often come couched in the terms of genetics. In 2002, a critic disparaged a production of *Macbeth* "in which the son of the black Banquo was played by a ginger-haired actress" (qtd. in Berry, *On Directing* 37). Yet, as Richard Hornby points out, no one makes a fuss about genetics or the suspension of disbelief when a staged blond-haired couple has an

equally impossible brown-haired offspring (460). Perhaps instead of "scarcely a ripple," non-traditional casting needs to be taken much further than one or two actors of color in a company, in order to break expectations of genetic realism and theatrical mimesis.

But in order for these expectations of realism to disappear, directors and companies need to stop avoiding questions of race and to consider what messages they might be sending. A director's intention to be colorblind may not be received by audiences as such. Director Kathleen Powers, for example, will occasionally "pointedly use [her] actors of color to explore a part of the story"⁴⁹ but in her 2007 *Winter's Tale* for the American Shakespeare Center, she cast without "trying to layer [race] onto it." She did, however, cast race as a kind of genetic realism, with black actor Rene Thornton Jr. playing Leontes, black actor Susan Heyward as both his son and daughter, and white actors for the rest of the cast, including both Hermione and Polixenes. This casting requires none of the suspension of disbelief of the kind so decried above about Banquo. Because the question of paternity is such an integral one to the play and to Leontes – asking it, as he does, of his son and denying it, then later affirming it, of his daughter – genetics comes to play a part for a contemporary audience of the play. Powers chose to stage the infant Perdita in this production as a dark-skinned baby doll, not a necessary choice as many productions will simply use a bundle of cloth to represent a swaddled child. Powers called this a "logical" choice, "neither color blind nor deliberate" and it is one that reaffirmed the realism of the portrayed family. But, as Leontes and Maximillius/Perdita were the only black characters on stage in this production, the choice of the visible black doll made the jealous king's questions of paternity verge on the

⁴⁹ She cites as an example directing *As You Like It* and casting a black Orlando and a white Oliver.

ludicrous, particularly as he held the black doll and accused the white Polixenes of siring black Perdita with white Hermione.

When asked about this choice, the director wrote, "we did discuss in rehearsal that when Paulina...is showing the baby to the Lords and detailing all the ways in which she resembles her father, well, in this particular case, if he would just LOOK at the child, he would see that she was his, and not Polixene's!" The actor who played Hermione confirms this, writing that there were "Good natured comments about how truly crazy Leontes must be to deny that Perdita is his child [as] she certainly doesn't look like Hermione or Polixenes!" (Rodgers). By *not* requiring a suspension of disbelief and disrupting the sign system of skin color, the production assumed that the audience would also recognize the child as clearly belonging to Leontes and not Polixenes, which the text confirms when the god Apollo declares that Hermione is chaste. However, this particular casting choice made Rene Thornton Jr.'s job of portraying Leontes exponentially more difficult. In an interview, Thornton explained that he was "livid" about the doll. Recognizing that the doll's color made his character's paternity a given, Thornton explained:

to me the doll was another step on [the director's] part to make sure Leontes is framed as nothing but evil. If you watch the show closely though you will notice that in the one scene I have with the baby I never look directly at the baby and so am unable to see the color of its skin, and when Pauline [sic] is holding it she has it on her shoulder with the baby facing away from me so I am still unable to see the baby myself. ("Re: Questions")

The easiest answer to this dilemma is either never to show the baby to the audience or simply to have another actor on stage, preferably playing Polixenes, to tell audiences that

yes, there are more black characters in Sicilia besides the royal family, so that perhaps Leontes might have at least the potential for semi-logical jealousy.

Thornton's description of himself as "livid" at the choice of the baby doll contrasts starkly with Rodger's descriptions of "good natured comments." Admittedly, both interviews and the American Shakespeare Center podcast about the production suggest that the director and Thornton had fundamental differences regarding the character of Leontes, but the semiotics of skin color on stage, embodied in the Perdita doll, exacerbated the situation. There is no way to know if Powers' opinion on the potential rationality of Leontes' jealousy was influenced by her casting or if she always intended to make Leontes seem "nothing but evil" or "truly crazy," but the semiotic pattern of skin color in this production certainly necessitated this reception by audiences.

In a play that calls attention to race, be it a central idea, references within the text, or called to the forefront through a theme like paternity in a multi-racially cast production, skin color, like gender, will be a sign that modern audiences will almost certainly notice. If directors stubbornly insist that they are blind to color, unintended or mixed messages will occur, as with this *Winter's Tale*. When asked if the then-resident troupe at the American Shakespeare Center had had any discussion about race in preparation for this or any of their shows in produced in repertory that season, the answer was consistently no. And therein lies one of the pitfalls of colorblind casting, that such casting is synonymous with an assumption that there need be no conversations about race and how it might influence a production; that it is "scarcely a ripple."

That same season, and with the same cast, the American Shakespeare Center produced *Love's Labours Lost* and *Antony & Cleopatra*, and both plays' color-blind

casting caused moments where skin color potentially assumed a signifying function, in spite of their "color-blind" directors. For *Love's Labours Lost*, because the director, Jaq Bessell, did not intend to make any statements about race with this production, audiences were expected to ignore the actors' skin colors as a sign throughout the play. Doubling practicalities in this production placed black actor Susan Heyward in the roles of both Jaquenetta and Katherine, alongside three white actors playing the other noblewomen. The problem with this particular casting double began in act four, when Jaquenetta asks Holofernes to read aloud the letter she has accidentally received, the greeting of which reads, "To the snow-white hand of the most beauteous lady Rosaline..." (IV.ii.121-122). In this production, Heyward frowned at her dark-skinned hand in a comedic bit, while the white actor playing Holofernes simply muttered, "Hmmm." The director explained her take on the moment, by saying:

The way I work, I hope to reach the end of the rehearsal period (which is short, in the case of ASC) with the cast understanding fully what is important to the story, and what is not. After the show opens, I fully expect (and hope) that the actors develop new ideas, or "bits" as long as none of these hold up the story, or compete with it. Susan [Heyward]'s idea to draw attention to the fact that Jaquenetta (in this production) is neither virgin nor white of hand, was entirely her own invention, and I didn't ask her to cut it out for that reason. That doesn't make it a "directorial choice" but I did recognize it as an actor's choice. ("Re: Questions")

The metadramatic moment amused audiences and even clarified that Jaquenetta had mistakenly received the letter.

A few scenes later, *Love's Labours Lost* has its masking scene, where the four noblemen can only identify their beloveds, including Heyward's Katherine, by the accessories they wear. Generally, this absurd conceit is accepted by an audiences'

suspension of disbelief. However, this production tried to make the confusion more logical by dressing the women in two sets of similar dresses, paired off by their similarities in height and body shape. This nod toward realism was at odds with the differences in skin color. Bessell points out that "the idea that a man could only identify his beloved by the jewelry or gloves she wears [is] only slightly less ridiculous than not being able to tell a white woman from a black woman" ("Re: Questions"). Her point is valid; this masking scene, along with illustrating the inauthenticity of the noblemen's courting, is an example of just how colorblind the audience is supposed to be.

However, as Keir Elam points out, "phenomena assume a signifying function on stage to the extent that their relation to what they signify is perceived as being deliberately intended." In this case, Heyward's skin color was intentionally important, a sign, in IV.ii, but it was meant to be forgotten by audiences immediately afterward. The two competing messages were displayed in the masking scene (V.ii), making the signification of skin color muddled and the focus on the men's confusion, well, confusing. Neither Heyward's comedic bit as Jaquenetta nor Bessell's insistence on skin color possessing no semiotic meaning in the world of the play is inherently wrong, but taken together in the same production, audiences are left wondering if they should have been interpreting skin color all along, and just why exactly the noblemen cannot tell at least Katherine apart from the rest of the ladies.

The *Antony & Cleopatra* of the same season, directed by Jim Warren, also used colorblind casting and intended skin color to convey no semiotic meanings. From even the very front row of the playhouse stalls, no difference in skin color could be discerned between the Egyptian queen and her Roman lover. Of course, this was not two-way

directional non-traditional casting but instead another production in the long tradition of lily-white Cleopatras. Given the specific references to her skin color in the play, which were left in for the American Shakespeare Center production, casting Elisabeth Rodgers in the role denied the text, an offense that the ASC insists they avoid. When asked about the lines, Rodgers explained, just as Celia Daileader references other white actors who have portrayed Cleopatra as doing, that "Cleopatra was actually a Macedonian by descent." Of course, as Daileader explains, even without any Egyptian intermarriage, Macedonian would still have left the historical Cleopatra's skin tone "a brownish-red ochre" (207-08). Further, one still must ask how much history ought to be involved in the skin color decision of the fictional Cleopatra since she specifically, textually, calls herself "black." For this production, Rodgers remarked:

I figured that my dark red hair and a little bit of bronzing at the tanning salon would suffice to justify that text. I did definitely "brown up" a little, mostly because I am normally very fair skinned, and I wanted it to be believable that I lived in Egypt.

Evidently she, as well as the costume designer and director, considered more extensive body makeup for the role, but they felt it would be too messy, given the white clothes for the Egyptians. Because Rodgers also appeared in the other three shows in repertory, she wrote that further tanning "would not work." And yet, *The Winter's Tale* does not say that Hermione does not have dark skin, nor does *Romeo and Juliet* specify that Lady Capulet, Rodgers' other role in repertory that season, has no tan. As exemplary an actress as Rodgers is, this production still became another in the line of the "white monopoly" on the role of Cleopatra, and belies the "melting pot" that in her interview Rodgers suggested the Egyptian court would have been. Audiences are not likely to see a pale

Cleopatra and her three servants, two of whom in this production were played by black actors (René Thornton, Jr. and Susan Heyward), and think "melting pot." Instead, they are going to see, at least subconsciously, a reification of a white woman ruling over black servants.

Directors, be they working in original-practices theatre or elsewhere, seem overall to be casting a few actors of color and calling the issue of racial prejudice closed, if they think about the question at all. They claim the term "colorblind" and use it as a defense against any potential criticism. Not only does this choice mean that unintentional messages occur in productions, as described above, but it also assumes a false progressiveness. True "colorblind" casting certainly sounds forward thinking and utopian, but actually it covers for a more pernicious and subtle racism. By refusing to think about race, both in Elizabethan England and on modern stages, directors shut down any chance of further growth or nuanced storytelling. Worse, "colorblind" casting, particularly for Shakespeare and early modern plays, essentially white-washes a production.

Occasionally a production may be able to avoid skin color as a sign system to the point where audiences really can ignore it and theoretically just see "people" separate from race, or to see themselves on stage, as the American Shakespeare Center would have them do. However, the default for early modern texts is white, as history, cultural expectations, and the text itself all assert. When a production, therefore, does not examine race, at least within its own contexts, audiences may well basically see actors of color playing white characters, in much the same way cross-gender casting is supposed to work. In this case, "colorblind" casting constitutes an act of erasure. While no simple answer exists to solve the pervasive racism producing early modern works, if

practitioners insist that they are "colorblind", then they do not even acknowledge that a problem exists to be fixed.

Not every theatre company, original practices or otherwise, includes social activism in its mission. However, these companies also cannot have it both ways— if they claim Shakespeare as a universal in which all people can see themselves, then they cannot stage the plays in ways which reify a white patriarchy. Original-practices companies have a particular burden. To illustrate, Carol Chillington Rutter places one of her major protests against original-practices theatre on casting:

Let us, for one thing, be under no illusion that arguing 'authenticity' is harmless antiquarianism. Rather it's a tactic of legitimation whose end is political, for it leaves Shakespeare in the sole possession of white male actors... (89-90)

Her argument here assumes that authenticity requires single-sex male casting, and she wrote specifically of the Globe's *Antony & Cleopatra*, but her point remains valid for any all-male production that bears the authorizing term "original-practices." Even though there is no original-practices company, even at its most "authentic," that argues for casting only male actors, Rutter's contention is worth keeping in mind. Shakespeare wrote for a specific time and audience, and the plays were originally performed by white males. One thing that original-practices theatre ought to be well situated for is taking the plays' origins into context and being particularly aware of their inherent and casual misogyny and racism, then taking steps to not reify either as normative and justified by virtue of being Shakespearean.

Original-practices casting choices, including all-male productions, do provide the possibility of defamiliarizing the well-known plays, as Rylance called for with the

Globe's "Season of Regime Change," but there are also further steps that productions can take. Beyond casting more "non-traditional" actors, original-practices theatre can also experiment with other Elizabethan staging conventions as pertain to race and gender, either directly or in updated ways. For example, one complaint that critics made about the 2003 all-female *Richard III* was that the casting blurred the distinction between the masculine and feminine realms of the play, the "crucial contrast between the scheming, bustling masculine world and the still, choric grief of the female characters," (Spencer "Sex-change"). Yet other playgoers specifically pointed out the white make-up used on the actors who played women; using this Elizabethan-style makeup made the performance of femininity, even as portrayed by female actors, highly noticeable and artificial (Maslowska). Similarly, the large codpieces used in *The Taming of the Shrew* and the very fake, rather maligned beards of the following seasons' *Much Ado About Nothing* both highlighted the performativity of masculinity in those productions. Choices like these three could be used even in traditionally-cast productions. Lauren Lovett, in Pennsylvania Shakespeare Festival's 2011 *Two Noble Kinsmen*, provides one example of a traditionally-cast role in which the actor called attention to the performance of gender. Lovett wore combat boots and army fatigues for most of the play in her role of Hippolyta, and cut her hair into a buzzcut as soon as she learned that she had been cast in the role. During a talkback, she explained that this felt true to the character, as queen of the Amazons, and that she wished to portray an aspect of femininity rarely seen on stage.⁵⁰

The question of race and make-up, particularly in the context of original practices, necessarily brings up the question of Elizabethan styles of blackface. Theatre historian

⁵⁰ Actors for this production chose their own costumes from the company's stock, without any director to guide their choices.

Virginia Mason Vaughan suggests that the recreated playhouse and original-practices companies are precisely the places to experiment with blackface productions. She worries that when watching, for example, *Othello* with a black actor in the lead, white audiences have their stereotyped expectations of blackness reinforced (171). She suggests instead that those kinds of roles should be experimented with in blackface, and she cites the original-practices theatres as the places to do so in order to learn more about early modern expectations of race and to keep from reifying as fact the negative aspects of early modern black characters as perceived by white playwrights (174). The risk of an entire production done this way, no matter the intent, is probably too great for any company to willingly take on, but companies like the Globe have produced experiments into early modern practices before, and could include blackface in similar experimental, off-season productions.

Doubling is one Elizabethan practice that original-practices companies already employ extensively, and it can disrupt the semiotic patterns created by actors' bodies on stage. For example, doubling in the American Shakespeare Center's 2007 *Romeo & Juliet* successfully enabled audiences to "suspend concern" about race.⁵¹ A glance at the production's poster, depicting black actor Susan Heyward as Juliet and white actor Gregory Jon Phelps as Romeo, might suggest that casting had been done in order to make the basis of the play's familial struggle about race. The original practice of doubling, however, made this not the case, and the production told the story without skin color as a signifier. Nearly all of the actors in the company played characters in both the Montague

⁵¹ Richard Hornby suggest that colorblind casting cannot exist until "society itself becomes color-blind," a result that is "not only unlikely but probably undesirable." Instead he suggests aiming for "color-neutral casting," so that rather than expecting audiences to suspend disbelief, they simply "suspend concern" when it is clear that racial signifiers are unimportant to the story being told.

and Capulet families. In order to keep the family lines uncomplicated for audiences, the director chose to simply color code the costumes: the Montagues wore blue and the Capulets wore red, meaning that there was never doubt, even if audiences missed a character's identification in the dialogue, about his or her affiliation. Furthermore, because Juliet's parents often direct their daughter to marry Paris, here played by another white actor, the casting and performance did not read as though Juliet were forbidden to marry Romeo because of his skin color. For plays with enough characters and aware directors, doubling can disrupt sign-systems and expectations in ways opposing the doubling in *Love's Labours Lost* that specifically called attention to race, although this should not be the singular goal of theatre companies, lest it lead to further whitewashing.

Original-practices theatre has one more card that traditional contemporary theatre productions cannot play. When writing about the Globe's single-sex *Twelfth Night*, James C. Bulman wrote that the guise of original practices enabled audiences who might not otherwise accept, at least for the duration of the play, non-heteronormative portrayals of characters and relationships (233). This justification of quasi-historicity certainly pertains to more than just this one production; many visitors come to recreated spaces and original-practices theatres to see Shakespeare done as it was originally. Single-sex casts could be used to disrupt modern gender norms even while they are accepted via the production's authorization by history.

Then, too, companies have more choices in cross-gender casting than only single-sex casts or changing the gender of one character. A student production of *Romeo & Juliet* at Mary Baldwin College in 2004, created by Laura Pyle and directed by Colleen

Sullivan, cast female actors in all of the male roles, and vice versa.⁵² This particular project was an experiment, and Pyle chose to leave the gendered language of the play as is, which constantly reminded audiences that the actors' bodies did not match expectations. The denaturalization of the play's role called particular attention to Juliet's circumscribed life and the violence threatened by her father because both go against gender expectations. This production only provides one example of casting experimentation that theatre companies could use. However, the multitude of theatre reviews in which critics work hard to reify gender normativity in the face of single-sex casts suggests that this is generally not enough to seriously disrupt gender binaries even within a single productions.

Fortunately, original-practices companies have institutions in place that can be used in conjunction with their performances to potentially educate and influence audiences about Shakespeare and portrayals of race and gender. Given their educational mission, actor talk-backs after select performances are not unusual. Actors take questions from the audience during these and answer candidly on topics including rehearsal methods, text interpretation, and amusing anecdotes about theatrical life. For this format to address issues of race and gender, an audience member would need to broach the topic. Yet there is no reason why actors, if they felt comfortable, could not speak briefly about their experiences in the production before opening the floor, and this might address race and/or gender. Likewise, companies such as the American Shakespeare Center have

⁵² At the time, Pyle was a masters student in the Mary Baldwin College/American Shakespeare Center Masters of Letters program. Throughout this project, Pyle called her *Romeo & Juliet* a "gender-swapped" production, but when writing about it later, she came to the realization that it would be more accurately considered "sex-swapped," as she had cast actors of opposing physical sexes, and that it was their visible signifiers of sex which were at odds with audience expectations.

podcasts on their websites in which actors and directors discuss the currently-running (at the time of recording) production. Since podcasts are not live, perhaps this could be a safer space for actors and directors to address the questions of race and gender in the terms of their performances.

As non-profit theatres, the large Shakespeare companies also possess education departments which often provide workshops, both in-house and in area schools. The workshops tend toward introducing students to the language of Shakespeare or instructing young actors. These outreaches should also broach Shakespeare's problematic constructions of race and gender, rather than sweeping them under the carpet of historicism. The former Director of Education for the Maryland Shakespeare Festival, Megan McDonough, expressed discomfort in referencing race in Shakespeare during school workshops, unless the school had specifically asked her to do so or a student brought up questions during the program. Offering a workshop on the performance of race or gender, however, would make it more likely for a school to ask for something in that vein. Furthermore, any workshops that include discussions of life in early modern England, or of Shakespeare staging practices, as McDonough reports most schools specifically request, ought to address the conditions of race and gender under which these plays were written. Facilitators and students might then be able to branch into fuller discussions about race and gender onstage and off. The Maryland Shakespeare Festival's education philosophy states that, "Shakespeare gives students a language to fully express their experience, passion and despair. It gives them a power to be heard." Workshops that address race and gender, two categories with which every student has experience but often does not have the language for, would allow them to "express their experience[s]."

Original-practices companies can also go beyond the traditional academy, with conferences and forums. The American Shakespeare Center, for example, hosts a five-day conference every two years for academics, theatre practitioners, and secondary-school teachers. This sort of event need not have as its theme the performance of race or gender, although it certainly could, but these conferences could easily encourage speakers to address the topic in their calls for papers and invite keynote speakers to talk about the performativity of race and/or gender. Conferences might enable more experimentation as well. The Blackfriars Conference sets aside time for afternoon workshops which allow participants "to apply methods and practices in Shakespearean staging" (American Shakespeare Center). Some of these workshop slots could be designated for exploring race, possibly even in the use of blackface to explore the metatheatricity that Vaughan posits lies within the original texts (Vaughn, 97).

That actors of color are being cast in productions, and receiving less flak for the choice, is a start. That companies are willing to talk about gender and cross-cast upon occasion is also a step in the right direction. However, companies currently are not furthering either step. The ways in which practitioners address the two issues are, as shown above, different from each other and could benefit by being put into conversation together, not in order to simplify either complex issue but so that tactics can be shared. In most cases, the choice to not talk about race is likely borne of fear of saying the wrong thing, but the silence benefits no one. On the other hand, the treatment of cross-gender casting as a mere stunt, leaving critics to push back at productions and declare that such casting makes no valuable change to the plays' meanings, also does little to further equality. Phyllida Lloyd's demand that the RSC cast an equal number of male and female

actors is an overly simplistic supposed solution to the problem of equality in theatre, but at least for a few days it had people talking. That so many of the responses were vehemently misogynist and edged quickly into racist, ableist, and homophobic language spectacularly illustrates the need for reasoned conversations on the topics, and that even in the traditionally liberal realm of theatre, there is still a need for a great deal of work.

Original-practices companies have a particular burden when they cast, since in the first productions of these early modern plays neither actors of color nor female actors took part on the public stage. In order to fulfill their missions of having Shakespeare speak to everyone, yet to be faithful to "original practices," these companies need, at the very least, to use what makes them unique to be certain they are not, in fact, reifying stereotypes and continuing to silence anything but white male perspectives.

Chapter 5:

MASS COMPLICITY: ORIGINAL-PRACTICES AUDIENCES

As the Globe replica neared completion and its 1997 opening, most critics' concerns about the playhouse centered on its artistic merit. But even before spectators entered the new-old space, confusion and protest began about their hypothetical behavior. Assuming the space would cater to tourists seeking an interactive and Disneyfied experience, critics complained that these theatre-goers would be more interested in performing their own roles of groundlings than in viewing a theatrical production.

Originally, the Globe encouraged such extremes of behavior. In a 1995 press conference, newly appointed artistic director Mark Rylance was quoted as saying, "The Globe will be marvelously like a bear-baiting pit or an arena in that the audience and actors will share our space and we will bait our inner bears... I can think of nothing more delightful than the audience heckling or throwing things" (qtd. in Macdonald). This comment played into the critics' fears and created consternation for some readers of *The Independent*, the newspaper in which he was quoted. A few days later, the paper published a letter pleading with Mark Rylance to reconsider what he had advocated for the new theatre's audiences. A Mr. Rowland Nelken of Nottinghamshire wrote, regarding contemporary audience behavior, "Anyone who could consider as 'delightful' an audience that heckles and throws things must have spent their entertainment career in the theatre, or another medium, where decorous audience behaviour can usually be taken for granted" as opposed to industries wherein workers must deal with poor behavior. He finished his letter with, "The open-minded, tolerant and listening audience has taken a long time to become established. Please, Mr. Rylance, do not enthuse about a backward step!"

In some ways, the initial behaviors at the Globe realized Nelken's fears about the audience. During the 1997 production of *Henry V*, reviews often critiqued the audience as much as the actors, as if they had a scripted role in the performance. Almost universally, reviews of the production mention the crowd's behavior. "Is that any way to address the noble Harry?" Clifford Ridley wrote of the French Ambassador's speech, answering with, "The groundlings at Shakespeare's Globe think not, and they make their displeasure clear: BOOOOO! NO WAY! OUT OF HERE, MATE!" (Ridley). David Dillon's article opens with the description that "the Globe audience shouted out, 'Right on, Harry, right on,' just as earlier they had booed and hissed the French ambassador for demanding his surrender." Similarly, Paul Levy wrote of the audience, "They booed and hissed the French court, and clapped along with the beat of the period instruments played by the Musicians of the Globe." This description of the audience response to the French appeared in many reviews of this production of *Henry V*, which suggests that it was not an incident isolated to one or two performances. That Levy included the description in a paragraph that also describes the period costumes and lack of lighting effects implies that the audience behavior, particularly those of the groundlings, is as integral to a Globe production as other theatrical staples are to traditional productions, a hypothesis borne out by reviewers' continued references to audiences throughout the Globe's now sixteen season history.

Writing about the new Globe in its opening season for *The Observer*, Robert McCrum also focuses on the crowd more than the space or the performance. He writes of the audience "buzzing noisily like a football crowd" before falling into rapt attention for Mark Rylance's prologue, then bursting into "tumultuous applause" for it and all the rest

of the scenes. Moreover, he describes how he and the rest of the audience "discovered we'd become his courtiers," and later, in the St. Crispin's Day Speech, "we became, as it were, his army." McCrum was particularly surprised when,

something even stranger happens the audience boos the French. This remarkable intervention wasn't prompted anywhere; it seemed to come out of an atavistic folk memory, the collective unconscious. At all their subsequent appearances, the French were roundly booed (as were the traitorous English villains, Scrope, Grey, and Cambridge).

While the xenophobic elements would be picked up in future criticisms, and Rylance would be accused of making Shakespeare into pantomime and pandering to the groundlings, the reaction of McCrum, albeit perhaps more emotional than most, ("I wonder if I was alone in feeling the tears prick at the thought of the sacrifice some would make on the field at Agincourt" he mused, upon feeling he was named one of Henry/Rylance's 'band of brothers'), does point out the power of the audience at the Globe. Lit as fully as the actors, not confined to seats, and encouraged to move around, the groundlings form a powerful and unpredictable force.

The Globe bowed to this potential threat when, for its second season, Mark Rylance programmed only comedies, although strangely including *The Merchant of Venice*. Tragedies, the artistic director declared, would wait "until audiences have become more acclimatised to the Globe experience" as during the first season audiences laughed through Beaumont and Fletcher's *The Maid's Tragedy* (Stringer). The audience of the first season created anxiety not just for the critics, who seemed to prefer their auditoriums dark and silent, but also for the performers who had declared audiences to be part of the experiment.

In fact, some groundling behavior was policed from the start. When audiences chose to sit in the yard, it was sprinkled with water beforehand in order to encourage standing. Ushers prowled the yard to keep audience members from sitting on the steps or even leaning on the railings, presumably due to fire hazards. Those who had paid only for groundling spots were not permitted to take gallery seats otherwise left empty. The audience 'experiment' had to occur within certain parameters as defined by the performers and production staff.

Reviews suggest that in the early seasons audience reactions continued to be a site of anxiety for the playhouse as well as for the critics. The 1998 *Merchant of Venice* did have those who hissed both Shylock, just as they had hissed the previous season's French, and that current season's Oliver, in *As You Like It*. The critic for *The Independent* suggested that this was a chance for the audience to "wrestle with its conscience," but frequent Globe critic for *The Guardian*, Michael Billington pointed out that as of that season, the Globe had only managed to "morally simplify" the plays' dynamics into "simple contests between heroes and villains" which included hearing "a Jew being hissed at in south London" (Cavendish; Billington "Exit pursued by boos").

Criticism of this kind continued through the second season, leading Mark Rylance to pen his own article for *The Times* in defensive response to Benedict Nightingale's rancorous warning that productions at the Globe had gone too far with its "audience participation" and "coarsened" Shakespeare. Rylance argued that he promotes

that my fellow actors play and sometimes talk directly with the audience, rather than to or at them. With [the audience] implies listening to the audience, which I also encourage, and together as artists we are constantly trying to encourage responses that are involved in the story and let pass

those that are self-promoting or undermining of the story. ("Meet the real Shakespeare")

Clearly, by 1998 there was already an understanding that not all audience response is helpful to storytelling, and Rylance makes a distinction in audience intentions. Of the 1997 *Henry V* production, he agreed that the audience played as his [Henry's] soldiers, but that "[t]hey certainly never cheered the killing of the prisoners," and that the "French women were not booed but cheered when they stopped Henry in his tracks." This specificity suggests that the company was aware that there was the potential for ugliness on the part of the audience, perhaps even on the level that Nightingale cited, with a nameless fellow critic comparing "the morally intricate hostilities between the Jewish and Christian factions" of *The Merchant of Venice* "to the level of "an Arsenal-Tottenham football day." Rylance identifies the crowd's disapproval as "not anti-Semitic boos but disapproval of a character's murderous intent." The artistic director may well have been right about the audience's motivations, and his piece did much to make Nightingale's look ill-informed, but the need to ascribe intention to the audience response implies anxiety on both sides of the question. This anxiety is especially visible in the "Globe Research Bulletins" from the first few seasons. The bulletin for *The Merchant of Venice*, as compiled by Pauline Kiernan, declares, "Impromptu byplay with playgoers needs to be controlled so that audiences are not allowed to interrupt the story." Contrary to Rylance's response in *The Times*, Kiernan's "Bulletin" went on to describe, "In the Trial Scene... quite a large number of playgoers laughed at Shylock. For them, Shakespeare's Jew was a figure of fun: entertainment, not tragedy." In this instance, the similarity of Elizabethan and modern audiences became problematic.

Original-practices theatres cannot recreate Elizabethan audiences, but what they do create is an audience more powerful and more vocal than those found at traditional contemporary theatres. While original-practices audiences do not quite reach the football-hooligan level of behavior that some naysayers predicted before the Globe's inaugural season, they do respond strongly and in a particularly collective, homogenized manner. This strength of response stems from several major aspects particular to original practices, including the expectations spectators bring to this kind of theatre, the spaces in which these productions occur, and the ways that actors in these kinds of performances interact with the audiences. While every original-practices company differs, all of them include these elements to some degree. This chapter's evidence relies heavily on the documentation and reviews of the Globe because of its ready availability, however, throughout, connections will be made to other sites of original-practices style productions.

Basic problems exist for any argument regarding audiences. Anyone attending a theatre event can only speak knowledgably about his or her own experiences and what can be observed. As Helen Freshwater points out, "each audience is made up of individuals who bring their own cultural reference points, political beliefs, sexual preferences, personal histories, and immediate preoccupations to their interpretation of a production" (5-6). No one's experience can ever precisely match another's. In fact, Dennis Kennedy declares that the only constant for every spectator at an event is "*the gathering itself*, in the simple act of being present, as simultaneous witnesses as participating observers, at an event offered for display *precisely for this group*" (14 emphasis original).

This definition requires no similarity of socio-economic, cultural, or other make-up. While any theatrical event can— and does— try to influence an audience as a whole, none will ever do so equally to every spectator present. Even at a theatrical production's strongest influence, no audience becomes a single entity, a fact which much be acknowledged even as this chapter explores the ways in which original-practices theatre influences audiences to respond in ways more homogenized and active than traditional, contemporary theatre.

Horizons of Expectation

In *Theatre Audiences*, Susan Bennett argues that each spectator "comes to the theatre as a member of an already constituted interpretive community and also brings a horizon of expectations shaped by the pre-performance elements" (102). The influences on these expectations include previous theatre experience, media and marketing materials, and even the theatrical venue itself. In the case of the Globe, these influences are often particularly strong. Many Globe audience members are infrequent theatre-attendees,⁵³ meaning that their ideas about audience behavior in the replica space comes not from experience in traditional, darkened proscenium auditoriums but from their own understanding of Elizabethan groundlings' behavior. Tim Carroll, a frequent director at the Globe, identifies this inexperience of audiences as making them more adventurous and "very willing to try different things" in responding to performances (qtd. in Logan).

The potential drawback to these inexperienced but willing spectators manifested in the Globe's early seasons, as audiences grappled with actors for control of the performances. In the 1999 "Globe Research Bulletin" for *Julius Caesar*, Jaq Bessell

⁵³ Alison Roberts references an audience questionnaire in which many responders "indicated that they only visited the theatre once a year."

describes audience members booing Cassius from the play's start and calls the behavior "generally disconcerting" (34). Moreover, these kinds of actions made the production become "a show about the groundlings, rather than for or with the audience as a whole." In Bessell's interviews with the actors after the season, Liam Hourican spoke of "wrestling with the audience to see who had control of the play" and that when the plebeians killed Cinna, the audience "found it very funny... the overriding emotion was of hilarity. That upset us a lot at the start" (qtd. in Silverstone, 43).

In August of the previous season, Mark Rylance took to the papers to defend how the Globe – and its audiences – perform Shakespeare. In response to censure from *The Times* critic Rylance wrote:

Nightingale is concerned about hissing and booing. So are we. Some members of the audience may arrive completely misled by inaccurate press material telling them that it is a requirement for them to boo and hiss, but the majority willingly exchange the "outside" world for that within the Globe, to become genuine participants in storytelling. Often they wish to make it known when they are displeased with a character's actions. ("Meet the real Shakespeare")

Here Rylance points out that "inaccurate press material" is to blame for audiences expecting that they must vocalize their opinions during performances. A month later, Rylance expanded on the audiences' desire to respond when Alison Roberts quoted him in an article for *The Evening Standard*, explaining that audiences at the new Globe do not know what kind of responses to make, in effect that they lack a specific kind of theatrical expectation.

Because we're obviously not used to theatre as it would have been in Shakespeare's time, people are a bit confused. It's as though the audience is hunting for a script, and the only scripts they know are those for

pantomime or the Last Night of the Proms... Gradually we want to encourage a deeper, richer response.

By cultivating repeat audiences and more accurate press, the Globe would create new audience expectations for its behavior, potentially still vocal and interactive but with fewer criticisms of pantomime.

In the August *Times* article, Rylance also addressed Nightingale's accusation that Globe audiences are asked to pretend to be Elizabethans, declaring the concept "ridiculous," then referring to his own statement in the Globe's playbills, which that season asked spectators to "bring only themselves and measure the play's verity on the scale of their own lives" ("Meet the real Shakespeare"). Whether Rylance's earlier enthusiasm for potential audiences throwing tomatoes could be interpreted to mean audiences should perform as Elizabethans is moot; clearly by 1998 this behavior was to be discouraged. Note, though, Rylance's reference to the program material, one of the items that Bennett identifies as a pre-performance material which "sets audience expectation and can guide them" (136). For the Globe, these pre-performance materials may also include their education center and permanent exhibit as well as their website, and these items not only influence audience interpretation but also audience behavior, helping to lead to the mostly homogeneous responses that Globe performances receive.

Depending on how much a company, or in some cases an individual production, identifies itself as original-practices, the concept is explained and advertised in its media materials, often touching on audience behaviors. In the case of the two companies that currently perform in replica spaces, Shakespeare's Globe and the American Shakespeare Center, their websites and promotional materials play up that space, which in turn creates

for audiences the implication that they are attending a particular kind of event which demands a particular kind of behavior. For example, the American Shakespeare Center website insists that its playhouse is "the world's only recreation of Shakespeare's indoor theatre," a claim that is repeated in its printed promotional material and again verbally during the actors' pre-show speech before every performance. The claim, which will no longer be true once Shakespeare's Globe opens a "Jacobean theatre" in 2013, is followed up with a quote from Andrew Gurr, identified on the site as "Professor of English, University of Reading, England and former Director of Research, Shakespeare's Globe Theatre, London," declaring the space to be "One of the most historically important theatres in the world." Of course a theatre company's website is about marketing and is designed to increase interest in and attendance at the playhouse, and this particular marketing uses the words of Andrew Gurr, an academic specifically identified as connected to the *other*, more famous, replica playhouse, to attract theatre-goers. However, quotes such as the ones above also influence the assumptions that the audience possesses before arriving at the performance. This is not just a Shakespeare production, the promotional materials insist, but one done in a space that demands authenticity, not only on the part of the actors, but on audiences' parts as well.

Companies performing in non-replica spaces are not exempt from this influential marketing rhetoric. The Grassroots Shakespeare Company, for example, which performs in parks local to their base of operations in Utah, could be seen as a typical Shakespeare-in-the-Park style troupe, but instead they pepper their webpage with references to their use of original practices. On each page, they link to their "working definition of original practices," in which they give an overview of the various playing aspects they use and set

themselves in opposition to other theatres, specifically the Utah Shakespeare Festival. In doing so, they also provide a prescription for how audiences should receive their performances and behave at them. One quote that they have included on their front page, from a blogger named Tara, sums up what audiences should be for them:

The audience laughed and applauded, hissed and booed, as if on cue. All throughout, an orchestra of crickets added their melody to the lone guitar and accordion... This, I think, is how Shakespeare intended his plays to be seen.

Of the eleven quotes on their homepage recommending their performances, four of them reference the shows' "interactivity."

The New American Shakespeare Tavern of Atlanta, Georgia uses the same techniques on its website. Every page links to their mission statement, which declares their space to be "the only Original Practice Playhouse®," a term they never quite differentiate from, for example, the Blackfriars. From there, a web visitor can move to an extended definition of original practices in a letter written by founder Jeff Watkins. Naturally, not every visitor to the Tavern will choose to do such diligent reading beforehand. It is likely, however, that a first-time visitor might choose to read the page on "How it Works," an explanation of what to expect at the venue. After a clarification of the ticket-buying process, the page's font size increases and the reader is asked if s/he is nervous about seeing a Shakespeare play, then assured that the New American Shakespeare Tavern will explain it all. The font increases further and turns red, then declares, "We promise you'll get it!" What follows on the page next is their prescription for the audience's behavior.

Because even though you as the audience don't have "lines", we here at the Shakespeare Tavern view Shakespeare's text as a conversation rather than

a lecture. YOU are PART of the conversation, and in our experience that goes a long way towards making Shakespeare's language accessible and clear. (Emphasis original)

There is no exhortation, as opposed to early years of the Globe, for the audience to throw things, but there is a clear assertion that the audience is part of the experience and that it is being directed by the original-practices company rhetoric.

At any playing space, pre-show information influences spectators' behavior, in the form of both programs and actors appearing as themselves on-stage to directly address the audience about what they will see. For example, the 2011 Actors Renaissance Season program from the American Shakespeare Center provides lengthy explanations of Shakespeare's playing conditions, which provide a framework for reception to those playgoers who read it. This framework includes a prescription for audience behavior, insisting, "...we hope to create an even more intense bond between performer and audience, and an even deeper level of fun and excitement for an audience experiencing the raw energy of the Renaissance stage." It continues, under the heading of "Universal Lighting," to inform readers that they "can play the roles that Shakespeare wrote them." This information does not directly tell the audience to boo, hiss, or throw tomatoes, but it does inform them that they are to be complicit in the creation of the performance. At many original-practices performances, those audience members who have not read the program are still given expectations in the form of a pre-show, which includes prescriptive information, such as informing the audience that by playing with the lights on, the actors can see the audience and thus the audience is complicit in creating the play.

The architecture of the theatrical space influences spectators' expectations as well as their experiences during the performance. Susan Bennett identifies the conditions of the stage, such as whether a set is visible, as providing "an important first stimulus for the audience's perception of the play" (133). In the case of the replica theatres, the Globe and Blackfriars and even the Atlanta Shakespeare Tavern, the architecture and décor serve to remind audiences that they are at a different kind of theatrical experience than those that perform in contemporary proscenium auditoriums. This fact reinforces whatever expectations theatre-goers may already have about Elizabethan spectator behavior.

The spatial conditions of original-practices performances also have multiple psychological effects on audiences. Early reviews and actor interviews of the replica Globe called attention to the social atmosphere of the building and the ease of gaining audience response. Playwright Howard Benton, upon having his own play performed at the Globe, wrote of the space, "the presence of the building dominates. Everyone is held in a democratic space." Reviews mention the "surprising intimacy" of the structure and that to see a play there is "an intricate communal experience" (McCrum; Dillon). Several aspects of the building lead to these communal feelings, and they occur to varying degrees at other original-practices productions in non-replica spaces as well.

First, the physical space of theatres influences behavior, just as any space does. For original-practices auditoriums, with benches such as at the Blackfriars or the open standing area of the Globe, the fixed-features of the space tend to bring people together, making them sociopetal spaces.⁵⁴ This arrangement means that even before the

⁵⁴ Edward T. Hall writes about sociopetal and sociofugal spaces in *The Hidden Dimension* and credits a physician named Humphry Osmond as coming up with the idea. In *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama*, Keir Elam applies the concepts to theatre.

performance, the spectators begin to coalesce into a more cohesive audience than they would in sociofugal spaces, ones which keep people separated, such as proscenium theatres with large, clearly separated seats which all face in one direction.

Second, the audience in original-practices performances is aware of itself; spectators can see each other. Because original-practices productions tend to be on thrust stages, audience surrounds the actors on at least three sides, meaning that if one is watching the actors, fellow theatre-goers will also be in view. The self-awareness of the audience here is assisted by the use of universal lighting, which most original-practices companies adopt. All of the spectators' responses remain visible throughout the performance, which tends to make self-conscious audiences and leads to an ease of sharing those reactions, be they laughter, anger, or applause.

Writing of darkened theatres, Keir Elam explains that "an overall homogeneity of response" is provoked by this "spectator-spectator" interaction, which Susan Bennett refers to as "intra-audience" communication, via three effects:

Stimulation (laughter in one part of the auditorium provokes a similar reaction elsewhere), *confirmation* (spectators find their own responses reinforced by others) and *integration* (the single audience member is encouraged, in consequence, to surrender his individual function in favour of the larger unit of which is part). (Bennett 153; Elam 95-96, emphasis original)

The visible original-practices audience is not different from Elam's description, it is simply magnified in its effects. The apparatus of original-practices productions, from prescriptive marketing to sociopetal space, and especially in visible audience, pushes for group identification.

Audience members are aware of each other in these spaces not just visibly but physically, too. At the Globe, for example, one might be shoulder to shoulder with another groundling, aware of his or her movement and responses. While this intimate proximity to a stranger would be awkward under other circumstances, in this space, because both spectators are mainly focused on the performance, it aids in the coagulation of audience response. Even original-practices productions without standing audiences have some of the physical experience. For example, Shakespeare and Company's Founders theatre has bench seating specifically designed to allow theatre-goers to feel the movements of someone sharing the bench, in order for spectators to recall that they are at a communal event despite being in a darkened space (Shakespeare & Company tour).

Third, while modern safety regulations mean that theatres cannot become filled over a set capacity, places like the Globe still tend toward a crowded feeling. Rikard Küller, in considering the psychological impact of theatre spaces, points out that crowding tends to increase emotional stimulation. In some situations, crowding leads to negative stress reactions, but it is a desirable feature in places like theatres. Audiences accept crowding to some degree because they come to the theatre expecting to share the space with strangers. In traditional contemporary spaces, the clearly designated seating arrangements lessen the stress reaction (174). At the Globe, without defined seating arrangements, the crowd coalesces to create a homogeneity of response and the 'energy' that so many Globe actors have recognized and commented on.

When the Globe project was first proposed, critics argued that no one would wish to stand for three hour performances. Not only have audiences proved willing to do so, but their feelings of discomfort may have increased audience interaction. In an interview,

Paul Chahidi, actor and Globe Education Practitioner, identifies the act of standing as part of audience involvement, saying, "I think it is a much more excited and engaged audience than anywhere else, without a doubt, because they are not slumped in their seats being passive— they are an active part of the process of telling the story." This echoes what Peter Brook, in writing about crucial aspects of theatre design, states, that "the least important thing in theater is comfort" (qtd. in McIntosh 25). While critics complain about the hard benches of the Globe galleries, and the Blackfriars Playhouse has bowed to public pressure and installed cushions on its wooden seating, the discomfort of the experience can lead to a more engaged audience. In being uncomfortable, a spectator remains particularly aware of herself and her surroundings, which can lead to active participation.

Finally, although spectators do not usually appear on them, the bare stages of original-practices productions also add to the interactivity and homogeneity of response. Because the empty stage precludes any kind of attempt at mimetic theatre, original practices requires what American Shakespeare Center founder Ralph Cohen calls "theatre of the imagination." Mark Rylance identifies this as "mass complicity," the agreement of audience and actors to suspend disbelief together for the length of the performance ("Meet the real Shakespeare"). Tyrone Guthrie, speaking of the thrust stage, wrote that the audience must watch for actors' movements more closely on a stage with no set, in order to decipher the play's "physical reality." When an audiences does this, "it finds itself involved. If everything is spelled out in the setting, it takes the audience much longer to get involved" (qtd. in Lewy1 14). Certainly audience members react to varying degrees, not only to be asked to use their imagination but also to the physical space in

which they find themselves for original-practices theatre. However, with so many aspects of the spaces influencing them toward a communal response, these productions are set up to receive dynamic , interactive, and collective response even before the actors take the stage.

The Role of the Audience

Within the space of original-practices theatre, actors and directors are able to take one more crucial step to make audiences collective and responsive: direct address. In universally lit and intimate spaces, actors can not only see their audiences, but audiences know that they are visible as well. This knowledge adds to the feeling of self-consciousness which in turn strengthens feelings of being part of a collective group.

For an actor to completely ignore a visible and very near audience as if there were a fourth wall would be awkward. Instead, in original-practices theatre actors tend to address the audience directly and to cast them, either as a whole or as individuals, as parts within the play, such as the army of *Henry V*. Paul Taylor identifies another example of this kind of audience casting when reviewing 1999's *Julius Caesar*, writing of the groundlings that "a large proportion of the audience here is paying for the privilege of impersonating the throng that rhetorical skill so easily turns into a mob" (Taylor). Writing about 1998's *As You Like It*, Mark Rylance describes a moment in the play when Jaques tossed an apple into the audience, "a simple gesture beautifully illustrating the illusionary nature of the division between actor and audience... which this production is actively exploring by treating the entire Globe as the Forest or Court" ("Meet the real Shakespeare"). Productions can go even further than one scene with specific audience

identification. 2010's *Macbeth* at the Globe included a cloth full of holes strung in the yard for the audience to stand with their heads thrust through. This particular staging concept is not original practices in terms of attempting Shakespearean staging techniques, but it did identify the audience as playing the role of the damned throughout the performance.

Individual audience members can also be singled out for participatory roles. During every production of *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* at the American Shakespeare Center in 2003, the actor playing Rafe chose a woman to be his "Susan," whom he praised and from whom, at play's end, he stole a kiss. More frequently, individual audience members provide examples, such as when the porter from *Macbeth* points out people to illustrate the damned professions or when Benedick comically despairs of finding a woman who fits his desires.

When an actor directly addresses one spectator and gains compliance, he or she works toward gaining the complicity of the entire audience. Ralph Cohen refers to this direct address as the "pleasure of acknowledgement, the sense of being recognised as part of the proceedings" (Cohen, 218). Rikard Küller offers a psychological reason for part of this pleasure in that eye contact has been shown to heighten interest and alertness in humans, much like crowding. Therefore, in the theatrical setting, audience members who are able to see performers' faces, and moreover, to make eye contact with them, will be more focused than those sitting farther away (Küller 164-165). In a small, universally lit space like the Blackfriars, or even in the yard of the Globe, every spectator has, at the least, a potential for direct eye contact. In the 2000 "Globe Research Bulletin", many actors spoke of the importance of specificity, of choosing individuals within the crowd

with whom to connect during asides or monologues. In doing so, they realized that as they built individual connections, the pressures of the sociopetal space and intra-audience communication work to make the individual contact a group contact. Whether it is eye contact or the participation of a single audience member, the give and take between spectator and performer strengthens the overall audience response. The feedback of the acknowledged audience encourages further participation and interactivity.

Original-practices productions of plays that include material which, in the twenty-first century, is objectionable need to be particularly aware of their homogenized and responsive audiences. Assuming that Nightingale and Kiernan's perceptions of audiences at the 1998 Globe's *Merchant of Venice* were correct, that the audiences did not find the play tragic but rather embraced its original Renaissance anti-Semitic comedy, then actors and directors need to find ways to enable and encourage differing opinions in the responsive space for similar situations in future productions. Plays like *Merchant*, or *Shrew*, or even *Henry V*, which at the Globe supposedly received such nationalistic fervor that French audience members were uncomfortable, can all reify stereotypes and slurs. All of Shakespeare's play include offensive material, albeit sometimes subtly, and the fun of an interactive audience does not outweigh the cost of celebrating and potentially strengthening things like xenophobia, racism, or misogyny, all of which already prosper on their own.

At times, original-practices productions must put pressure on their complicit audiences. The same pre-performance materials which help form audience expectations offer a first step; companies which incorporate playbills or pre-show talks should use them to talk about the problems inherent with the Elizabethan worldview which do not—

or more importantly, should not—translate to modern audiences. Those pre-performance materials, of course, can be ignored by audiences and cannot dictate perception.

However, actors can also use their connection to the audiences to comment on a play's troubling moments and messages; the universally lit stage means that background characters can be seen at all times, so their physical reactions to offensive behavior—by characters or indeed by spectators—could sway an audience with which they already have a rapport. Extratextual commentary may upset some Shakespeare purists, but if "pure" Shakespeare reifies stereotypes and prejudices, then original-practices companies must eschew it.

Shakespeare's Globe and other original-practices companies may look to Elizabethan audiences for inspiration, but they serve and perform for modern ones. While visitors might attend the recreated theatres once as part of cultural tourism, if they return it is because they enjoyed something about the performance. Judging from the popularity of the Globe and other original-practices companies, audiences respond to the casual and interactive experiences. Writing about a need for a general alteration in theatre spaces, Michael Billington points out, "What is clear is that audiences are changing. Not only do they crave intimacy; they also hunger for a degree of informality" (Billington "Anyone know a good builder?") Whatever the reason for this shift, be it a desire to connect in a digital world or just the realization that such theatre is fun, other companies have taken note. Although there are not many plans for replica playhouses in the works, companies such as the Royal Shakespeare Company have changed their spaces to a more interactive thrust configuration. W.B. Worthen and many critics of the Globe project pointed out that

no one could recreate Elizabethan audiences. And the critics were right. Instead, original-practices theatre creates new audiences via old techniques, architecture, and expectations.

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