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# SHAKESPEARE'S MOVIE MOTHERS: MATERNAL REPRESENTATION IN FILMS OF *A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM, RICHARD III, ROMEO AND JULIET*

by

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## Abstract

SHAKESPEARE'S MOVIE MOTHERS: MATERNAL REPRESENTATION IN FILMS OF *A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM, RICHARD III, ROMEO AND JULIET*

by

Patricia Lennox

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*Shakespeare's Movie Mothers: Maternal Representation in Films of* A Midsummer Night's Dream, Richard III, and Romeo and Juliet, has two main purposes in examining representations of the mothers' roles in cinema and television films: one to articulate the fluidity of influences between stage and cinema performances of Shakespeare's plays; the other to help redress an imbalance in current Shakespeare film criticism that focuses on the male roles at the expense of the female ones.

Chapters 1 and 2 focus on a single scene in *A Midsummer Night's Dream.* Titania and Oberon's quarrel over the changeling Indian boy, is used to trace the varied ways directors in both the nineteenth-century theater and twentieth-century films create the extra-textual presence of the Indian boy and how this changes Titania's role. *MSD* films include Vitagraph's silent version; an animated one; and those by directors Reinhardt and Dieterle; Kemp and Coronado; Kemp-Welch; Hall; Moshinsky; Lapine and Ardolino; and Hoffman. Chapter 3 considers fluctuations in the women's roles in *Richard III,* not only the cutting or inclusion of Queen Margaret, but the varying degrees of authority and articulate rage allowed or denied Queen Elizabeth and the Duchess of York, plus the extra-textual presence of Jane Shore in films by Benson, Olivier, Howell, Pacino, Loncraine and McKellen. The fourth and final chapter explores how four films of *Romeo and Juliet* – by Cukor, Castellani, Zeffirelli, and Luhrmann –manipulate cinematic conventions to make Lady Capulet and Juliet's Nurse conform with contemporary images of mothers.

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# Introduction

In a recent, major book on Shakespeare films, *Shakespeare in the Cinema: Ocular Proof,* Stephen Buhler points out that most studies of Shakespeare films have concentrated on "what the medium of cinema reveals or obscures about Shakespeare" and have measured films in terms of textual adaptation, cinematic conventions, acting, and directing (2). My examination of Shakespeare's "movie mothers," uses this traditional critical framework described by Buhler, but I use it to focus on the previously unexplored area of the women's roles in Shakespeare films. In his book Buhler builds upon previous scholarship by placing all Shakespeare films "amidst the cultural practices, economic pressures, career trajectories and audience expectations that shaped their production and reception"(8). Buhler and I might be said to have somewhat parallel approaches to our projects, for the object of my analysis is also to show how all interpretations of Shakespeare roles in films are crucially dependent on a combination of artistic, financial, and cultural influences. However, I differ from previous studies of the films, including Buhler's, in that my purpose is to show how these elements shape interpretations of Shakespeare's women.

Integral to this work is my suggestion that such a study must also place the films within the context of a long history of Shakespeare performance that includes both film and stage. Further, I have an additional purpose, namely to explore the relation of gender to the scheme of things, specifically as it is represented by the mothers' roles. Examining the mothers' roles, I will argue, places cinematic interpretation of Shakespeare's women

characters in a prominent position for the first time in critical studies of Shakespeare films. My contention is that seeking insight into the screen performances of selected women's roles also reveals ways that the medium of cinema and the expectations of movie audiences shaped the making of films of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Richard III*, and *Romeo and Juliet*. It also opens the discussion of the films to include previously ignored information about the actors, directors, and producers.

One of the key reasons it is so important to compare film versions is that they highlight textual fluidity as they offer a range of interpretations of a single Shakespeare character: the same character is often transformed in the different films into very different types of people. This is especially true for the women characters whose movie interpretations are often tailored to match preconceived notions of femininity, maternity, and female sensuality, even though these conventions may be at variance with Shakespeare's text. The same type of adaptations may be true of stage performances, but these, though documented in print and photographs, cannot be given close readings twenty and forty years after the fact, as films now can be studied on video.

My work follows in the wake of what is now a flourishing field of Shakespeare film criticism. It also departs because it is written in terms of questions arising from feminist theory, which offers a wide discursive terrain. I am particularly concerned with not assuming automatic or traditional views of the films – but with asking where and how differences in the women's roles are affected by the gendered conventions of those films, a question posed most notably by three decades of feminist film studies and the feminist Shakespeare discourse. Further, an interrogation of this material has caused me to minimize analyzing the female characters as such, in favor of addressing the cinematic

construction of those characters as gendered categories. I shall address this issue within and also beyond: literary text, stage tradition, and a century of Shakespeare films.

It seems time to turn the spotlight on women in the films because Shakespeare film studies have traditionally addressed the films from the male perspective of the director or lead actor (often the same person), while from my feminist standpoint I address this material not as an end in itself but as a frame within which to examine, among other issues, the affect on Shakespeare's characters of the male-dominated hierarchy of filmmaking that ranges from top-level production decisions to issues of the camera's "male gaze." My perspective is also informed by feminist critical theory, which seeks to formulate an answer to the question: "Where are the women and what are they doing?" For me, addressing this question is just the beginning.

The three plays I have chosen as the focus of this project, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Richard III*, and *Romeo and Juliet*, reflect something of the long history of Shakespeare films, and they demonstrate the wide range of interpretation seen in films made decades apart. The films of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* include Vitagraph's silent film (1909), and those directed by Max Reinhardt/William Dieterle (1935), Joan Kemp-Welch (1964), Peter Hall/Royal Shakespeare Company (1969), Elijah Moshinsky/BBC Shakespeare Series (1982), James Lapine/Emile Ardolino/New York Shakespeare Festival (1982), Lindsay Kemp/Celeste Coronado (1984), Robert Saakiants's Animated Tales (1994), Adrian Noble/Royal Shakespeare Company (1996/2000), and Michael Hoffman (2000); *Richard III* films include F. R. Benson (1911), Laurence Olivier (1955), Jane Howell/BBC Shakespeare Series (1983), Richard Loncraine/Ian McKellen (1995), and Al Pacino's *Looking For Richard* (1996); *Romeo*

*and Juliet* films include George Cukor (1936), Renato Castellani (1954), Franco Zeffirelli (1968), and Baz Luhramann (1996). The cultural and historic shaping of these films, defined by a combination of changing contemporary theater traditions and movie conventions, provides the background material, while the actual screen performance as shaped by the actress, director, cinematographer, and film editor, has been foregrounded in my discussion. Thus, while the traditional approaches described by Buhler have a place here, and continue to be part of the on-going discourse on Shakespeare films, I was drawn to the challenge they pose to a "reading" of the films that incorporates both these approaches and feminist theory alike

My analysis extends to the fundamental premise of feminist criticism, namely that reading material within the critical grid of gender studies reveals previously ignored or unseen information that can further the general discourse. To this end I have engaged in a cultural analysis that proceeds from close reading of the films, and the format I have chosen is intended to facilitate a combined historical perspective with close reading. In endeavoring to elucidate these conditions, my choice is to focus on a narrow category of mothers; it is motivated by the fact that within the plays the role of mother is represented with a wide range of characters. My critical approach was formed by the fundamental idea that Shakespeare's women, even the comparatively underwritten ones, have the potential to take on a fuller life on the screen. I am concerned primarily with whether or not a director chooses to enable or suppress this potential, and how those ends are achieved.

My investigation has three sites: the play text, stage history, and films. Although theater and film are usually treated as discrete spheres of analysis, I maintain that they are

part of the shared continuum of Shakespeare performance. Further, I hope to have this dissertation read not only as a discussion of films but as an example of the fluid cross-influence between stage and film performances of Shakespeare. While I cannot posit a single synchronic movement in terms of all the women's roles on film, I will address the major issues involved in a way that suggests a paradigm for examining the women's roles.

The purpose of the first section, chapters 1 and 2, is to demonstrate the wide range of film interpretations of a single role (Titania), how that interpretation is significantly affected by gendered cinema conventions, and how those predominately male-centered conventions are further enforced by the interpolation of an extra-textual character (the Changeling Indian Boy) into the film. The inclusion of an extra-textual character, usually someone mentioned in the play but never called to be on stage, is a popular cinematic device for Shakespeare films where, typical of the medium, the visual image is given equal or greater prominence with the spoken word. It is particularly significant in the way it offers the director entry into the text, though through the invention of a technically non-speaking role. It provides, in effect, the director's rewrite of Shakespeare's play text. The second section, chapters 3 and 4, focuses primarily on two issues, though it continues exploring directors' interpolation of extra-textual characters. Of the main themes in this chapter, one, connected with the mechanics of filmmaking, examines the use of camera shots, particularly close-ups, as gendered manipulation. The second, related to cultural practices, examines choices in casting as reflectors and inscribers of changing cultural attitudes towards women, in general, and mothers, in particular.

* * * * *

The primary goal of this project is to help redress an imbalance in Shakespeare film studies that have, to date, focused primarily on men – directors and actors – and given scant attention to the women's roles. In the current, extensive collection of Shakespeare film studies most major female characters have not been analyzed from a feminist perspective, though the opposite is true in literature and theater-performance studies. (Katherine in *Taming of the Shrew* is the only notable example to date in film studies.) Important secondary roles, such as Juliet's Nurse or Lady Capulet, have received even less attention, despite the fact that these roles have often been the subject of far more varied and contrasting cinematic representations than most of the men's roles. For instance, the similarities and differences in Laurence Olivier and Kenneth Branagh's portrayals of Henry V have received extensive in-depth examination, but similar critical concern has not been applied to the very telling differences among Lady Capulets in the four major film versions, nor to something as fundamental as the conflicting representations of Titania's maternity and sexuality in ten significant film versions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Titania, Lady Capulet, and Juliet's Nurse are the women I will focus on here, along with the three mothers in *Richard III*, Margaret, the Duchess of York, and Queen Elizabeth.

As with all film studies, the mechanics – both artistic and financial – of movie making will be taken into consideration along with the cross fertilization that occurs between Shakespeare stage and film performances. Shakespeare films are unique in that they are based on a well-established play text and come to the screen with centuries of literary commentary and theater traditions, all of which must ultimately be transformed

into a film that works on its own terms as a movie. Before discussing the history of Shakespeare on film and the related critical discourse that forms the background of my own writing, it seems appropriate to consider how theater productions have influenced films of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Richard III*, and *Romeo and Juliet*.

Early movies, the silent films of the teens and twenties and the talkies of the thirties, all drew heavily on stage traditions. In fact, some of the silent films, like Benson's *Richard III* are the only remaining records of actors on the early twentieth-century stage. With other films directors, such as Reinhardt and Olivier, drew on extensive theater experience. The earliest films reflected current stage practices that had roots in nineteenth-century performances, which themselves were either continuations or confrontations of eighteenth- and seventeenth-century variations of the plays, sometimes both at once. Theatre influence on Shakespeare films continues to the present, though since the mid-twentieth century that influence has been reciprocal in nature and has moved back and forth between stage and screen in a fruitful cross-pollination of production styles and character interpretation. For example Reinhardt had directed *Dream* for over two decades before he made his film. Cukor's *Romeo and Juliet* was influenced by John Gielgud's British production, and Zeffirelli's version translated his youth-orientated stage production to the screen. Loncraine/McKellen's *Richard* drew heavily on Richard Eyre's stage version where McKellen had played the title role.

Sometimes Shakespeare films are haunted by the ghosts of century-old productions. For instance directors of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*'s have made music a major part of the show since the late seventeenth century when Purcell wrote music for *The Fairy Queen* (1692). In the eighteenth century music continued to dominate the play

in *The Comick Masque of Pyramus and Thisbe* in 1716 and a mock opera at Covent Garden in 1745. When the play reappeared as David Garrick's *Dream* in 1755 the production featured twenty-seven songs sung by imported Italian singers. Mendelssohn's famous music became attached to the play with Madame Vestris's 1840 production, which also marked the return of Shakespeare's script. Reinhardt drew on music-drenched nineteenth-century productions for his own Mendelssohn-infused film with its centrally placed ballet, and at the turn-of-the-twenty-first-century Hoffman's soundtrack faintly echoes Garrick in its use of Italian opera. Another element that remains consistent and has been carried forward from theater productions into film versions, early and late, is the emphasis on *Dream* as a pageant that includes elegant costumes, elaborate sets, special effects, and, on occasion, turns Titania and her fairies into little more than into glorified show girls, as Reinhardt's pre-movie production did in Oxford.

Early silent Shakespeare films often capture disappearing stage traditions. One such tradition is the practice, started by Madame Vestris, of turning Oberon into a breeches part for a woman. In the 1910 Vitagraph film of *Dream* Oberon is played by a woman, as he had been on the stage for nearly a century. However, the film renames the character Penelope, dresses her in flowing Grecian robes, and gives Fairyland two female rulers, a move that Shakespeare silent film expert Robert Hamilton Ball found inexplicable, but one that is quite clear when viewed from the perspective of stage conventions.

With *Richard III* a different category of stage tradition has transferred to films: the nineteenth-century actor/manager who played the lead role has become the twentieth-century film director/producer who plays the lead. In the eighteenth and nineteenth

centuries Richard was played by the great-actor managers. Garrick. Kemble. Keene. while in the twentieth century. though the tradition does not dominate stage productions. a similar actor/director combination is seen in the films of Benson (who reinstated Margaret who had been deleted in nineteenth-century productions). Olivier. McKellen. and Pacino. As might be expected. these directors often absorb Richard's views of the women around him and this view. in turn. affects the ways in which they direct those roles. Olivier minimizes the women and turns them into cutouts in a history pageant. McKellen. on the other hand. makes them prominent. but curiously conflates Richard's mother. the Duchess of York. with his sworn enemy. Margaret. and takes quite literally Richard's claim that his mother's lack of love caused his infirmities. A second tradition that remains in Benson's silent film comes from Colly Cibber's seventeenth-century rewrite of the play. Cibber's scene of Queen Elizabeth comforting her two young sons in the Tower remained well into the early twentieth century, even after the return to Shakespeare's play and the rejection of Cibber and Garrick's addition. In fact Benson's inclusion of the scene in the film. which is really fifteen-minutes of highlights from a staged production. offers a record of the scene's popularity because it retains it even though Benson was noted for rejecting earlier adaptations in favor of Shakespeare's original play text.

*Romeo and Juliet.* offers an example of how casting has changed and been influenced in the twentieth century by the back-and-forth influence between stage and screen. Traditionally. stage actresses playing Juliet were not teenagers and frequently were in their thirties or even forties. which meant that Lady Capulet and the Nurse would be correspondingly older. However. a big shift in the actresses' ages occurred in the

1960s when Franco Zeffirelli, an Italian director invited to direct the play in England, featured teenaged lovers, and a correspondingly much younger Lady Capulet. Over the years Lady Capulet had also been acquiring a tradition of adultery, hinted at or made explicit in her relationship with Tybalt, a move resulting from casting a younger woman, but retaining the older husband. On stage in the thirties Lady Capulet is still the aristocrat, as she is in George Cukor's film. However, in the sixties Zeffirelli took years off her age and also included a passionate exchange with a very sexy Tybalt, on stage and again in his film. Since then she has, more often than not, been in her late thirties or early forties on stage, with a correspondingly young Juliet. In Baz Luhrmann's recent film a teenaged Juliet has a mother just old enough to feel competitive with her daughter.

Films also record shifts in costume traditions. For instance, in a 1907 silent Italian film of *Romeo and Juliet*, Juliet's Nurse's costume is a copy of the traditional nineteenth-century Nurse's costume: fussy old lady clothes, layers of frill and a lace cap worn on the London stage by the famous Nurse Mrs. Sterling in 1887. However, in George Cukor's 1936 film the Nurse wears what became the traditional twentieth-century costume: a wimple and ample but simple dress reminiscent of Chaucer's Wife of Bath. This costume evolved from William Poel's production in 1917, and John Gielgud's in 1934, both of which restored the Nurse's bawdy language that had been missing or sanitized for over a century.

Despite the heavy influence of the stage on Shakespeare films, they have a unique place in the annuals of cinema history. Even in the earliest days of films there were Shakespeare films that set out to establish innovative cinematic conventions, even in combination with theatrical ones. For instance, Reinhardt's film might have been

patterned on his stage productions, but co-director Dieterle included Academy Award-winning special effects unique to the movies. Shakespeare films are also among the first movies ever made. Of the more than 400 silent films listed by Robert Hamilton Ball in his monumental history of silent Shakespeare films, the earliest was made in 1898 and consists of two minutes of Sir Beerbohm Tree as King John. A decade later Brooklyn, New York's Vitagraph studio filmed a series of Shakespeare's best-known plays. Shakespeare films were an international product made in the United States, Britain, Italy, France, and Germany. Originally, as the movie houses changed from the seedy nickelodeon to the elegant picture palace, these films helped establish that movies had a cultural cachet – they could do the classics and could feature famous stage actors in acclaimed roles – Frederick Warde as King Lear, Forbes-Robertson as Hamlet. Shakespeare also provided stories and plots for films at a time when directors and producers realized that, if they were to keep their profitable audiences, they would have to provide more than pictures of moving objects or vaudeville skits. By the time of the Shakespeare tri-centenary celebration in 1916, the ten or fifteen minute one-reel Shakespeare film had been replaced by three to nine reel versions with elaborate, specially constructed, sets, elegant and costly costumes, sophisticated camera work, evocative lighting, and, that evolving breed – the movie star. Shakespeare's anniversary was celebrated in Hollywood with the production of two big-budget versions of *Romeo and Juliet* produced by rival companies.

Curiously, the advent of talking films ended the rage for Shakespeare films. The primitive limitations of the early microphone temporarily set movie-making back. The first sound Shakespeare films, *The Taming of the Shrew* made in 1929 with Mary

Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks was filmed so both a sound and silent version could be shown. The result was a highly stylized, much cut version that seems to have satisfied neither its cast, director, or audiences, who generally ignored it. By the time the second American Shakespeare "talkie" was made in 1935 (Reinhardt and Dieterle's lavish *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, discussed in-depth in chapter 2) films had regained and surpassed the sophistication of the late silent films. However Reinhardt's film and MGM's 1936 lush *Romeo and Juliet* (discussed in chapter 4) sensitively directed by George Cukor, echoed those original Shakespeare films in their transfer of theater tradition to the screen. For example, Norma Shearer's Juliet and Leslie Howard's Romeo were middle-aged and the screen treatment was respectful. The previous year a British film version of *As You Like It* had suffered from a similar staginess. Production of Shakespeare films went into decline until the mid-1940s when Laurence Olivier directed and starred in a stirring war-time *Henry V;* his film noir *Hamlet* followed after the war, and a *Richard III* made for television broadcast and movie house distribution (discussed in chapter 3) was made in 1955. In fact, despite Orson Welles's films of *Macbeth* (1948), *Othello* (1952), and *Falstaff* (*Chimes at* Midnight, 1966), and Joseph Mankiewicz's intelligent and star-studded *Julius Caesar* in 1953, between the fifties and the eighties it was television that kept Shakespeare on the screen. These included Hallmark's reverential productions, PBS broadcasts of BBC programs including the multi-part history series *Wars of the Roses* (1960) and the BBC Shakespeare Series (early 1980s) with its full-text versions of every play in the Shakespeare canon. Then, in 1989 an actor-director from the British stage accomplished what Olivier could not. Like Olivier, Kenneth Branagh made a highly popular film of *Henry V,* but, unlike Olivier, his success

opened the floodgates to what has become a deluge of Shakespeare films. During the following decade and into this century, at least one, and sometimes two or three, films of Shakespeare plays or spin-off derivatives based on the plays have been filmed either for movies or for television.

During this time, publications on Shakespeare films have also kept pace and the topic has now become an accepted area of specialization within Shakespeare studies, testified to by the fact that the annual Shakespeare Association of America conference now includes at least one seminar annually on Shakespeare films. In 2000 the first international conference devoted solely to the films was held in Malaga, Spain. The "Shakespeare on Film Newsletter," begun in 1970, continues to be published as part of the quarterly *Shakespeare Bulletin*, and most of the scholarly pioneers in the field continue to write about the new films, their early faith in the academic importance of the films now justified. In part the growing acceptance of the films as sites worthy of scholarly attention is consistent with the growing place of performance studies within Shakespeare studies. The first wave of Shakespeare film scholars began writing when the films were hard to obtain sixteen-millimeter prints. They focused on the history of film production and directorial choices, compared stage and screen production styles and actors' performance in the leading role. The advent of video expanded a writer's ability to give the films a "close reading." The second wave of Shakespeare scholars, including Kathleen Howlett, Stephen Buhler, and Courtney Lehmann, whose works began to appear in this new century, incorporate post-structuralist theories into their post-modern critical examinations of the films. To date, however, no one has provided a close examination of the women's roles within the films.

"Shakespeare's Movie Mothers" is situated midway in this critical evolution. Because the more traditional "history-of-film-making" approaches to Shakespeare films have not examined the women's roles, it has been necessary to use their analytical tools to expand the written record by noting what impact the treatment of Shakespeare's women, had on the film. However, writing about Shakespeare's women, also meant drawing on four generations of feminist criticism – textual, theatrical, and cinematic. Textual criticism of Shakespeare, especially Barbara Hodgdon's, suggested areas of investigation regarding text; performance criticism, such as Phillipa Berry's, established performance standards; and feminist film criticism, especially Laura Mulvey's, provided the critical grid of what to look for on the screen.

* * * *

The category "'movie mothers" may sound like excessive fine-tuning for the much larger, important, and under-explored topic of Shakespeare's women on films. However, separating out the mothers helped enormously to focus my discussion by providing parameters that are broad enough to include several types of women, all of who function within a maternal capacity in the plays. Titania, queen of the fairies is the adoptive mother of the changeling Indian boy; Queen Elizabeth has three children that Richard preys upon; her mother-in-law the Duchess of York is mother to the murderous Richard; his nemesis Margaret is a deposed queen who saw Richard kill her only son; Lady Capulet is a wealthy mother, while the servant Juliet's Nurse is a surrogate mother. Here, as with other Shakespeare plays, it is the rare mother who can save her child's life. Titania relinquishes her child to Oberon, and Elizabeth saves only her daughter; all the plays other children are dead by the fifth act.

Another aspect that made the mothers so appealing is that the mother figure generally becomes a stereotype in films, especially those made in Hollywood where the majority of Shakespeare films originate. Shakespeare's mothers, on the other hand, are never stereotypes. Movie directors make choices in presenting those mothers on screen to they almost always embody their own cultural constructions of gender, maternity, female agency and parental responsibility to the point where many of the mothers in the films of *Dream*, *Richard III*, and *Romeo and Juliet* can be said to illustrate how the construct of motherhood changes at key points in the twentieth century. It is important to remember that Shakespeare films are among the few movies that begin each time from the same "script."

It is a well-rehearsed fact that movies have always had a love-hate relationship with women and that mothers provide a specific and particularly vexed locus for this relationship. As a result, Shakespeare's mothers change from film to film. For instance, Richard's mother, the Duchess of York, is a serene, wise old woman in Olivier's film and a cold, hateful snob in Loncraine/McKellen's. Films traditionally have had trouble sanctioning a mix of loving maternity with honest sexuality, a combination Shakespeare frequently allowed his women. The result is that Titania becomes a glamorous but careless mother, (1935) and a Renaissance Madonna (1982). Lady Capulet a sympathetic aristocrat (1935), and an adulteress (1969 and 2001). Juliet's mother has been loving (1935, 1955), angry (1969), and a neurotic (2001). As expected, generally the choice reflects the current film conventions where mothers can either be a saint or a villain, but not a mix of both. Shakespeare further challenges Hollywood dichotomies in the way he often allows women authority, whether over a house full of servants, or ruling a band of

fairies. Here again, Hollywood seems to have had trouble accepting, or finding, suitable film conventions within which to place these authoritative women on screen.

This palimpsest of theatrical tradition, the history of Shakespeare on film, gendered-biased film directors, Hollywood film conventions, and the cultural construct of mothers provides the background for my exploration of Shakespeare's movie mothers.

**Chapter 1:**

Chapter 1 uses the wide range of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* films to explore ways in which Titania conforms to or confronts classic Hollywood stereotypes of women. The play has a woman, a queen of fairies, who is a loyal protector, an adoptive mother, but at the same time is an angry wife. Her sexuality is key to Oberon's spell that makes her the adoring consort of an ass. My point of departure is film directors' inclusion of the changeling boy. Starting with the boy's mid-nineteenth century appearance in elaborate stage productions, I show how this decorative presence is transformed in the film versions to shape the role of Titania herself. There is no set pattern to the boy's age or appearance, and as he changes with each of the films, so does the character of Titania. Titania in films has looked like a standard issue fairy (both with and without wings), an Amazon vegetation goddess, a naked earth mother, a Follies showgirl, *The Wizard of Oz*'s good witch Glinda, a Renaissance Madonna, and fairy queens in nineteenth-century art.

**Chapter 2:**

Chapter 2 continues to explore material from chapter 1, but where the first chapter was a study of the many different types of Titania on screen, this chapter focuses

specifically on two films that create extensive roles for the boy within the movie. Reinhardt/Dieterle's film contains fifteen minutes of interspersed footage that tells a mini-story of the boy's rejection by Titania and happy rescue by Oberon, while Adrian Noble's film uses the boy as a coda throughout. In both cases the boy is young, though in the former he is five and in the latter closer to twelve. The continued presence of the boy remains a defining feature for the character of Titania. This chapter also demonstrates how even extensively discussed films, such as Reinhardt's, can reveal new information when examined with a new critical grid. My discussion of Max Reinhardt and William Dieterle's direction and, especially their photography, of Anita Louise as Titania considers the role of emigrant German directors in creating the image of the Hollywood screen goddess patterned on European women, especially Greta Garbo and Marlene Dietrich, and draws parallels between their film's Titania and Dietrich's movie *Blue Angel*. Noble's film, on the other hand, uses the boy's gaze, first through a Freudian keyhole at Hippolyta and later as an omni-present observer of Titania, as a voyeuristic device that both exaggerates and parodies her sexuality. Only the intelligence of the actress Lindsay Duncan, who plays both women, manages to keep Titania from being completely off-balance, despite being costumed in a flamingo pink Barbie doll dress.

**Chapter 3:**

Chapter 3 focuses on four film versions of *Richard III* and examines how the directors' gendered interpretations of the women are the result of editing, casting, textual cuts or transpositions, and camera work. It pays particular attention to the ways in which Olivier reduces Shakespeare's women to figures in a history pageant, while his own

creation of Jane Shore acquires visual power and sensuality. Ian McKellen's adaptation is equally Richard-centered, though the women retain greater visibility and authority. However, the Duchess of York is made something of a villain through conflating her role with Margaret. McKellen's addition is a silent, but ever-present Princess Elizabeth, whose virginal innocence stands in constant contrast to the other more sophisticated, knowledgeable and – by implication – cold women. Jane Howell's direction, on the other hand, is also gendered, but towards a feminist perspective that gives the women great presence on the screen through a combination of keeping Shakespeare's dialogue uncut and in place, and casting strong actresses, and consistently giving them the central place on screen.

**Chapter 4:**

Chapter 4 reviews the roles of Lady Capulet and Juliet's Nurse in *Romeo and Juliet* in four significant film versions, one American, two a mix of Italian and British or American, and the fourth Australian/American. Here, because this is primarily a domestic tragedy, the mother's role is very much influenced by popular ideas of what a wealthy mother is like. Cukor and Castellani are the most sympathetic. The former sees her as aristocratic and gracious, while the later actually gives her the most complex treatment of any film by placing her firmly within a community of women in a well-run home. Zeffirelli introduces the young, bitter Lady Capulet, and Luhrmann offers two Lady Capulets. The first is a wittily done comic character, who dresses up as Cleopatra for the ball while telling Juliet about her suitor Paris. The second, post-ball, is closer to Blanche Dubois, someone who is too frail, too beaten down by a domineering husband to even care about saving her teenaged daughter. In these films Juliet's Nurse undergoes

less radical changes, but the consideration here is the degree to which she is made a figure of fun by being presented as a female grotesque.

As stated above, my goal has not been to posit a single synchronic movement in terms of the women's roles in the films. Instead, I have sought to use traditional approaches to Shakespeare films but to expand those approaches by working from the fundamental question: where are the women. To this end, I have concentrated primarily on where and how in films directors have enabled or suppressed Shakespeare's women's roles, how those ends have been shaped by gendered film conventions and by the cultures in which the films were made. I have, in effect, gone back to write a missing page of Shakespeare screen history and in doing so hope that I have also suggested a way forward.

# Chapter One

## *A Midsummer Night's Dream* on Film: Titania and the Changeling Indian Boy

*A Midsummer Night's Dream* has been, by far, the favorite Shakespeare comedy for film directors, and with nine versions available on video, it is a rich place to begin an examination of mothers in Shakespeare films.[1] Like most fairy tales, *Dream* has no birth mothers in the story, and, typical of the genre, the mother has been replaced by another woman, but *Dream*'s Titania is an adoptive mother not a wicked stepmother. She is an unusual case because she is also a good queen, a "fairy of no mean repute," and a woman of frank sexual appetite, a trait more traditionally connected with evil stepmothers. Located by the text in a fairyland forest situated on the edges of antique Athens, Titania and Oberon are a conflation of Greek gods, European fertility deities, and English fairy folk – a conflation more easily seen perhaps in Puck who is part Bacchus, part faun, and part folklore prankster. Even when films relocate the setting to England, Italy, or Connecticut, USA, the conflation remains the same. In addition, film versions add still another layer of mythology – the screen goddess. In this palimpsest there is nothing that marks Titania as specifically maternal, yet that consideration is foisted onto the character when the Indian boy actually appears. This has happened sporadically in stage productions from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, and happens in all but one of the film versions from the earliest in 1909 to the present. This chapter focuses on film directors' negotiations of the subsequent effects on the character of Titania in response to the boy's actual presence on the screen.

The total collection of films of *Midsummer Night's Dream* includes six silent movies, one animated versions, one with puppets, one with a cast of children,[2] three major Hollywood releases – one made in the first decade of talkies and two between 1996 and 2000 – plus several television broadcasts. Of these, the films discussed in this chapter include: Vitagraph studio (1909); Max Reinhardt/William Dieterle (1935); Joan Kemp-Welch (1964); Peter Hall/RSC (1969); Elijah Moshinsky/BBC (1982); Lindsay Kemp/Celeste Coronado (1984); Robert Saakiants/Animated Tales (1994); Adrian Noble/RSC (1996/2000); James Lapine/Emile Ardolino/New York Shakespeare Festival (1982); Michael Hoffman (2000). In these ten films the cinematic and artistic quality, as well as the directors' agendas vary widely: the silent version resembles an amateur theatrical; Max Reinhardt's has Mendelssohnian grandeur with much music and spectacle and little dialogue; the BBC Shakespeare series adheres to a mandate to include every line and avoid radical invention; the Lindsay Kemp and Celeste Coronado film offers a camp pastiche – part Benjamin Britten opera and part sly homage to Reinhardt. The Hollywood films had lavish budgets while others made do with modest or even minimal ones, which is one of the reasons that the 'look' of Fairyland has proved highly mutable. Still, on film indoor sets far outnumber the use of real nature; some forests are defiantly non-Arcadian, and one is even treeless. In the RSC productions, Peter Hall's fairies live in a cold, damp, and muddy English woods, while Adrian Noble's fairy world exists on a bare stage overhung with raindrop-shaped light bulbs. Joan Kemp-Welch's made-for-television *MSD* has the fake trees and black-and-white flatness of early television broadcasts, while Elijah Moshinsky's BBC version, made sixteen years later, offers richly colored Rembrandt-inspired scenes to compensate for its studio restrictions.

Most of the films were made for general audiences: four for movie house distribution where they were expected to make money at the box office (Vitagraph, Reinhardt, Noble, Hoffman); four (Kemp-Welch, Hall, Saakiants, and the BBC-Shakespeare Series) were filmed for television. The NY Shakespeare Festival film records a live performance. Coronado/Kemp's film, uniquely, was aimed at the gay art house. Only four of the ten had their origins in stage productions, and the film directors, Max Reinhardt, Lindsay Kemp, Peter Hall, and Adrian Noble, were working from their own stage versions. However, even here the original staging was altered to take advantage of cinema's special effects. All of the films melt together layers of stage convention and film codes, and there has been a steady cross-pollination between theater and cinema. For instance, Hoffman, Kemp/Coronado, and the animated film all contain allusions to Reinhardt's film, but that film's artistic roots lie in the theater. Although the films discussed in this chapter were made during the passage of nearly a century and there were two and three decades between some of them, they all seem to acknowledge and allude to the play's nineteenth-century stage traditions – perhaps because this tradition is also so much a part of Reinhardt's seminal film.

For all their rich variety and despite their many differences – full text, truncated text; bright vision, dark undertones; canonical or experimental approach – the one thing that remains constant in the films is the inclusion on screen of the Indian boy, the changeling child over whom Titania and Oberon fight. The boy appears on screen in nine of the ten films, even though Shakespeare's play text never calls for him to be on stage. In some of the films the boy's presence is minimal, but in others it becomes an important part of the director's vision, especially in Reinhardt, Kemp, and Noble. Most important to this chapter is the way that

repeated inclusion of the boy, across a wide spectrum of films, draws attention to the custody battle subplot that usually receives far less attention. In highlighting the subplot's importance by bringing the boy on screen, the films also require greater interaction between the queen of the fairies and the boy, an interaction that foregrounds Titania's role as foster mother. However, this extra-textual inclusion – in part the result of film's insistence on showing who and what is mentioned – by making concrete Titania's relations with the changeling child, also makes "Titania's abandonment of the boy and of the loyalty her relation with him represents" more troubling (Dubrow 150). It raises vexed questions about her indulgence and later desertion of the child when, as Oberon reports, she meekly gives him the boy: "I then did ask of her changeling child: / Which straight she gave me, and her fairy sent / To bear him to my bower in fairy land" (4.1.59-61[3]). In contrast to this description of obediently handing over the child, tempered with its notice of fairies carefully escorting the boy to his new home, some of the films have Titania literally pushing the boy away. Further, showing Titania as an adoptive mother to the child problematizes the sexuality that the text establishes through Oberon's list of her lovers – a list she rather unconvincingly denies as "the forgeries of jealousy" (2.1.81) – and through her erotic encounter with Bottom. One of the problems with the image of a sensual mother is that it confuses the traditional boundary between good and bad mothers that calls for a separation between chastity and sensuality. Hollywood famously categorized this split as Virgin/Whore, which could be read as a latter-day version of classical antiquity's separation between Diana, goddess of chastity, and Aphrodite/Venus, goddess of love.

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Whether the changeling appears or not, the subplot of the Indian boy occupies a curious place within the play. On one level it replicates the play's themes of change and displacement, of abandonment and rescue: the boy is stolen by fairies from the Indian king, given to Titania, then tricked away from her by Oberon. What little we do know comes from either Titania or Puck. She says the child is the son of her votaress, a mortal who died giving birth. The reason she insists that "the fairy land buys not the child of me" (123) is loyalty to his dead mother and to memories of their time together when "her womb [was] then rich with my young squire" (131). The less than veracious Puck says the boy is the son of an Indian king and that Oberon, who himself has just returned from India, wants the pretty changeling for his court, a "knight of his / Train to trace the forests wild " (1.2.24-25). Oberon himself says he wants the "little changeling boy / To be my henchman" (1.2.120-121). Recent readings, including Louis Montrose's, have argued that the disparity between these stories "extends the tension between fantasies of male parthenogenesis and myths of female powers" (Dubrow 145).[4] Because both are powerful spirits, the fairy king and queen's battle over the child and their jealousy of each others' amorous affairs, has turned nature upside down: the seasons have lost their order and storms flood the countryside – at least the English world where the "nine-men's morris is filled with mud" (2.1.98).[5] They have been bad parents, as neglectful of their worldly charges as Titania will later be of the boy. Because of their debate human mortals must live in fog and rain, the "progeny of evils" that, as Titania points out, are her and Oberon's responsibility because "we are their parents and original" (2.1.117). Oberon claims she can make amends, in a sense become the good parent again, by relinquishing the boy to him. Finally, when Oberon gains custody in act four, the boy ceases to be of concern and is not mentioned again. However, in some films the boy continues to remain on screen even after he joins Oberon because the director

has interwoven the role into the story, and the subplot continues to develop. In Reinhardt the boy is shown several times at Oberon's side, sharing his glory, his little turban decorated with a miniature version of Oberon's antlers. In Noble he remains as participant and agent of the story's development through to the end where he, not the lovers, is the focus of the fairies' final celebration.

It's not even clear what a changeling orphan is actually doing in a comedy. He brings with him unhappy reminders of mortality and dangerous childbirth. In old wives' tales the changeling child was the deformed, or retarded child left by the fairies in exchange for a bright beautiful human child –a myth-strategy to alleviate a mother's sense of guilt as defective procreator. Thoughts about birth anxieties are further encouraged at *Dream*'s end with a bridal bed blessing listing the afflictions and birth defects the newlyweds' children will be spared.[6] Dubrow suggests that the boy may indicate contemporary anxiety over the death of parents and the dangers of stepparents and custodial arrangements. Shakespeare's plays have surprisingly few stepmothers for a society in which stepmothers were a relatively common occurrence (the only one in addition to Titania is the evil Queen in *Cymbeline*). Shakespeare may even have been especially aware of this problem in 1596, the year he wrote *Dream*, because his aunt and uncle di, leaving his cousin an orphan. The fact that 1596 also marked the death of eleven-year old Hamnet, Shakespeare's only son, adds poignancy to the subplot of a boy desperately desired by both Titania and Oberon.

In the play the idea of stepmother is not isolated to Titania and the Indian boy. It is incorporated in Theseus's reference to "a step-dame or a dowager, / Long withering out a young man's revenue" (1.1.5-6) and in Lysander's description of his "widow aunt, a dowager, / Of great revenue, and she hath no child / . . . / And she respects me as her only son" (1.1.157-160).

Further, stepmothers play a major role in the Theseus legend, a story familiar to an Elizabethan audience through North's translation of Ovid. In the legend, Theseus, as a young man, is nearly killed by his stepmother Medea, but saved at the last minute by his father who recognizes the sword worn by this son he had never seen.[7] Later, Theseus's second wife Phaedra, will cause the death of his and Hippolyta's son Hippolytus, "whose fate it was to die / By step dame's craft and sire's credulity" (Ovid 360). The Theseus legend has still another link to *Dream*'s ghost – the child who causes the parent's death. The Indian boy's birth resulted in his mother's death. Theseus was the inadvertent cause of his father's death when the young warrior, returning from Minos, forgot to replace the black sails of defeat with the white ones of victory. The grief-stricken King Aegeus, believing his son was dead, committed suicide.

Titania's custody of the changeling boy is not simply about being a step- or adoptive-parent. There is also the issue of a boy's necessary emergence from babyhood to boyhood. An Elizabethan audience would have been aware of the importance of "breeching": a young boy's move from the smock and petticoats of early childhood to the trousers of the male world. This was a significant moment in a boy's life (Shakespeare's plays contain many references to it as an important point of passage) and usually occurred between the ages of five and seven. Montrose argues that the Indian boy would be about this age and that this shift would be one more layer in the play's series of transformations. It's a reading that works equally well with a modern Freudian interpretation – the boy is at the crux where he must reject the feminized world of the mother and move into the male world. Either reading suggests that Titania is a mother who is unwilling to let her child grow up, "to trace the forests wild" (1.2.25), a rather heavy responsibility to place on a fairy – even if she is a queen.[8] Two films focus heavily on the boy

and place him at this juncture. In his 1935 film Reinhardt builds on the idea that the boy needs to be rescued from Titania. Reinhardt, or his co-director William Dieterle, adds a contemporary twist and makes Titania a glamorous divorcee for whom the child is merely a diversion, a plaything. Adrian Noble's 1996 film situates the boy's journey to selfhood in the Freudian primal moment where, peering through a keyhole, he realizes that his "mother" (Hippolyta/Titania doubled by Lindsay Duncan) is a separate, sexually charged person. Duncan's languorous reading of "Four days will quickly steep themselves in night; / Four nights will quickly dream away the time" (1.1.7-8) is drenched with sexual desire. The remainder of the film is the boy's education in the many faces of love and his confident emergence as a beloved junior member of the troupe of actors.

*A Midsummer Night's Dream* text is vague about personal details regarding the Indian boy, perhaps because the text never calls for him to appear on stage. We are told nothing in the text about his nationality, his physical appearance, or even his age. Each film director has imaged him differently. On screen his age has ranged from infant in arms to late teens. He has been both an Indian and an English child and has been dressed in everything from the silks of a rajah to blue stripped pajamas. Within the play the changeling *is* mysterious. In fact, as Dubrow points out, the "very existence of the plot is puzzling" (145). He seems little more than a device to trigger the break between Titania and Oberon. The missing personal details are not necessarily important if he is only a plot device; in fact the lack of specifics helps to de-emphasize a literal interpretation of the boy. On stage, if he is there at all, his presence is usually more decorative than plot-driven. Traditionally the main focus of Titania's role is not on the boy but on her tempestuous relations with Oberon, her ultimate capitulation to him, and her infatuation with Bottom. However, her most lyrical speech remains her description of the boy's

pregnant mother in 2.1.122-145, with its rich mix of metaphors of commerce and pregnancy celebrating a female friendship based on service, talk, laughter, and a deep sense of loyalty. Since Peter Brook's Royal Shakespeare Company's production introduced the practice in 1970, Titania's role has taken on additional complexity by doubling the roles of Hippolyta and Titania. This is usually matched by doubling Theseus and Oberon, which means that their quarrel extends from Athens to Fairyland. However, in the films only Adrian Noble uses this and Lindsay Duncan and Alex Jennings double the roles, as they did on stage.

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In ninety years of film history, Titania has had many guises, including a Renaissance Madonna, a Victorian fairy, and a drag queen. She has been dressed as a Follies chanteuse in clinging silver lamé and has also worn nothing more than a few leaves. She has been a devoted protector of the boy, a bad mother, and an indifferent one. She has fondled babies, hugged five-year-olds, held the hand of older boys, and run her fingers down the spine of a young man – all of them her changeling Indian boy. She has confronted a female Oberon (renamed Penelope); and various male Oberons, two on horseback; one wrapped in vines, another dressed in a sweeping brocade coat, and still another with a billowing cape that canopied the night sky. Actresses playing Titania on film tend to share certain physical similarities, including attractive, slightly mature bodies; they are usually older than the young lovers, which means in their thirties; they almost always play the role with long blonde hair (sometimes straight, sometimes curled), and generally wear elaborate gowns (eight out of ten – the exceptions are Judi Dench in green body paint and Michelle Shay in a "cat suit" body stocking). In every case Titania changes

according to the moment's predominant ideal of beauty, and in all the films from 1935 onward that ideal has been defined in large part by film stars. Anita Louise, Reinhardt's Titania, has the soft-lit bright glamour of the 1930s movie stars Marlene Dietrich and Greta Garbo. Michelle Pfeiffer, Hoffman's Titania, is an acknowledged screen icon of the 1990s, but the golden lights and camera's soft-focus in her scenes seem a deliberate attempt to recapture the glamour of an earlier time. Helen Mirren, Moshinsky's Titania, is quite literally patterned on a conflation of paintings from two periods, the Renaissance, (most specifically when she is sleeping in her bower in 2.2, a scene that meticulously recreates Rembrandt's painting of Danae) and the late-Victorian Pre-Raphaelites. However, Mirren's "look" also coincided with the hippie style of the 1960s and 70s. In other scenes this Titania almost seems to struggle with the masses of golden hair – but Mirren's sharp personality finds its way through – as, in a later film, Lindsay Duncan's acuteness cuts through a look that one viewer classified as "bimbo." Duncan, in Noble's film, would be a caricature of the image of ample bosomed, big-haired sex-goddess – the form-fitting dress rivals Mae West's costumes – were it not for her fine bones and intelligent humor. On the other hand, Lindsay Kemp/Celeste Coronado's Titania, played by Jack Birkett, is a deliberate parody, one that most closely resembles Glinda, the good witch in *Wizard of Oz*. Only Judi Dench, as Hall's muddy Titania with lank dark hair, an abandoned air and normal, womanly body, is at odds with the image of screen goddess, and was certainly unique among women who appeared on the television screen in 1969. Her presence is even more remarkable in light of Molly Hasksell's observation that for women the years from 1962 to 1973 were "the most disheartening in screen history" (323). If Dench's liberated Titania had a contemporary on the screen. it would be the infinitely more coiffed Emma Peel in *The Avengers.*[9] As strong and liberated as Dench's Titania is, the costuming – somewhere between ancient wood sprite and

contemporary hippy – is actually the happy result of necessity and compromise. Hall deliberately chose to subvert the fairyland spectacle of Reinhardt's film and instead wanted to capture the play's emphasis on seasons turned upside-down in muddy Warwickshire. During the filming, it became clear that the rainy weather would spoil the elegant silk and lace of the Restoration costumes Titania and her court had worn in his stage production. Since there was no money to commission new costumes, director Noble simply discarded Titania and Oberon's clothes and kept off camera the galoshes Dench wore to stay warm.[10] Soviet artist Saaklind's drawing of Titania in the *Animated Shakespeare* is close to Hall's vision. This is a warrior goddess with a square jaw and a rugged demeanor who nonetheless has hair that turns into flowers and a complexion that goes from wood spirit green to human flesh color when she falls in love with Bottom.

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On the other hand, it is the Indian boy, who is the real "changeling" in the films and demonstrates a wide range of interpretations, adapted according to the director's approach. He is present in all but Peter Hall's film, though there Titania's and Oberon's courts are composed of children. The boy's age is important because Titania must play off it, responding differently to a babe in arms or an adolescent. The most extreme casting is the fey young man in Lindsay Kemp/Celeste Coronado's film, and the youngest is the infant in Elijah Moshinsky's BBC version. James Lapine, director of the Joseph Papp production, makes memorable use of a three-year-old African-American boy. The Vitagraph silent film, Reinhardt, and Hoffman all set his

age at around five. Adrian Noble uses a boy who is closer to nine or ten, while Joan Kemp-Welch has him aged around twelve; the animated version's boy seems to be in his early to mid-teens. In addition to the boy's age, his ethnicity also changes: Indian in five, African-American in one, and Caucasian in three. The Soviet animators drew the changeling as an adolescent Indian reminiscent of the 1940s Hollywood star Sabu the elephant boy. He is turbaned, and, like Sabu in most of his films, bare-chested and wrapped in a working-class dhoti. Joan Kemp-Welch presents a live version of a similar boy, wearing the dhoti but minus the turban. Michael Hoffman's Indian boy is a holy icon, the blue-skinned god Krishna as a child. Elijah Moshinsky uses a very little Indian child, around eighteen months old. Max Reinhardt's boy, Kenneth Anger with cosmetically darkened skin, is a plump, five-year-old miniature rajah. The Caucasian boys are equally different from each other, a small boy dressed in a suit of leaves in the Vitagraph film, the older pajama-clad English boy in Noble, and the rose-crowned young man in a brief toga, part St. Sebastian, part Ganymede, part Nijinsky faun in Kemp/Coronado.

The basic practical issue every film director faces is what to actually do with the boy when he is on screen. On stage he could be placed decoratively and simply be a presence, but the camera is selective. What it includes it emphasizes. A director's scene-by-scene storyboards have to indicate the details of the boy's actions in the film: which scenes he will appear in, what types of cameras shots will be used, how many close-ups, how many long shots, how many reaction shots; where he will be placed; what his attitudes will be; how the other fairies will include or reject him; and most importantly for this discussion, how Titania will interact with him. Will she be a mother who "Crowns him with flowers and makes him all her joy" (1.2.27) or one who sees him as another member of her court? Will she hold him maternally during her confrontation with Oberon, or will she be a queen protecting a member of her court? Will he

disappear after that one scene or will he also be part of the retinue of fairies in her bower? If he is in the bower when she falls asleep does he sleep in her bed or leave with the other fairies? The list of considerations is long and this is only a miniscule part of the overall film structure, which raises the question: Why bother with the boy at all?

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The desire to present the changeling boy 'in person' goes back two centuries to earlier theater presentations of *Midsummer Night's Dream*, particularly in the nineteenth-century productions with their emphasis on spectacle. In fact it was not until these productions in the mid-1800s that *Dream* began to slowly re-emerge on the stage in something closer to Shakespeare's actual play. According to Odell "from the closing of the theaters in 1642 until Elizabeth Vestris's revival in 1840, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, as its author left it, was never seen on the stage" (119). Instead audiences (including the one famously containing Samuel Pepys) were given a mock opera or a comic opera – but not Shakespeare's play. They saw the *Merry Conceited Humors of Bottom the Weaver* (published in a quarto edition 1661), or the spectacular *Fairy Queen* with music by Purcell (1692), or *The Comick Masque of Pyramus and Thisbe* presented at Lincoln's Inn Fields in 1716 and as a mock opera at Covent Garden in 1745. At the Drury Lane in 1755 David Garrick used *Dream* as the basis of *The Fairies*, which featured twenty-seven songs and Italian singers as Lysander and Hermia. If an advertisement in the *New York Times* can be believed the "operatic comedy" of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was presented "for the first time in America" at the Park Theater on November 8, 1826. There, the reviewers found Mrs. Sharpe "a substantial fairy queen" and the production flawed but

entertaining, though the heavier parts were "endurable only because of the singing."[11] During the nineteenth-century *Dream* appeared with increasing frequency on the London and New York stages, but the definitive turning point was Elizabeth Vestris's 1840 London production, which set a standard for spectacle with its carefully painted panoramas and "transformation" scenes and, more important, marked the return of Shakespeare's text to the stage. This production also established two conventions that would persist into the next century: casting a woman as Oberon and using at least some of Mendelssohn's music. Women had played the fairy king sporadically in the eighteenth century, but now it became the standard casting, and audiences would see a series of women in the role, just as they would continue to hear ever-increasing amounts of Mendelssohn's music. The year 1906 saw the return of the male Oberon,[12] but Mendelssohn continued much longer as directors – from London's Charles Kean (1856) to Max Reinhardt (1935) to Michael Hoffman (2000) – cut text to leave room for the music.

It is difficult to pinpoint when in this history Titania began sharing the stage with the Indian boy. He may or may not have made an appearance in the "popular and successful" 1816 version by Henry Reynolds at Covent Garden where act 2 ended with a view of "Titania's fleet of galleys bringing the cherished Indian boy to Oberon," that "then ascended to reveal a seascape and a fairy palace" (Williams 2-3). Mme. Vestris seems to have omitted him from her elaborate production. In the acting edition printed by Lacy, based on the Vestris performance, the changeling is not included in Vestris's detailed description of the production's costumes for the large assembly of fairies, fauns, satyrs, wood nymphs, and dancing fauns.

A pamphlet published by W.E. Burton claims that his 1854 New York production was the first to place the boy on the stage.

> The 'lovely boy, stolen from an Indian King,' never before placed on the stage, although undoubtedly intended to be personated, is costumed from an ancient print, and is believed, both in beauty and apparel, to be worthy the love of the Fairy Queen.
> Burton quoted in Odell, 134-35.

It is worth noting that Burton, in addition to claiming an understanding of authorial intent – "undoubtedly intended to be personated" – relies on Puck's description of the boy's origins and cites his beautiful costume with its antique pedigree as the thing that makes the child "worthy the love of the Fairy Queen," thereby ignoring Titania's claim that she acts because of loyalty to her votaress. The somewhat idealized watercolors for Kean's 1856 production show the boy with Titania in 2.1.

Earlier stage spectacles may very well have included the boy. Later ones most probably did, along with the "fairy and operatic spectacle" that included the "Ascension of Puck on a Brilliant Serpent, entwined around a Globe of Pearl" and "a Grand Transformation Scene in three Beautiful Changes – The Golden Vineyard of Aurora Fairy Land, the Valley of Ferns, the Temples of Arcadia, with groups of winged Fairies upon Rising Pedestals [with a] gorgeous culminating effect" promised in the 1867 production at the Olympic. It is hard to imagine that many directors would have resisted the chance to place one more image of exotica on the stage along with "Fairies attending King and Queen, Attendants on Theseus and Hyppolyta, [sic] Warriors, Amazons, Frogs, Insects, &c., &c."[13] The boy was definitely on the New York stage in Augustin Daly's 1873 "grandiloquent" production at the Grand Opera House, a precursor of his noted 1888 production. An announcement of settings for the play – in part advertising the skillfully painted sets by George Heister who had received much praise for his paintings of "Fairyland" at the Broadway theater production in 1854 – describes 2.1's "View of a Fairy Wood near Athens ([designed] by Heister). Puck, the Hobgoblin, Oberon, the King of Fairyland, The

'Lovely Boy, stolen from an Indian King.' The Satyrs or Fairies of the Wood and Titania are here introduced" (Odell 140 ). An exotic boy fits well with the elaborate costumes and lavish scenery that formed a major part of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* 's theater history, and it seems reasonable to assume that the boy was a familiar sight on the stage, separate even in the moonlight from the child fairies that were increasingly favored in late-nineteenth-century productions.

Spectacle continued to remain a part of *Dream*, even when early twentieth-century productions, such as Granville Barker's in 1914, rejected the traditional heavy sets. Directors still devised ways to keep Fairyland magical. Even Barker, so revolutionary in his simplified scenery, had his fairies spectacularly coated with bronze paint. Max Reinhardt's own 30-year theater history with *Dream* saw him move from pared down neo-romanticism in the early 1900s to a gradual return to the elaborate music-filled spectacle. The early film by Reinhardt/Dieterle and the much later one by Michael Hoffman are both examples of the enduring nature of *Dream*'s tradition of the visual over the verbal. Peter Hall's late-1960s film, on the other hand, acknowledged the tradition by consciously rejecting it and deliberately working against the image of a Mendelssohn inspired Fairyland. It is also the only film to omit the Indian boy.

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Vitagraph's Titania drapes her changeling boy with flowers.

**Vitagraph's Silent *Dream*: Two Female Rulers of Fairyland**

The changeling boy appears on the screen in the earliest film of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, a straightforward and charming silent movie produced by the New Jersey-based Vitagraph Company of America, "the largest film studio of pre-Hollywood era and the most prolific producer of 'high art' subjects, that is films based on literary, biblical and historical texts" (Uricchio and Pearson, 1993, 3). Vitagraph's 993-foot, 15-minute *Dream* is considered one of the most successful efforts in the extensive series of Shakespeare plays filmed by the company between 1908 and 1912.[14] For the most part, the company used a repertory group of actors who would also be called upon to sew costumes and paint scenery. Rather curiously for such a seemingly close-knit company, the film's credits do not identify either of the actresses playing Titania and Penelope, even though it lists the two fairies, Helene and Dolores Costello,

daughters of Maurice Costello (Lysander). The information may have disappeared with the missing final footage. Although noted for its sets created in the style of classic paintings, Vitagraph used economical outdoor locations as much as possible for its films. In the case of *Dream* this means an unexpectedly simplified and natural production instead of the spectacle of moving panoramas and transformation scenes so closely associated at that time with the play on stage. Vitagraph's Athens is actually a Beaux Arts marble terrace in Brooklyn's Prospect Park; the Mechanicals' workshop is a partially built shed with the woods visible outside; and the enchanted forest is a standard summertime, sun-lit place of fields and trees, where the local water works pond provides scenic background. Most of the camera shots are straightforward, limited in part by the fixed camera that keeps the action in the middle distance. There is no attempt to recreate the sense of a nighttime world, nor even a magical one. The "magic" instead, is evoked through Méliès-type[15] cinema effects that allow characters to "magically" appear and disappear with surprising abruptness. There is even a special studio shot showing Puck flying over the world – both going to fetch the flower and returning.

The film tells Shakespeare's story clearly, but with great economy. It is closer to a dumb show composed of key plot points, with familiar scenes and speeches acted out in mime. An audience familiar with the general story would have had no difficulty following the film and filling in the gaps. Years later Vitagraph co-founder Albert E. Smith was to ruefully admit that it was, "to put it mildly, literary sabotage to boil Shakespeare down to thirty minutes" (218). Actually, many of Vitagraph's films, including *Dream*, were only fifteen minutes long. The movie opens with an introductory title card that sets the action in Duke Theseus's court and sums up the lovers' plight. The first shot is the open-air "duke's court" and the four lovers, and Egeus, Theseus, Hippolyta, Philastres, and a half-dozen helmeted guards. The actors quickly go through

the motions of Egeus's plea. Hermia's distress. Theseus's decision. Hippolyta gives Theseus a broad smile of approval as she takes his arm to exit. Hermia and Lysander, left alone, embrace and quickly leave together. As soon as they are gone Demetrius enters, seems to see them in the distance, and exits on their trail. Helena then enters and follows Demetrius. An inter-title provides transition to the next scene and explains that the craftsmen are rehearsing a play for the duke's marriage celebration. The Mechanicals, here truly are a "motley crew of patches," each one holding or wearing the tools of his trade and all of them bearing a close resemblance to the village idiot. The Mechanicals' rehearsal is followed by a third inter-title card, which introduces the action in woods outside of Athens.

> Titania, queen of fairies, quarrels with Penelope. Penelope plans to avenge herself and sends Puck for an herb which when placed upon the eyes of a sleeper, will cause him to love the first creature whom he sees upon waking.

No time is wasted in this condensed version, and the inhabitants of Fairyland appear and disappear abruptly on the screen in the static mid-distance shot without transitions or dissolves. In quick succession the first scene in Fairyland shows: a bucolic field with trees on the far side of a small pond; a woman appears, her pre-Raphaelite-medieval hairstyle and dress decorated with flowers; in a flash a young boy is at her side and as she places flowers around his neck it is clear he is the changeling boy. Penelope, in a flowing Greek dress, abruptly appears and argues with Titania; the fairy queen protectively holds the boy close to her then vanishes with the boy, leaving Penelope alone; Puck (Gladys Hulette aged eleven or twelve) appears and after receiving her instructions literally rises up and flies off. In this under-populated Fairyland Titania is quite alone when she lies down to sleep, clearing the way for Penelope to apply the magic drops. She is still alone when the "translated" Bottom stumbles upon her. Puck, who led the "ass" to the sleeping fairy queen, waves her wand to awaken Titania. At that point the fairy queen's small

retinue appears: three little girls in flower-draped, organdy dresses, with little wings on their backs. Later the girls, one of whom is a thumb-sucking three-year-old, answer what in the text would have been the summons for Pease Blossom, Cobweb, Moth, and Mustard Seed. They scratch Bottom's nose before disappearing again. Titania and her beloved sit under a leafy tree at water's edge and settle into sleep with his head lying chastely on the outer edges of her lap.

Penelope's appearance wakes the enchanted queen, the spell is lifted, and the two women exit arm-in-arm in convivial amity. The film's penultimate scene shows the waking of the lovers in the woods and Theseus's blessing. The final scene in the eight minutes of footage (667 of the original 993 feet) preserved in the British Film Institute's copy is the Mechanicals, once again rehearsing, though now in the vicinity of the duke's palace (the park's fountain and a building with classical pillars in the near distance). Robert Hamilton Ball describes scenes after this including a title card that says the lovers are married and the "tradesmen" give their play. The described scenes all concern the performance of *Pyramis and Thisbe*. The fairies do not make a final entrance and Ball says the play ends with Shakespeare's 5.1. Although the British Film Institute's copy of the film is incomplete, it does contain the three first scenes described above, which were missing from the copy viewed by Ball. That version opened with the equivalent of 2.2, where the magic flower drops are placed in Titania's eyes. The missing footage led Ball to incorrectly assume that "the casting of the mechanicals' play and the quarrel between Oberon and Titania were deliberately cut" and that there is "no Oberon in the entire film, his place being taken by a fairy, latter designated as Penelope" (54).

Vitagraph replaced Oberon with Penelope, shown here with Puck.

In fact, Penelope is no fairy of common rate, but is Oberon transformed through a curious elision of the nineteenth-century tradition of casting actresses as Oberon, but unlike those productions where Oberon was still the King of the Fairies, the film's "Oberon" is now dressed as a Greek matron, and renamed. Although the Vitagraph series was innovative in that it recreated the plays for film and did not, as previous Shakespeare films had done, merely record a stage performance, Vitagraph's directors still adhered to theater traditions in casting and interpretation, including the casting seen here not only in Oberon/Penelope but also in having a winsomely energetic Puck played by an older girl. With two women of equal stature in Fairyland – both adults with magic wands – it was obviously necessary to telegraph to the audience which one is Titania. The boy's presence serves the purpose of identification, as well as providing a charmingly bucolic moment.

Although the changeling boy appeared in many stage productions of *Dream*, the average movie-goer would have been more likely to make the connection between the boy and Titania based on a familiarity with the story either from the full text, or, far more likely, from a condensed story-telling version such as Mary Lamb's retelling of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in *Tales From Shakespeare* (1801).[16] Lamb's tale omits the Mechanicals and Hippolyta and instead places emphasis on the lovers and on the fairy royalty's "disagreement" caused by "Titania's refusing to give Oberon a little changeling boy, whose mother had been Titania's friend; and upon her death the fairy queen stole the child from its nurse, and brought him up in the woods" (27). Lamb's Titania is, as one would expect, less sexual, but also unexpectedly stubborn about holding onto the boy and ultimately is shamed, rather than enchanted, into handing him over. Oberon "reproaches" Titania for having "lavished her favors upon an ass." According to Lamb, the fairy queen cannot "deny the existence of the flower-decked creature asleep in her arms," but only gives Oberon the boy after the fairy king "had teased her for some time" and then only because she is "ashamed of being discovered by her lord with her new favorite" (38). In the Vitagraph film the child could easily be the changeling boy in Lamb's tale. The fair-haired child is about five years old and his costume, layers of leaves, is more that of an elfin changeling than of an Indian boy. Although his appearance on screen is brief, it is not that much shorter than any of Titania's fairies.

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Tangential to the exchange of the boy is the question "Why create Penelope?" It may be that the director felt that the more realistic demands of the camera would cause confusion with a

female cast as Oberon. There may be have been another reason as well. Jay Halio cites the "official" nineteenth-century rationale for the casting practice. It was thought that a woman would "convey better than a man the 'ephemeral idea' of fairyland" and this outweighed any possible contradiction that "the casting of women for both Oberon and Titania might bring to the quarrel between the fairy king and queen" (24). However, what Halio does not mention is that casting a woman turned the role into a "breeches part," one that, like Rosalind in *As You Like It* and Viola in *Twelfth Night*, sanctioned revealing at least part of the female leg. Mme Vestris, who set the actress-as-Oberon convention in her 1840 production, was famous for her beautiful legs, and this was a socially sanctioned way to show those legs. Masculine "Roman" military attire suitable for Oberon was easily re-transcribed as a helmet, breastplate, and skirt which, though slightly too full to be authentic, stopped at the knee. In Vitagraph's film barelegged Puck, played by a pre-adolescent, seems free to be bare-legged and legs also make a veiled appearance for both actresses in their final scene when breezes mold the fabric of their dresses close to their bodies. However, even if Vitagraph had felt that an overtly leggy female Oberon was at odds with their serious treatment of Shakespeare, they could have followed the example of Sir Beerbohm Tree's 1900 production where the actress as Oberon was dressed in a black gown and the difference between Titania and Oberon was signaled in terms of light and darkness. What may have happened at Vitagraph was concern about the film audiences' requirement of, or preference for, greater reality in characters. Or they may have been responding to a growing disenchantment with casting women as Oberon. George Bernard Shaw complained about the practice in his review of Augustin Daly's production in London in 1895 (146). Later George C.D. Odell expressed relief at the appearance of a man in the role, one of the

few things he actually liked about Harley Granville Barker's production when he saw it in New York in 1915.

As in most of the films that follow, by the end of Vitagraph's film the changeling boy is nowhere in sight as the rulers of the fairy kingdom walk off arm in arm, an image that recalls one of Lamb's description: "These fair night-wandering ladies became once more true friends: all the unkind words which had passed were forgiven, and they consulted together what was best to be done in their present situation" (40). However, Lamb was describing Hermia and Helena. No doubt it is only a coincidence, but earlier in the film when Titania and Puck, walking in the woods, are suddenly replaced on screen by Hermia and Helena walking in almost the same manner in the same place, it suggests a possible overlap between the women of Athens, Hippolyta, Hermia, Helen, and the forest's community of fairy women, Titania, Penelope, and Puck. The final shot of Titania and Penelope together reasserts that possibility.

* * * * *

Gary Jay Williams uses the image of the "web of Victorian tradition" (1977, 1) in his discussion of nineteenth-century productions of *A Midsummer Night's* Dream. Actually the twentieth century continued weaving that "web" of romanticism with further strands of lush music and spectacle, particularly in Max Reinhardt's neo-romantic productions on stage, starting in 1909, and especially in the 1935 film. Soon after Reinhardt's first German production of *Dream* Harley Granville Barker ostensibly broke with these lush lures in his 1914 production, but photographs suggest that in reality he simply replaced one style of aesthetic romance with another. Disruption was to come later with Peter Hall's 1969 film where a "real" forest and

"real" mud was actually a "reel" displacement that replaced the intricacies of set and costume with those of camera shots and editing to achieve its own images of transformation. Although Hall never asks the audience to be awed by a beautiful set or breathtaking set change, as nineteenth-century directors did with their transformation scenes, his film constantly draws attention to the breathtaking rapidity and unexpected twists of its production techniques.

At virtually the same time as Hall's film, Peter Brook staged a *Dream* of sophisticated minimalism with his white box production for the RSC in 1970, where not a tree or leaf appeared and the fairies' energies were expended on trapezes. Despite the legendary praise that continues to be attached to the Brook production's innovative simplicity and sensual energy, directors of stage and film continue to return to the romantic vision of a fairyland created on the earlier stage and in the eighteenth, nineteenth, and early-twentieth century drawings and paintings of Fairyland inspired by Shakespeare's play. Brook's set, devoid of any decoration other than the hanging trapezes, has not stirred film director's imaginations in the way that paintings and lush stage sets have done. Only Adrian Noble's shows the influence of Brook's bare stage – and that production is, for the most part, a filmed stage version. The rest evoke much earlier stage productions and significantly, Reinhardt/Dieterle's film that channeled those productions onto the screen and melded them with the movies. Among influential art works echoed in Reinhardt/Dieterle and other films are representations of Titania and Oberon drawn, painted, or etched, by Henry Fuseli, Richard Dadd, and Arthur Rackham. These artists present images that allude to the play's often-ignored darker side. When productions bury the play's dark side under the froth of tulle-dressed fairies, they also tame Titania's complex sexuality, the carnal side of her infatuation with Bottom and the erotically-charged relationship with Oberon. They domesticate her to fit acceptable standards of womanly behavior. However, since this socially

constructed view of the woman's role changes, so do the interpretations of Titania, as will be seen below.

Hoffman's Titania (Michelle Pfeiffer) with the Changeling Boy as the Indian god Krishna.

**Hoffman's Turn-of- the-Centuries *Dream*: Titania as Retro-Modern Screen Goddess**

Of the films discussed in this chapter, this persistent urge to traditionalize *Dream* is submerged by Hall, surfaces in Moshinsky and in Kemp-Welsh, is parodied by Kemp/Coronado, and deeply subverted by Noble. It geysers up with full force in Hoffman's film, where the gloriously overblown visions of Vestris, Keane, Keene, Burton, Daly, and Tree live again. The film was made at the turn of the twentieth century and places the action at the turn of the previous century. Their designers' panoramas, dioramas, and transformation scenes come full circle in this film. Mendelssohn's music is there on the soundtrack along with Verdi, Puccini, Bellini, and Donnizetti, as well as specially composed music by Simon Boswell. Nineteenth-century stage designers' careful attention to antiquarian detail culled from art and archeological

records for sets and costume also resurfaces in Hoffman's staff's research into turn-of-the century fashion plates and paintings along with formal and classical art and artifacts. Production designer Luciana Arrighi says "inspiration" came from Renaissance painters and the fairy world: the sets were "based on the woods, tombs, and caves to which the Etruscans carried their dancing and feasting" (20). According to director Hoffman the image of Titania was directly influenced by the works of Pre-Raphaelite painters, (27) and Oberon was "drawn directly from Moreau's brooding Apollo in *Muses Leaving Their Father Apollo*" (25). Also present, but unacknowledged by Hoffman, are the influences of the Reinhardt/Dieterle's 1935 film: Hollywood's cult of the screen goddess; and cryptic allusions to other popular, non-Shakespeare films, including several Merchant-Ivory films and, in another key, a fairy bar that evokes the one in *Star Wars*.

Not only does Hoffman's lavish film resonate with echoes of nineteenth-century stage productions mixed with the 1935 *Dream*, but its casting was dominated by the Hollywood star system, as much as the 1935 film had been when Jack Warner told Max Reinhardt that he was restricted to using actors under contract to Warner Brother's Studio – including Victor Jory, Verree Teasdaele, Anita Louise, Dick Powell, and James Cagney.[17] Reinhardt's own dream list, reported by his son, was actually closer to the kind of "dream" package a producer could only assemble if the artists were freelance, as they are today. Reinhardt had wanted Greta Garbo (Titania), John Barrymore (Oberon), Charlie Chaplin (Bottom), and Fred Astaire (Puck). Sixty-five years later, with studio contracts no longer binding actors to a single production company, directors are able to bring together actors from a variety of backgrounds. Michael Hoffman mixed his cast for *Dream* with one eye on the box office and the other on (somewhat) high culture. There are glamorous and "sexy" movie stars (Michelle Pfeiffer/Titania and Rupert

Everett/Oberon), the lead from a weekly television series (Calista Flockart/Helena), an actor acclaimed for both theater Shakespeare and Hollywood comedies (Kevin Kline/Bottom), actors respected for work in independent films (David Strathairn/Theseus, Stanley Tucci/Puck), and actors popular with the twenty-something members of the audience (Christian Bale/Demetrius, Dominic West/Lysander). In the classic tradition of *Dream*, music, sets, and costumes are at least, if not more, important than the performances. Acknowledgement of the changes found in late-twentieth-century approaches to Shakespeare's text exists only in the emphasis on sexuality, though free of any hint of the play's darker views on the subject. Nearly everyone in this fairy forest is in a state of attractive partial undress, and the young lovers end up romping in the forest wearing little or nothing – Lysander is nude when Hermia tells him to "lie further off," and all the lovers are naked when Theseus finds them in the morning. The fairies are all adults, given to drinking and "making out" in bars, and to picturesquely nude swims in the soft-focus style of Edwardian nymph paintings.

In the midst of all this visual layering is placed an outstandingly "decorative" Indian boy with long black hair and cobalt blue skin. He is made up and costumed in a meticulous re-creation of the popular Indian image of Krishna, god of love and music, as a child. Anyone with even a passing familiarity with Indian mythology would remember that the adult Krishna plays an important role in the Bhagavad-Gita where he teaches lessons on reincarnation and the mutable, insubstantial nature of reality, likening it to smoke and mirrors. Though the changeling boy's appearance is brief, his very presence in this supernatural form helps to shape the role of Titania (Michelle Pfeiffer) in her first scene (2.1) by establishing her as both an exotic and as a maternal and tender spirit. Hoffman's screen treatment of Titania heavily evokes not only

Victorian fairy paintings, but also movie traditions of the screen goddess. There are numerous close-ups and posed still shots where a degree of immobility guarantees that the star's carefully modulated lighting will not be disturbed. Pfeiffer/Titania is photographed in soft focus, back lit so her hair becomes a shining aureole; there is a "pillow" shot, a close up of her asleep, her hair spreading across the pillow, a bare leg and hip discreetly exposed while the screen is suffused with gauzy golden light.[18] When Oberon spies on Titania in her bower, he sees her attendants preparing her for bed, brushing her hair, and standing in rapt attention. Titania's sheer dress disappears in this distance shot, so that she seems to be decorously nude. She wears a similar diaphanous, transparent dress when she is in bed with Bottom. Countering these images, however, is the extreme chastity of her first scene. As the earth rumbles and boulders fall her curtained litter is carried in by attendants, women who are completely muffled in chadors. When the litter's curtains part on the line, "I must be thy lady," Titania is revealed. She is curiously padded and muffled by the high collar of her dress that is more in keeping with a Victorian stage Titania than with the Pre-Raphaelite Burne-Jones painting printed alongside Hoffman's remarks in the published adaptation (27).

In this first scene, Pfeiffer's Titania seems stiff and self-conscious compared to bare-torsoed Oberon's authoritative sensuality. Pfeiffer's self consciousness here is a pity because the actress is known for mature modern sexiness that would have worked perfectly for the part. In *One Fine Day*, also directed by Hoffman, she combined the kind of maternal sexiness, fierce independence, vulnerability, and organizational control as a super-single-mom that would have been terrific in Titania. Still, including the changeling boy on screen seems designed to add a maternal dimension. The published screen directions describe Titania signaling for the boy, who is brought in on a pony (an image not unlike Reinhardt's boy, who enters on a unicorn). She

"gently strokes his hair" as she describes how his mother had been her votaress. She "studies the little boy's beautiful face, seeing her dear friend's visage. Her eyes fill with tears." After the line, "When we laughed to see the sails conceive / And grow big bellied with the wanton wind." she again "kisses the boy, strokes his raven hair, and signals for his escort to take him." She then lowers her voice, as though to protect him from the sad information, and explains to Oberon that the boy's mother "being mortal, of that boy did die." When Oberon again asks her to give him the child, her nostrils flair in animalistic rage, and she "hisses at him." Oberon "recoils" and when he looks up again Titania is standing "high on the cliff's face" holding the boy (23-27). After "We shall chide downright if I stay" she disappears as abruptly as Vitagraph's Titania, but, like Reinhardt's queen, she leaves a sparkle of lights behind.

The scene contains two anomalies. One is the persistent image of pregnancy introduced in the "big-bellied" speech, and implied both in the unusual puffiness of Pfeiffer's face in this scene, and in the subversion of expected images of sexuality. Not only does her dress come to her chin, it conceals the body completely in its loose folds. When Titania stands holding the boy in the scene's only full-length shot of her, the dress is opaque and billows out. Because the film follows other Hollywood conventions so closely, the effect suggests the old trick of "shooting" the star above the waist to hide the fact that an actress is pregnant or has gained weight. Curiously there is a similar refusal to show the star's full body in every scene that follows. When she is spied in her bower the blue half-shell of a bed keeps the camera shooting at chest height or above, cutting off the middle and lower parts of the body. Even when she is in bed with Bottom, swathes of fabric are arranged as though to again hide, if necessary, a midriff larger than today's well-toned sex goddess is expected to have.

Another "pregnant" picture occurs, when Hermia and Helena, beaming with joy, hold up their dresses to shield their nakedness when Theseus finds the lovers in the woods. The folds of the dresses, particularly Helena/Flockhart's, mimic the shapes of pregnant women. Although Oberon's final speech is reduced to a six-line voiceover, it includes "To the best bride bed will we, /Which by us shall blessed be. And the issue there create / Ever shall be fortunate." while on screen Lysander and Hermia are shown in bed making "gentle love."

According to the published script, after the voiceover and view of the lovers in their respective rooms and beds, Titania appears on the grand staircase, arm in arm with Oberon, with the changeling boy standing between them. What actually appears on the screen is Titania on the grand staircase, balancing the boy on her hip (the same mode of carrying him seen earlier). She is now in the sheer blue dress she wore in her scene with Bottom. Oberon stands beside her: the family is united. However, anyone watching the film does not actually get to see this because it is a complete blur, with just the slightest hint of blue as the camera zooms upward to the myriad sparkling lights filling the domed ceiling. The only way it can be seen is on an editing machine that allows a frame-by-frame view, and even there the trio forms an insubstantial pageant that fades and blurs, like a watercolor painting left in the rain. The staircase, the lights, the dissolving blur are pure Reinhardt, but the actual presence of the boy in the final scene is Hoffman – or perhaps *Animated Tales*. Tellingly, Hoffman puts the boy in, then blurs the image to the point of invisibility. In that fading blur of transparent fairies the changeling boy, child of the mortal mother, has now, in Titania's arms, become as insubstantial and fluid as the fairies, so that here, as in other films, the boy is missing from the final reunification of Titania and Oberon.

I doubt that the filmmakers thought of the ramifications that might evolve if the link between a young Indian god and the meaning of a changeling was explored. Nor did they consider how the postcolonial subtext suggested by Titania's taking the child-god from an Indian king becomes a metonymic image of the West removing a part of India's religion and incorporating it into Western culture for decorative value – as a character in a Hollywood film. Instead, it is probably more accurate to classify the use and effect of the boy in Hoffman's film as designed for maximum visual effect. It is the one image in the film without a source in Western art, but it is nonetheless faithful to *Dream*'s tradition of spectacle.

Anna Massey as Titania in the 1964 Kemp-Welch television *Dream*

### *Dream* on Television in the Fifties: Titania as Memsahib

The first full-length TV studio production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was broadcast in 1958, though excerpts had been televised in 1937 (twice), 1946, 1947, and 1957 (direct from the Old Vic). Its full-length television "debut" was lavish by television standards and cost the

then enormous sum of 6.000 pounds for a cast of twenty-two actors and a twenty-eight member corps de ballet (Rothwell/Melzer 194). However, the earliest television production currently available for viewing is the 1964 production directed by Joan Kemp-Welch for England's independent (i.e. non-BBC) network Rediffusion Network Television. It offers a traditional, ballet-inspired version of the play that could have been adapted from drawings for Kean's Victorian production. It is scarcely cheering to believe that the *TV Times* review is accurate and this was "the most imaginative TV production of a Shakespeare play during the . . . year" (quoted in Rothwell/Melzer 195).[19] Kemp-Welch's *Dream* is described by Kenneth Rothwell as "a very lovely, romantic, beautiful, virtually uncut adaptation of Shakespeare's play, done theatrically with Mendelssohn's music and supplementary ballet" with influences of the Reinhardt school "just beneath the surface" (Rothwell/Melzer 195). Rothwell's books are the only ones to include information on the production, which seems of little interest to Shakespeare film critics. However, there is an inexpensive, mass-market video from Videos of Yesteryear, made available because the then-unknown comedian Benny Hill plays Bottom.

The production is of passing interest here because of the on-screen inclusion of an ethnic Indian boy (who receives no screen credit). On the whole, despite Oberon's (Peter Wynagarde) "pre-punk haircut" (Rothwell, 2000, 108) the very respectful production seems dated, and has a 1950s feeling of just waiting for something to burst through – which is exactly what happened five years later when Peter Hall's *Dream* was televised. Kemp-Welch's Titania (Anna Massey) speaks wonderfully but is excessively ladylike, even docile, though she does keep both of her speeches in 2.1, and gentility did not extend to cutting references to sails that conceive and grow big-bellied, nor to a womb rich with unborn child. Slender and petite, Titania is costumed as a prima ballerina in this ballet-driven production, and her blonde hair is short, swept upward in a

style that is a cross between Fairyland chic and Mayfair elegance. There is no fierceness in her confrontation of Oberon and no sensuality in her wooing of Bottom, whose nose she keeps patting as though he were a prize spaniel. When Oberon lifts the spell and wakes her, she is slightly perturbed and glances at this man with an ass's head with mild distast, as though he were an unwashed gatecrasher at a tea party. This Titania is a good example of the way witty, independent women in films of the nineteen thirties and forties were replaced in the fifties and early sixties by more subdued and domesticated women.

As for the boy, in 2.1 Titania enters accompanied by the changeling at the end of a ballet number by her fairies. She moves with a ballet dancer's studied grace, and the Indian boy is her dance partner: he strikes a series of positions between ballet and yoga that generally involve kneeling at her feet, arms upraised. The changeling boy's brief presence here is little more than a prop, something or someone for Titania to clutch while defying Oberon. The boy is around eleven or twelve years old, awkward, slender, bare-chested, dressed only in a modified dhoti that reaches half way to his knees. No doubt the costume is meant to evoke a connection with English classics, Kipling's *Jungle Book* and *Kim*, the story of different changeling Indian boys. However, on the black and white screen the boy seems a less confident vision of the forties film actor Sabu Dastagir, who was known in Hollywood as Sabu the Elephant Boy .[20] The relationship turns this very cultured Titania into something of a British colonial memsahib. Each time Titania crushes him to her chest – which she does repeatedly to punctuate her speech – the poor lad is left eye-level with her bust and low cut neckline. He seems both embarrassed and entranced by this proximity. His solution is to rest his check on her frontage and stare up with an unwavering gaze of adoration. Later he is in the background when the fairies gather in her

bower, but it is a Caucasian elf boy who stands (briefly) as her guard. The Indian boy departs with the other fairies when they leave Titania to sleep, and he does not appear again.[21]

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The *Animated Tales'* Titania with the Indian Boy and assorted fairies

**An International Animated *Dream:* Titania as Vegetation Amazon**

A similar adolescent, dhoti-dressed, ethnically Indian boy appears in *Shakespeare: the Animated Tales' A Midsummer Night's Dream.*[22] These animated versions are a good test case for what their makers perceive as the basic elements in a Shakespeare play because they deal with a stripped down version of the play, one that runs just under thirty minutes (half the time of

Vitagraph's silent *Dream*). The films are cartoons, produced for family television viewing, but sophisticated in both style and approach. These miniature Shakespeare films[23] are the result of an international collaboration in 1992 between a production companies in Wales and England and artists in the Soviet Union. The texts were adapted by Jack Garfield; the artwork was done by the Soviet animation studio Soyuzmultfilm and featured different styles for each "tale." Editing was done in Wales; voices were supplied by English actors; the BBC functioned as distributor for the worldwide contracts. The result was both a financial and artistic success. Part of the fascination resulted from the serious care given to the artwork, and the unique style devised for each film that used either cel animation, puppets and stop-camera motion, or a unique method involving painted glass. Cel animation was chosen for *A Midsummer Night's Dream.*[24]

Laurie Osborne has noted similarities between several Shakespeare films and the characters in the animated version. For instance, she observes that Claudius in the animated *Hamlet* is very like the one in Olivier's film; Mercutio in *Romeo and Juliet* looks and acts like John McEnery in Zeffirelli's, and Macbeth and his Lady often resemble Orson Welles and Jeanette Nolan (1997, 106). However, although she notes similarities between the animated *Dream* and both Reinhardt's and Peter Hall's films, she does not mention that the Kemp-Welch television version of *Dream* also seems to have been among the animators' sources. There are strong resemblances in physical appearance and costume between Oberon, Bottom, and the Indian boy. The changeling boy, again an ethnic Indian, is slim and taller than Puck; he is a youth of indeterminate age, closer to adulthood than adolescence, and dressed, not as Reinhardt's silk and jeweled baby rajah but in a simple white dhoti, similar to the boy in Kemp-Welch's

production. Like the film star Sabu, but unlike Kemp-Welch's boy, the animated boy wears a turban – a detail that, along with his passive contentment, contributes to an element of ethnic caricature. The turban, which is really adult headgear, also makes him appear slightly older than Kemp-Welch's boy and rather too old to be the center of such a custody battle – rivalry for a valued servant would seem more appropriate. Throughout his expression and reactions are sweetly blank.

Titania, on the other hand, is nothing like Anna Massey as Kemp-Welch's ballerina fairy queen. This Titania (voice, Suzanne Bertish) is a sharply drawn vegetation goddess, whose craggy jaw, intense eyes, and warlike gaze conflate her with the Amazon queen, Hippolyta, who is otherwise missing from the adaptation. It is worth noting that the marketing department for the American distributor HBO preferred a more traditional version of Titania for the video's cover. Although the cover has the animators' drawings of Oberon, Puck, and miscellaneous fairy-creatures, the main figure in the cover picture is Titania, but she is not drawn as a traditional fairytale fairy godmother with blonde curls and a fluffy pink dress. She looks at Oberon with a slightly vexed expression while a small, plump, brown-skinned boy (also very unlike the Indian boy in the cartoon) in white pantaloons tugs at her skirt. They obviously thought that the parents who would be buying this tape were not ready for a warrior Titania, a "liberated" woman who would be at odds with the *Tales From Shakespeare* image of *Dream* as a fairy tale suitable for all ages.

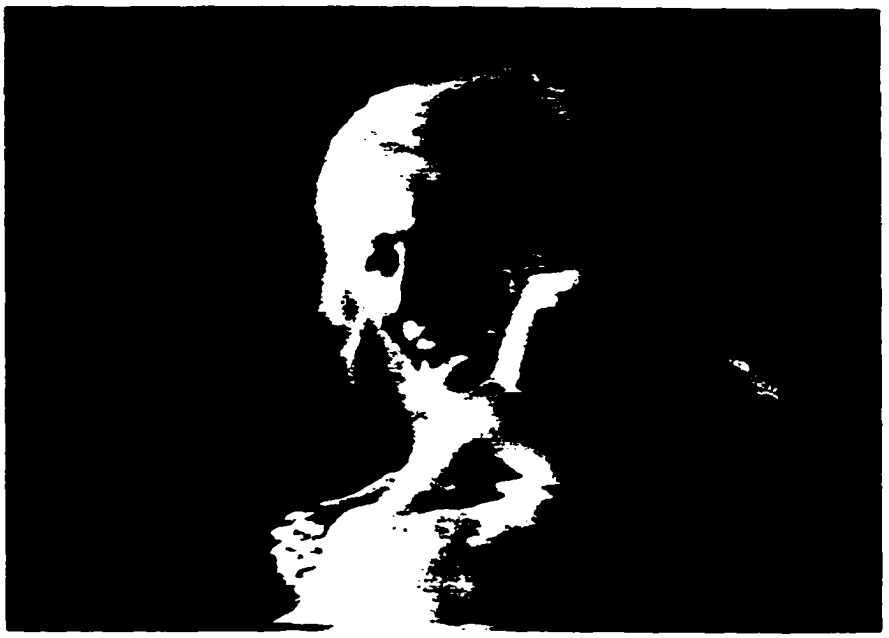
In the cartoon Titania's court of fairies consists of delightfully invented creatures who leave behind blinking firefly lights when they disappear, following *Dream*'s long tradition from Agustin Daly's battery-equipped fairies to Reinhardt/Dieterle's cinematic special effects.

However, instead of associating Titania with light (the stars and moon) and Oberon with dark (clouds and storms) as has been done so often, here she is linked with the earth and he with all stages of the sky. When she sleeps vines wind round and cover her. When he spreads out his cape it is full of stars.[25] The short pudgy Puck, in contrast, seems a very human jester. He is dressed in a flamingo-pink Elizabethan page's outfit and bears a strong resemblance to comedian Jackie Mason. Rejecting Kemp-Welch's version of Titania in favor of a strong, athletic fairy queen could be an indication of the changing role of women in society – or perhaps this Titania/Hippolyta draws on the older cartoon character trope of the Americanized-Amazon: Wonder Woman. In this version Titania does not cuddle the boy, drape him in flowers, make him "all her joy," or even place a protective arm around his shoulder. In fact she does not pay any particular attention to him. Instead, he is treated more like the good servant who contentedly stands by. Unlike most of the Indian boys in films, he is still there when Titania stretches out on the ground to sleep. When she sleeps, he lies down nearby, but further off as befits a servant. Oberon's description of Titania handing over the boy is replaced by a scene in which Puck, with a look of sweet seriousness, flies in, scoops up the sleeping youth, and flies off carrying him in his arms. It is a rewrite that removes any sense of Titania as an abandoning mother or protector, and quells any possible quivers of anxiety in a youthful audience. It also, however, diminishes the effects of her enchanted obsession with Bottom, and in doing so further neutralizes any hint of sexuality, again keeping the play highly suitable for the series target audience of young viewers.

At the end of the cartoon Titania, Oberon, Puck, and the Indian boy exit as a quartet, flying off hand in hand, with Titania and Oberon in the middle, Puck to her left, the boy to his

right. It is a neat pairing off that one expects in Shakespeare's comedies, though now the couple has been expanded into a tidy family group.

The animated *Dream* is a highly condensed version designed for a youthful audience and, although Oberon has a slightly menacing appearance, there has been no hint of sexuality nor of the darker side of the play. Even so, the boy's inclusion in the happy ending is unusual. Shakespeare's play ends with the departure of the courtiers and newly weds who go off to bed, followed by the reappearance of the fairies; Oberon gives his blessings, Titania calls for a song, and Puck speaks the epilogue. In the BBC Shakespeare Series version, which overflows with children, he is not included with the others who surround Titania in her bower in 2.2. In Hoffman's film the child is on and off the screen in a minute and his final appearance at the film's end is a complete blur. Reinhardt keeps his changeling on screen much longer and includes several scenes in which the boy appears with Oberon – sitting with him on his horse and later standing by his side in the fairy king's triumphal chariot – but the director still omits the boy when the fairies return to the duke's palace – though Jack Jorgenson argues persuasively that Reinhardt's "scores of little oriental attendants at the end recall the Indian boy in the forest" (49). Kemp/Coronado include the "boy" in the closing extravaganza. After Titania and Oberon exit leaving him behind, the boy pairs up with an ecstatic Puck, but ultimately falls asleep with the fairies. Nobel is unique in the way he centers the ending on the boy in a full-cast curtain call that celebrates the boy and makes him the center of everyone's attention. Still, the animated version's final shot of the quartet flying into the dawn sky, hand-in-hand remains among the sweetest film endings.



Helen Mirren's maternal Titania in the BBC Shakespeare Series

## The BBC's *Dream:* Titania as Renaissance Madonna

The five television *Midsummer Night's Dreams* discussed here have had very different Titanias – a demure danseuse in 1964, a muddy earth mother in 1969, and in the 1980s, when there were three, a Renaissance Madonna, an Amazonian earth goddess, and a sprite in a glittery body stocking. Two of the five wore costumes requiring strategically placed sequins or leaves, while two others have worn billowy dresses. One actress has been too gracious, another too unfocused in the role to be categorized, and a third is a two-dimensional cartoon figure whose square jaw broadcasts authority. However, of this disparate collection of fairy queens two, Judi Dench and Helen Mirren, are outstanding examples of the powerful generation of actresses who came up through the Royal Shakespeare Company in the 1960s and brought new energy, intelligence, and agency to playing Shakespeare's women. Dench and Mirren act very different

Titanias, but both bring strength, sexiness, and fierce dignity to Titania that makes her equal with Oberon – and creates a couple balanced in strength and emotions.

Judi Dench as Titania in Peter Hall's film.

To continue the inventory, three of the five television versions have presented the boy as an ethnic Indian – a fourth, the New York Public Theater production, cast an African-American child, and the fifth, Peter Hall's film, omits him entirely. However, the BBC version directed by Elijah Moshinsky in 1981 is unique in using an infant of about eighteen months as the changeling. In this version the infant appears only in 2.1 where, during Titania's two long speeches, he is held in her arms and nuzzles his head against her shoulder. He is real in a way that most of the other boys are not. Humanity's frailness is in his thin arms and his vulnerable naked body half-wrapped in a loose white cloth. All of this makes Oberon's desire for the boy seem threatening and even cruel. In 2.1 Mirren is "regal, imperious, a fairy queen whose white

gown seems the source of all the light in scenes in which she appears . . . She alone seems languidly self-confident and at ease with her universe" (Colley). This Pre-Raphaelite Madonna radiates fierce determination when she confronts the darkly sexual Oberon (Peter McEnery) who towers over her on his black, blindfolded horse. With his shoulder-length hair and shirt open to the waist, only McEnery's dignity keeps him from looking like the cover of a "bodice ripper." In contrast to Titania's elegant young courtiers, he is more ominously attended by a dwarf and a darkly punk Puck. In the confrontation she, clutching and soothing the baby all the while, is solid, fierce, defends her dignity. There is nothing coy in her describing leaving his bed and board.

The presence of this very real baby also contextualizes textual references to "parents original," mothers, pregnancy, birth/mortality, and birth defects in terms of the visibly maternal Titania. Here more than in any other version she is the surrogate mother who protects and comforts the boy. Although the infant appears only in 2.1, Titania is surrounded by charming children of various ages in almost all of her scenes. Some reviewers praised these little courtiers with wings. "Titania, looking as if she had stepped from a Pre-Raphaelite canvas, shows up with a cluster of angelic children equipped with diaphanous wings" (Richards). However others grumbled about them because (although this is not actually stated) they kept her from fulfilling a sex-goddess potential. A grumpy Nicholas Shrimpton groused in *The Times Literary Supplement* that she was "so hung about with infant fairies that it was hard not to think of her as a harassed nursery-school teacher." Various critics' comments make it clear that casting Mirren as Titania created expectations based on Mirren's reputation for sexiness that it was expected the role would show to advantage.[26] Some were pleased with what they saw. G. M. Pearce found her a "sensitive and seductive Titania" and wrote in *Cahiers Elizabethians*, "Sexuality was

strongly present in Helen Mirren's lush Titania . . . perhaps more . . . an earthy goddess than a fairy queen." Others were let down. Nicholas Shrimpton, who considered *Dream* "the nearest this series has come to disaster since Jonathan Miller first stepped in to rescue it from banality," grumbled that it was "hard to believe" that the viewing public who "settled down to warm the cockles of their hearts on the glowing limbs of Helen Mirren with unusual relish . . . were not disappointed" – perhaps because those limbs were so modestly covered throughout. Although Shrimpton complained about an "earth goddess Titania substituted for her more fragile predecessor," he praised Mirren's spirited performance, despite the cargo of children.

Actually Moshinksy's version moves in and out of sexuality and sensuality – as it also does with the play's dark side. Although the presence of the baby and other children problematizes the treatment of Titania's sexuality, particularly when they join her and Bottom in bed, this does not signal a return to a desexualized Titania of an earlier age. The self-assured Madonna of 2.1 becomes the seductive lover in 2.2, where the screen image of Titania in her bower replicates Rembrandt's painting of Danae on her bed, with the major difference that, unlike Rembrandt's nude, Titania remains fully dressed. This "Rembrandt" moment on the screen is also a soft-focused, golden-misted, blonde-hair-spilling-over-the-pillow shot evocative of movie glamour shots. However, the seductive image becomes fragmented as the bed begins to overflow with children who nestle down to sleep with her and Bottom. The Indian baby is not included in this youthful loading of the bed, another detail that, along with his infant years and dark skin, separates him from the fairy children. It is a reminder that he is a human child, a changeling who has been adopted by the fairy queen.

Later Titania is modestly sensual with Bottom (Brian Glover) as she embraces him in a bed that is still full of children. Moshinsky even includes a curious moment when Bottom, lying

nearly on top of Titania, utters orgasmic sighs as the children rub his back. The children's presence seems a deliberate move to counter the scene's implicit sexuality, while still acknowledging that sex is deeply embedded in it. Series producer Jonathan Miller and director Elijah Moshinsky would certainly have been conscious that the target audience for the series was the schoolroom and library. In keeping with the corporate idea of canonical films was the mandate from the BBC and American financial backers, Time/Life, to eschew innovative staging – an order Miller gradually and effectively subverted. Undoubtedly the series' goal of making every Shakespeare play available to academic institutions did not include propagating bestiality with pictures of a blonde Madonna in bed with a hairy ass. Still the image is just barely sidestepped. As Richard's points out, it is "unsettling to see Titania snuggle into bed with an ass" – even though on the whole he approved of the fact that "Moshinsky is not about to dwell on the darker aspects of the fable [and instead] turns back the clock and turns up a good measure of bewitchment. Tradition it appears is not without defense." Moshinsky's lush staging, his touches of homage to Reinhardt, may turn back the clock – much to the dismay of several critics who saw it as backsliding – but the clock is pushed forward in Mirren's fully realized and liberated Titania, who is a surrogate mother, fairy queen, and sex goddess *pace* Nicholas Shrimpton.

* * * *

James Lapine's woodland creatures and fairies, with the Indian boy center.

**Lapine's *Dream* in Central Park: The Bad Mother Sexy Titania**

If the infant changeling in the BBC production renders Titania's sexuality moderate and brings it within acceptable parameters for an educational market, another very young boy in an American film made for television a year later provides a single grace note for an overtly sexual Titania. One of the unique and most touching non-textual uses of the changeling boy occurs in the 1982 broadcast of a filmed stage performance of the New York Shakespeare Festival's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* produced by Joseph Papp. In this production, directed for the stage by James Lapine, Central Park's open-air Delacorte Theater's stage, which is both unusually wide and deep, was transformed into a forest and garden that seemed to be part of the park – the program credits include a "landscape consultant." The set must have been a joy in the theater and it works surprisingly well in the television version directed for the ABC network by Emile Ardolino.[27]

In this *Dream* the boy is about three years old and is African-American, as is Titania (Michele Shay). As Titania confronts Oberon (William Hurt) in 2.1, the camera gives a glimpse of the boy balanced on her hip. He only really appears on the screen when she gazes wistfully at him and relives the moment of gossiping with his mother on the sands of India. It is a splendid example of the frustration that can be caused by the camera's controlling gaze, something encountered in films of stage performances where obviously other actions are taking place beyond the range of the camera. Here, the Delacorte's audience would have been aware of the boy on Titania's hip throughout her two main speeches, much as the viewer is aware of Mirren's holding the baby, but here the television viewer is only given selective shots of the child, starting with a close-up on "she being mortal of that boy did die." Herbert Coursen thought this speech was Shay's one good moment because she "got a sense of vicarious pregnancy into her description of the changeling's origins, but otherwise concentrated [successfully] on looking beautiful" (qtd. Bulman/Coursen 285). When Titania sets the boy down, Oberon gestures to him to come, which the boy does with delighted little hops. He settles quite happily in Oberon's lap until the fairy king's request "give me the boy" draws a roar from Titania that ignites chaos. In the melee Titania grabs the child, calls her "Fairies, away / We shall childe downright, if I longer stay" (2.1.144-145), and exits into the darkness.

The strangeness of the inhabitants of Fairyland in this production, especially their makeup, hair, and costumes resembling *Cats* (1981), marks a real difference between the human lovers and the extraordinary inhabitants of the woods. The fairies are meant to represent myths from all parts of the world – an idea that worked better as concept than in realization. William Hurt's Oberon seems stifled by the sheer weight of his American Indian appearance – long hair

in a top knot, a bare chest, some face paint, and trousers that are some type of chaps. The critics panned his stage performance, but I suspect he has actually done as much as he can to overcome Lapine's bad direction, rather like the actor ruined by a director's bizarre vision of Richard III in the film *The Good-bye Girl.*

Michele Shay's Titania fared far better, at least in costume, and she is beautiful in a gauzy, shimmering transparent body stocking with strategic sequins. She slithers, slinks about, and is determinedly sexy in her encounter with Bottom (Jeffrey De Munn). Instead of gently leading Bottom into Titania's bower with the traditional rope of flowers ("lead him to my bower / . . . / tie up my lover's tongue, bring him silently" (3.2.196 and 201), her attendants pick him up bodily, carry him in, place him on top of the reclining Titania, and then all pile on top of the couple. From that point on, whenever the stage lights shine on the upstage tree-ringed grassy knoll that serves as Titania's bower, the fairy queen, Bottom, and the fairies are seen continuing to revel, in something of a group grope. Even the otherwise dense Puck looks dismayed at this.

Related to this revelry is the unique interjection of the changeling into the middle of 3.2, the scene where Puck tricks Demetrius and Lysander into sleep. In this *Dream*, as the two young men search for each other on opposite sides of the stag, the small changeling boy toddles downstage, crosses a low bridge over the pool there, and goes behind some nearby bushes. Meanwhile, imperious Oberon has been unhappily observing the partying in the bower. Completely dejected and despondent he lies down on the ground by the bridge. Titania sees him, comes down from the bower, and picks up the boy, who has been sitting on the stage just above Oberon, though hidden from his sight by bushes and flowers. She looks pityingly on the prone Oberon and places the boy in his arms. Still lying on the ground, Oberon wraps himself round the boy in a fetal position. There is a pause after Titania departs, then Oberon finally rises, as if

revived by the boy's presence, picks up the child, sits him on his broad shoulders, and carries him off. Is this a consolation prize? Or is it that his grief was not for Titania but for the boy lost in the debased fairy queen's bower? Even without an explanation for Oberon's depression, the scene is inexplicably moving as Titania momentarily transcends her unleashed carnality to act as an agent of succor.

The action then returns to the text with Helena and Hermia's entrances. Puck (Marcel Rosenblatt), who has been more a cross between a wild creature and a mentally retarded gnome, acquires dignity and humanity as she tucks in the sleeping lovers, an action that parallel's Titania's previous moment of tenderness. Oberon watches from upstage, with the boy still in his arms, and notes this change in Puck with satisfaction – previously there has been an on-going exchange of master-animal approval where Puck, after completing each task, contorted her body in order to hold her face up for a kiss on the nose. After the lovers are asleep, Oberon comes forward holding the child and stands by Puck. When he says, "we are spirits of another sort. / I with the Morning's love have oft made sport . . ." (3.2.389-390), he is really addressing the boy in his arms, and the camera keeps them in a close-up throughout as the speech becomes both a blessing and incantation for the beaming child. The child continues to smile happily, and afterwards, when he is set down, he does a little dance of joy before Puck and Oberon each take him by an arm and exit swinging him. Titania, the bad mother obsessed with sexuality, has been fully replaced by Oberon as the good father.

Titania (The Incredible Orlando) and changeling (Francois Testory) in Kemp's *Dream.*

**Kemp and Coronado's Polymorphous Pastiche: Glenda the Good Witch as Titania**

Lindsay Kemp and Celeste Coronado's 1984 film of *Midsummer Night's Dream* contains the last changeling Indian boy and Titania combination that I will consider before moving on to the next chapter's discussion of Reinhardt/Dieterle's and Adrian Noble's *A Midsummer Night Dream*, the two films that make the boy a central part of the action. Kemp's is another film that is rarely mentioned in the discussions of *Dream* on film, perhaps partially because the video has not been widely available and when rentable, has been relatively expensive.[28] Also it may have been excluded from the canon because technically it is a derivative film that either eliminates a great deal of dialogue or replaces it with songs. The exception is the Mechanicals' performance – a blend of *Romeo and Juliet* and "Pyramus and Thisby," with Juliet/Thisby on stilts.

The film, which offers its own brand of magic that securely places it in the long tradition of elaborate *Dream* productions, is known in large part through bootlegged copies. Although the

film is currently making its way into the canon of Shakespeare films, it lingered for years in the lavender haze at the fringes of camp porno, even though when Lindsay Kemp's company presented the play on the London stage at Sadler's Wells Theatre, it was favorably reviewed by mainstream newspapers and theater journals. The *Financial Times* found Kemp "an entirely compelling performer," the *Independent* said he had "transformed himself into a legend [whose works] have become classics," and the *Guardian* which demurred that Kemp seemed "not so much to be resting on his laurels as to be basking on them," still found the design and costumes by Kemp and Sandy Powell to be "ravishingly evocative." Unfortunately this chapter does not allow space for a detailed study of this *Dream* of gentle grotesques and lavish gender bending – where men play some of the women's roles, some with dubbed female voices, and where, for a while, it looks as though Hermia might end up with Helena and Demetrius with Lysander.

The film's layers of intricacy call for and deserve an intensive look at its collage of references: theatrical, cinematic, pictorial, and musical, most prominent of which are allusions to Benjamin Britten's opera and to Reinhardt/Dieterle's film. This *Dream* contains all the elements Kemp once listed as his ideal blend for theater: "the glamour of the Folies Bergeres [sic], the danger of the circus, the eroticism of Rock n' Roll, and the shiver of death."[29] To date, critical examinations of the film have been few and meager, with the exception of Kenneth Rothwell's recent history *Shakespeare on Screen* and his earlier collaborative work with Melzer, which gives substantive production information, a lengthy quote from Michael Griffith's rave review in *The Observer* – "This visual delight should not be missed" – and Rothwell's observation that "some will find the film perverse and even mischievous . . . [as it] excels at ferreting out of the subtext the most recondite and recherché, even twisted, of meanings" (200). Jonathan Collick in his cultural-materialist based *Shakespeare, cinema and society* limits his comments to a

reference to a grotesquely transformed Bottom, "monster" part animal, part plant (74) and to a brief description of the film as "a collage of self-conscious references to other plays, movies and familiar images," especially Reinhardt's film. Collick gives Kemp less than a page, an outline of the adaptation's use of "mime, dance, ballet, singing and theater" and "its consciously theatrical use of costumes and techniques culled from the Elizabethan masque" as part of its treatment of the "play as a study in transgressive sexuality" (103). Actually Collick is disappointingly brief in light of the promising use of a still from the film for the book's cover. The Kemp/Coronado film is also given surprisingly short shrift by Richard Burt, who has developed his own porno niche in Shakespeare film criticism. Burt mentions the film only in passing as a "gay-affirmative adaptation" (30, 36).

Lindsay Kemp once described his performance of the title role in Wilde's *Salome* as himself doing Norma Desmond doing Salome. In Kemp's *Dream* Titania, played by the semi-blind Jack Birkett[30] (whose stage name is the Incredible Orlando) seems to be doing Glinda, the good fairy from *The Wizard of Oz*, as she might imitate Anita Louise in Reinhardt's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Birkett's grandly dressed Titania is an intentionally high camp version of Billie Burke's unintentionally camp performance in the 1939 film of *Oz* – there are the same wig (though exaggerated), fixed smile, big dress, and star-tipped wand; only the tinkling silvery voice is missing. Puck, played by Kemp, is a bald, amoral creature, who looks very much like one of Oberon's henchmen in Reinhardt's film. However, typical of the way Kemp, who described himself as "an ancient Jewish fairy [who is also] Negro and homosexual," [31] elides himself with his sources, his Puck also looks very much like Kemp in real life.

The film, based on Kemp's stage production, is unique – as it is in so many other ways – in its invention of a changeling boy who hovers at the age of consent, and who is obviously being "had" by Puck and desired by an elegantly lecherous Oberon for the same reasons and acts. This is closer to the world of Angela Carter's Golden Herm: the Indian boy as a desirable sexual exotic in a pan-sexual – or more accurately here, Pan-sexual – Fairyland. However, unlike Carter's "Auntie Tit-tit-tit-ania," Kemp's is a resplendently dressed imperious queen of the fairies who remains the boy's protector.[32] The boy (Francois Testory) is a faun-like dancer evocative of Nijinsky (another of Kemp's obsessions) and has a high, melodic singing voice. His thin body is dressed only in a brief toga. His frail shoulders stoop, and the wreath of roses on his head almost over burdens him.

The film goes beyond the play text and joyfully opens it to the possibilities of readings based on a happily polymorphous perversity. It clearly centers Oberon's battle for the boy in sexual terms, but does so without losing Titania's great loyalty to her votaress, a loyalty so fierce that she battles Oberon by shooting green death rays from her eyes. In the end, it is Puck who attempts to curl up with the boy, only to be rebuffed.

* * * * *

As unique as the Kemp-Coronado film is in this collection, it is also consistent with the pattern of representation seen when an older boy, or in this case young man, is cast as the changeling: Titania becomes a protector rather than a surrogate mother. However, casting an older child also diminishes the possible reading of a subtext that suggests the boy's own transition, his move from the female dominated nursery of early childhood to the male-oriented social space of boyhood. This is the move that Titania thwarts in the play when she keeps him from Oberon's court, and one that the early film of Max Reinhardt and William Dieterle and the

much later one of Adrian Noble weave as a central strand in the sparkling web of *Dream's* stage and film history. The next chapter looks at these two films where the directors have given an exceptional amount of screen time to the boy's transitions in the film and, in the process, argued that that sex goddesses do not make good mothers.

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[1] The term 'film' is used throughout in the broadest generic context and includes films made for movie theaters and well as filmed television programs. Almost all of these films are available in video versions. Film dates are based on those given by Rothwell and Melzer. The comedies in general have not been as popular on film as the major tragedies. In popular films in English since 1930 (not counting the BBC series) there has been one *Twelfth Night*, one *Much Ado About Nothing*, two *As You Like It*, several *Taming of the Shrew* (including television broadcasts, taped summer festival productions, and the musical *Kiss Me, Kate* the Broadway show on television and the Hollywood film version, without the comma in the title), one *Love's Labours Lost*, one *Comedy of Errors*, one *Merchant of Venice* (though of the two planned in 1969 the Orson Welles version was supposedly filmed and the film stolen) no *Measure for Measure, All's Well That Ends Well, Troilus and Cressida, Merry Wives of Windor*. This list of course does not include foreign films nor does it add television shows, unless they were released on video.

[2] The Czechoslovakian puppet version is not included because it is not available on video. Christine Edzard's recent version has also been excluded because although it uses the full text, its cast of children places it in a different category, and the Indian boy, here the producer's adopted three-year old Chinese daughter, only appears briefly towards the end.

[3] All Shakespeare quotations are from the *Riverside Shakespeare*, 2nd edition, edited by Evans, et. al.

[4] See Montrose, pp. 132-144.

[5] This has become rather a tradition ever since Peter Brook introduced it in his ground-breaking RSC production in 1955. In addition, when the roles of Hippolyta and Titania are doubled, as they frequently are. Titania takes on an expanded life in the court of Athens, where she can be seen as sympathetic to Hermia's cause and can even be a force for humanizing Theseus/Oberon.

[6] Shakespeare provides a similar, if less complete list in *King John* 3.1.45-51 where Constance enumerates the things that might make her love her son Arthur less, including if he were "Full of unpleasing blots and sightless stains, / Lame, foolish, crooked, swart, prodigious, / Patch'd with foul moles and eye-offending marks."

[7] Titania's vow to care for the boy echoes Theseus's own mother who raised her son alone – an unusual example of a legendary warrior raised by a woman.

[8] Elizabeth's own young courtiers, particularly Philip Sidney and Fulke Greville, complained decades earlier that they were kept in the feminine court and not allowed to participate in the masculine world of exploration. See Greville's account of the time he and Sidney ran away and hid out on Drake's boat planning to accompany him on the voyage to the New World, only to be hauled back to court by the queen's emissary.

[9] Diana Rigg, who played Emma Peel, is the mini-skirted, thigh-booted Helena in this *Dream*.

[10] My thanks to Russell Jackson for this piece of information gained in his interview with Dench.

[11] *Evening Post*, Nov, 10, 1826. quoted Odell, 123.

[12] Odell's information is generally about major productions in New York and London. The cast list for an American production at the Seattle Theater, March 10, 1900, shows that there were exceptions to the practice of a female Oberon. Mr. Ashley Miller is listed for the role of Oberon, program New York Performing Arts Library.

[13] Quote from an advertisement for the Nov. 27 evening performance (writer's collection), also cited in Odell, 147.

[14] In 1908 Vitagraph produced *Macbeth*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Othello*, *Richard III*, *Anthony and Cleopatra*, *Julius Caesar*, *The Merchant of Venice*; in 1909 *King Lear*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Twelfth Night*; in 1912 *Cardinal Wolsey* (*Henry VII*), and *As You Like It* (Pearson and Uricchio, 1994, 201). On Vitagraph and Shakespeare, see Ball, and Uricchio and Pearson, especially 65-95. On Vitagraph's *Dream*, see Ball 52-56, 313-14, and McKernan and Terris 110-111.

[15] George Méliès was an early French filmmaker famed for cinematic special effects. His work was particularly popular in the first decade of the 1900s. See Ball 33-37.

[16] The collection was jointly authored by the brother and sister, but the plays were divided: he took the tragedies and she the comedies. For a more detailed discussion of general film audience's knowledge of Shakespeare, see Urichhio and Pearson, chap. 3, esp. 74-81.

[17] Actually Reinhardt still used Nini Theilade, who had been in his production at Oxford and again at the Hollywood Bowl, as First Fairy, as well as retaining Bronislawa Nijinska as choreographer and the new-comer Olivia de Havilland as Hermia. There is a question as to whether Mickey Rooney was under contract to Warner at the time or not.

[18] A similar pillow shot is seen in Reinhardt, Moshinsky.

[19] Far more sophisticated Shakespeare was broadcast later that year on BBC with *Wars of the Roses*, the three-part adaptation by the RSC's John Barton and Peter Hall of *Henry VI*.

[20] Sabu, who made several films in the 1940s was actually a boyish appearing young man who had indeed been "discovered" tending elephants in Mysore, India.

[21] The only other children in the production are the young actors playing Cobweb, Mustard Seed, and Pease Blossom.

[22] See Laurie Osborne for an extended discussion of the films.

[23] *Macbeth, Romeo and Juliet, A Midsummer Night's Dream, Twelfth Night, The Tempest, Hamlet,* first series, 1982; *Julius Caesar, Richard III, A Winter's Tale, The Taming of the Shrew, As You Like It, Othello,* second series.

[24] Cel animation is the traditional animation method used for cartoons from Looney Tunes to Disney. Images are painted on transparent acetate, then layered on top of each other so that characters can move in front of stable backgrounds. Additional depth of field is created by using a multiplane camera, which allows placing the layers of acetate at various distances from the camera.

[25] Although the sky-filling cape is reminiscent of Reinhardt's film, his Oberon's cape enveloped the world in darkness; this Oberon, instead, fills the sky with twinkling stars.

[26] This image of sexiness, still connected to the actress today, began with her 1968 RSC debut as Shakespeare's Cressida, directed by John Barton. One memorable moment from that production had Troilus holding a piece of her dress that slowly unwrapped as she moved across the stage. There was just a glimpse of her nude body as she exited into the wings.

[27] The credit of television director for a film such as this means generally that the stage director continues to direct the actors, but that an additional director is on hand to direct the cameras and editing of camera shots.

[28] The website for Classic Video Club lists a PAL format video "produced" by the Dangerous to Know home video company, priced at SFr. 49.95. However, it is currently marked "temporarily withdrawn." Richard Burt cites DTK as the only distributor for the film (30). My own "bootlegged" copy is of such a poor quality that colors bleed together on the screen, the result of its coming from a long series of copies of copies. I was told that the distant parent copy was purchased at a gay porn shop in London, or possibly Paris, at least a decade ago.

[29] Kemp's description of what he wanted to achieve in all his theatrical productions, quoted in Rothwell, 2000, (203), from David Haughton (Kemp's co-producer and long-time partner), "Program Notes for the Lindsay Kemp Company" Sadler's Wells Theatre, 15 April – 11, May, 1985.

[30] Birkett's other Shakespeare film roles include Thersites in the BBC Shakespeare Series' *Troilus and Cressida* (1981) and Caliban in Derek Jarman's *Tempest* (1980).

[31] Ritzy-Brixton Cinema Club Notes, 1984, quoted in Rothwell, 2000, 203.

[32] "Overture and Incidental Music for *A Midsummer Night's Dream*" reprinted in *Burning Your Boats*, 274-83.

# Chapter Two

## Do Sex Goddesses Make Good Mothers? The *Dreams* of Reinhardt/Dieterle and Noble

Although nearly all film directors of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* put the changeling Indian boy on the screen, none have given him more prominence than Max Reinhardt and William Dieterle in 1935 and Adrian Noble in 1996. Their films, made more than thirty years apart, create a-story-within-a-story for the boy. The boys themselves are very different, one is a five-year-old miniature rajah with a plumed gold turban, while the other, aged closer to nine, is a fair-haired English lad in striped pajamas. As seen in chapter 1, the boy's age changes the dynamics of Titania and Oberon's quarrel and even contributes to shaping the actress's interpretation. Helen Mirren clutching a baby is a Renaissance Madonna who is very different from Anna Massey's imperial ballerina dancing with an adolescent. Even when the boys are the same age, there can be major differences. The silent film's Titania is sweet and kindly as she holds her elf-child's hand, but Michelle Pfeiffer's fairy queen, balancing the young god Krishna on her hip, becomes mythic.

When the boy is given his own extended story Titania's involvement with him goes beyond the textual confrontation with Oberon and the extra-textual inclusion of the child in her bower. In both the 1935 and the 1996 films the boy occupies a comparatively large amount of screen time with his own rites of passage. If Reinhardt/Dieterle's scenes featuring the boy are extracted and reassembled, they tell a coherent story, without dialogue, that lasts a quarter of an hour. Fifteen minutes is 12% of the entire movie and the same length as Vitagraph's one-reel silent *Midsummer Night's Dream*. Noble's boy

occupies even more screen time, and his story is intricately interwoven into more than half the film's scenes where he is participant, observer, and, at times, director. In the earlier film the boy's story is his transition from the female-dominated world of infancy and early childhood to male-focused boyhood. In the more recent film, he matures through *Dream's* dream, and moves from the mother-dominated nursery to the communal world of theater where he is loved – and celebrated – by the larger community. Both transitions can be located in Shakespeare's references elsewhere to a young boy's move upward in childhood's hierarchy: out of the petticoats of early childhood and into the breeches of male society. The boys' transitions in the films also fit the Freudian grid of the journey from id to super-ego. In both films the boy's changes occur within the context of his relationship with Titania, a relationship that in the films far exceeds the play's text and, in turn, is a major factor in shaping the viewers' received perceptions of the Fairy Queen. One film transforms her into a seductive child-woman for whom the boy is little more than a delightful life-size doll. The other film takes a performance of Titania that dominated the Royal Shakespeare Company's stage production with the Fairy Queen's mix of humor, dignity, and sensuality, and nearly succeeds in reducing it to nothing more than a gaudy sex symbol.

* * * *

Of the ten films of *A Midsummer Night's Dreams* Warner Brother's 1935 version directed by Max Reinhardt and William Dieterle continues to exert the widest influence on its successors. The film has received more attention in the annals of Shakespeare film criticism than nearly any other and holds an equal place with film versions of *Hamlet* and

*Henry V* as the subject of critical discourse. However, it took more than forty years for this attention to become positive and reverse the original complaints it was "neither good cinema nor good Shakespeare" (Agee 347) and to counter the accusation that it added "nothing at all to the mature apprehension of Shakespeare" (Lejeune 98). Even when praising its beautiful effects, earlier writers used the film as proof that Shakespeare would never be successfully presented on film.[1] It was not until Roger Manvell's survey of Shakespeare adaptations in 1971 and Jack Jorgens's insightful and scholarly reassessment of the *Dream* in 1977, that Reinhardt/Dieterle's film began to be increasingly appreciated – and loved – by Shakespeare film scholars.[2] Originally it was taken to task by academic and non-academic critics alike for its "box office"[3] casting and mixes of traditional theater, thirties Hollywood romance, and burlesque comedy; Shakespearean bombast and un-Shakespearean musical numbers; classical ballet and horror film techniques; patent artificiality and surrealism. It was only decades later that critics decided such a pastiche might not be totally inappropriate for a play with allusions to Petrarch and Ovid; fairy tales and folk tales; courtly lovers and "hard-handed" workmen; metamorphosis and acting; dreams and reality.

The details of the movie, its production process, reception, and critical analysis are thoroughly documented by Jack Jorgens, Samuel Crowl, Roger Manvell, Jay Halio, Russell Jackson, and most recently by Kenneth Rothwell, and Robert Willson.[4] However, although writers have examined the film from many different critical perspectives, few have given more than cursory attention to the interpretation of Titania, and none have considered how that role, like so much else in the film, is the result of an amalgamation of *Dream*'s theatrical traditions and a blend of German and Hollywood film conventions.

In fact, not only did the Reinhardt-influenced German film community provide the American movie screen with shadows from its own "haunted screen,"[5] for Hollywood's *Dream*, it also introduced to American audiences the iconic image of the worldly European screen goddess epitomized by Marlene Dietrich and Greta Garbo – stars who irrefutably determined the shape and form of the 1935 screen Titania.

Reinhart/Dieterle's Titania (Anita Louise) mothers Bottom (James Cagney)

**Reinhardt/Dieterle's Titania: a Hollywood goddess via the Berlin theater**

Warner Brothers Studio's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was co-directed by a Vienna-born German theater director for whom *Dream* had become a signature piece, Max Reinhardt, and an émigré German film director who had been under contract to the Studio since 1930, William Dieterle. Years before, when the two men worked together in Germany with the Berliner Ensemble, Reinhardt had been the master director and Dieterle the apprentice actor. By the time they came together again in Hollywood, Reinhardt was in unofficial exile from Hitler, and Dieterle was a rising American film director. On stage Reinhardt might have "owned" *Dream*, but on screen it was a collaboration, and its other director, Dieterle, was himself "owned" by Warner Brothers. For decades Max Reinhardt had presented a *Dream* that balanced Shakespeare's speeches with spectacle, dance, and music, but for all of his acclaimed work in theater and his influence on German cinema, this was actually his first sound film.[6] William Dieterle, on the other hand, began acting in and directing silent films in Germany in 1923, and moved on to Hollywood after a consortium of American film companies squeezed the German film industry into a recession.[7] Under contract with Warner Brothers for the five years preceding *Dream*, he had directed a wide range of films, including dramas, mysteries, thrillers, comedies, romances, sci-fi, documentary and even a musical.

As might be expected with co-directors, there were conflicts, and the result, as Jonathan Collick points out, is a film that "displays a tension between two largely exclusive methodologies, i.e. the Hollywood production values used by Dieterle and the Romantic and mystical theatre of Reinhardt" (81). Reinhardt wrote, "In making 'A

Midsummer Night's Dream' into a motion picture, I have realized a life-long ambition, with a result far surpassing my fondest hopes'"(v). However, Gottfried Reinhardt complains that the production was taken out of his father's hands – not yanked out but subsumed by people working on the film – and "suffered from delegation of authority and cursory involvement" (43). Dieterle, on the other hand, says there was a clear and comfortable division of responsibility between the two directors; "he [Reinhardt] was to be concerned with dialogue and leading the actors, while I attended to all technicalities connected with the filming . . . despite some overlapping . . . everything went without a hitch . . . simply because we understood each other so very well " (Manvell 25). This split between mystical romance and Hollywood convention may help explain the film's curious conflation: a Titania of pure loveliness who is also a less-than-lovely narcissistic self-indulgent flirt.

Along with conflict in making the film there was also continuity. The directors, as well as other émigré members of the production company, were products of a theatrical Diaspora that moved artists from the German stage (where Reinhardt had been the leading innovator) to German film (which had embraced Reinhardt's work and translated his theatrical style onto the screen) and, finally, to Hollywood (where many former members of the Reinhardt-influenced German film community now made their films). Members of the film's production team, drawn from Warner Brothers' foreign community, may have been protecting the revered theater impresario even as they took much of the production out of his hands. These included composer Eric Wolfgang Korngold (Austrian) formerly a protégé of Reinhardt's in Germany, who arranged the music by Mendelssohn; set designer Anton Grot, (Polish) whose previous films included

*Gold Diggers of 1935*; and costume designer Max Ree (Danish), a veteran designer of fifty films since 1926. Reinhardt prevailed in the choice of choreographer and kept the team who had worked with him in Europe and on the American tour. Choreography was by Branislawa Nijinska and Nini Theilade, who beat out Warner's own choreographers at Reinhardt's insistence, even though the studio produced five annual musicals, and their contract choreographers included Busby Berkeley, whose lavish style is evoked in *Dream*'s dance sequences. The collaboration between Reinhardt, Dieterle, Korngold, and others on the film became a Hollywood version of what Lotte Eisner identifies as "one of the basic principles of the German cinema; the essential role played by the author, the designer, and the technical staff"(19) – only here, of course, the author was a silent partner.

Even if the film-work is primarily Dieterle's, it is also Reinhardt's theater-work coming full circle. Reinhardt's Berlin theaters were one of the strongest influences on early German cinema – the training ground for much of Hollywood's foreign film community. In addition to Reinhardt's acclaimed productions at his Deutsches Theater, his more intimate chamber theater Kliempess provided an acting space that allowed actors to use the kinds of small subtle gestures that transferred well to movies, and the majority of actors in early German films came from his company or trained in his acting school. In addition, for German – as well as American films – one of Reinhardt's most revolutionary stage practices was his emphasis on chiaroscuro lighting effects: the collision between light and shadow, the sudden spotlighting of a character while others are left in the dark (Eisner 47).[8] Eisner's description of Reinhardt's fabled stage effects

and "magical stage lighting" matches what occurs on the screen in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Characters "suddenly surge out of the darkness, lit by invisible sources of light . . . rich costumes and trimmings glitter and glow . . . the pallid face . . . leaps from the darkness" (77). For instance, the film constantly places Titania not only in the light, but also positions her as a source of light. Many of her scenes are diffused with a soft gauzy glow, an Impressionist haze filled with seemingly hundreds of white-clad fairies.

The fact that Reinhardt and Dieterle had different artistic agendas ultimately worked to benefit *Dream*. Jack Jorgens credits the film's energy to the shifts between Reinhardt's "ornate escapist fantasy" and Dieterle's "dark vision." Actually, elements of both worlds are mixed. Fantasy Athens is a musical comedy court, its spacious set a series of Art Deco swirls and curves that would be at home on the set of an Astaire and Rogers film. Titania's almost realistic forest is happily inhabited by dozens and dozens of little girls in gauzy wings and underpants – and by sleek adult fairies who could have stepped out of the Ziegfeld Follies or *Gold Diggers of 1935*. Oberon's forest space however, is darker and retains more disturbing elements from Reinhardt's earlier theater productions. Mickey Rooney's feral Puck is a gleefully amoral creature patterned on Gertrude Eysolt's malicious hobgoblin in Reinhardt's 1905 production at Berlin Newus Theatre am Schiffbauerdamm. Victor Jory's sepulchral Oberon, enthroned on his black stallion, is a menacing figure, and his "courtiers" bear a disturbing resemblance to Nosferatian zombies.[9] As with Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree's turn-of-the-century production, Oberon's bespangled somberness contrasts with Titania's iridescent brightness, recalling the light and dark of the starry, moonlit night sky.

Jorgens praises the way Reinhardt and Dieterle "skillfully integrated the traditional view of the play as an idyllic fantasy with the darker, post-Freudian *Dream*, and in doing so made an important contribution to the interpretation of Shakespeare in performance" (37). In one of the film's eeriest sequences, steeped with dream-like sensuality, Oberon's henchmen sweep down, transform Titania's glittering fairies into sleepwalkers, and carry them off as darkness gradually envelopes the screen.[10] Even Titania, who seems all light and brightness, acquires an unsettling dimension when she rejects and abandons the tearful Indian boy. Elements of this darker *Dream* also influence later film versions and make their way into Peter Hall's muddy forest and Elijah Moshinsky's dim and dreamy woods where Oberon, on horseback, is accompanied by a dwarf. However, Reinhardt/Dieterle's image of *Dream* as a sparkling music-filled spectacle has been the more dominant influence on later films, reasserting itself at some point in nearly all of the films, and most recently in Michael Hoffman's version. Luckily, the German directors' reduction of Titania to a superficially charming but unreliable mother-cum-screen goddess has been less pervasive, even when directors have paid homage to Reinhardt/Dieterle's *Dream* in other elements of their films. Judi Dench, Helen Mirren, Lindsay Duncan, and Michelle Pfeiffer are beautiful but authoritative and loyal fairy queens.

* * * * *

Regardless of how much of the film's interpretation of Titania came from Reinhardt and how much from Dieterle, the sources for Anita Louise's Titania are located

at least three decades earlier in the theater. Max Reinhardt's numerous productions of *Dream*, beginning in 1905, were a proving ground for his innovative ideas, but they also had long roots to nineteenth-century German Bardology. His first production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was built around Impressionist stage design and costumes deliberately chosen to offer a romantic challenge to the growing influence of drab realism. In thousands of performances in more than fifteen different productions of *Dream* throughout Europe and in the United States over thirty years, the staging (variously labeled Expressionistic, Impressionistic, and neo-Romantic) moved back and forth between elaborate stage sets with fake trees on turntables and sets of evocative simplicity. In the late twenties, as one of the founders of the Salzburg Festival, Reinhardt began a series of outdoor festival versions of even more elaborate productions of *Dream* where dance and spectacle completely dominated text. In the spring 1933 he directed a stunning production of *Dream* first in the Boboli Gardens in Florence, Italy, and then, at the invitation of Oxford University's Drama Society (OUDS) in England where, the university grounds being deemed too small by Reinhardt, the play was performed in Oxford's more expansive South Park.

The park's rolling fields meant that Reinhardt's *Dream* was more than ever a pageant rather than a Shakespeare play.[11] Titania (Oriel Ross[12]) was nearly silenced by the emphasis on dance and the elaborate fairy rituals. The role became more a dancer's role, though still stunningly effective in the opening as Titania in a billowing blue cape made her first entrance at the far end of the field and walked majestically – and endlessly, given the distance – toward the audience, leading by the hand a small boy dressed in white (Carpenter 130). However, the emphasis on dance placed added importance on the

First Fairy – played to outstanding effect by a seventeen-year-old Danish dancer, Nina Theilade – ( an emphasis also seen in the film where Theilade also danced the role). This new emphasis confused at least one critic, Hart-Davis of the *Spectator*, who reported that Titania was abducted by Oberon's men.[13] It was a version of this production, where beautiful panoramas were favored over accessible dialogue, that traveled the next year to California, where the Hollywood Bowl performance became the basis for Warner Brothers' film.[14]

* * * * *

In the film Titania's role is a mix of dance – or at least aesthetic movement – and limited dialogue. Jorgens observed, "she does not act, but dances, poses, and sings" (39). Many critics, in addition to Jorgens, have praised Anita Louise's loveliness as Titania, her fluid movements, her ethereal shimmer (mirrored by her chorus of Busby Berkeley-inspired attendants), but they have panned her mannered speech and "amateurishness" in the part. Although considered "as exquisite a Titania visually as a poet could sensibly conceive," her mannered reading of her lines gave the impression she was "completely unfitted for the ordeal that was thrust upon her; an ordeal that she had been prepared for by nothing in her brief acting career" (Watts 50). This final critical slap is unearned because Anita Louise was, in fact, a seasoned veteran, not an amateur thrust on the screen for the first time. In this film the debuting actress was Olivia de Havilland, whose performance received high praise.[15] On the other hand, twenty-year-old Anita Louise had made her Broadway debut at six and worked in Hollywood from the age of nine. By the time *Dream* was filmed she had appeared in thirty films, and, as a contract player with Warner Brothers, had recently played her first major "grownup" role as Marie

Antoinette in *Madame Dubarry* [sic] (with Delores Del Rio in the title role). This, however, is not to deny that hers is an exceedingly mannered performance, but the fault may lie with the directors, not the actress herself.

Anita Louise as Shakespeare's fairy queen is part Reinhardt's invention and part Dieterle's. This Titania is ethereal, silvery in voice and costume; she is also both virgin and vixen, a willful flirt who laughs at her rejected "Lord" and who later absent-mindedly pushes away a child who adores her. Reinhardt may well have seen nothing disturbing in Titania as a child-woman. He seems to have tended to cast the role with young actresses. Dieterle, however, films her as though she were a more mature film goddess. It is difficult to place Louise's interpretation of the role in the context of Reinhardt's earlier stage productions of *Dream* where there is nothing in the reports to indicate an unusual interpretation of the role, as there is with Eysolt's Puck. Then, too, actresses were not always the strong point of Reinhardt's theater companies despite, or perhaps because of, his proclivity for love affairs with leading ladies. His productions of *Dream* changed over the years, but Titania seems consistently to have been seen as a less important part, with the real acting demands being placed on Puck, Oberon, and Bottom. These are the three performances mentioned most often by theater critics, though generally most of the focus is on the staging rather than the actors.[16] Yet, Reinhardt must have felt the fairy queen was significant because in "Of Actors" (Columbia University, 1928) he speaks of Shakespeare's "infinite omnipotence" and ability to contain multitudes of characters. To illustrate the point he lists six paired opposites, starting with Othello and Iago, and ending with Titania and Bottom.[17]

Unlike theater reviews of Reinhardt's staged *Dreams*, the film's reviews almost always mention Anita Louise's Titania. In the film her role is vastly expanded because the production numbers that feature her and her fairies are a major part of the movie. Since the film's two directors had different artistic agendas the question that arises is how much of this glittery, girly Titania is Reinhardt and how much Dieterle? In Reinhardt's first stage productions Titania and Oberon were dressed in earth tones that made them an integral part of the forest – they belong to the earth and trees, not the night sky as they had in previous English productions. In the film, however, Shakespeare's fairy queen sparkles in silver and arrives on a moonbeam that transforms into a long white cape. The costume is pure Hollywood, requiring special cinematographic edit tricks and designed to reflect the lights of a movie set. In contrast, a photograph of the 1905 *Midsummer Night's Dream* shows a winsome Titania (Else Heims) in a simple dress of semi-sheer fabric, while a slightly later production has a different actress, but still in a simple dress, though now decorated with leaves and flowers. In that production Oberon is dressed simply in leaf and vine decorated tights, but he also has an elaborate antler-like headdress that lights up. The far more elaborate costumes were reserved for Hippolyta and the young Athenian maids, Hermia and Helena.[18] However, years later in 1923, in what is described as a relatively simple production at the theater in the Josefstadt in Vienna, American designer Ernest de Weerth costumed Oberon, Titania, and the fairies in silvery gauze laced with branches (Williams 171). Still later, Reinhardt's Salzburg Festival production in 1927 had a totally different set of far more elaborate costumes by de Weerth patterned after paintings by Tiepolo.

Nonetheless, Anita Louise's thirties-moderne dress sends conflicting messages unconnected to any of Reinhardt's previous Titanias. It proclaims her to be both sensual Venus and chaste Diana, which in itself could be interesting if both were allowed to co-exist. Instead Venus is signaled, but then denied. The body-molding dress with its fluid fringes signals seduction, but the signal is subverted and contained; sexuality is curtailed and turned to vacuous chastity by girlish movement and voice. Where Shakespeare wrote a mature and sensual woman, the movie presents an alluring child-woman who is a provocative tease and ice goddess. The silver gown hugs an unreal body of discrete curves that are as unmoving as a marble statue. Its closest equivalent might have been the Victorian stage's "post-plastique," which presented reproductions of famous paintings featuring chastely nude, strategically draped models.

Further, there is irresponsibility in this Titania's extra-textual relations with the changeling boy that detracts from the fairy queen's dignity. This has been observed by all the writers except Fiedler, who saw the Indian boy's presence as an example of Reinhardt's "loving portrayal" of women in the film. Because we see the boy, he reasons, we also see "Titania's maternal love" (93). Fiedler, to put this in perspective, is also unique in calling Mickey Rooney's Puck a benevolent spirit. Jackson and Crowl are far more astute in assessing Titania's curious teasing coyness which is far beyond anything authorized by her promise to Bottom that she will "thy amiable cheeks to coy" (4.1.2). [19] This coyness-with-a-difference is apparent in her first meeting with Oberon where she is taunting and precocious (a surprisingly fit word for the child-woman's flirtation). They meet only after a long musical spectacle where she has danced with her troupe of fairies. That image of a blithe spirit is kept unblemished by cutting almost all

of her lines. All of the references to the tumultuous seasons, the dreary ramifications of her quarrel with Oberon are gone, as is her lovely Indian sands speech with its haunting images of pregnancy and death. All that remains of Titania's lines in act 2, scene 1, and they are said in a sing-song recitation, are:

> What jealous Oberon? Fairies, skip hence.
> I have forsworn his bed and company.
>
> * * *
>
> Set your heart at rest.
> The fairy land buys not the child of me. (2.1.61-62)
>
> * * *
>
> His mother was a vot'ress of my order.
> And for her sake do I rear up her boy,
> And for her sake I will not part with him. (2.1.121-123; 136-137)

She says she will stay "perchance till after Theseus's wedding day" and invites Oberon to dance in moonlight revels. His demand "Give me the boy" is answered in full: "Not for thy fairy kingdom. Fairies, away! / We shall chide downright, if I longer stay." Her manner is so arch that one almost expects her to say, "Fiddle-dee-dee / The Fairy Land buys not the child of me," except that the flirtatious tease Scarlet O'Hara would not make it onto the screen for another four years, 1939, would also bring Billie Burke's gooey-fluty Titania-voiced Glinda the Good Witch in *The Wizard of Oz* (whose fairy queen "look" was later co-opted by Lindsey Kemp in his film for Jack Birkett's drag-queen Titania).

Critics have complained about the tone of Louise's voice, the sing-song delivery of lines, and have praised the decision to have her speak as little as possible. The brevity

of her speeches is consistent with the way Reinhardt's "pageant" productions in Florence and Oxford had made the role more visual and less aural. However, the decision to have Titania speak in silvery soprano may have actually been made by music director Eric Wolfgang Korngold, whose involvement with the film went further than simply adapting Mendelssohn's music and conducting the orchestra. He also "conducted" the actors as they spoke their major speeches. He wanted to insure that they matched the rhythm of their readings to the rise and fall of the extra-diegetical[20] background music. With Titania the result was to further deflect any unwonted sexuality, in effect further taming Shakespeare's wonderfully-appetited fairy queen. This manipulation of voice offers a key to the way in which this Titania is disempowered by an excess of girlish loveliness. When Kaja Silverman writes about voice and women in film[21] she uses voice primarily in the sense that in films the female subject is defined by "unreliable, thwarted, or acquiescent speech" (309) and "is excluded from positions of discursive authority both inside and outside the diegesis" (40).

Shakespeare gave Titania a powerful and authoritative diegetical voice, especially in her first meeting with Oberon in act 2, scene 1. Her voice of authority is axiomatic. However, that voice is thwarted by Reinhardt and Dieterle not only when they reduce her lines – as they did for all the parts – but by the pitch and tone of Titania's actual voice, a contortion of the actress's own speaking voice. In those tinkling rills and runs one hears – and sees – Silverman's theory in action: on the screen "body and voice are played off against each other in a way calculated narrowly to circumscribe their signifying potential" (310). While Oberon's deeply resonant voice speaks with authority, Titania's silvery laugh reduces her speeches to a series of twitters and her apparent sensuality to a

façade. In classical cinema the woman's voice establishes her position as the voice is synchronized with the image (Silverman 12). Here, however, the voice is used to diffuse the image, to keep it from being excessively sensual or authoritative. Imagine, for example, what the effect of Louise's Titania would have been if she spoke with the seductive warmth and the slightly accented English of Garbo or Dietrich. Instead we are given a girlish American voice that reinforces the "obsessive and indeed exclusive reference to the female body, a reference which turns woman in representation and in fact – back upon herself, in a negative and finally self-consuming narcissism" (315).

In this film Titania *is* narcissistically enamored with playing mother. After first rushing to the boy in an extended sequence that replicates a lovers' meeting, she later rejects him even though this means ignoring the text's description, given by Oberon, of how when they meet again she promises to send him the boy, accompanied by fairies.[22] In the film Bottom takes the changeling's place as someone for Titania to baby and rock to sleep with lullabies. In fact, she is replacing one crying child with another. It is Bottom's sobs that wake her, not his bray. She is "responding to the sobs of a forlorn child propped pathetically against a tree . . . a literal babe in the woods" (Crowl 66). Throughout Titania's first "wooing" scene with Bottom, there are intercuts of the troubled Indian boy, first trying to get her attention, then wandering off unhappily, finally weeping alone in a field where he is finally rescued by a gleeful Oberon. The boy's sadness is a repeated counterpoint to the new lovers' happy if misguided infatuation.

Yet, the film does not villiainize Titania beyond that point. As if a kind of selective memory was at work to insure thinking only happy thoughts, the extended

wedding procession with its little flower girls and Mendelssohn's "Wedding March" is a kind of children's ceremony, a "Tom Thumb wedding" where the boyishly strutting bridegroom wears a huge sunflower in his lapel and his bride walks, modest and demure, by his side. Any hint of a wedding night with sexual consummation, which is part of the play's joke, is dispelled by a soft-focus shot of Titania's singing her bridegroom "baby" to sleep. Even Titania's wedding veil, so beautifully woven from a spider web until it magically fans out with the iridescence of a dragon fly's wings, is a reminder of how flimsy her powers have become compared to her original moonbeam cape or to Oberon's vast sky-encompassing black cape.

However, even here the film uses a pre-wedding moment to signal sexuality and then pretend the signal was never sent. Immediately before the comic wedding, Titania is shown looking extremely soulful and being comforted by her handmaidens as though she were a tremulous virgin. It is to them, at what would be the end of act 3, scene 1, that Titania, who has said so little throughout, retains the sexually-charged lines of her final speech. "The moon methinks looks with a watery eye; / And when she weeps, weeps every little flower, / Lamenting some enforced chastity" (198-200). The sense of "enforced" conveyed here is not the potential one of rape but of enforced as in lovers being kept apart. This is one of Louise's best moments – and one of the few where she is allowed to be sincere – but it is not enough.

In *Dream* traditionally the contrast is between the mature lovers, Titania/Oberon and Theseus/Hippolyta, and the infatuated Athenian youths. However, in this film although the saturnine Victor Jory (Oberon) is in his thirties and appears much older,

Anita Louise, at twenty, is a year younger than Olivia de Havilland (Hermia), and four years younger than Jean Muir (Helena). While the Athenian lovers are played with the pep of college coeds, Titania is more finely wrought. Louise was cast, at the Studio's insistence, because she was one of Warners' most beautiful contract players and was being groomed by the studio for star roles, but she was also cast against type despite her previous role as Marie Antoinette. Her earlier parts were primarily the good girl, sisters and daughters, – as later she would be the faithful wife and understanding mother.[23] Although she is asked here to impersonate a Hollywood goddess, the real screen goddesses were European grown-ups, at least a decade older, women who radiated worldly sexuality. [24]

**Garbo, Dietrich, and Titania**

Greta Garbo, Reinhardt's first choice for Titania, could have played the role to perfection. Her single raised eyebrow would have transformed this screen Titania into a ruler, a Queen Christina of Fairyland. Instead Dieterle did the next best thing and filmed Anita Louise as though he were Josef von Sternberg shooting Marlene Dietrich.[25] There is the same careful star lighting technique that holds the face up to catch the light and the long pauses in close-ups carefully engineered for an iconic image. Of course, Louise's very youth and wholesomeness frequently subvert this effort because when she moves her head to a different angle, the face reverts to that of a teenager. Perhaps Dieterle thought he could invent a screen personae for Louise, as von Sternberg had for Dietrich. However, all the sophisticated lighting in Hollywood could not disguise the face that Anita Louise was a wholesome American just out of her teens, a golden California girl.[26]

Dieterle's desire to work within the evolving convention of filming glamorous stars like Dietrich is understandable however, if for no other reason than that it matched the studio's preference for fashioning its stars. He did not replicate any of the more daring and overtly sexual shots that had marked Dietrich in *Blue Angel* (1930) such as the provocative leg shots, but he did have a Dietrich film, *Blonde Venus* (1932), to draw on as a model for a story of a glamorous mother who adores and then abandons her young son.[27] A comparison of that film with *Dream* offers a number of intriguing similarities, especially in light of the Hollywood/German influences on Louise's Titania. *Blonde Venus* opens with Mendelssohnian music and a *Dream*-like forest sequence, in which laughing nymphs swim in a willow-shaded pond, their pre-Code nudity glimpsed beneath the water. This enchanted woods also has its "fairy" queen, Helen, played by Dietrich, and its bumbling earthbound "mechanicals," a group of American and German students who stumble upon what is actually a troupe of actresses enjoying an afternoon break of skinny-dipping. As *Blonde Venus* develops there are significant similarities in the pattern between Dietrich's role of Helen and Shakespeare's Titania. Both women have independent powers, Titania as a ruler in Fairy Land, Dietrich's Helen as a singer who enchants men – this ultimately leads to her becoming a nightclub star in Paris (Hollywood's stand-in for a magic Fairy Land). Helen marries one of the intruding students and becomes a completely adoring mother, while Titania is an adoptive mother, though in Reinhardt/Dieterle's film equally adoring and indulgent. When divorced both women fight for custody of a boy aged four or five and both eventually run away with the child. Each one has an extra-marital affair which, though the unfaithful wives acted with innocent motives – Titania under enchantment, Helen to save her husband's life – lead to

the loss of their boys. For both women sexual degradation is connected to relinquishing the child – Titania enamored of an ass indulges in bestiality, while Helen is driven by poverty to common prostitution. In the end, both women are reunited with their husbands. However, for Helen the boy is the motivation for reconciliation, while for Titania the child, at this point, is irrelevant.

Perhaps the most striking similarity between the two films is the image of an erotic and glamorous woman as a mother in an age when independent women were seldom to be seen on the screen (the glory days of the screwball comedy were yet to come[28]) – and in Hollywood good mothers were chaste and unproblematic. However, a major difference, which almost seems to define the shift brought about by the puritanical Production Code, is that in 1935 Anita Louise's Titania, though charming in her relationship with the boy, is ultimately a bad mother, a self-indulgent divorcee who ignores a crying child, while Dietrich's pre-Code Helen is allowed to remain a devoted mother even throughout her passionate affair and her skid into prostitution. Of course in the end, even Helen had to give up the lover to gain the child. In *Blonde Venus* Dietrich offers a rare screen performance that mingles the glamorous with the maternal – and one that legitimates in terms of film convention Anita Louise's Titania as adoptive mother.

Reinhardt and Dieterle made their *Dream* right after the Hayes office passed its stringent censorship code virtually banning from the screen any reference to or suggestion of sex, for example, married couples must sleep in separate beds. Thus *Dream*'s treatment of sex, implying or ignoring the subject that is so embedded in the text needs to be read not against subsequent films, but in terms of films that directly preceded it, those made between 1932 and 1934. Those earlier, pre-Code, films often permitted a

woman to actually enjoy sex, to indulge in it without punishment (though not always), and to take a lover without falling into degradation.[29] Shakespeare has written into Titania's part all of this– a period of joyful extra-marital sexual indulgence, followed by reconciliation with the husband. Post-Code would not allow such amoral activities. Although theoretically they might be slipped into a Shakespeare film under the guise of high art, the need to appeal to a general audience made directors warily prefer to bowdlerize Shakespeare and domesticate his women. In this film Titania becomes a willful and immature gay divorcée who thoughtlessly skips off to the next infatuation. However, she retains sufficient modesty for family fare: there are no references to a dalliance with Theseus, her attraction to Bottom is chaste, even maternal, and she is properly contrite – i.e., on the verge of hysterics – at the sight of Bottom sleeping in her bed.

* * * * *

Titania in Reinhardt and Dieterle's film is really a palimpsest of Victorian theater, German neo-Romanticism, European Hollywood, and American Puritanism. She is a mix of two stars: the silvery elements of the night sky and those on the silver screen. She is Shakespeare's wanton fairy queen tamed by middle class morality, her authority and sexuality translated to girlish wonder and coy chastity. Still she is truly lovely, an ethereal being when viewed from the best angle in the right light. In this film, the changeling's role is deliberately turned into a mini-drama that challenges Titania's seriousness and her "goodness." The combination of truncated dialogue and repeated scenes where she rejects the once-adored boy completely negate Shakespeare's Titania's claim of loyalty to her dead vot'ress. Instead, Reinhardt/Dieterle present a boy cast aside

by a mother, as Hermia is by her father, a parental rejection possibly linked with the hard-hearted parents of Pyramus and Thisbe. Her rejection also links him with all the film's unhappy lovers: Theseus scorned by Hippolyta, Helena hated by Demetrius, Hermia discarded by Lysander, Bottom, Oberon, and the changeling boy abandoned by Titania, and Bottom scourged by his wife in a scene that was filmed but deleted. In the end, of course Jack has Jill, nothing goes ill, and everyone is loved, though we do not see the boy when the fairies return to the court.[30] In all these films the boy's presence in the final scene is limited to Kemp, the animated version, and Noble, though his absence at the end of Reinhardt/Dieterle's film is surprising because he was so prominent. However, removing him ensured a happy ending with the emphasis on lovers and not on parents living or dead; good, bad, or indifferent.

Languorous Hippolyta (Lindsay Duncan) and Theseus (Alex Jennings) in Adrian Noble's *Dream*

**Noble's Titania: the sexiest mother**

In Adrian Noble's 1996 film of the Royal Shakespeare Company's production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the changeling boy (Osheen Jones) is a constant presence throughout and has the unexpected effect of fragmenting and diminishing the role of Titania (Lindsay Duncan). The film had its origins in the Royal Shakespeare Company's 1994-1995 stage production, much of which is incorporated into the film, though as will become clear this is not simply a recorded stage performance.[31] Noble's *Dream* is placed last in this study because it gives more screen time to the boy than any of the other *Dream* films and also makes the most complex use of him. The film's opening focuses on him; he is incorporated into almost every one of the play's scenes as observer or agent; he is foregrounded as the ever-present silent witness. Although in all the films the on-screen boy has been the directors' invention, in Noble's film the boy's own journey through the enchanted night forest becomes the film's ultimate focus. He becomes the true changeling, not in the traditional sense of the substituted fairy child, but through his transformed identity as he moves out of the nursery's womb-like enclosure and into the social collaboration of the theater. The film becomes the story of his dream voyage, rather than the lovers, and the final scene's backstage celebration and curtain call quite literally revolve around him as all hands raise him in the air.

To date, the only article on Noble's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is Mark Thornton Burnett's which uses the vocabulary of Freudian analysis to explore the director's extra-textual and extra-diegetical use of the boy's presence. Burnett's article, written to "redress the [bad] filmic reputation" of Noble's *MSD*, argues that instead of setting Shakespeare back a hundred years as one critic claimed,[32] the film "reinvents

Shakespeare for the millennium" (89). Although I agree with Burnett that the film was seriously underrated, my direct concern here is with Noble's reading of Titania and how the boy's presence radically changes a viewer's response. As with Reinhardt/Dieterle's film, extensive use of the boy works against the adoptive mother Titania by showing her as the indifferent parent who prefers a lover to her child.

Noble's changeling boy is a fair-haired English lad in blue and white striped pajamas, and the expansion of this invented role is the major change made in transferring the RSC production onto the screen. There was no child in the stage version, which was a slimmed down, fast-paced production in which the lovers held equal place with the denizens of fairyland. In the film, the boy's presence serves as a framing device recalling Puck's comments on the theater's dream aspect – "think but this . . . that you have but slumbered here" (5.2.441-42). There is also an obvious allusion to the mix of dreams and performance found in *Taming of the Shrew* where Christopher Sly believes he is waking into reality from a dream when in fact he is being incorporated as part of a play's audience. However, unlike Shakespeare's Sly, and unlike Shakespeare's un-represented changeling boy, Noble's lad remains in the play: observing, participating, and at times even controlling the action and characters. His presence is tied to the film's most cinematic moments: the opening sequence in the nursery, the fall down the "rabbit hole," the flight of balloons, arrival of fairies in bubbles, and the ET-inspired motorcycle ride past the moon. At one point he is even shown moving a gigantic ball of a moon. The English boy in pajamas is established as the Indian boy of the quarrel when he sees a turbaned image of himself appear in a bubble conjured by Puck's description of Titania and Oberon's dispute. The boy is also the person most consistently connected with the

film's many references to the theater. He manipulates puppets in a toy theater, pulls "real" scenery ropes backstage during "Pyramus and Thisbe," and is the center of attention in the resoundingly joyful final curtain call.

The film itself has two styles; it is part what Jack Jorgens would classify as cinematic movie and part filmed stage play, perhaps the unavoidable consequence of budget limitations or even time constraints. However, while Reinhardt and Dieterle managed to merge their own divergent film and theater experiences into a relatively seamless whole, the result of Noble's mix is uneven and far from satisfactory. It seems tilted off balance – Fairyland is too obviously a bare stage, and the special "magic" effects seem intrusive rather than an effective extension. Part of this off-kilter "tilt" occurs because so much of the play's magic is now located with the boy at the expense of the other roles. Most importantly for my discussion, emphasis on the boy combined with other directorial choices results in a diminished Titania. This is not to say that she is silenced or invisible; the opposite is quite true.

Dressed in flamingo pink she is highly visible, overshadowed only by her enormous pink velvet-lined umbrella. Furthermore, Lindsay Duncan is a commanding actress able to reach heights of fierce imperiousness. The diminished importance is located in turning her into a parody of sexual desire, and the diminution is furthered by frequent inter-cuts of the boy, making him a part of almost every scene including her most intimate ones. His presence on screen often is a reaction-shot close-up signaling his involvement in nearly every aspect of the action. It is the repeated image of the boy observing Titania that destabilizes the unity of her relationship with the other characters and disrupts the play's sense of continuity as Noble, in effect, rewrites the play. This is

especially true when, as frequently happens, the Noble-directed expression on the boy's face replaces Shakespeare's lines as the coda at a scene's end. The boy's ubiquitous presence, the early framing of *Dream* within the context of classic children's literature, and the fact that the controlling "gaze" is a child's all seem at odds with Noble's decision to present a Titania who is, paradoxically, defined by a rampant sexuality. She is a fairy queen of lust, rather than love. Where Mirren's Titania was maternally loving, and Dench's was joyfully physical, Duncan's fairy queen has a hard edge reminiscent of the Restoration roles that are one of her specialties. In contrast, even Lindsay Kemp's orgiastic film maintained a sense of delight in the sensuality of its polymorphous perversity. There, Jack Birkett's Titania was obviously pleased with Bottom's[33] significant protuberance, but embraced him with exuberance rather than an aggressive come-hither teasing.

Relevant to the question of how and what changed in the transference from stage to film, it is important to note that much of the film retains Noble's stage blocking. However, in the original production at Stratford-upon-Avon when the role was played by Stella Gonet, Titania's sexuality had a softer, more joyful air.[34] In both stage and film versions Duncan's Titania keeps Bottom (Desmond Barrett) from leaving the woods not by her powers as a spirit of no common rate, but by an assault on his genitals. She prostrates herself in front of him and slowly raises her head against his legs until she reaches his crotch, at which point the films cuts to Bottom's face and his surprised bray bellows out. The 'assault' continues as Titania lies on her back and slowly lifts her leg to place her foot, again on his crotch. When Bottom looks down, he makes it clear that the spread legs and split skirt have revealed, though to his sight only, her pudenda. It is an

overt act of carnality, matched by Bottom's coarse eagerness. Noble later shows them balanced in the umbrella, vigorously fornicating (though fully dressed) and still later, the camera swirls around and images blur as Titania rides on his back in orgiastic frenzy, while a drunken retinue of very grown-up fairies follow them.

Joe Papp's Central Park production had also suggested an orgy in Titania's bower, but here the image is more grotesque, perhaps because Bottom's ass's head does not use a traditional cuddly donkey mask, such as Reinhardt/Dieterle placed on James Cagney. Instead Bottom presents an unappetizing combination of scraggly hair and protruding rotten teeth. In Hoffman's film Kevin Klein's Bottom is also transformed with large ears and general facial hairiness, but the visible face remains sweet and lovable. Barrett is appealing as the stage-struck weaver but when translated into an ass, he becomes a grotesque. On stage, however, his rapport with the audience provided a balance that kept him appealing throughout.

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Far more important for this discussion, is the way Noble focuses on the Indian boy, possibly at the expense of the play's other characters, and definitely as a silent commentator on Titania's promiscuous sexuality. A child's observant presence turns her into the "bad" mother, a licentious woman more interested in seduction than in parenting. In the film, the boy provides the link between the court and forest. His extended presence as an observer also affects the production's characterization of Titania. In other versions

where the boy is older, no longer an infant or even a five-year-old, Titania's relation to him has been more that of a patroness than mother, as in the animated version, the 1950's television production with Anna Massey, and even Kemp's film. However, although Noble's boy is aged around nine or ten, his relationship with Titania does not fit the pattern generally seen with these older boys. Instead, even though he is closer to adolescence than early childhood, his bedroom crowded with nursery toy, and his waking cries of "Mommy" align him with the younger boys. Titania is still a mother figure, but with a major difference. The child/parent relationship is established soon after the film's beginning and is presented in terms of Freud's crucial "primal moment." The boy wakes, gets up, and, still dressed in his pajamas (which he will wear throughout the film), walks down dream corridors, looks through a keyhole and is puzzled by seeing Hippolyta ('mother') and Theseus ('father'?) in an erotically-charged conversation as to how, "four days will quickly steep themselves in night" (1.1.7).

The problem here is that the film consistently raises the question of where the boy is located during every scene and what he is actually seeing. The biggest factor working against Noble's Titania is the fact that her actions are measured by the presence of the boy. The transference of a stage production to screen always contains a problem: stage pictures are designed to be viewed as a whole, but the film spectator's gaze is controlled by the camera. Throughout, from the first moment when he peers through the keyhole, it is the boy's "gaze"[35] that shows us Titania. On the whole, he seems simply amused. When he is in fairyland, he looks lovingly at Titania as though he accepts who and what she is as she lounges in her umbrella. However, consistent with his Freudian reading, Burnett identifies the pink-lined umbrella as a metaphor for female genitals, with the

umbrella handle representing the phallus and so sees the boy's unemotional look at the umbrella as indicative that he has made the necessary moved through the Oedipal stage.

With or without the Freudian imagery, what appears on the screen is a seductive 'pillow shot' of Titania as the recumbent object of desire, eyes closed, blonde hair spread out on the pillow, as she was also seen in Reinhardt/Dieterle and Moshinsky's BBC productions – but the "male" gaze is a ten year-old boy's. The boy's presence also emphasizes alternate readings between the later and earlier parts of the film. The 'Athens' part is not only the most cinematic section, but also the one where Duncan's character carries greater authority. In the film as on stage, Titania and Hippolyta are doubled, as are Oberon and Theseus. In contrast to the abandoned Titania sprawled in her umbrella suspended beneath the stage's thick "forest" of hanging bare light bulbs, Athens' amorously longing Hippolyta is seated in an elegant eighteenth-century room drenched in candlelight. She is dressed in the soft folds of an aristocratic white satin dress, and her long blonde hair is elegantly arranged. When Egeus drags his daughter in, her languorousness changes into sharply focused attention as she listens with increased concern to the Duke's willingness to impose the old Athenian law of death or the convent in support of Egeus's attempt to control his daughter Hermia. When Oberon calls Hippolyta to leave with him, the Amazon queen expresses her displeasure by slapping his face as she passes by, prompting the confused duke to ask. "what cheer my dear?" [36] His puzzlement is understandable since their earliest speeches had been spoken with great sensuality and longing.

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Hippolyta's sympathetic reaction to Hermia does nothing to prepare the audience for the change in Duncan as Titania. Obviously there is no reason for an actor to be consistent in doubled roles, in fact variety is often more important. However, the boy's presence in both worlds seems to call for a reverse-sided reading of a single character in all of the doubled roles so that if the interpretation is to be seen through the boy's gaze, the product of his psyche now identifies the once chaste mother with an exaggerated sexuality. Although this provides a persuasive reading, the costume and Duncan's interpretation of Titania were very much the same when I saw her on stage as they are in the film. The big difference lies in the fact that now there is a child watching.

Lindsay Duncan as Titania

In contrast to the aristocratic Hippolyta, Titania wears an even lower-cut, tight fitting dress that emphasizes the bust, and her hair is teased out and decorated with red feathers. However, despite this Mae West redux costume and the Barbie doll hair, this is an intelligent and even fierce Titania. She is not, however, a maternal Titania, nor even a protective one. At no point does she coddle or embrace the boy; in fact his presence is scarcely acknowledged by her until the final curtain call. Other characters, on the other hand, respond to him throughout: Bottom lends him his jacket during the rehearsal in the forest, Oberon and the boy face each other directly from either end of the toy theater, Puck takes his hand and races with him into the Duke's court, the Mechanicals work with him backstage during the performance of "Pyramus and Thisbe." Any sense of Titania as a maternal figure is further deflected by cutting lines 127-142 in act 2, scene 1, her description of gossiping with the pregnant vot'ress on "Neptunes yellow sands" (line 130), so that the viewer hears of the contagious air resulting from the quarrel and the accusations of infidelity, but is not given the softer images of friendship, pregnancy, nor the sad one of mortality. There is in fact no real explanation for Titania's desire to keep the boy. Noble is unique among film directors who include the boy in that he limits the reference to the boy's mother and also keeps the child out of sight during the custody debate.

In chapter 1 the question was what is an orphan doing in a comedy? Here the question becomes what is a child doing in the midst of such adult sexuality? In making the film Noble has conflated two radically different sub-themes: one, the play's troublesome suggestions of dark sexuality – the dangerous night forest, the allusions to snakes, Puck's cruel pranks – and the other *Dream* as part of the canon of children's

literature – the play most likely performed by school children, the sweet tale in *Lambs' Tales from Shakespeare*, the emphasis on the fairy world in illustrated editions like Rackham's. By introducing the boy Noble also creates a different frame for the play, one that places it in the child's world. There are clear allusions to children's classics: *Mary Poppins*, *Alice in Wonderland*, *Peter Pan* (above all[37]) and the children's film, *Wizard of Oz* and *ET*. Only the *Secret Garden* is missing, surprisingly so since it deals with a boy who becomes healthy via a garden Noble's fascination with childhood images is one of the enduring themes of his stage productions. His *Hamlet* included a doll's house in Ophelia's room and his *A Winter's Tale* placed the opening scene in a balloon-filled party for the young prince. *Dream*'s very English Indian boy is not unlike the young boys who act as wise observers in other Shakespeare plays – Mamillius in *A Winter's Tale*, Prince Arthur in *King John*, Macduff's young son in *Macbeth*, Moth in *Love's Labours Lost*, and the busy Page in *Merry Wives of Windsor*.

What is new here is the way the boy is guided through his transition by the theater itself and a community of actors. The theater metaphor is particularly apt for this play with its inclusion of rehearsal and performance scenes. In the film a toy theater, seen in the initial shot of the nursery, becomes part of the film and forms a motif that echoes Shakespeare's own fascination with, and meta-theatrical emphasis on, the mechanics of theater in *Dream*. The toy theater is so important that Theseus delivers his speech about the bank where wild thyme grows staring into the theater and through it to the face of the boy on the opposite side. The "real" theater becomes the site for the film's most joyous moment: the final scene set backstage that celebrates the exhilaration of performance. In

that theater community Titania is not the ruler but simply one of the performers whose magic powers are stripped away at the performance's end.

Perhaps the Queen of the Fairies has "come a long way" from the kind lady with the wand in the silent *Dream*. En route she has acquired a remarkable film history that includes Anita Louise's ethereal moon fairy, Anna Massey's ballerina memsahib, Judi Dench's muddy earth mother, the animated vegetation goddess, Jack Birkett's good witch, and Helen Mirren's Madonna. Titania's latest screen image is Michelle Pfeiffer in Hoffman's film where she is dressed like one of the more decorous fairy queens in Victorian fairy paintings, and her gauzy sparkle gives a glittering nod in the direction of the 1935 Titania: part beauty queen of fairy land and part movie star.

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[1] This argument was given serious attention, fueled by a limited number of sound films, the Pickford/Fairbanks *Taming of the Shrew*, 1929, *Romeo and Juliet* ( Shearer and Howard) 1936, and *As You Like It* (Bergner and Olivier), 1936. Olivier's *Henry V* in 1945 was the first film to convince critics that Shakespeare just might be successfully transferred to the movies.

[2]See Jackson, Rothwell, and Willson for positive and even fond critical commentaries.

[3] See Watts, Jr.

[4] See Jorgens, chap. 2; Collick, chap. 4; Crowl, 1992, chap. 5; Rothwell and Melzer, 190-191; Rothwell chap. 2; Jackson, 1994, 99-120; Willso,2000, chap. 2.

[5] See Eisner.

[6] He directed two silent films in Germany: *Insel der Seligen* and *Venezianische Nacht* , both in 1913.

[7] Kenneth Rothwell gave me this information.

[8] Fritz Lang is a good example. Lang moved to Hollywood in 1934 and directed films through the 1960s, many of them film noir thrillers.

[9] Murnau's German silent *Nosferatu* (1923) the ur-Dracula film, based on Bram Stoker's 1897 novel, is one of the most influential horror films of all times. Murnau directed in Germany from 1919 and in Hollywood from 1927.

[10] This has always seemed to me to be a subtle reference to the darkness that was beginning to enshroud Hilter's Germany.

[11] He had asked that 70 extras be available, along with principal parts drawn from university actors and hired actresses for Titania, Hermia, and Helena. Reinhardt's originally very expensive approach to this production seems to have been based in his misunderstanding that it would be the presumably rich university that was underwriting the expenses. In fact it was the relatively impoverished student organization that was footing the bill. See Carpenter, 130-131.

[12] Reinhardt's casting pattern was to mix members from his permanent company with native actors. Ross was an English film actress with what seems to be a limited film career. She appeared in a Michael Powell thriller *Price of a Song* in 1935, and – a curious but measurable mark of celebrity – in 1938 was one of the subjects of the Ardeth brand cigarette cards, pack size photos of stars; this particular series seemed to favor cheesecake shots.

[13] The distance from the audience may have contributed to the confusion; another critic though the ballet ended with the First Fairy carried off by Puck. Williams n.53.

[14] Reinhardt's stage production played the Hollywood Bowl, Los Angeles, 17-21 September 1934; the War Memorial Opera House, San Francisco, 1-5 October; Faculty Glade and Greek Theatre, Berkeley, 13-15 October; then went on tour to Chicago, St. Louis, and Milwaukee until January 1935. See Fukrich-Leisler and Prossnitz, 195-201.

[15] De Havilland, who appeared in *Dream* at the Hollywood Bowl and on tour, was signed by Warner Brothers specifically to debut in this film. Louise, who was already under contract to the studio, would remain with Warners for another three years, during which time she competed, generally unsuccessfully, with de Havilland for roles. See Belmer, 20, 30-31.

[16] This is not unusual for discussions of this play. See Williams throughout.

[17] The list included Brutus and Cassius, Romeo and Juliet, Falstaff and Prince, Henry, Shylock and Antonio. *The Yale Review* 18 (1928) 1: 36-37, qtd. Feidler 89.

[18] Elaborate court dress for Hermia and Helena continued to be a convention well into the 1950s, ending possibly only with the emergence of the youth culture in Shakespeare productions. In 1949 Diana Wynyard's aristocratic Helena in an RSC production wore a dress with voluminous silk skirts and jewel-draped bodice See Dyana Wynter as Helena in *Shakespeare Memorial Theater*.

[19] See Crowl 66-67; Jackson 1994, 104-107.

[20] The terms extra-deigetical is used to designate something that occurs outside the "real" world of a movie scene, such as background music.

[21] In "Dis-embodying the Female Voice," reprinted in Erens. 309-327.

[22] Christine Edzard's charming film (2001) acted solely by children is the only film version of *Dream* to acknowledge this line. In this film, which keeps the full text, the only time the changeling child is shown on screen occurs in a brief intercut at 4.1.60 that shows child fairies delighting in the new presence of an enchanting three-year old Chinese child (played by the adopted daughter of the film's producer) dressed in elegant native attire.

[23] Her final role was that of the mother on the television series *My Friend Flicka.*

[24] In 1935 Dietrich was 34 and Garbo 30.

[25] Dieterle had actually been involved with helping Dietrich to get her first acting jobs in Berlin.

[26] After recognizing the extreme youth of this Titania, furthered by the girlish elements in the performance, and the absence of references to the dead vot'ress, it is difficult not to think of her as the boy's careless babysitter, instead of his adoptive mother.

[27] The film is also famous for a beast to beauty transformation in a dance number where Dietrich first appears in an ape costume.

[28] *It Happened One Night* (1934) is generally regarded as the first of the screwball comedies.

[29] See Lasalle, "The Censors Strike Back" and Haskell, "The Thirties."

[30] The Folger Shakespeare Library has an earlier version of the screenplay, owned by James Cagney, that includes a final scene reuniting Oberon, Titania, and the boy.

[31] The play received unanimously high praise from the critics, and had a successful international tour. The RSC and Channel Four jointly produced the film, which had limited cinema release in 1996 and 1997 along with and a television broadcast and video release. It was not shown in movie theaters in America, but the video was released in 2000 and appeared on the shelves of Blockbuster stores as Hoffman's *MSD* was shown in movie houses. Although the play was highly successful, the film was widely criticized and considered a failure.

[32] *The Times* 28 November, 1996, 39; quoted in Burnett, 89.

[33] On stage Bottom metamorphosed into a vegetation creature, in the film he is even more fantastically and unidentifiably splendid, part animal, part plant.

[34] The Shakespeare Institute Library has a video of the production and the changes are significant: short, bouncy hair, a low-cut but wide-skirted dress, a generally joyful demeanor, and enthusiasm that included fluffing the pillows as Bottom joined her in the umbrella. The most frequently used publicity picture was one of this exhuberent Titania.

[35] The term "the male gaze" comes from Laura Mulvey's seminal article "Visual Plesure and Narrative Cinema" where she argues that the camera's "gaze" is always that of a male: behind the camera, as director of the scene, or exchanged by actors within the scene.

[36] Hippolyta's reaction to Egeus's scene, and her manner of exiting can often be used as a barometer of the director's view of the feminist issues presented in the scene. Hoffman has Hippolyta (Sophie Marceau) exchange sympathetic looks with Hermia and look scornfully at Theseus as she exits; Moshinsky has Hippolyta (Estelle Kohler) show scant involvement, as though nothing in Athens is of interest (she is first shown pacing like a caged cat). Reinhardt/Dieterle's Hippolyta is full of scorn from the beginning.

[37] The film starts by evoking films of *Peter Pan* with its long tracking shot of the nighttime sky that zeroes in on the gabled rooftops of London, and then, as with the flier's point of view, flies closer and closer until an open window is entered . The camera pans slowly around the softly lit room which, with its mixture of twenties and thirties childhood artifacts, is not unlike a perfect room in a Laura Ashley catalogue. Finally the camera comes to the sleeping boy, a copy of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with Rackham's drawings lying on the coverlet. The move to Shakespeare's act 1, scene 1 is the dream sequence as the boy moves through narrow but brightly painted hallways until he peers through the keyhole to see a very languorous Titania and Oberon. Titania's first line in the film is a sensually imbued "Four days will swiftly steep themselves in four nights."

# Chapter Three

## Missing Mothers and Added Whores: Films of *Richard III* by Olivier, Howell, Pacino, Loncraine and McKellen

The *Richard III* films that form the focus of this chapter demonstrate how varied and multi-layered cinema interpretations of Shakespeare's plays can be. What these films also demonstrate are ways in which films, even those with divergent agendas, can establish patterns of representation that signal an overlooked or under-considered aspect of the play. Here, for instance, the films re-inscribe the play's emphasis on the women's roles, even though in each film it is a different woman character who receives specific emphasis. Even when the films have opposing points of views on where the emphasis should be regarding the women's roles, they continue to re-affirm the enormous importance these characters play in the original text, an importance that has been traditionally submerged in stage performances in order to insure that Richard is a star turn for the lead actor, who is frequently the manager/director as well. The fact that three of these films have been directed and written by the actor playing Richard places them in a long tradition of *Richard* productions – a theatrical tradition mediated and changed in the transformation of the play into a film.

Any discussion of the women's roles in films of *Richard III* must first acknowledge the stage tradition of minimizing those roles – Margaret, Queen Elizabeth, Duchess of York, Lady Anne Neville, and Lady Margaret Plantagenet – because the

films, to various degrees, redress this minimization. This chapter examines four major films of *Richard III* – Laurence Olivier (1955), Jane Howell/BBC Shakespeare Series (1983), Richard Loncraine/Ian McKellen (1995), and Al Pacino, *Looking for Richard* (1996). It also touches on a fifth film, the silent version of F. R. Benson's (1911) Stratford production. This discussion of the films will start with Jane Howell, move on to Olivier, close with McKellen, dip in and out of Pacino, and nod occasionally in the direction of Benson. All of these films, including Benson, are now available in video format. This format makes it possible to view the films closely, repeatedly, and in relation to each other. It also makes it possible to use them to explore two of the important film techniques that have, either accidentally or deliberately, resulted in increased visibility and forcefulness of the play's women. This has come about generally through traditional film strategies: placing existing characters in additional scenes and by adding more women to a scene. In only one of the films, Jane Howell's, has the increased visibility of women been the result of retaining all of Shakespeare's text.

Of the four major films, Howell's feminist approach, which celebrates the women's roles, and Olivier's patriarchal film, which minimizes all but a single, sexually alluring woman, are diametrically opposed in their presentation of women. McKellen and Loncraine (hereafter referred to only as McKellen), whose work has been somewhat influenced by both their predecessors, Olivier and Howell, is in the middle. Like Olivier, McKellen's film borders on the misogynistic in their treatment of the women, but acknowledges and respects their importance and power over Richard. Pacino remains on the fringes of the discussion because his consciously post-modern exercise consists of segments from the play, embedded in a documentary about making an imaginary film of

*Richard.* Pacino includes Lady Anne, (the seduction scene 1.2) and Elizabeth (from 1.3, 2.1, 2.4, 4.4), and brief glimpses of Margaret.

Jane Howell's made-for-television BBC version makes it clear how four women – three mothers and one an aunt "in law" but "in love" a mother (4.1.23) – form a force against which Richard is continually compelled to battle. Howell's exceptionally strong presentation of the women highlights their psychological complexity and political agency. Olivier, on the other hand, focuses heavily on an invented, non-speaking role for Jane Shore and reduces Shakespeare's women to gender stereotypes – docile wives and resigned mothers. McKellen's film opts for a Freudian reading that locates Richard's psychological problems in his mother's life-long rejection. McKellen furthers this vilification of the Duchess of York by reassigning some of Margaret's lines and characteristics to her. In both McKellen and Olivier's films Margaret is the "missing mother," though in these films large chunks of dialogue have also been deleted from all roles, but especially so for Elizabeth and Duchess of York. Only Howell retains Clarence's young daughter, Margaret Plantagenet. The added "whore" in Howell, Olivier, and Pacino is Jane Shore, and in McKellen it is an unnamed airline stewardess bedded by Rivers.

Each of the versions of *Richard III* is unique, but all can be read reflexively to examine overlapping patterns of increased female presence on the screen. This persistent pattern helps to identify the significant role of this "feminized community, presided over by three queens and a queen mother. It stretches beyond the living to remember, include, and empower the dead . . . [and] as the play moves forward it becomes an active force in disabling and defeating Richard" (Jowett 1). This communal presence has traditionally

been minimized in stage performances, though recently it has received increased attention on stage.[1] In the films of *Richard*, women – both Shakespeare's characters and the film's invented characters – retain a significant presence achieved through various cinematic means, even when dialogue is severely reduced, as it is in almost all Shakespeare films. Three strategies in particular stand out because they are so much a part of film conventions in general and because they work visually as substitutes for the missing dialogue.

One basic way the presence of women on screen is increased is by casting "extras." Throughout the canon of Shakespeare films, nearly every "cinematic" film[2] has a moment where additional women, often young and attractive, appear either as figures in the landscape or to convey something about another character. In the *Richard III* films female "extras" are seen in the crowds lining the route for a royal procession and among the aristocrats and the household servants. They are at state balls and dinner parties, in the court and at coronations. When McKellen and Loncraine place the action in the twentieth century, they are seen in the professions they would be practicing: singers, manicurists, nurses, maids, nannies, and working class wives.

Another way in which additional women are brought into films is by making visible those women who are only mentioned in the play text. In McKellen's *Richard*, Edward's daughter Princess Elizabeth appears in numerous scenes. Howell adds Jane Shore to one scene. Pacino inter-cuts a shot of Jane whenever her name is mentioned, and Olivier places her in the foreground of almost every scene where King Edward is present. A third way Shakespeare films expand the presence of women is by including existing characters in more scenes than the text specifies. For instance in *Richard III* McKellen

places Lady Anne in twelve scenes, compared to three in the play. The number is slightly misleading however, because this film turns Shakespeare's 25 scenes into 126 scenes. A "scene" in the film denotes a new set, but not necessarily a new speech or set of characters. For instance, Richard's "now is the winter of our discontent" (1.1 in the play but film-scenes 17-19) starts at the ball but continues in the men's washroom and finishes on a walkway leading back to the ballroom.

Although Olivier's and McKellen's films bring in additional women characters, the results are very different. Where McKellen's additions add dimension and even power to the woman's roles, despite severely trimmed dialogue, Olivier's additions consist mainly of introducing a very seductive Jane Shore and neutralizing the agency of the royal mothers, Queen Elizabeth and Duchess of York. For Olivier, Mistress Shore becomes the darling of the camera's "male gaze,"[3] a personification of Richard's "ambling nymph," while strains of the "lascivious lute" are heard on the soundtrack. In contrast, he reduces the roles of Elizabeth and Duchess of York to bare minimum, cuts their scenes and flattens their interpretations into cardboard cutouts – medieval paper dolls in a history pageant. They are feminized and domesticated. Elizabeth becomes the acquiescent wife who turns a blind eye on blatant infidelity and occupies herself solely with the children. Olivier's version denies Shakespeare's women both the power of court politics and the supernatural powers of prophesy and curse. Ultimately, it is Jane Howell's 1982 version, that, by keeping all the characters – Margaret, Elizabeth, Duchess of York and Anne[4] – and retaining their scenes and lines in the play text's sequence, brilliantly illustrates the way Shakespeare turns these women – two generations of mothers – into a force Richard must contend with.

Pacino's film is less illuminating on this issue and full of quirky personal choices. However, Penny Allen gives one of the film's most memorable performances both speaking as herself in rehearsal and as Queen Elizabeth. Even Pacino – whose film stays focused steadily on himself, the director-actor whose almost obsessive quest is to decipher the play – gives Elizabeth an unusual space. One of the film's many rehearsal scenes includes Penny Allen explaining Elizabeth's rationale in 1.3 with great fervor. Allen clearly understands the queen's political intuition and her grasp of the situation with Richard. Evidently Allen's director did not agree because her "stage" performance, seen inter-cut with the rehearsal scene, is formal and controlled, devoid of the actress's rehearsal-room fire and passion.

Penny Allen as Pacino's Queen Elizabeth

**Allen as herself in the on-screen rehearsal.**

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Howell uses the full text (Peter Alexander, editor, 1951) without rearranging the order of scenes. and with minimal "filmic" interpolation, eschews moving characters to other scenes or adding invented ones (with one notable exception); her made-for-television *Richard III* demonstrates how powerful the women's roles are: they punctuate the action, track the rise and fall of Richard, and even when a queen falls from the throne a daughter can rise up to continue the bloodline as queen. Howell's success in presenting the women rests on retaining Shakespeare's full text, keeping scenes intact and in their original order, using the camera not as the "male gaze" but to create credible intimacy, and casting strong and distinctive actresses. Howell once said, "every choice is a political comment." Her specific choices throughout *Richard* suggest a modest feminist agenda

A typically framed shot in Howell's BBC version in which the Duchess of York Looks on approvingly as former Queen Elizabeth comforts Lady Anne

calling for a return to prominence of Shakespeare's women. It is important to understand how large the women's part is in the play before one can see what McKellen and Olivier do with that extensive presence. Howell makes such an understanding possible.

*Richard III* is filled with men who are fully occupied by power negotiations with other men. Richard, Edward, Clarence, Buckingham, Hastings, Ely, Stanley, Catesby, Rivers, Tyrrel, Dorset, Richmond; dukes, earls, lords, bishops, archbishops, jailors, and mayors vie with each other for place and preferment. It is surprising then to realize how much attention is paid to women in conversations within this male-centered society and how much dialogue the women have when they are in a scene. In act 1, women have more than a quarter of the lines (26%) as they do in act 2 (28%), and in act 4 (32%).

Even in act 5, generally said to be without women, Lady Anne's nine lines give her equal place with the other ghosts in Richard's dream. In act 1, even before Lady Anne appears in scene 2 or Queen Elizabeth in scene 3, the female presence is conjured up through numerous references branding them as sexual provocateurs and political power mongers. Richard introduces the idea of a "wanton ambling nymph" (line 15). Richard and Clarence discuss women (lines 65-130); Elizabeth Woodville Grey – Queen Elizabeth, whom Richard is always loath to address by the royal title – is branded a Machiavellian queen who rules the king and engineered Clarence's imprisonment, and they snigger over Jane Shore, Edward IV's purported mistress. After Clarence is taken away, Richard confides to the audience his plans to marry Henry VI's widowed daughter-in-law, Lady Anne (lines 165-75). Pacino gives these conversational references literal visibility because in his attempt for clarity in what he considers an unbelievably complex play, he inter-cuts flashbacks of characters whenever a name is mentioned (the film's pattern is to alternate between actors in rehearsal and in costume "performing."

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Shakespeare's play text gives *Richard III*'s women a significant presence in a number of scenes and has them the subject of numerous discussions. However, productions of the play tend to significantly cut this presence. One reason for the cuts is simply practical; the play is long (Howell's version runs nearly four hours). This, for reasons that are not altogether clear, results in the women's parts being severely reduced and even deleted. An easy cut, for instance, is Clarence's young daughter, Margaret

Plantagenet, who has lines in 2.2 and can be omitted even though she forms an important part of the group of mourning women. In Howell's version, she is played by a pre-teen actress who serves as a reminder of the third generation of women in the play: the daughters.[5] Far more important among the textual cuts, though, is the frequent, complete removal of Margaret. Colly Cibber,[6] the eighteenth-century actor/dramatist whose rewrite of *Richard III* remained the standard performance text until the mid-nineteenth century, omitted the role entirely, and other directors have followed suit.[7] Sometimes, it's simply a matter of economics. For instance, Bill Alexander's RSC production starring Anthony Sher (1984) had a major Margaret (played by Patricia Routledge) in England, but dropped her when the production toured abroad. When *Richard* is presented on its own, separate from the tetralogy, as it usually is, directors also offer the rationale that Margaret's removal makes the play more accessible. This is part of trimming references to the *Henry VI* plays and the clearing out of characters whose presence can only be explained by knowledge of those plays.[8] This, of course, was not a problem for Howell because she was directing the entire tetralogy and could assume her audience would be familiar with not only the characters, but the actors who played them.

## Jane Howell's *Richard III:* Full Text and Full of Women

A full production, such as Howell's, of the entire minor tetralogy of *1-3 Henry VI* and *Richard III* makes clear the radical shift in the women's roles away from authority – Margaret was the power behind a weak king; Elizabeth was an unbeatable influence on a strong one. Both Margaret and Joan la Pucelle led armies into battle. In *Richard* the

only echo of a woman's political "power" lies in references to the excessive number of Elizabeth Grey's relatives with titles and court positions. For most of this play, the women are widows defined only by their now-stifled procreative roles as mothers. In sense, Jean Howard and Phyllis Rackin's argument holds true that in *Richard III* there is a transfer of the female power onto Richard himself, which results in the consequent domestication of the women.[9] However, Juliet Dusinberre has pointed out Margaret is resistant to domestication. Her roots lie in the plays of Aeschylus, by way of Seneca, and she moves from Clytemestra to the Greek Furies "insisting on retribution in future generations" (275, 300). Jane Howell's production shows how Margaret educates the other women so they draw on her fury. She teaches them how to curse so they can resist the final silencing that defines the Elizabethan domestic.

Jane Howell's version of *Richard III* beautifully demonstrates why feminist critics have begun to redress the previous neglect of these women. Her Queen Elizabeth (Rowena Cooper) and Duchess of York (Annette Crosbie) convey a dignity illustrative of what Nina Levine, pointing to the play's "ambivalent presentation of women" suggests is "perhaps most disarming about the women . . . their *seeming* [emphasis mine] powerlessness . . . . [as] Richard's most visible victims, they offer persuasive testimony of his 'unnatural' violence against the family and the state" (97-98). Watching Howell's actresses portray the rage of Margaret, the anguish of Elizabeth, and the inner debate of Duchess of York, belies Janet Adelman's argument that Richard's "violent unmaking of the maternal body" ("the point of origin of his selfhood) "moves women from positions of power and authority to positions of utter powerlessness, and finally moves them off the stage altogether" (9). Howell and her cast make it very clear the women do not become

completely powerless nor do they move completely "off the stage." Instead they shift their source of power to a female alliance and to language that alternates between the politically astute and devastatingly prophetic curse. True, in *Richard III* women are no longer leading armies, but within the play they do not turn domestic in the sense of being "silent and obedient." Instead, in aggregate, they become a force of destiny – one that must be reckoned with in ways that Richard and those around him ultimately fail to do. The women are there to the bitter end when the prophecies and curses are fulfilled in the marriage of Princess Elizabeth and Richmond. Howell keeps women prominent to the very end with her final shot of Margaret cradling Richard's corpse as the credits roll across the screen.

Howell's BBC production is an impressive negotiation of original play text, theatrical convention, and feminist/pacifist politics within a canonical site – the big-budget conservative production of Shakespeare plays for a nationally authorized educational program. It is equally impressive in its technical aspects that successfully meld theater, film, and television. The background of the production is as follows. In 1982 theater director Jane Howell made her television debut directing the three parts of *Henry VI* and *Richard III* for the BBC Shakespeare Series. Between 1979 and 1985, the BBC filmed the entire canon of Shakespeare works for international television broadcast, a project whose educational focus and conservative American financial backing resulted in strict guidelines specifying the plays must be done without cuts and the productions must be "traditional," i.e. no modern experimentation. However Howell, aided by producers Jonathan Miller and Shaun Sutton, managed to circumvent the strictures. She eschewed "realistic settings"[10] and instead used a stylized set of multi-level scaffolding

for the tetralogy and dressed the actors in costumes evoking the medieval without actually copying it.[11] The same actors appear in the same roles throughout the tetralogy, so by the time of *Richard III* viewers would have an acquaintance with the characters from *Henry VI*. They would have seen a loving Duchess of York send Richard, Clarence, and Edward off to battle and watched the self-possessed widow Elizabeth Grey come hesitantly to court to confront a randy king Edward about her dead husband's confiscated property and end up marrying him. Above all, viewers would have witnessed the transformations of Margaret from doll-like young woman to powerful and adulterous queen. They would have seen her vengeance as York's cruel torturer, and her grief at her son's murder. Howell's viewers[12] would have also watched young Richard, who in the beginning looks more like the runt of the litter than a deformed monster, become a fearless soldier, equal with his brothers in battle, and, finally, almost unexpectedly evolves into a man willing to pluck down the crown at any cost.

Howell's is the only one of the four films in which we see complete versions of all four of the scenes (1.3, 2.2, 4.1, 4.4) where Queen Elizabeth, Duchess of York, Lady Anne, and Margaret appear. We watch a growing allegiance among the three wretched York wives and their final acknowledgement of Margaret's powers. In 1.3 Elizabeth and Margaret are adversaries, in 2.2 Elizabeth, the Duchess, and Clarence's daughter compete over the degree of their self-centered grief, but by 4.1 they have begun to forgive and support each other, and in 4.4 Elizabeth, now in harmony with the Duchess, turns to Margaret and begs, "Teach me how to curse my enemies" (4.4.129). Ultimately in 4.4 Elizabeth and the Duchess, schooled by Margaret, decide to confront Richard; "in the breath of bitter words let's smother / My damned son" (4.4.147-48). Within these scenes,

each one of which contains a trajectory of shifting alliances that ends with the focus moving from the women to Richard himself, Howell works to bring the women into the foreground. Other directors, including Olivier and Loncraine, add dimension to the women characters by either moving them into additional scenes or by increasing the viewer's sense of their increased presence by placing more women in scenes as extras (and by designing more scenes calling for extras). Howell, however, increases their visibility through camera angles and the placement of actors on the screen, techniques discussed in greater detail below. The fact that she is working with the smallest production budget of any of the directors and is the only one filming solely for television broadcast[13] are major factors in her decisions as to what goes on the screen. But this explains the overall look of the production, not her choice to foreground the women.

Of the four plays in Howell's tetralogy, *Richard* is the one that pretty much turns its back on the set, the tiered scaffolding running across the back of the studio. The previous three plays had made intensive use of the multilevel construction that treated the television studio as a stage set.[14] As the plays progressed the set reflected their mood from brightly colored paint at the beginning, when Henry V's glory still burnished everything, to drab earth tones of decay and ruin by the end of 3-Henry VI. In *Richard* the action primarily takes place in interior settings. Although *Richard* makes far less use of the larger set, one element of the set continues to be enormously important: the large doors at either side of the stage. The doors were designed to help maintain momentum – the great charge of energy as characters entered and exited the stage. What is unexpected in *Richard III* is how often it is a woman who comes through those doors, starting with Lady Anne, a mere 174 lines into the play.

The camera work here is very important in the film's focus on women. Howell, who generally worked with only three of the five available cameras, perfected the camera shot that became a hallmark of the Miller-produced plays. The frame is midway to a close-up, but can accommodate a small group of people to create the illusion of an intimate meeting. One of the keys to the success of these scenes is lighting designer Sam Barclay's skillful, nuanced lighting, which consistently creates a sense of place. Without changing or compromising Shakespeare's text, Howell makes choices in her "visual" editing and consistently privileges the women: Lady Anne shares equal screen space with Richard in 1.2; Margaret and Richard are equally matched on the screen, even when she is "hidden" behind the throne and he is in front of it holding center stage; throughout, tight "head shots" make Queen Elizabeth predominant and give emphasis and authority to her speeches, as do reaction shots of the Duchess of York, which make clear her a silent disapproval of Richard. H.R. Coursen described the standard BBC camera work previous to Howell as "usually minimal and minimalist, using a three-camera format that sometimes reveals its own ennui by shifting to a reaction shot within an almost invariable close-up format" (93). Here, however, those tight shots serve to open up the play by foregrounding the reactions of the traditionally forgotten spectators – the play's queen-mothers. For instance, consider the way the camera is used to intensify *Richard*'s Margaret in 1.3.

For Howell, the doors at either end of the stage are a major component of the movement of actors on and off stage. However, there are times when Howell subverts

her own structure – significantly with the appearances of Margaret, who almost never enters or exits through those doors. Instead, she insinuates herself into camera range, a dark shapeless form, black hat covering her head and forehead, the hair under a dirty white wimple, body wrapped in the mass of a black coat. The face itself has the aged pudginess of an alcoholic, the eyes bleared with madness, the teeth just bad enough so that as the camera moves in closer and closer on the face until it is right in the viewer's own face; the viewer instinctively draws back. In contrast, whenever Queen Elizabeth, Lady Anne, and Duchess of York fill the screen in close-ups there is a formality, a distance. Richard frequently talks directly to the viewer, but it is only Margaret who seems dangerously ready to spill out of the television screen. Julia Foster gives a brilliant performance in the role. In her first entrance in 1.3 she enters quietly and only the television can see her as she hovers behind the black back of the tall throne where Elizabeth sits. Beyond the throne Richard stands in the middle distance speaking to the queen. Seventy-five lines earlier our focus had been on Elizabeth, her astute and doleful judgment of what Edward's death will mean, how it "includes all harms" (1.3.10), and her awareness Richard of Gloucester "loves not me, nor none of you" (1.315). We had also seen her verbal stab at Stanley about his wife, and heard her declare herself "baited, scorned, and stormed at" (1.3.125) by Richard. Meanwhile, the hidden Margaret becomes a chorus commenting to the viewer on Elizabeth's lament. She dominates the screen, yet remains unseen by any of the characters. This is the same power to engage the audience in complicity that Olivier and McKellen give only to Richard.

The second time we see Margaret she is equally forceful and continues to emphasize her parallel role with Richard. King Richard has just confided to us that Anne

is dead and he plans to solidify his claim to the crown by marrying his niece, the Princess Elizabeth. As Richard exits through the doors, the camera moves in for a close-up of his back, an image of moral deformity in the shape of a hunchback. With scarcely a break, another dark shape, also a back, moves in from the bottom left of the screen. Margaret has returned. As she moves aside we see Elizabeth and the Duchess moving down from upstage right. Because it is rare for anyone to enter without coming through those side doors, the women's sense of displacement is clear as they enter slowly and solemnly in their long black velvet dresses. With their hands kept stiffly by their sides, they walk as though in a funeral procession following an invisible cortege for the dead princes. Elizabeth is no longer the "painted queen"; the drawn-on eyebrows and rouged cheeks are gone; her paleness makes her look as old as her mother-in-law. The previous distance between the parvenu queen and the Duchess has been melted by grief. They have sought sanctuary together, and are now bound even further by their continuing losses. The two women come center stage and kneel as Margaret hobbles over and, leaning on her cane, bends over them. In the previous confrontation with Margaret, Elizabeth had towered at least half a head taller than the little French woman; now positions are reversed and finally equalized when Margaret places her crafty face next to the queen's. The camera moves in for a close-up of the Duchess, then slowly pans round to reveal the exhausted face of Elizabeth.

Margaret's speech is vicious: the Duchess's womb was the kennel for a hellhound; she thanks God "this carnal cur / Preys on the issue of his mother's body" (4.4.67). But here, unlike McKellen's imperious Duchess (Maggie Smith) or Olivier's reverently ancient Duchess (Helen Haye), Howell's Duchess (Annette Crosbie) is a

lovely, thoughtful woman. She is perhaps in her late forties or early fifties, which fits with Ron Cook's Richard in his late twenties and an Edward (Nick Reding) whose emaciated body and sore-riddled face suggest death from disease, not age. This kindly, intelligent Duchess seriously measures her guilt as the mother of a moral monster. One remembers Miranda's observation in *The Tempest*, "good wives have borne bad fruit." Unlike Maggie Smith's Duchess there is nothing to indicate she has been anything less than patient with Richard, even as a "techy" infan, or that her love forsook him in the womb. This is a Duchess who makes the viewer feel her anguish. Hers is not an aristocratic face, rather one that might be associated with sensible gentry. We had seen her self-control and steadfastness when she reproached Elizabeth's unchecked grief at Edward's death. On the whole, she seems far too decent to be on the receiving end of Margaret's attack. When this Duchess confronts her murderous son Richard with the decision to never speak to him again, Crosbie makes it clear this is not only the result of grief that goes beyond words, but also a moral decision. It is the only thing the Duchess can do. In a furious act of atonement she will curse him and pray for his enemy's success. Richard is shocked; the crack in his armor appears; Cook's boyish face works marvelously here. At one point, earlier, trying to win her favor, his look at his mother was almost sensual – as though it is the only way he can envision responding to a woman. Now her rejection makes him momentarily thoughtful. His mother is the only person he ever really reacts to.

But still Richard remains an indomitable force. As Elizabeth goes to exit with the Duchess, this time through the doors (Margaret has wandered off upstage), he calls her back and makes the amazing offer to make her his mother-in-law. Following so closely

on his pain at his mother's rejection, this action is spiteful, as though he would replace his mother with another mother, even though we know marriage to Princess Elizabeth was part of his master plan. Queen Elizabeth's first reaction, not unlike Lady Anne's spitting at Richard, is to reach out to tear his face with her nails. However, like Lady Anne with the dagger, though she is poised to strike – and he stands stoic and passive – she cannot follow through. Perhaps tearing his flesh would be too physical an intimacy. Slowly her grief turns to controlled anger like hot coals banked by ashes – ready to burst into fire at any moment.

This is the last time the text calls for any of the women to be on stage. McKellen continues Elizabeth's presence by including her at her daughter's wedding to Richmond. Pacino, rather curiously, shows Elizabeth and two other women watching the Battle of Bosworth Field. However, none of the directors gives the final moment of the play to the women, as Jane Howell does. Throughout her film Howell makes only three small interpolations, two are insignificant, but one is major. The insignificant ones are putting Jane Shore on screen in 3.2 to kiss Hastings good-by and having Richard remember the Duchesses' curse from 4.4.210-19 at the start of the ghosts in 5.3. The significant addition comes at the very end of the film. Howell's closing image is Margaret, madder than ever, her unwrapped hair like an aureole, her manic laugh filling the air. The camera pans slowly up a seemingly endless heap of bodies to finally arrive at Margaret sitting on top of this mountain of carcasses. On her lap she cradles the half naked corpse of Richard – the Virgin Mary with the body of her son, but now reversed so it is the crucified Devil.

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Critics considered the BBC's *Richard* to be a disappointment after Howell's glorious *Henry VIs*; most of their complaints centered on a weak Richard.[15] So many of these critics seemed to miss the way Howell was redressing the traditional imbalance of the women's role, by returning them to their centrality in Shakespeare's text. Comments on this final image made clear their lack of understanding. For instance, Michael Manheim said the final shot epitomized what was, for him, the way "Howell is more engaged with old Margaret's cackling as she sits on her mountains of corpses during the credits – fine pacifism, but not really the point of *this* play" (138). But then Manheim also felt Foster was "too gentle" for the "witch-like Queen" (138). Stanley Welles who gave Howell's work on the fourteen-hour tetralogy highest praise, saying the dedication with which she "served Shakespeare" is so admirable she can be forgiven the indulgence of her added ending (*TLS*). Some critics understood. John J. O'Connor in the *New York Times* found the ending a "shattering image" that was "a stunning coda for this admirable production."

Howell's Margaret (Julia Foster) and Richard's (Ron Cook) corpse.

Laurence Olivier's addition: Jane Shore (Pamela Brown)

**Laurence Olivier's *Richard: a Spy in the House of Women***

Where Jane Howell restores the women's prominence in *Richard III* through textual retention, camera work, casting, and one major extra-textual image. Laurence Olivier and Ian McKellen make drastic cuts in the script, but still give significant visibility to the women. However, as shall be seen, increased screen presence of women can work both for and against the agency of Shakespeare's women. Laurence Olivier's 1955 film[16] of *Richard III* includes the screen credit "by William Shakespeare with Some Interpolations by David Garrick, Colly Cibber, etc." Actually, Olivier's treatment of *Richard*'s women does them even more damage than Cibber's adaptation. Cibber, at least, gave Queen Elizabeth an expanded scene with her sons in 4.4, and added a speech

acknowledging her plans to marry her daughter to Richmond. Cibber also transposed some of Henry IV's lines to give Lady Anne a soliloquy, in addition to writing dialogue that gave her a brief chance to talk back to Richard (3.1).

As director of *Richard III*, a position Olivier says he reluctantly accepted when the original director Carol Reed resigned, the actor was faced with adapting what he felt was a long, complexly structured text full of references to three previous plays the audience would not have seen, and peopled with unfamiliar historical figures.[17] He was also confronted with a unique set of technical requirements. Through innovative financing, producer Alexander Korda had obtained backing from a wealthy American television network, CBS, for a television production of Richard III starring Laurence Olivier in his famed stage role. However, and this is where Korda was breaking new ground, after the initial TV broadcast the program would be released to movie theaters for a standard run. Putting Shakespeare on a small-screen, mainly black and white, television was challenging in itself (in the early 1960's two acclaimed BBC series, *An Age of Kings* and *War of the Roses* were still small scale, set-bound, and designed for a screen picture in shades of gray). This newest *Richard*, however, was to be shot in Technicolor and Vista-Vision, one of the large-screen formats tested by Hollywood in the mid-1950s in the attempt to compete with television through larger and splashier movies on ever-expanding screens. The advantage of Vista-Vision was its unusual clarity, especially in mid-depth shots. All of this meant Olivier, who had not directed a movie in seven years, had to deliver a product that would be imposing in Technicolor on a large screen but still be recognizable in black and white on the small screen. His solution, with

the exception of the Battle of Bosworth Field, was to use a series of theatrical-looking sets of large, sparsely decorated, medieval rooms and courtyards which the audience "enters" voyeuristically as the camera insinuates itself through various windows, archways, and peepholes. Though these sets are relatively plain, the camera works very hard as scene after scene is introduced by Richard who plays Peeping Tom and brings the viewer into room after room. In a film where the women characters' dialogue is minimized and they themselves are reduced to stereotypes, the vast rooms add to the reductive agenda by swallowing them up. The one exception is Olivier's extra-textual interpolation, Jane Shore (Pamela Brown). Everyone in the film is spied upon by Richard, but when it happens to the women, one is again reminded of the dominant male gaze of films, the scopophilic eye of the camera.

The story of making the film is well documented and includes the budget constraints, the short shooting time, the connection to Olivier's theater performances, and the textual adaptations.[18] Unfortunately the adaptation, though giving prominence to the invented character of a silent Mistress Shore, totally removed Margaret, shortened and flattened the roles of Queen Elizabeth and Duchess of York, and reduced Lady Anne to a scared rabbit of a girl.[19] In *Laurence Olivier on Screen* Foster Hirsh's approving rationalization for Olivier's cuts and inventions sums up all the traditional misunderstandings and prejudices against the women in this play, interpretations that take Richard's evaluation of those characters as fact rather than self-revealing assessments. It seems fair to assume Hirsch is reflecting Olivier's ideas when he writes:

> *Richard III* is indeed a cumbersome, awkwardly constructed play, and Olivier's's excisions and alternations are for the most part helpful. He eliminates Margaret [whose] wailing adds a tragic note to the drama, but her hysterical imprecations turn us against

> Richard, and she would therefore interfere with Olivier's's studied attempts to charm us, to make us see the entire action from Richard's point of view . . . her ringing set speeches are parenthetical to the dramatic action . . . Olivier also considerably reduces the role so the other wailing queens [who] like Margaret, are too theatrical, too purely ornamental, for the film's straightforward narrative drive . . . Olivier has simplified the structure of Shakespeare's bulky, unevenly balanced play . . . reducing the women's roles in order to concentrate on the main political intrigue . . . Lady Anne is fatally weak-willed. . . . The court consists of oily, self-serving politicians, wily, double-dealers, or weak, vacillating, easily controlled characters like Edward's wife, Elizabeth. (100-01)[20]

Constance Brown also applauded the excision of Margaret because it "forces particular attention on the psychology of Richard" (133). Brown counts Henry VI's widow among those characters "who clutter up the stage when the play is performed in its entirety." She sees no need for Margaret and her prophetic curses that "must necessarily seem a little quaint to modern audiences." "A prophetic curse is a rather mechanical device for structuring a rambling history and heightening dramatic irony – the sort of effect an audience would appreciate fully only when superstition was a way of life" (132).[21] Brown does, however, approve of Olivier's addition of Jane Shore as a visualization of the court's corruption, a corruption that in part is the legacy of "guilt acquired" in the Wars of the Roses (140).

### Jane Shore: *Richard III*'s "Other" Woman

Although the other films include Mistress Shore briefly and confine her to the one scene (3.2), Olivier's film has focused on Jane from the opening coronation. In spite of my proposal to limit this discussion to characters who are mothers, Olivier's Jane must be discussed in more depth because he uses her presence in frequent appearances to displace *Richard*'s "real" women. Our first view of Jane occurs during the coronation of Edward

IV (the film backs up to include the coronation scene from *3-Henry VI* to give the viewer some context). In Shakespeare's text there are significant allusions to Jane Shore, King Edward's mistress, the most famous of which is Richard's accusation, "Edward's wife, that monstrous witch, / Consorted with that harlot, strumpet Shore, / That by their witchcraft thus have marked me [with a withered arm] (3.4.70-75). Olivier, who so thoroughly reduced the roles of Shakespeare's women, has added his silent Jane Shore to the film "to serve throughout as a token of the corrupt court" (Hirsh 101). Carol Reed, who was originally to have been the director, had even encouraged Olivier to write additional dialogue for a scene that would establish the relationship between Jane and Edward. Olivier was far more skillful: he provided the scene, but without adding a single word. As the newly crowned Edward leaves the cathedral, he stops the stately procession to look at Jane (placed in the front, right-hand side of the screen) and sensually caresses her face with his free hand – the other being occupied holding the scepter of state.[22]

Jane Shore (Pamela Brown) becomes the principal woman in Olivier's *Richard III*, someone of enormous prominence on the screen, where she is literally always just behind the throne. There is always something lascivious about Shore, and the camera approaches her with a "male gaze" that exemplifies the now-clichéd term. We see her constantly beside the king in the court, in private, and even ministering to him at his deathbed while the queen studiously seems not to see her. Even at Edward's deathbed she embodies acquisitive sexuality. At the king's death she shifts her erotic attentions to Hastings. When they both reach out to touch the dead king's hand, their own hands connect instead. They clasp hands and exchange of looks of amorous promise as they sit

there framing either end of the king's body. On the other side of the bed the grief-stricken queen sobs.

In all four films Jane Shore is brought onto the screen, but Olivier's emphasis is unique in the way it displaces the play's women. Howell, Pacino, and McKellen all pick up on Richard's instruction, "tell Hastings to give Mistress Shore one kiss more," and add Shore to 3.2, the four a.m. scene "before Lord Hastings' house." Hastings is awakened by the messenger with Lord Stanley's notice; he should "with all speed post with him toward the North, / To shun the danger that his soul divines" (lines 18-19). In a brief, but packed, seventy-five lines it is clear Hastings has disastrously misread the portents of Stanley's dream and, equally dangerous, misread the conditions of Richard's "separated council."(line 21) assuming "His honour and myself are at the one" (line 23). Pacino's inclusion is the simplest and consistent with his commitment to make visual and concrete anyone who is mentioned – at the time they are mentioned. He shows Hastings lustily kissing good-bye to Jane Shore, played by an attractive young actress. Olivier's version continues to emphasize Jane as a sexual object, and the same scene opens with a shot of Hastings and Jane passionately kissing in bed, then switches to the messenger's arrival, knock at the door, then back of Hastings and Jane. Howell also includes Jane (Lady Anne Carroll), who comes "downstairs" from the bedroom to help Hastings into his armor with affectionate playfulness. Howell stays true to avoiding female stereotypes, and Jane, though a very pretty blonde in her early thirties, is dressed in a rather billowy nightgown that suggests a possible pregnancy. When Hastings says "And I in better state than e'er I was" (line 115), the statement is accompanied by a long embrace with Jane,

which makes his words more a declaration of personal happiness and less of a comment on political triumph at the death of Rivers and Dorset. Although possibly at odds with the political undercurrent, his loving delight in Jane humanizes Hastings and helps to make his death matter more to the viewer.

One of Howell's trademarks in the tetralogy is her ability to turn the parade of characters into finely delineated and identifiable people. Bringing Jane Shore into the picture gives the viewer an image of a specific and very un-witchlike woman. This helps to place in perspective Richard's accusations that Jane and Elizabeth have bewitched his arm. Though filmmakers consistently show a tendency to include additional characters, as illustrated here by these additions of Jane Shore, in fairness it should be noted the inventive inclusion of Jane is not restricted to film. Bill Alexander's RSC production (1984) also includes her – but with a difference. In that production she is one of two girls spending the night with Hastings, and when the messenger knocks at the door, a woman's voice can distinctly be heard muttering "shit"[23] – a curious bit of additional dialogue conveying the "we've been busted" aspect of the interruption. On the other hand, McKellen removes Jane Shore from the text. There is no mention of her. In this film all the men are given wives, and Hastings, who is the least worldly of the courtiers, is seen chastely kissing a discreetly bath-robed, middle-aged woman (whom we might imagine to be Jane) good-bye as she hands him his hat (a nice allusion to other films where Jane presents Hastings with his armor).

Olivier's Jane Shore takes the central place other directors have given to Queen Elizabeth. Olivier's cardboard version of the queen, played as a long-suffering wife, is at

odds not only with Shakespeare's text but with other film's interpretations. Jane Howell and Ian McKellen both give Queen Elizabeth a central place – Howell because the full text calls for it and because her version valorizes the women, McKellen because he sees the queen as Richard's most formidable opponent. This serves as a rather good illustration of my thesis there exists a range of characterizations available in the palimpsest created by multiple video versions. Still, Olivier's choice to foreground mistress Jane Shore over a missing Margaret, a cipher Queen Elizabeth, or Duchess of York speaks of his own agenda – a Richard centrally placed and unchallenged by a crone's prophecies, a queen's anger, or a mother's curses.[24]

* * * * *

Olivier also almost demolishes the role of the Duchess of York, making her a conventionally pious screen mother. In this film we are scarcely aware of her presence until nearly the end of the film (4.3) – unlike McKellen's adaptation where the imperious Duchess sweeps in as the opening credits roll. Olivier's version of 4.3 is intensely domestic; the Elizabeth and the Duchess sit sewing on either side of the fireplace, their interest, even here, focused on a male, the younger prince, the Duke of York. The scene is carefully set up and is worth recapturing because it offers an excellent example of the way the film works to consistently present women in terms of men, as the subject of the women's interest or as themselves the object of men's desires. The scene is entered into through the Cardinal's view of the room, as he turns from looking out the window to addressing the women in the room. The room itself is a bare chamber, its severity

softened only by a fresco over the fireplace. Queen Elizabeth and the Duchess are seated comfortably on either side of the fire as the youngest prince crouches by the flames toasting bread on a long fork. The mood is serene; there is no unbridled grief. The women are looking forward to the Prince Regent's return from school and speculating, as a mother and grandmother might, about how he may have grown. The young prince surprises them by saying he hopes he himself will not grow fast because uncle Richard once said, "Small herbs have grace; great weeds to grow apace" (2.4.15). The rancor behind the comment does not resonate for the boy, but the women exchange looks of exasperation – "there goes Richard again." The reaction is notable because the women register so little in regard to what goes on (one thinks especially of a stony faced Elizabeth ignoring Jane Shore's presence at Edward's deathbed). But Kerridge and Haye do not convey the bitter hatred Maggie Smith and Annette Bening give to their reactions in McKellen's film. In fact, the former only serve to emphasize how un-political these women are. Richard is merely a "tetchy" annoyance. The queen treats him coldly: we know from 1.3 she acknowledges his hatred of her and her family, but she seems curiously disassociated from him even as she predicts to Rivers and Dorset that their happiness has reached its end.

In that scene, where all the power should be in the hands of the queen, and where in Olivier's film she is sitting on the throne, usually a place of control, her force is subtly minimized by keeping her in middle distance on the screen. Mary Kerridge's delivery is

Olivier's Queen Elizabeth (Mary Kerridge) holds court.

appropriate, her face mobile and expressive, her costume distinctive (in the early scenes she is the only person dressed in white). Even though she is dressed in the only light color in this scene and all the men around her are in dark clothing, she never truly grabs the scene. Instead she remains distanced, powerless. It is a curious trick of film because on stage the middle center stage conveys authority. It is the difference between the *locus* and *proscenia*, between the regal, historically authorized placement of royalty and the front stage apron, the playing space occupied by clowns, fools, Richard – and here by Jane Shore. We cannot tell if Olivier was trying to place her there for centrality, and he failed to consider the difference it made on film, if he thought VistaVision would compensate, or if he deliberately chose to keep her distant and weakened. Her only powerful close-up comes as she pleads to the Tower, "Pity, you ancient, stones those

tender babes / Whom envy hath immured within your wall" (4.2.110-111. Only when she is rendered harmless, without any political power, is she given the force of a full frame close-up. In contrast, Jane Shore has been lolling about on the screen's equivalent to the stage right front apron where she couldn't be missed. However, most of the times we have seen Elizabeth she has been in the distance, often viewed through windows Richard has opened for us. As for the Duchess, she remains a stereotype of wise old age – not as a mother who damns her evil son with curses.

McKellen/Loncraine's Queen Elizabeth (Annette Bening) praying to the Tower.

**McKellen and Loncraine: Ladies in the Thirties**

Jane Howell offers a fully realized trio of mothers, and Laurence Olivier reduces them to a duo as dimensionless as paper dolls. Al Pacino includes all the women except Clarence's daughter, but the roles are only glimpsed, though in two forms that alternate between actresses rehearsing in their work clothes and performing in traditional period

costume. Richard Loncraine and Ian McKellen occupy the most curious space in this film history because, on one hand, their film reduces women's roles – Margaret is gone, as is Clarence's articulate young daughter, and all textual references to Edward's mistress Jane Shore are deleted, all speeches are cut or shortened – but, on the other hand, this film allows women to remain centrally placed and to dominate the screen throughout. Although Margaret has been deleted, some of her lines and attributes have been significantly transposed on to the Duchess of York (Maggie Smith). Queen Elizabeth (Annette Bening), who has proved to be the most durable female character throughout all film and stage versions and the one least silenced by cuts (though Olivier nearly succeeds in submerging her), occupies a major space as Richard's chief adversary.

Here, again, the camera's "gaze" plays an important role in establishing the women's position. Olivier's camera distanced them with the voyeuristic eye of a peeping Tom, while Howell's camera embraced them as central characters and kept them in the middle of the frame. Loncraine's camera, as Sam Crowl points out, " sees everything and thus suggest nothing" (1997, 62). It neither diminishes nor emphasizes the women, and in doing so they, once again, occupy significant positions in the film. In addition, McKellen and Loncraine employ the usual techniques for increasing women's screen presence: adding "extras" to scenes and placing Shakespeare's characters in more scenes than the play text calls for. They also use a third cinematic ploy: bringing on screen a character who is mentioned in Shakespeare's text but is never called upon to appear – such as the Indian Boy in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* discussed in the previous chapter. All four directors did this with Jane Shore, and McKellen does it here by placing Princess Elizabeth, daughter of Edward IV and Elizabeth, in scenes from beginning to end of the

film. In the play, as with Jane Shore, the princess is alluded to, but never called upon to be present. Historically her significance lies in her marriage to Richard's vanquisher, Richmond, a union marking the end of the Wars of the Roses and the commencement of the Tudor dynasty. Within the play the marriage has added significance. It is Queen Elizabeth's trump card, her one effective act of defiance – and the only time she is able to save a child from Richard's fatal clutches.

Each of these women fills a place in Richard's hierarchy: his brother's wife is his chief opponent; his cold rejecting mother is the source of his physical and, hence, emotional/psychological distortion; Lady Anne is a trophy taken from Henry VI's reign, and Princess Elizabeth is to be yet another trophy, this time to solidify his place on the usurped throne. With the inclusion of Princess Elizabeth, McKellen now has on screen a woman for each of the Elizabethan categories of a woman's role: wife, widow, and maid. However, Lady Anne (Kirsten Scott Thomas) is a curious exception because though she goes from widow to wife, this film attaches to her a neurotic need mixed with touches of an expensive prostitute. She is the woman who sells her body for an advantageous marriage – certainly a reflection of Richard's view of what to him is a surprisingly easy seduction. This easiness is also emphasized in a 1930s setting where the viewer sees other women earning their own living. This film's Lady Anne is edgy and high strung, and her instability is visualized in repeated scenes of drinking and drug taking. Her helpless anxiety is spelled out in a film scene where she tries to seduce her cold husband, a scene that uses the sexy "ghost" from another movie – Elizabeth Taylor dressed only in a slip as Maggie the sex-starved wife in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*.

McKellen/Loncraine's film is full of visual allusions to film images of the thirties as well as later representations of the period. It includes some wonderfully ironical plays on the images of Merchant-Ivory films and Masterpiece Theatre productions – such as the ubiquitous steam engine barreling its way through the tranquil English countryside bringing the Prince of Wales to London for his coronation – and murder. It is also dotted with images that have an extra layer of meaning through their associations with other films, though generally mainstream Hollywood rather than Shakespeare films, such as Lady Anne's presence in the doorway. Director Loncraine, who is responsible for the look of the film, gives no discernable visual nods to the previous films of *Richard III* by Howell and Olivier. In fact, Olivier's film of *Richard III* was scarcely, if ever, mentioned in articles on McKellen and Pacino's films, though McKellen himself refers to it. Loncraine's touchstone is the more accessible Hollywood milieu, and the women here conform to images seen in those films: the imperious dowager mother, the unhappy neurotic, the strong-willed but glamorous woman of the world, the innocent young bride. Although the film is meticulous in its 1930s details, the film conventions invoked, particularly for the women, are from the last three decades, not Hollywood in the thirties. The thirties touches, including original period dresses for Queen Elizabeth, are more closely allied to photographs taken during the period. The American Queen Elizabeth matched with a docile king, makes allusions to Wallis Simpson. Equally pervasive in the family-oriented view of the royal family are memories of the domesticity of George V, whose family included two young princesses, Elizabeth and Margaret. Quite rightly most commentary has focused on the ways Hitler is evoked in the film, but it is rather chilling

to transpose images of England's two real princesses circa 1939 onto Shakespeare and history's two princes.

However, this film's origins, as with Olivier's and Pacino's lie in the director's stage performance of Richard. In the early 1990s the experienced Shakespearean actor Ian McKellen played Richard III in the British Royal National Theatre production directed by Richard Eyre. Inspired by this production, McKellen wrote a screenplay that "translated" the play for the movies. He retained Eyre's setting of a vaguely 1930s Europe shadowed by dictators because the "crucial advantage of a modern setting is clarity of storytelling" (McKellen 12). The film was produced in 1996 in collaboration with Richard Loncraine, a movie and video director with almost no knowledge of Shakespeare, but with a keen eye for what works on screen. The result is visually stunning cinema with a memorable performance by McKellen and – most important for this discussion – a film that contains several strong female presences. McKellen's actor-manager decisions about the transfer of the play to the screen are best explored in light of McKellen's own commentary on the production.[25] The published screenplay includes Oxford-educated McKellen's articulate discussion of the film's goals and provides an invaluable scene-by-scene commentary. The film focuses on Richard's political and psychological manipulation rather than prophecies and curses that dominate Shakespeare's play. One of the ways the screenwriter and director shift the focus is by deleting more than two-thirds of the original play text. However, no matter how much they cut in the way of scenes and dialogue, they re-establish the balance of women within the remaining text by giving strong visual representation to the individual speeches (or what remains of their speeches) of Edward IV's Queen Elizabeth, the Duchess of York,

and Lady Anne. These women are also included as silent participants in many more scenes than in the original text. This focus on women is signaled from the beginning. Within the first five minutes of the film seven women appear on the screen: Queen Elizabeth (Annette Bèning ) , the Duchess of York (Maggie Smith), Lady Anne (Kristin Scott Thomas) in an elegant photograph, Princess Elizabeth (Kate Steavenson-Payne), the young prince's nursemaid, and the sick king's "nubile" nurse (who compresses her lips and manages to barely blink an eye as the king's hand slides up under her skirt). McKellen created other non-speaking women's roles: guests at a ball and at a dinner, a jazz vocalist, an airline stewardess, wives for Hastings, Stanley, and the NCO (the second murderer in Shakespeare's play text). There are even a make-up artist and a manicurist who prepare Richard behind closed doors as Buckingham tells the Mayor of London that Richard is "Not dallying with a brace of courtesans, / But meditating with two deep divines" (3.7.79-80).

Curiously, and at odds with Shakespeare's text, the character of the Duchess of York is relatively uncomplicated in this film, though McKellen's view of Richard's mother is anything but simple. Unfortunately McKellen, Loncraine, and Maggie Smith make the Duchess a stereotypical dominating, aristocratic mother who, dressed in long black Edwardian dresses, brings to mind a cross between Helen Hayes as the duchess in *Anastasia* and Edith Evans as Lady Bracknell in *The Importance of Being Ernest*. McKellen disagrees with the idea that Richard embodies the Elizabethan belief outward deformity is a manifestation of an inner moral turpitude. He sees Richard, instead, as destroyed by a mother who hates him, and has hated him since "love deserted me in my mother's womb." Annette Crosbie's Duchess in Howell's version, even before

Margaret's attack in 4.4, conveyed the conflict Richard's mother feels at having produced such a monster. But McKellen argues Richard's "mother's cursing outbursts in scene 97 [play text 4.4] exemplifies the verbal and emotional abuse which from infancy has formed her youngest son's character and behaviour." (Technically, and tellingly, Richard is her youngest *living* son; his younger brother Rutland is dead.) McKellen's justification for concluding that Richard's deformity was caused because "my mother's love forsook me in the womb" includes a dismissal of academics, who see the character's origins in the Vice figure of medieval morality plays and "are too adamant when exploring the origins of Elizabethan drama." In morality plays, the Vice figure is the stock representation of pure evil who, like Richard, is also full of charm and speaks directly and seductively to the audience. McKellen feels that what the academics miss is "what actors discover, that Shakespeare fleshed out those types and made them human." I suggest McKellen the actor obviously missed the fact that many academics feel the two views are complementary. But, for purposes of this discussion, we must consider the Duchess as a destructive mother, a reflection of Richard's own misogyny.

Richard scorned by his imperious mother

Readers of Shakespeare's play and viewers of Olivier and Howell's films have seen the Duchess as a kindly mother, one who ultimately turns against her hunchback son, but only after he has engineered the death of one brother, and two nephews, and hastened the death of Edward. In *1-3Henry VI* there is little to indicate that Richard was scorned by his family, including his mother – despite his own speech to the contrary. Nor do those plays even demand that Richard be played with an excessive deformity. A small hump, or a slight limp, as in Howell's production, can be sufficient – and makes Queen Margaret's taunts in *Henry VI* of crookback Dickey a cruel exaggeration. McKellen, however, seems eager to conflate Margaret, who loathed Richard, with his own mother, whom he assumes always despised him as the damaged son. Shakespeare's sources, Hall and Thomas More, say his was a breech birth. The Duchess says it was a long and difficult birth, and that Richard was a troublesome infant. According to her, he gave his mother no comfort, not even in the womb, and, according to McKellen, she made him suffer for it ever after.

In the film, the dowager is ramrod straight, an Edwardian duchess of the old school. Hers is the dismissively haughty demeanor Maggie Smith is marvelous at, where every sag and wrinkle broadcasts distaste. It is easy to imagine this Duchess giving what little affection she might have to the two pretty sons and rejecting the damaged one, particularly since he would remind her of her own failure to produce a well-formed child. The coldness between her and Richard is evident from the first time they are on screen together. On her first entrance, during the opening credits, accompanied by Princess Elizabeth, she walks past Richard and gives him no more than a curt nod. However, as

she passes on and enters the drawing room she curtseys deeply to her eldest son, Edward IV. She is like *Coriolanus*'s Volumina, that *uber*-matriarch who would also have embraced with almost masochist joy subjugating herself to her son, the king. But when the Duchess curtsies, it is also as though the throne was only given to him and acknowledged solely because she kneels. By contrast Queen Elizabeth's attitude is that of the mother-in-law who knows her son could have done better. He should have married the French princess, not Lord Grey's widow. Later, after Clarence and Edward's deaths, the Duchess seems a degree more humanized. As she sits in the drawing room with Elizabeth and the princess she methodically – and effectively – mends the wheels of a toy railway car for her grandson. Yet, he continues to be hurt every time she rejects him. Her lament, "two mirrors of my husband's likeness / Are cracked in pieces, by malignant death. / And I, for comfort, have but one false glass, / That grieves me when I see my shame in him," visibly upsets him. Her response to his "Mother, I do humbly crave your blessing" is a sour series of utterly stock phrases that emphasizes her distaste. Curiously, Richard never seems to understand why so much venom spews from her. He even seems disappointed she does not praise him for gaining the throne. Perhaps that is why McKellen felt it appropriate to conflate her with Margaret. In her final scene in the film, she speaks Margaret's lines from 4.4 on how to nurse a vengeful anger:

> Compare dead happiness with living woe;
> Think that thy babes were sweeter than they were,
> And he that slew them fouler than he is:
> Bett'ring thy loss makes the bad causer words.
> Revolving this will teach thee how to curse. (133-137)

Then, because this is a film filled with myriad scenic touches from the 1930s, the Duchess (as though she were indeed the French-born Margaret) announces she is going to France, instead of sanctuary as in the play text. She climbs into a a small private plane of the period – as passenger, though, not as pilot which one almost expects from this steely woman. The camera follows the little plane as it rises into the blue sky, until it becomes a speck on the screen. Smith's is a fascinating performance – this is not an actress who would give anything less – but there is no development, no deep-set humanity, no sense of growing community with the other bereaved women. She is completely caught in Richard/McKellen's reductive misogynistic perception, a simplistic view counter-indicated in Shakespeare's full text.

* * * * *

Even less complicated is the extra-textual Princess Elizabeth seen throughout the film. Both the mischievous young prince and this serene young women serve to further amplify the character of their mother. While the boy is the carefree American side, the daughter is a thoughtful young woman, carefully tutored by her grandmother, her innocence is carefully guarded, in the beginning, by both mother and grandmother. Young Elizabeth starts as a sweet but gauche fifteen-year old (McKellen 53) attending her first ball. Later she is loving and tender with her sick father, quietly composed at state dinners, plays the piano when the women are in mourning, looks with shy adoration at Richmond when he visits them with Stanley, and accompanies her mother everywhere including outside the tower and to Richard's army headquarters. Eventually she becomes

a radiant bride shown in the marriage bed the morning after the wedding, which is also the morning of the battle of Bosworth Field.

McKellen/Loncraine's royal family at the ball as Richmond asks Princess Elizabeth to dance.

McKellen explains they "brought to life" the princess to change the play from being one that looks backward to being one "centered on the living moment and then looks forward" (17). For the same reason Henry Richmond is also a part of several scenes.

McKellen create a small story within the play for the girl. Three minutes into the film we see her greet Uncle Clarence with a loving kiss and adjust his "ill-knoted white tie" (McKellen 53), however, when Uncle Richard enters she pulls back. Later in film-scene 47 we see a similar reaction when "Richard charmingly kisses Princess Elizabeth, who ever-so-slightly recoils . . . [though there is] sycophantic approval all around" (133). McKellen added this as "ironic moment preparing for scene 101, when Richard hopes to marry her" (132). At the ball in film scene 16 where Richard toasts "the winter of our

discontent made glorious summer by this son of York," the princess, "a little nervous in her first ball gown," (McKellen 53) dances with the dashing young Richmond and is quite obviously falling in love. McKellen makes it obvious "the future king and queen clearly fancy each other – the sort of wholesomely sexy couple which makes Richard feel inadequate" (56). She is a silent witness to the women's grief: Elizabeth's, Lady Anne's, and Duchess of York's. She is with the other women outside the Tower when they are denied access to the princes; she is at the picnic when Lady Anne speaks of her unquiet nights with Richard. She accompanies her mother to see the Duchess off to France and hears the advice on how to learn to curse. She goes with Elizabeth to Richard's military camp, but does not go into his railroad car headquarters. Nor does she hear his plans to "bury" her dead brothers in her womb "Where in that nest of spicery, they will breed / Selves of themselves . . ." (4.4.480-81.). Later she is a radiant bride being married to Richmond and, last of all, she wakes in luxuriant nudity in her new husband's bed, an enchanted Juliet reluctant to let Romeo go – the only scene where she is separate from her mother.

Despite the many additions weaving her into the story, McKellen removes her from the ending. In Shakespeare's text the play's final ten lines concern the joining of Richmond and Elizabeth, "true succeeders of each royal house" (5.5.31) and it is their well-balanced marriage that will bring "smooth faced peace . . . smiling plenty and fair prosperous days " (5.5.35-36) back to heal an England battered by civil wars. The film however, gives Richard the last "word" by concluding with the confrontation between Richard and Richmond. The final image on the screen is Richard toppling backwards

into a blazing fire, a fallen angel plunging into the massive fires of hell. Many citations to the film discuss the ways in which this replicates the final death scene in the Jimmy Cagney gangster film *White Heat*.[26] In a discussion of mothers, it seems appropriate to point out the Cagney line, "Top of the world, Ma," can be seen, through a quick reading of sliding allusions, to place Richard's mother in the final moments of the film. Of course, the connection has little to do with the mothers in thirties gangster films. The typical mother in that genre was the class-based, the loving but poor and uneducated immigrant woman.

The young princess's presence is indicative of the way McKellen creates a highly visible community of women whose political roles are conflated with the domestic role of mother –mothers in royal dynasties. Princess Elizabeth will become the "mother" of the Tudor dynasty. In Shakespeare's tetralogy, Queen Margaret was thwarted as dynastic mother when Richard killed her only son. The Duchess of York sees her son Edward reign, but at great cost. Edward and Clarence's deaths leave her with the "cracked glass." Richard the son who has never given her a moment's comfort or joy. Queen Elizabeth nearly sees her own dynastic role end when her two young sons are murdered in the Tower. However, she ultimately triumphs by subverting Richard's quasi-incestuous marriage plans to make the princess his wife. Richard's misreading of Elizabeth's seeming acquiescence is the first indication he has lost his political astuteness. Blinded by his own successes, he assumes she is as malleable as Lady Anne had been, and their final encounter mirrors that earlier wooing scene. Scorning his own mother, he underestimates the fierce protectiveness of a mother. The image of Queen Elizabeth as a

playful and loving mother dominates the opening scenes in the film. McKellen explains. "the film shows little of the effect of politics on the general population . . . rather it is the backstage story of the powerful Establishment, "hence the domestic introduction of the new Queen and her son off-duty" (50). During those long and episodic opening credits, the domestic tone is established as the boy gleefully escapes from his bath dressed "only in his drawers" and runs down the palace hallway away from the pursuing nursemaid. He rushes into the arms of his mother and, the screen directions say: "flicks water at his mother, who shrieks with laughter" (McKellen 51). At this moment, preparing for the celebratory ball, she is endearingly homey in a plain dressing gown with clips in her hair and no makeup. The nursemaid catches up and places a large towel over the squirming child's face to dry it – and to remind the viewer of his later fate.[27]

In presenting the cozy domesticity behind the scenes of royal pomp, by focusing on the seven-year old prince, the film also evokes the pictorial tradition of *Richard III* where the two visual icons for the play are the murdered princes and Richard's hump. Illustrations for the play have inevitably emphasized these images, particularly with pictures of boys who are far younger and more cherubic than they are in the play . For example, in Boydell's collection, a popular series of early eighteenth-century engravings of scenes from Shakespeare, there are two plates of the princes (the boy's reunion in 3.1 and the murder described but not shown on stage 4.3). In the latter, the boys are very young, between six and ten. The murderers loom darkly over the children, whose blonde curls are etched with a halo effect. The children are symbols of innocence as they sleep serenely in each other's arms, an open prayer book and set of rosary beads beside them (as described in the text). Millais' painting, *The Princes in the Tower* (1878), presents an

equally romanticized image of Elizabeth's "little pretty ones" (4.1.112). McKellen also provides an inter-cut, as the murderer describes the deed, of the sleeping boys with the clothes that smothered them over their faces.

McKellen says he removed Clarence's children from the text in order to place the emphasis on the to-be-murdered princes. However, there is another little boy – Stanley's son, who in McKellen's screenplay is described as having Downs Syndrome, but on-screen simply appears to be a timid child with thick glasses. In contrast, the young prince's energy echoes his American mother. We are frequently reminded of the difference between Richard's painful childhood relations with his estranged mother and the young prince's with an adoring parent. Later at the victory ball the prince is seen bouncing on his mother's lap and then dancing delightedly with her – with his feet on top of hers so he can follow the steps. When his Uncle Rivers arrives, straight from America, the boy is included in the brother and sister's embrace and as they dance together he is swept up in the arm of an obviously adored uncle. Later he appears at breakfast, and is seen later in the drawing room with the women where he plays with a marvelous toy train (significantly stopped in its tracks by Tyrrel's foot). However, he turns into a spoiled brat, which Richard sees as Elizabeth's training. He is preternaturally sharp in his teasing of Richard, and at "and bear me like an ape" he jumps, quite harshly, on Richard's hump, not only humiliating him by tipping him off balance and making him fall, but also causing real pain. In contrast the heir-apparent, the Duke of Wales, is relatively disengaging, a stiff military figure in his early teens, dressed in an excessive uniform with

too much plumed admiral's hat and a beribboned chest. He is much closer to the men's world and, possibly for that reason, of less interest to the filmmaker.

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As visible as young Elizabeth is in the film, her presence is almost always tied to the more prominent role of her mother. By placing Queen Elizabeth in every scene containing King Edward IV, McKellen makes her role in the court possibly even more paramount than it is in Shakespeare's text because she is the energy force dominating the sickly king. To make it clear to the film audience that Elizabeth and her brothers are outside the royal family, American actors were cast for the part: Annette Bening as Elizabeth. Robert Downy, Jr. as her brother Rivers. Queen Elizabeth's grown sons from her first marriage have been removed. Within the first ten minutes of the film the queen has been established as a loving mother, one who is actively involved with her children, and a seemingly equally loving wife. We even see her relations with her imperious dowager mother-in-law as being cordially chilly. Elizabeth has the flashy glamour of dripping satins and red lipstick associated with the 1930s, but her daughter evokes an earlier charm, a more simple pre-World War I – a period the duchess as Edwardian dowager also seems to embrace. In both cases their clothing helps to separate the women from the more intense politics of the court. Although she is introduced as Elizabeth in private life (film-scene 5), a homey figure with no makeup and pins in her hair, in the next scene she is the painted queen, perfectly dressed and coiffed, sedately dancing with the king, the royal couple the only ones on the floor in the midst of elegantly dressed

party guests. However, her formality is undermined by our next views of her bouncing her son on her lap and dancing with him.

Her sense of American informality is underscored by her openly affectionate greeting of her brother. (He was already shown arriving on a transatlantic flight, his wealth and power signaled by many wrapped gifts, a chauffeured car, and an easy way with all the servants, and his sexual attractiveness confirmed by the airline stewardess's adoring look as he tucked a tip into the breast pocket of her uniform – she would later be seen in a hotel bed with him when he is murdered). Rivers is de-politicized in this version, first by his playboy's entrance and then at the family breakfast table where he playfully wears an American Indian headdress, brought for his nephew. Elizabeth is alone in seeing the political landscape clearly, and she is very much a part of these politics. The fact that we have seen Queen Elizabeth standing by the king as he signed the pardon gives weight to her political involvement and makes the reconciliation scene 2.1 much more understandable.

Elizabeth is astute; she knows that Richard as Lord Protector means the end of her position and even her happiness. Her unbridled grief at the king's death is self-centered mourning for the tragedies she knows will follow. In both text and film we see the growth of the community of women – a community that represents the play's *de casibus* theme of the loss of place and fortune at the time of greatest glory. Gone from the film, along with Margaret, us Shakespeare's wonderful choric repetitions, "I was a queen" . .. I had an Edward" (4.4.40-46). But the growing closeness of the women is there not only as they stand a mass of women in black at the Tower gates, but earlier in a brief scene,

not much more than a minute in length, of pastoral elegance, a picnic on the palace grounds attended only by the women, where Lady Anne tells of her unhappiness.

The royal women listen as Anne tells of sleepless nights with Richard

* * *

These films of *Richard III* once again demonstrate how the idea of a single, set interpretation is no longer possible through a film of a Shakespeare play. There are simply too many versions available for viewing and comparison. These films demonstrate ways in which different films with divergent views can establish a pattern of representation that signals the importance of an under-considered aspect of the play. Here, for instance, it is the importance of women in *Richard III*, though in each case the focus is on a different woman, and there are even opposing points of view about the roles of those women. The films, taken in aggregate, reaffirm the enormous importance of women in the original text, a importance that has, more often than not, been submerged

as the play has been cut and produced by three centuries of actor-managers who emphasized Richard – the role they played. Films of Shakespeare's plays continue to reassess the woman's roles and– at least in the case of *Richard III* – to return them to their original visibility

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[1] See Hodgdon, 1991

[2] Jack Jorgen established a taxonomy for the films with three categories: the theatrical mode, which is a filmed record of a theatrical performance, i.e. Olivier's *Othello*; the realist mode, which basically does the play using film realism, i.e. Zeffirelli's *Taming of the Shrew*; and filmic mode, which "is the mode of the poet" and is the most inventive in its approach to the text, i.e. Welles' *Othello* (8-10). Of the *Richard III* films discussed here all three are cinematic in that they are defined by the use of the camera. McKellen is in the realist mode, but Howell and Olivier use theatrical sets, which give them a physical affinity with the theatrical mode.

[3] Although this much quoted phrase from Laura Mulvey has been redefined by Mulvey, in this instance it is the most accurate description of the exchange between Pamela Brown's Jane Shore and the Olivier-directed camera work.

[4] Technically Lady Anne is not a mother – her barrenness makes her position even more tenuous – but she does align herself with the princes and, as aunt, claims she is as close as a mother in her love of the princes.

[5] The recent RSC production at Stratford-upon-Avon (2000) included the children in early performances but as they play ran to 11:30 p.m., they will probably be cut for the London version.

[6] Cibber also deleted Clarence, Edward IV, and Hastings. Although he did major surgery on everyone's lines, he gave Lady Anne a condensed version of Henry IV's soliloquy on sleep (2 *Henry* IV, 3.1.4-31), and wrote a " heart-wrenching" scene for Elizabeth and the princes in the Tower. The popularity of that particular scene is demonstrated by Benson's inclusion of it in his 1911 silent film. Cibber added an aside showing that Queen Elizabeth's agreement to Richard's proposed marriage to her daughter is only a delaying tactic, and she fully plans to marry her to Richmond.

[7] Cibber's version of *Richard* replaced Shakespeare's throughout the eighteenth and much of the nineteenth century.

[8] Recent stage productions seem to be reversing the trend to minimize the women's presence. Benjamin Alexander's influential Royal Shakespeare Company production with Antony Sher trimmed speeches, but retained a strong Margaret, Duchess of York, and Queen Elizabeth. Steven Pimlott's 1995 production, also for the RSC, retained much of the women's dialogue, calling their roles "the emotional and intuitive heart of the play – the antithesis of the conspiring men" (quoted by Brown, 102).

[9] This is a pattern Howard and Rackin find consistent with the move from history to tragedy.

[10] The original guidelines for the BBC series specified traditional sets, which meant relatively realistic stage sets, as seen in the *Romeo and Juliet* (1978), though not necessarily realistic in the sense of on-site locations – seen successfully in *Henry VIII* (1979) and distractingly in *As You Like It* (1978).

[11] See Willeims, Taylor, Manheim, Lennox, Hodgdon.

[12] 800,000 in Great Britain for *1-Henry VI* and 500,000 for the remaining three parts of the tetralogy.

[13] Olivier's film was made for television, but at the same time was made to be released in movie theaters.

[14] Most discussions of the production offer extensive information on the set. See: Manhiem, Lennox.

[15] See Bullman and Coursen, 292-296. For a discussion supporting an immature Richard, see Carroll, and Garber, 100.

[16] When Laurence Olivier filmed *Richard III* in 1955 his solid reputation as an interpreter of Shakespeare rested on decades of stage performances and his award-winning films of *Henry V* (1945) and *Hamlet* (1948). *Richard* marked his reemergence as a film director, but it was also the last Shakespeare film that Oliver would direct. His later screen appearances as Othello and Lear were primarily records of stage performances and were directed by Stuart Burge and Michael Elliot, respectively.

[17] See Hammond, 66-67, 72 on length (3,600 dialogue lines) and playing time (three to four hours). Howell's version runs 230 minutes (Rothwell/Melzer). C.B. Young theorizes that the shorter playing time of Cibber's version may account for part of its popularity.

[18] See Hirsh 95-110, Jorgens 136-147, Cottrell 264-273, Manvell 47-54, and especially Davies 65-82.

[20] Another Olivier biography, Joseph Cottrell, may or may not have been echoing the actor when he wrote "Half a dozen characters were eliminated, including, most controversially, *the fishwife-tongued* Queen Margaret" (266) (emphasis mine).

[21] However, an examination of Shakespeare's full text shows how closely linked the women are to the prophecies and curses that play a major part in this play. Buckingham realizes that he cursed himself when "I wished might fall on me when I was found / False to his [Edward IV] children and his wife's allies" (5.1.17-18) when he failed to listen to Margaret's warning. Lady Anne also inadvertently curses herself when she curses Richard's future wife -- though what she actually says is may that wife be made "miserable by the death of him" (2.2.27) when in fact, it is the living Richard who makes her life a hell. Richard himself remembers that it was Henry VI who prophesied that Richmond should be king (4.2.105). Since so many of the curses originate with Margaret, to cut her role is to diminish the impact of this theme. Rivers, Grey, and Hastings all meet their deaths acknowledging that Margaret's curses have fallen upon their heads (3.3; 3.4). Elizabeth prays that she may not "die the thrall of Margaret's curse, / Nor mother, wife, nor England's counted Queen (4.1.51-52).

[22] Jane Shore's presence here is closer to *Mirror for Magistrate*'s picture of her as one of the symbols of fallen power. Shakespeare chose not to emphasize her and to keep her off stage. Perhaps this was done for artistic reasons or perhaps simply because he had already used up all the actors who could play women. As it was he provided three women's roles that could not be doubled because they appear together in 4.4. Clarence's daughter could have doubled as one of the princes.

[23] This is based on the performance video in the archives of the Shakespeare Trust Library.

[24] While I generally avoid biographical readings of choices, here knowing that Olivier brought his own "Lady Anne" (Claire Bloom) home as a lover while his "queen" wife (Vivian Leigh) was in residence, does prompt questions of the projection of male fantasy onto *Richard* and even onto directorial decisions that give us an Edward VI whose wife openly shares her husband with his mistress. This placement does also serve to further domesticate the role of Queen Elizabeth to that of chaste mother – a reading at odds with her combination of integrity and sexuality in the seduction/courtship scene from *3-Henry VI* and her political role in *Richard*. Olivier has, in fact, prioritized Hollywood's conventional dichotomy of Virgin / Whore in his presentation of Queen Elizabeth and Jane Shore.

[25] One of the new traditions arising around Shakespeare films in the 1990s is the publication of the film book. If the book is a high-end publication it will include the screenplay version of Shakespeare's text, as well as informative essays by those involved, and good quality photographs. These publications are an invaluable source of information, though because post-production changes continue up until the moment the film is released, these books must never be taken as the absolute authority of what

actually appears on screen. There are usually small details or even brief scenes or camera shots that are listed but do not exist in the film. At the lowest-end of this type of publication, the book will simply reprint a previous edition of the play text with a glossy still from the film as the book cover. DVD versions that include interviews with directors, actors, etc. have become an additional source of useful information on the films.

[26] See Buhler, 2000, 52; Loehlin, 75-77.
[27] The young prince being bathed may also be an allusion to the murdered boy in another Shakespeare film – Roman Polanski's *Macbeth*. In that film the murder of Lady Macduff and her son happens in the serenity of the nursery, after the boy's evening bath.

## Chapter Four

### Juliet's Nurse and Lady Capulet: Unruly Mothers in Films of *Romeo and Juliet*

This chapter explores the mothers – Lady Capulet, Lady Montague, Juliet's Nurse – in four film versions of Shakespeare's tragedy *Romeo and Juliet:* George Cukor (1936), Renato Castellani (1954), Franco Zeffirelli (1968), and Baz Luhrmann (1996).[1] As with all the major Shakespeare films, these movies have received extensive critical attention,[2] but none of it has focused on the women's roles. The first three chapters of this dissertation considered some of the ways cinematic conventions and theater traditions became intermixed in films of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Richard III.* In these two final chapters I approach films of *Romeo and Juliet* and *Macbeth* using some of the recent theories of feminist film criticism to examine, among other issues, questions of unruly women and comedy, women and melodrama, and, with *Macbeth,* filmed acts of violence against women.

As Russell Jackson makes clear in his examination of Stratford-Upon-Avon Royal Shakespeare Company productions of *Romeo and Juliet* between 1947 and 2000, within the generalized expectations for each of the roles in the play, directors and actors have found space for great diversity.[3] This is equally true of the *Romeo and Juliet* films, and over the years each medium has had an effect on the other, either through production styles or through the creation of audience expectations, such as the desire for a younger Juliet. It is a much rehearsed observation that plays and films are always the product of

their own times. Shakespeare's play is four hundred years old, but when it goes on the stage or on the screen it is filtered through the current social construct – and what results is a hybrid of past and present. Nowhere is this more clearly seen than in the portrayal of the important secondary roles, such as Lady Capulet, in a Shakespeare play roles often left more flexible because less thoroughly developed in the text. That richness of possibilities is important in the films whose "realism" requires more details, but it has yet to be examined in terms of how the women are situated within cinematic conventions of spectatorship, subjectivity, and spectacle; whether the comedy is at their expense; or to what degree the tragedy has been transmuted to melodrama through a greater emphasis on a woman's grief, all of which make feminist film theory a particularly relevant tool for examining films of *Romeo and Juliet.*

As Patricia Mellencamp has pointed out, feminist film criticism is now in its fourth generation and some of the issues of earlier concern, especially psychological and psychoanalytical approaches and the controlling "male gaze" are now either less dominant or have been incorporated into the general critical approach. Many of feminist film criticism's concerns, however, remain the same, including female spectatorship, point of view, and issues of agency, voice, and authority. This chapter will draw on E. Ann Kaplan's discussion of "women's pictures," melodrama, and representations of mothers; Kathleen Rowe's exploration of women and comedy, and Molly Haskell's tracking of the movies' changing treatment of women. Kaplan's work opens an avenue of exploration that suggests how *Romeo and Juliet* translated into a popular film fulfills most of the major requirements of a woman's film and as such may be a variant on the

"woman's weepy" instead of a tragedy.[4] Rowe offers an innovative critical approach to comic women in cinema that provides a paradigm for discussing Juliet's Nurse. Haskell's tracing of the trajectory in film representations of women between the 1920s and 1970s that moved from "reverence to rape" is useful for examining *Romeo and Juliet*'s mature women. As with previous chapters, the films are considered within their production context – artistic and economic – and also, as with the previous chapters, as part of a continuum of Shakespeare performance that I believe must give equal weight to performances on stage and screen.

As with the earlier chapters, the focus will be on mothers and mother figures, here Romeo's mother, Lady Montague; Juliet's mother, Lady Capulet; and Juliet's surrogate mother, the Nurse, whose maternal role is highlighted in the Arden edition's *Dramatis Personae* as "Juliet's foster-mother." The older women's presence in the text is more extensive than might be expected: Lady Capulet appears in eleven scenes (1.1, 3, 5; 3.1, 4, 5; 4.2, 3, 4, 5; 5.3); Lady Montague, whose death is reported in the final scene, appears in two (1.1, 3.1) and is kept alive for the final scene by three of the film makers (Castellani, Luhrmann, and Zeffirelli); Juliet's Nurse is also in eleven scenes, five of them with Lady Capulet, (1.3, 5; 2.4, 5; 3.2, 3, 5; 4.2, 3, 4, 5, and is "heard within" in the balcony scene, 2.2). Although there have been numerous televised versions of the play, foreign films, and derivative versions in all languages, this chapter is limited to the four major film versions listed above because they have played an important part in shaping popular ideas about the play and its characters. Also, the films are spaced far enough apart to illustrate the changes in the cinematic representation of older women and

mothers, and to show varying degrees of enshrinement and subversion of Shakespeare as canonical writer.

With a play as well known as *Romeo and Juliet* there are established expectations for the characters: Romeo will be dashing, Juliet sweet and lovely, both will be young, even if the actors playing them are not. Capulet will be an overbearing patriarch, and Lady Capulet aristocratic and somewhat formal. Juliet's Nurse is expected to be a comic character, plump if not fat, old, but not ancient, garrulous, affectionate, and a bit vain. Although all of the films base their characterizations on these expectations, unexpected twists are added to the roles, including Lady Capulet and, even, the Nurse whose role seems so well established, even though she was not part of the earliest sources of Shakespeare's plot. The lovers' story has roots in Italian folk tales, was a popular subject in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century European *novelles*, and was published in an English translation by Arthur Brooke in 1562, the version closest to Shakespeare's. Although the Nurse is absent from the earlier stories, including da Porto's in 1530, once Bandello included her in his 1554 revision of da Porto, her role in the story continued to grow. Bandello uses her to move the plot along – she identifies Juliet as a Capulet to Romeo – and as the lovers' accomplice who furnishes the rope ladder to Juliet's room. Brooke expands her role, adds her garrulousness – she tells Romeo a long story of how as Juliet's baby nurse she "clapt her on hir buttocks soft and kist where I did clappe" (line 651 ). His conclusion includes her banishment by the Prince "because that from the parentes she dyd hyde thye mariage, / Which might have wrought much good, had it in time been knowne" (line 2987-88). Though he trimmed the reference to infant Juliet's buttocks and

removed her from the play's conclusion, Shakespeare expanded the Nurse's role so that in addition to furthering the plot she also represents earthy pragmatism in the play's many voices of love and lust. Her emphasis on the physical side of marriage, especially in 1.3, provides "a natural context for the motif of 'death-marked love' which governs the play" (Everett 155). What is best loved and most remembered about the character of the Nurse is that she is a comic character, slightly Rabelaisian, even possibly a female Falstaff. She has become such an iconic part of Romeo and Juliet's story, that *Shakespeare in Love* includes a nurse (Imelda Staunton) for Shakespeare's Romeo/Juliet, Viola de Lesseps. This nurse is immediately recognizable as she bustles, fusses, and plays the go-between – even to the point of positioning her rocking chair in front of the lovers' bedroom, counting on its creaks to cover the sound of love-making.[5]

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Kathleen Rowe's book *Unruly Women* offers a useful paradigm within which to discuss the Nurse on film in terms of cinema's comedic conventions. Rowe "investigates the power of female grotesques and female laughter to challenge the social and symbolic systems that would keep women in their place" by examining the "conventions that govern gender and comedy" located in "the spectacle-making unruly woman" (3-4). Part of her goal was to energize feminist film criticism, which had fallen into "ennui" in the late 1980s, by opening up the discussion to include the position and representation of women in comedy and to consider an "alternative view of female subjectivity" (5). She is especially concerned to move beyond critics like Mary Ann Doane who, she says, hesitate

to "invoke laughter, seeing it structured, like spectatorship, at women's expense" (6). Rowe's argument for laughter and comedy as one of women's strengths includes such self-invented and independent comediennes as Mae West and Rosanne Barr Arnold, and her pantheon of funny women embraces the heroines of Hollywood screwball comedies as well as the Muppets' Miss Piggy, whom she sees as the epitome of the large, self-satisfied comic woman (not unlike Juliet's Nurse).[6] Rowe also presents laughter as a structure where women can express anger, which is relevant to the Nurse's "comic" indignation at Mercutio. In part Rowe is responding to Tania Modleski's argument, in *The Women Who Knew Too Much*, that anger remains the most unacceptable of emotions for women (27, qtd.in Rowe 7) and, therefore, has not been incorporated into feminist film theory.[7] Although that point seems less relevant to *Romeo and Juliet*, Rowe's full argument is relevant because she also situates her argument as a response to and participation in a shift of emphasis in feminist film theory from psychoanalytical emphasis on the gaze to the case for narrative as a "means toward social transformation." This becomes a particularly useful tool for viewing the comic uses of the Nurse in these films of *Romeo and Juliet*, each made for a different generation.

Rowe's list of motifs in the genre of laughter correlate with the character of the Nurse in Shakespeare's play text, as well as in the role's interpretation in the four films discussed here. Rowe's motifs include "transgression and inversion, disguise and masquerade, sexual reversals, the deflection of ideals, and the leveling of hierarchies" (9). From acts 1 through 4 the Nurse's behavior falls into these categories. She transgresses by aiding Juliet's love affair and taking on the role of the parent. When she carries the message to Romeo, the leveling of hierarchies in the process. This is emphasized not

only by her over-genteel speech, but often by her non-servant costume – in Zeffirelli's film she wears patched velvets and in Luhrmann's a tailored suit. Her "examination" of Romeo and decision that he is a suitable husband for Juliet is in itself another leveling of hierarchies that places her in the parental role. Much of the language of the play contrasts the bawdy speeches of Verona's young men expressing their endless obsession with "scoring" with the romantic language of Romeo and Juliet. The Nurse straddles both worlds and her sexual reversals move back and forth between romantic love and the blatantly sexual. Although she supports the lovers, she constantly challenges the ideals of Petrarchan love they embody. Affection, a motif of laughter that Rowe does not mention, is a key to understanding this scene. In these four films affection is the center of her relationship with Juliet – and it is the swaddling cloth that wraps the laughter in their scenes together. In the films much is made of the Nurse's over-fondness for Juliet. She hugs and kisses her, smoothes her clothes, tidies her hair. Castellani's Nurse even has a handkerchief with which she polishes Juliet whenever she gives her one of her frequent kisses on the cheek or forehead.

Directors and actors have had the following information in the play text to draw upon for their interpretation the Nurse and the two mothers. Barbara Everett argues effectively in "The Nurse's Story" that Shakespeare has taken Brooke's "sketch of a conventional character-type and given it dense human solidity" even adding the further dimension of "a moral dilemma that defines and painfully 'places' her" (154). The play text offers more information about the Nurse than about Lady Capulet, whose role Shakespeare also expands further than Brooke. Because the Nurse's lines are often

severely cut in the films, it is worthwhile to present the role as a whole before proceding so the variations' effect on the role can be better understood. The Nurse's act 1. scene 3 speeches give expository biographical information and establish her garrulousness: she has been Juliet's nurse for fourteen years, since babyhood, had nursed other babies before, had a "merry" husband, now dead, but whose bawdy jokes are fondly remembered. We also learn that she had a daughter Susan, who would be the same age as Juliet had she not died, and that the Nurse is vulnerable enough to feel herself a bit of a sinner. (She says that Susan was "taken by God" perhaps because she was "too good for me" [line 20]). Juliet's baby days are still vivid memories to her nurse, who continues to address her with baby nicknames, lamb and lady bird. Later in act 2, scene 4, we learn the Nurse is old, though as the scene makes clear young or vain enough to resent being called "ancient." The Nurse is protective of her young charge and quizzes Romeo with the same care that Capulet would have questioned a potential suitor. Act 2, scene 5 makes it clear that she is fat enough to be out of breath, not at all suited to be Cupid's messenger, and her feet hurt and her back aches. However, earlier at the ball (1.5.112-116) she is far less constrained, when she tells Romeo that whoever gets Juliet will get "the chinks," a gross reference to money further vulgarized by a sexual play on words (this reference is missing from Cukor's fairy tale-inspired film and Castellani's cleaned-up Nurse). The text also includes a confusing reference to an otherwise unspecified relationship with Tybalt who, mourning his death, she calls her best friend (3.2.61) (stunningly placed by Zeffirelli, and omitted by Cukor and Castellani). The moral crux comes when she seemingly abandons Juliet by urging her to forget Romeo, avoid her father's anger, and enter a bigamous marriage with Paris (3.5.212-234). In each of the

films, as with stage performances, she seems to have slightly different motives for giving this advice, which Juliet sees as complete betrayal, including a desire to smooth things over, pragmatism, and protection of Juliet.

Obviously for a performance, whether on stage or in a film, decisions must be made about the Nurse's age, appearance, and the extent of her bawdy earthiness. As ever-younger actresses played Juliet, the Nurse's age on stage moved from the ancient crone of Edith Evans (1932) to the early middle age of Brenda Bruce (1995). The same is true of the films: she was closer to seventy in 1936, but thirty years younger in 1968 and 1996. In the films there are six key scenes for the Nurse, ones that provide the touchstones for characterization and illustrate the directors' manipulation of the material: the initial discussion of marriage among the Nurse, Juliet, and Lady Capulet; her meeting with Romeo and confrontation with Mercutio; the return to Juliet; telling Juliet of Tybalt's death and Romeo's banishment; her advice to Juliet to marry Paris; and her discovery of Juliet's "body." The core of the Nurse's personality is a bawdy, happy embrace of sexuality – which most of the films restrain. In the play text the Nurse's earthiness asserts itself in her description of weaning Juliet in 1.3 – which, again in the play but not in the films, she also uses to remind Lady Capulet of her central role in Juliet's life by pointing out that Lord and Lady Capulet were away at the time of the weaning. All four films keep parts of the Nurse's speech about the three-year-old Juliet's fall, but all of them delete her earthy references to weaning, wormwood, and "dugs." Shakespeare's Nurse quotes her husband's smutty joke about how the toddler Juliet will fall back when she is older – Cukor's cuts make it simply a cute story about a child's compliance, while Zeffirelli's Lady Capulet utters a shocked "Nurse!" The Nurse

constantly ties love to sex, though for her it is loving, joyful sex where "happy days lead to happy nights." However, Castellani's rewrite, which "shredded" the part and removed the bawdiness, makes it seem simply a comment on the ball and, not unexpectedly, Cukor omits it. The idea that "women grow by men" is omitted in Cukor, Castellani, and Zeffirelli, but kept by Luhrmann). Jokes are lost in the cuts and so is the bitter irony of jokes turned sour. When the Nurse comes to wake Juliet in 4.5, she jests that on her wedding night the bride shall "sleep but little" (line 7). Again, this is omitted by all four directors. What does remain, in all but Castellani, is the stunning scene with Mercutio and Romeo on the piazza in 2.4, the test scene for her bawdiness. Cukor, Zeffirelli, and Luhrmann's Nurse gets the joke and laughs at Mercutio's reference to the clock's "bawdy hand on the prick of noon" (2.4.110), but Castellani cuts the scene completely. In this scene something, such as an action not signaled in the text, must occur for her to be so "vexed that every part about me quivers" (2.4.157-58). Directors provide this affront through Mercutio's physical "assault" on the Nurse. Since each of the three versions is so different, and the scene provides an important crux for the roles of the Nurse and Mercutio, I will discuss them in more detail below.

As the play continues, the question arises as to how much consistency is needed among the Nurse's attitudes: toward marriage in 1.3, toward Romeo in 2.5, and toward a compromise marriage with Paris in 3.5. The role starts as a comic character, an earthy and loving confidante of the youthful lovers, but ultimately the comedy gives way to the quick slide into tragedy that leaves everyone, including the Nurse, helpless. Actually in the play text she continues to be comic even after the deaths of Mercutio and Tybalt. Her last line to get a laugh comes in 3.3, when visiting the distraught Romeo in Friar

Laurence's cell, she responds to the monk's fifty-line discourse with "O lord, I could have stay'd here all the night / To hear good counsel. O, what learning is" (lines 157-58). (Cukor's filmscript includes the speech, but it is cut in the final edit; Castellani and Luhrmann cut almost all of everyone's lines in this scene; Zeffirelli also omits it, though his Nurse watches with growing admiration and delight as Friar Laurence pumps up the dejected Romeo with his (slightly shortened) speech.

It is clear that much of the language that makes the Nurse funny is missing from the films, so the question must be asked: where is the comedy located? Rowe provides a partial answer with her category of the comic female grotesques, i.e. overweight and non-feminine. In the films each actress offers a slightly different view of the Nurse: Edna May Oliver (Cukor) is a comic meddling old woman; Flora Robson (Castellani) is middle-aged, thinner than most Nurses, both stern and caring with Juliet and not particularly funny; Pat Heywood (Zeffirelli), is an even slightly younger Nurse, an amusingly enthusiastic peasant, foolishly fond of Juliet; Miriam Margoles (Luhrmann) is a comically exuberant, very plump Hispanic "caretaker" who despite an exaggerated performance conveys enormous warmth. All four are lovingly devoted to Juliet and make it obvious they would do anything for her. None of them plays the Nurse as stupid, but as someone who lacks judgment; though that lack is surprising in Flora Robson's Nurse. On the whole, the Nurse's comedy is located in her jokes in the play text, but in the bowdlerized films it must reside in her body language and garrulousness. She must become the female grotesque.

In contrast, the cuts in Lady Capulet's speeches in the films do little to change the characterization. Lady Capulet appears in eleven scenes, the play text provides relatively little information about her either through others' descriptions or in her own dialogue. As a result, much of the interpretation of this role has depended upon the prevailing view of aristocracy and, particularly, aristocratic or upper class parents. For instance, the assumption that such parents are not closely connected with their children can result in a Lady Capulet performed as though she has little, if any, real affection for Juliet, one who takes quite literally her rejection of the rebellious Juliet, "I have done with thee" (3.4.203). Film comedies, especially the screwball comedies and their progeny, often present the upper class mother as a social snob and feather-brained ditherer, a latter day version of Jane Austen's Mrs. Bennett. However, other more serious films have usually connected aristocracy with decadence and moral corruption. Marjorie Rosen speaks about "superficial and insulting" movies about society matrons in the twenties and thirties that "implied that, given leisure, women lounged about salons, titillating their imaginations and libidos with illicit liaisons" (176). Although "the myth of the profligate socialite" (Rosen 176) peaked in the thirties, elements of it linger in cinematic conventions and taint the role of Lady Capulet in Zeffirelli and Luhrmann. A third option for the role, one that shows the aristocratic mother as capably managing an extensive and complex household, is rare, but possible, as Castellani proves. Of the four *Romeo and Juliet* films, Violet Kemble Cooper (Cukor) plays Lady Capulet as a kindly and gracious but very elegant lady; Lydia Sherwood (Castellani) portrays a good woman concerned about her daughte, but powerless in the world of male contracts; Natasha Parry (Zeffirelli)

is beautiful, but disdainful; and Diane Venora (Luhrmann) is well-intentioned, but has the frail neurosis of a battered woman.

Much depends on the director's decision about Lady Capulet's age, an interesting issue because there has been a major shift in choices over the last thirty years. The Nurse was traditionally played as very old and now is more often solidly middle-aged, the advanced years can be justified by Juliet's being the last baby she nurses, which could easily place her in her mid-fifties at the latest. Lady Capulet, one the other hand, claims to have been made a mother "much upon these years / That you are now a maid" (1.3.72-73) which places her somewhere between late twenties or (allowing for slight exaggeration on her part) mid-thirties. Traditionally she was played as solidly middle aged, occasionally even bordering on old age, no doubt the result of the stage tradition of casting actresses in their thirties, forties, and even fifties as Juliet. However, the more recent, mid-twentieth century practice of casting Juliet with a very young woman[8] has resulted in a younger Lady Capulet.

Significantly, for the role of Lady Capulet, in the films Lord Capulet continues to be played generally as older than his wife, consistent with the ways in which the play text draws repeated attention to his age – though again Castellani is an exception. At the ball Capulet sets the time of his last dance at thirty years before (1.5.35-40). This is important here because the discrepancy in ages has been seen as a cause for an assumed marital discord. Lady Capulet sarcastically says he needs a crutch, not a sword (1.1.1.74). The December-May marriage has also led to a growing practice – seized upon by Luhrmann – of suggesting that Lady Capulet is having an affair with Tybalt, often signaled by an embrace or dance at the ball, and used to explain her extreme grief at his death.

Luhrmann also has her flirt with Paris, with the result that part of her anger at Juliet's rejection of him is tied to Lady Capulet's own disappointment at the loss of such a seductive son-in-law.

A self-centered and rather cold mother is not necessarily what the part calls for, though the interpretation "plays" well.[9] There may be only sporadic discord within Capulet's patriarchal household, as there is in Cukor; grief for Tybalt may be indeed family mourning as it is in Castellani's very Italian film; Paris may be admired only as a desirable match for her daughter. However, even if Lady Capulet is not played as cold and estranged, she certainly is not as close to Juliet as the Nurse who has devoted her life to her charge and who, whether from too much time in the nursery or as a class-based infantilization of servants, seems closer in world view to the fourteen-year old Juliet than to her parents. In each of the four films Lady Capulet is a different type of mother: dignified but warm in Cukor, domestic and maternal in Castellani, smoldering with resentment in Zeffirelli, and neurotic in Luhrmann, while the Nurse, though different in each, remains consistent in her embracing love for Juliet.

The relationship between Lady Capulet and the Nurse is of long standing, at least fourteen years, yet the degree of familiarity permitted between "upstairs and downstairs" seems open to renegotiation with each stage production and film. In Cukor and Castellani it is affectionate. Cukor includes a wonderful bit at the opening of 1.3 with the sleeping Nurse is gently awakened by an indulgent Lady Capulet and dislodged from her grand chair. Castellani frequently shows them together and includes the Nurse when Lady Capulet listens just outside Capulet's study as Juliet with pretended docility agrees to marry Paris. In Zeffirelli servant and lady are mutually contemptuous, which is Lady

Capulet's attitude to most of the household, including her husband. In Luhrmann any possible relationship is limited both by Lady Capulet's inability to relate to anyone outside herself and by the divide that separates class and nationality, rich Anglo from servant Hispanic. Luhrmann is the only one of the four to use a modern setting which, to some degree, skews the relationship between servant and employer by associating the nurse's function as something that happens only in rich households.

Lady Montague, on the other hand, plays a very small role in the text, though she is part of the symmetry of "the two families, both alike in dignity." The films have given her additional prominence by including her in extra-diegetical scenes, including kissing Romeo farewell as he goes to Mantua and waiting in the duke's palace to hear his banishment of Romeo (Castellani). In that farewell scene there is a wonderful moment when Lady Montague echoes Juliet when she plaintively calls out "Romeo."[10] The text places her in the opening scene where she tries to restrain her husband: "Thou shalt not stir one foot to seek a foe" (1.1.78) (cut in Cukor and Castellani), often with a comic effect consistent with the opening's mix of comedy and potential danger. In act 5 her death is announced by Lord Montague, "My liege, my wife is dead tonight. / Grief of my son's exile hath stopp'd her breath" (5.3.120), but is overshadowed by Romeo and Juliet's deaths. For Zeffirelli, Lady Montague is the good mother, in contrast to the parvenu Lady Capulet. Romeo's mother cares about him and there is a final shot of her early in the film looking back for a final glimpse of him as she leaves the square with her husband.

Each filmmaker differentiates between the sets of parents, as a means of clarifying the two families, their children, and their retinue of servants and family friends. Throughout Cukor's version the Montagues are dressed in slightly old-fashioned voluminous black in contrast to the fashionably up-to-date, highly decorated clothing of the Capulets. Castellani also uses the patrician/parvenu contrast, but through casting. The Lord and Lady Capulet are played by English actors Sebastian Cabot and Lydia Sherwood, while the Montagues, with almost no dialogue, are played by Italian actors with faces of aristocratic bone structure, Nietta Zocchi and Guilio Garbinetti.[11] The difference in appearance between the lean and dignified Lord Montague and the shorter, heavy-set Lord Capulet creates the contrast between the two families, though the two women are much more similar in physical appearance. Zeffirelli also saw the conflict between the families as possibly a struggle between the old aristocracy and new money. Luhrmann presents both men as probably closer to mob money and their social wives, though while the men are of a similar age, the slim, blonde Lady Capulet is at least twenty years younger than her husband, suggesting she is a "trophy wife."

As for the relationship between Juliet's two "mothers" – the one that bore her and the one that raised her – that has been somewhat more flexible on stage and in the films where the interplay between the two women is heightened. All of the films maintain the gently comic moment in 1.3 when Lady Capulet dismisses the Nurse, as callously as she would any servant, so she can speak with Juliet "in private" about marriage, then immediately capitulates and calls her back. Both women are at the ball, but their degree of communication varies with each film. Beyond that the films are consistent with the play text in retaining the scenes, if not all the lines, that bring them together in 3.5 when

the Nurse tries to protect Juliet from her enraged parent and 4.2 when Juliet "comes from shrift with [a false] merry look" (line 15). All the films also keep at least a portion of 4.3 where Juliet says she is going to bed and dismisses both the Nurse and Lady Capulet. Scene 4.4 where the Nurse is given the pantry keys and sent for condiments for the wedding feast is important in Cukor, but missing in Castellani.

A more nuanced discussion of significant elements of these scenes is provided below. Another issue of relevance in the different versions is the ways in which it is made clear that the Nurse inhabits her own sphere, one that orbits around Juliet, while Lady Capulet's world is broader and comparatively more social. Zeffirelli, for instance, introduces the three women as they appear in windows. Telling, the Nurse and Juliet are glimpsed playing and heard laughing, while Lady Capulet appears sullenly alone at her window. Cukor uses a gently comic bit where the Nurse falls asleep in the garden in lady Capulet's chair, only to be gently awakened by the amused Lady. Luhrmann introduces his women both in close ups of their wide-opened mouths calling for Juliet. The three main women in the play – Juliet, Lady Capulet, Nurse – are a triumvirate who between them can illustrate the three ages of woman – youth, middle age, and old age – and also represent the three early modern categories for women – maid, wife, widow – and the play and/or film begins to open up when the three appear together in 1.3. The two older women are variously parents, an employer, a servant, and both are subject to Lord Capulet's rule, even though they subvert that rule on occasion.

In the films so much of Shakespeare's dialogue has been cut, usually by at least half and more often by two-thirds, while additional lines have been added in Castellani, and some background comments in Zeffirelli. The result of the cuts is that all the

additional elements of movie making come into play; casting, costumes, settings, film images, background scenery, the surface details of props and decoration are all incorporated into the characterizations.

* * * *

Lady Montague (Violet Kemble-Cooper), the Nurse (Edna May Oliver) and Juliet (Norma Shearer)

**George Cukor, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1936**

Rowe's categories for comedy were developed as a critical grid for films and television programs, but they can apply to stage as well. That link is important here because any discussion of Shakespeare on film ultimately starts or reverts to references to stage performances, which is particularly true for MGM's 1936 film of *Romeo and Juliet* directed by George Cukor. Unlike other film adaptations from classic literature, Shakespeare films draw on material with centuries of performance history and traditions, which must be acknowledged and respected, or rejected by a director. Each of the films

discussed here has its theatrical links, but none more so than George Cukor's lavish black-and-white fairy tale made when Hollywood was still attempting to establish a position as a purveyor of high art as well as low. In the years immediately preceding and following the film MGM emphasized historical costume films, adaptations from the Broadway stage, and versions of classic Victorian novels including Cukor's own *Little Women* (1933), *David Copperfield* (1934), and *Camille* (1934). Although there had been a proliferation of silent Shakespeare films in the first quarter of the century (Ball lists 20 versions of *Romeo and Juliet*), there were only two sound Shakespeare films to influence MGM's *Romeo and Juliet*, neither of which was considered a success.[12] The director and his designers looked to the London stage and to Hollywood mainstream films for models. Script adaptation was by a young Yale drama graduate turned screenwriter, named Talbot Jenning,[13] whose previous film, *Mutiny on the Bounty* (1935), won him an Oscar nomination. A more mature academician, William Strunk, Jr. of Cornell University, was also on hand to keep a watchful eye on the filming, supposedly to assure that Shakespeare's words were not tampered with, but also with the result of a generally careful filtering of the play's many bawdy references – somewhat to the Nurse's detriment.

On the stage *Romeo and Juliet* had been the subject of renewed interest sparked by John Gielgud's innovative productions, first at Oxford in 1932 and at London's New Theatre in 1935 (see Levenson, chap. 3). Gielgud was praised for the way he purged "rhetorical tendencies among the cast, achieved a fast-moving action uninterrupted by scene changes" and paid a "great deal of attention to design" (Carpenter 124-28). He also restored much of the original dialogue, especially the bawdy puns, to present a *Romeo*

*and Juliet* for contemporary tastes. The "purge" of oratorical style and the attention to design can be seen in Cukor's film, if not the return of bowdlerized dialogue. The result on the screen, however, was a mix, as so many of the "serious" big-budget films were at MGM studio with its mix of British and American talent and high and low aspirations. Designs for set and costumes were carefully researched by London designer Oliver Messel and MGM art director Cedric Gibbons, though Shearer's dresses were the product of her own MGM designer Adrian, made with an eye to the star's needs rather than design continuity.[14]

A great deal of the discussion about making the film centers on the costumes and sets, their historical accuracy and how they were designed to reveal Shakespeare's characters. Messel found that the fifteenth-century Florentine painter Benozzo Gozzoli's St. Francis "showed exactly what the costumes should be for Friar Laurence and Friar John." However, the Nurse's wimple and heavy dress could have come from MGM's stock costumes. It sets her apart and has much to do with stage tradition and little to do with any of the Renaissance paintings admired by Messel, Adrian, and Gibbon. Messel's costumes for Lady Capulet and her friends are imaginative copies of dresses in Botticelli, Gozzoli, Fra Angelico, Bellini, Singorelli, painters who Messel says captured in their paintings the clothing worn by women and "were finding a new freedom of expression" which manifested itself in clothes and ornamentation (scenario 267). In this film, as on the stage, the Nurse is a throwback – medieval serge in the midst of Renaissance silks.[15] If Messel's touch is there at all, it is in the exquisite folds of the wimple, but rarely in the dress, though at the ball she "lightens up" a bit with white sleeves and a bit of beading at the neckline, and in the garden with Juliet her sleeves have some basic lacings that add

texture; later a belt with dangling purse is added. Still, in most scenes she is wearing three times as much fabric in her heavy dresses as anyone else in the production. It is a costume that constrains and de-sexualizes her, as do the textual cuts that remove her sexual jokes and puns, with their delight in a woman's part in love making and her emphasis on nursing – though she does get to mention to Romeo at the ball. "I was her nurse." The constraining costume is a subtle but significant note that places the Nurse's sources of comedy in her safe image of an old, sexless woman, funny in her indignity and talkativeness – someone to be laughed at, not with. In the two films that truly look like Renaissance paintings, Castellani's Nurse is dressed like a figure found in any number of the painters listed by Messel, and Zefferelli's Nurse looks like a typical peasant again found in any of the paintings, though she breaks into an operatic gown of patched velvet for her foray into the town square. But these films are twenty and thirty years after Cukor's.

For MGM in 1936, even more important than costume and décor was the cast, which offered a very high-Hollywood mix of American, British, and British-type American actors, typical of the studio's successful string of Anglophile films.[16] Juliet was played by Norma Shearer, an accomplished star with sixteen years of screen experience, an Academy Award for *The Divorcee* [sic](1929), and a specialty in quasi-British roles, including Noel Coward's archly sophisticated *Private Lives* (1931), and the "high brow" *The Barretts of Wimpole Street* (1934). Shearer was also married to MGM's ruling producer Irving Thalberg, and the film was in part a present from him. It was produced despite prevailing wisdom that Shakespeare was not good box office and the

prediction that this film, like the recent *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, was fated to lose money.[17]

The performers' ages have become in issue in viewing the film on video because writers from 1970 onward address it. In the film, the ages of the Nurse and Lady Capulet are influenced by the ages of the lovers. Here the thirty-six-year-old Juliet is matched with a youthful-looking forty-six-year-old Romeo, British actor Leslie Howard. Although both were far older than Shakespeare's lovers, they were lithe enough to have gotten away with the parts on stage. In fact, their ages were consistent with those of Shakespeare's "young" lovers in contemporary stage productions, including Katherine Cornell's Juliet. This may explain why most, though not all, reviewers said little about their maturity. An older Juliet was a long-standing stage tradition, the alternative being Ellen Terry's well-known bromide that: by the time you have enough acting experience to play Juliet, you are too old. However, film is based in part on close ups and to help make the middle-aged Romeo and Juliet as convincingly young as possible, all the surrounding actors had to be, or at least appear to be, older. Tybalt and Mercutio were played by Basel Rathbone (age 44) and John Barrymore (also 44), respectively. Juliet's mother, Violet Cooper, was in fact only six years older than Juliet,[18] but made up in dignity what she lacked in age, while fifty-three-year old Edna May Oliver whose specialty was "acidulous, but often warm-hearted spinsters" (Haliwell 539) played the Nurse as though she were seventy, which was quite consistent with stage practice.[19] Her physical appearance bore a remarkable resemblance to Edith Evans, who had been a major success in Gielgud's effective "recovery" of the play in the previous year. For critic James Agate it was Evans's Nurse that overshadowed the rest of the cast. She

"ruled the entire roost" with her "grand performance, and the pathos of it should have taught young playgoers what pathos was in younger days. He claimed that, "[W]henever such grief is heard on stage," it would stir the heart of Mary Ann Stirling, "though it have lain for a century dead."[20]

Edna May Oliver is a confident and jocular Nurse, bursting with self-importance, tender and doting on Juliet, comfortable in Lady Capulet's company, and secure about her place in the Capulet household. It is worth taking time to look closely at this particular interpretation because it presents a Nurse who is a conflation of a movie "type" with an older stage tradition. Even Gielgud, in his determinedly liberated revision, retained much of this traditional Nurse. However, his version reinstated much of her bawdiness – as well as that of the youth of Verona. In films preceding *Romeo and Juliet* Oliver, an MGM studio player, had been Aunt March in *Little Women* and Betsy Trotwood in *David Copperfield.* Both are crusty, independent old maids, and Oliver's Nurse has a strong streak of these women, as well as a touch of Oscar Wilde's Lady Bracknell when angry. Oliver's rather raw-boned face can be stern, which could give the Nurse an air of headmistress or strict governess at odds with the part, but instead she becomes an example of Rowe's observation that it is female grotesques that draws laughs.

Shakespeare's Nurse's bawdiness is hinted at in Oliver's winks and nudges – one that nearly knocks Mercutio off his feet in appreciation of "the prick of noon." Graham Greene complained that "the nurse's part has suffered, but more from Miss Edna May Oliver's clowning than from a censor" (150).[21] However, when she is truly abused by Mercutio she rises to dignified – and justifiable – outrage at the injustice. The slightly manic John Barrymore as Mercutio declares "a bawd, a bawd" at Benvolio's suggestion

the Nurse is inviting Romeo to a dinner. He swoops down, flips her heavy cape up from behind (at first it looks as though he has lifted all her skirts over her head) and causes her to be dunked into the plaza's fountain. Her understandable indignation as she tries to dry her sopping hat is met by his soundly slapping her bottom. It may have been the somewhat irrepressible Barrymore's invention; the actions are not mentioned in the otherwise carefully detailed scenario, where one expects bits to be missing because of last-minute edits, but not added.

As a sign of her function in the play, in opening pageant, the Nurse gets the first laugh in the film. The movie segues into the film via credits with elaborately framed, captioned photographs that function as a cinematic theater program, followed by a sketch of a stage which morphs into a theater set with Chorus reading the play's opening lines. The camera closes in on the theater set's painted backdrop, the square in Verona, which then becomes a Renaissance sketch and finally the realistic film set – MGM's back lot meticulous recreation of the square, now under the Italian-bright California sun. Into the square comes the procession of members of the houses of Capulet and Montague, entering rather threateningly from different sides. The pageantry is a studied copy of Italian paintings: the sight gag is pure cinema. The Nurse with a walking stick hobbles along, eyes straight ahead. Walking beside her is Peter (identified in the opening credits as the Nurse's servant). As the Montague serving men draw near, he spits at them, twice. The Nurse admonishes him with a slap on the nose, much to the Montague men's amusement. A minute later, after the main party has entered the church, Peter walks off, but not before the Nurse gestures that he should restrain himself.

In the film the women do not speak until 1.3 when Lady Capulet tells her daughter about Paris. In Cukor's film the scene takes place in a garden where Juliet plays with a pet deer, and the Nurse is "asleep against the dove-house wall" [the film's graceful nod to the text's cut "'Shake' quoth the dovehouse" 1.3.35], lulled by a gentle chorus of cooing doves" (154).[22] Actually, the joke is that she is asleep in Lady Capulet's chair. The sleepy afternoon is disturbed by Lady Capulet's impatient call, "Nurse!" The scenario describes how the Nurse "wakes with a start" and "waddles" toward Lady Capulet, who – though not described in the scenario – is slender, aristocratic, and glides gracefully. Meanwhile the film script emphasizes the Nurse's age and weight as it describes her "panting" (155) as she shepherds the playful Juliet from the back of the garden into her mother's presence. When Lady Capulet tells her to "leave awhile, we must talk in secret," the scenario describes her reaction as "indignant"(actually it is a wonderful snort of impatience). Good humor is quickly restored as Lady Capulet "smiles" and calls back the Nurse, who returns "highly pleased" (155).

Cukor's retentions and deletions in the dialogue offer a useful standard by which to judge the other films, and the comments in Talbot Jennings' published film script add further details, especially regarding what was being conveyed, as in a Nurse who "waddles" when she walks and "pants" at the least exertion. Although the Nurse claims to be able to tell Juliet's age "unto the hour," for rather obvious reasons (a Juliet in her thirties) the discussion of her being fourteen is cut, as it will be in Castellani (a Juliet in her early twenties). Mention of Juliet's age returned to the film scripts only with the truly young Juliets in Zeffirelli and Luhrmann. In Cukor the reference to the Nurse's dead daughter Susan is retained, along with the Nurse's pointing out that Lord and Lady

Capulet were in Mantua, though leaving out references to Juliet's weaning. Also kept are baby Juliet's "broken" brow and the husband's merry jest that more wit will cause Juliet to fall back, though the connotation is she will have more sense rather than the play's clearly sexual reference. Though her speech is halved, it is long enough to seem garrulously unstoppable. She seems to pick up speed as she insists on adding more and more details. It prompts Lady Capulet to declare "enough" and finally speak firmly to move the discussion to the subject of Paris and marriage. Lady Capulet's speech about the Count is even more drastically cut than the Nurse's. Her careful book-filled metaphors are gone, but discreetly replaced by having Lady Capulet hold an open book on a padded cushion on her lap (later films also cut her speech, but without this graceful nod, like Cukor's earlier one to the dove house, to Shakespeare's missing metaphors). The general mood is one of sweet accord between the three females. Juliet the perfect daughter, whose answers cause her mother to smile "approvingly" (154). Here Lady Capulet is kindly in a *noblesse oblige* manner and is obviously fond of both her compliant daughter and the eccentric-but-lovable old Nurse.

The eccentricity allows an acceptable degree of transgression, the uncensored outpouring of speech that can be curtailed by firm but gentle authority. As such the Nurse is a comfortably comic figure, laughed at for her fussiness, her chatter, her naïve affection, and her "waddle." As Rowe points out writing of Roseanne and Miss Piggy, fat is funny, but so is volubility. The Nurse's ancestors, the Gossips, chatter their way through hundreds of years of literature and find an equal place on the screen in the garrulous old lady, usually a widow or spinster, in other words, a grotesque. The Nurse's age and old-fashioned costume help to set her apart in this film. On a positive note, in

film terms this may also be an indication of Edna May Oliver's importance. In the film credits for supporting actors (i.e., everyone except Howard and Shearer, whose names came even before the film's title) her name comes second, after Barrymore's. Still, in this film all the other female servants are young, while the Nurse is made comic by her age

At the elegant ball, designed to re-create "to the fullest . . . the pomp, splendor, and magnificence of the Renaissance, the Italian love of luxury at its height," Lady Capulet is glimpsed once seated in honor – just before, a mock lady played by a dwarf was shown similarly enthroned in the less demure carnivalesque festivities in the outer room. Unlike later films, here the Nurse appears only as needed for the action. During the ball Romeo asks her who Juliet is; at the end of the evening when Lady Capulet and Juliet (with the Nurse behind them) are saying good-bye to the guests, she is sent by Juliet to learn Romeo's identity. Later, of course, her voice is heard during the balcony scene.

The Nurse's next major scene (2.4) is the meeting, as Juliet's messenger, with Romeo on the piazza, where her dignity is affronted by Mercutio and the young men of Verona. It is of equal importance for the role as 1.3. In the film Romeo's callous mocking of her appearance ("a sail, a sail") is reassigned to Mercuito. Again MGM's scenario specifies that the Nurse is "waddling along" (179). Cukor directs the scene with much of the comedy resting on the sleepy, inefficient servant Peter who accompanies her. The part is played by Andy Devine, a comedian noted for his curious infantile voice, a mix of gravel and squeaks that made anything he said seem funny.[23] Here it is placed in contrast with Edna May Oliver's quasi-British authoritative tone. His discomfort at being in Montague territory and his ineptness at playing footman to the Nurse's pretensions are examples of the care that Cukor takes in this film to frame the serious with the comic.

Peter is forgetful about fanning his "lady" and, half-asleep, is oblivious to Mercutio's insults – "I saw no man use you at his pleasure . . ." (180). Although Mercutio's joke that "the bawdy hand of the dial is now upon the prick of noon" (179) is much appreciated with a powerful nudge, "what a man you are," the abuse is serious. It starts mildly with Mercutio's mocking bows as he addresses her as "ancient lady" (180), but ends with a dripping wet Nurse with a smacked rump. No wonder she is so "vexed that every part about me quivers." Decades later, her treatment by the young men in other films will give her far more reason to quiver and the audience less reason to laugh. Zeffirelli's Mercutio is far more menacing, as are the sport-shirted punks in Luhrmann.

When she turns her comic gravity on Romeo, asks his intentions, and warns him not to lead her lady into a Fool's Paradise, his answer is a response to her momentarily looming authority. It needs to be remembered here that a rather greater degree of authority than usual is required by the Nurse in this scene simply because of Leslie Howard's age – an ancient Nurse to a middle-aged Romeo. The brief scene with its reduced lines ends with a standard sight gag about servants and money. She responds to Romeo's offer of a tip saying she can't accept it, while keeping her hand open and staring away so he can place the coin there. Her fist closes quickly over it, then her face lights with delight when she checks its worth.

The Nurse's return to Juliet is full of backaches and sore feet, but also full of the kind of physical comfort that the Nurse offers Juliet, which must be there for part to succeed. Every effort was made in the production to make Shearer girlish – she pets a deer, skips, does little runs, and speaks in a lilting voice. Although the actress speaks the part rather beautifully, the aspirations to youth in the repeated starry upward gazes can be

irritating. They are not there, however, when Shearer is playing scenes with Howard – the dance, the balcony, and the bedroom; nor are they there when she is working with Edna May Oliver in their big scenes, especially this one. When the Nurse returns from seeing Romeo, Shearer kneels as comfortably at her Nurse's knee as though she really were fourteen. One contrast in the Nurse's and Juliet's affection here is that it is not a compensation needed because Lady Capulet is remote or unloving; here she has been shown to simply be more formal, restrained but more affectionate than in any of the other films. In this version Lady Capulet embraces, kisses, and pats her daughter, but the difference is that when Juliet is with her nurse, she is still a child, and when she is with her mother, she is a young woman. In some ways the two older women come to represent Juliet's two "ages," which may be why after the Nurse delivers her news – and her admiration of Romeo's various parts – Juliet tosses on her cape and skips off to church alone, for all the world like Red Riding Hood off to grandmother's.

Cukor's Juliet is embraced by both her mother (here) and her nurse (below)

Cukor's Juliet embraced by her nurse

Obviously, announcing Tybalt's death and Romeo's banishment is a serious moment in all four films. In Cukor the Nurse and Peter are present in the square when Romeo stabs Tybalt, one of the film's uses of an image to clarify how characters have information. As the Duke and his men ride in and Benvolio drags the stunned Romeo away to safety, the camera pans over the horrified onlookers and we see the Nurse's face register the seriousness of the act. When she announces to Juliet, "*we* are undone" (emphasis mine), the "we" stems from her shared identity with Juliet, and in no way suggests concern for her own position or any fear that she will be found out. Her attempt to figure things out and calm her frantic "child" results in her going to Friar Laurence's, finding Romeo, and insuring that the wedding night consummation occurs.

However, the second time the Nurse is confronted with a grave problem, the threat of Juliet's own banishment, her compromise solution is disastrous. The problem of counseling Juliet to move on to a second marriage that "excels your first" (3.5.224) is

complex in its picture of inconstancy. Brenda Bruce, who played the Nurse in the 1980 Royal Shakespeare Company production, decided that the Nurse's advice was an attempt to protect Juliet from being cast out on the street, that "incapable of sending Juliet out into the world" the Nurse gives what to her seems the most "sensible and acceptable" advice, even though she does not believe it herself (99). Edna May Oliver's Nurse is clearly trying to figure out a solution that works for everyone, including the angry Capulet who has just dismissed her as a gossip, and Juliet's mother whose failed at intervention with her husband's anger – "you are too harsh" – turns into an unexpectedly haughty dismissal of her daughter. Oliver gravely gives the advice as though she is Portia and has cut through a knotty legal question to see a solution all around. The advice is given sincerely and thought by her to be good advice, which is why later she does not question the seemingly content, "newly shriven" Juliet. The blindness could be justified: she knows Juliet as a child, not in this new guise as a woman, but for Juliet it is still a betrayal.

Edna May Oliver's Nurse crowned with bridal flowers

In this film the Nurse is given an additional extra-textual scene where she is the center of attention, added perhaps for pacing or maybe as a nod to audiences' affection for the older actress. Shakespeare includes her briefly in the preparation for Juliet's "official" wedding to Paris, where she is sent to organize the food. Cukor, however, expands the wedding preparations and places the Nurse centrally in the scene, which takes place in the ballroom. As more and more flower garlands are hung, more piles of food arranged, more peacocks paraded about, the Nurse is teased and draped with flowers by the household maids. Despite her role in encouraging the tragedy of the clandestine marriage – carrying messages to Romeo, arranging the meeting for the wedding ceremony, carrying the ladder for the balcony (references to this are cut in all film versions) – she has been evidently fooled by Juliet's seeming acceptance of Paris, and participates in the festive marriage arrangements without a flicker of concern.

Here again the Nurse is made the source of the joke, which is that a fat, silly old woman is the farthest thing possible from romance. The scene is softened by having the teasing done only by women – in contrast to the more brutal teasing at the hands of Mercutio– and is softened even further by the Nurse's obvious enjoyment of the joke, even though it is at her expense. In the world below stairs she *is* also the mother of the bride and this is a carnivalesque acknowledgement by her peers. Consistent with carnival's king of fools, the Nurse is crowned with flowers instead of the bride. Importantly, it is all done fondly. The fondness that Edna May Oliver's Nurse shows Juliet is repeated in the general fondness shown by the maids to the Nurse. She ends the

scene collapsed in laughter on the floor as more and more flowers are heaped upon her. Only the stern presence of Lady Capulet, the "real" mother of the bride restores order and sends the Nurse to the kitchen. Lord Capulet arrives and reverses that order by sending her to wake Juliet.

Throughout Cukor has been sensitive to the play's balance of light and dark emotions, and has retained Shakespeare's rhythm of comic and serious scenes. Here he exaggerates the comic pause long enough to draw the viewer in and create a distance from the previous emotion-wracked scene where Juliet takes the Friar's potion. The light-hearted scene is of a piece with the film's dedication to spectacle, but it also establishes an effectively mood-lulling break before the discovery of Juliet's body.

Horror mounts quickly toward the lovers' death. First the Nurse finds the body and calls for help: Lady Capulet arrives first, followed by Lord Capulet who is blustering about keeping the bridegroom waiting. She stands comforting Lady Capulet as all three adults stare, stunned by the "dead" Juliet. The Nurse is the figure of comedy that steps over the threshold and departs when tragedy inhabits the "mansion" of Juliet's love. When all is tragedy, she adds nothing further to the play, but becomes merely a tool, the person who finds Juliet because she would logically wake her up.

Cukor adds a scene that visualizes the household's sadness, added perhaps to meet the desire for major production shots and the camera's assumed need to fill the screen with images. It also provides a touching grace note for the next to the last time the viewer sees the Nurse. In the next is a shadow-filled long shot of the ballroom now transformed for mourning with black curtains drawn and the tables cleared of the wedding feast. In an action not described in the screenplay, Lady Capulet and the Nurse stand at either end of a

long table where they work in unison to fold the table cover. Their task completed, they then walk off together with the Nurse's arm resting comfortingly on Lady Capulet's shoulder. She appears one final time when she walks beside Peter in the funeral procession that provides a somber reflection of the film's boisterous opening procession.

Castellani's Nurse (Flora Robson) and Juliet (Susan Shentall)

**Renato Castellani (1954)**

The Nurse's fondness and affection, so obvious in Cukor, Zeffirelli, and Luhrmann, are muted in Renato Castellani's 1954 film of *Romeo and Juliet* (released in Europe as *Giulietta e Romeo*). Made by a partnership of Italian and British producers for international distribution, the film was neither a commercial nor artistic success, though the critics treated it with well-deserved respect. Zeffirelli's English stage production in the same year had reclaimed the story of Italian passions as the source for Shakespeare's

play, and Castellani took those Mediterranean passions to the movie screen to play them out against the spectacular architecture of Verona, Venice, Montagana, and Siena. Castellani said he wanted "the characters, [Shakespeare] based on Italians" to become "Italians once more, after years of stylization have made them into something quite different."[24] One of the results of this retro-Italianization is that in this film where the play's lines are severely cut, and the Nurse's dialogue is "shredded" to almost nothing, Castellani gives unusual weight to Lady Capulet's role. He identifies her with home as sanctuary and positions her as the presence that balances Capulet's hair-trigger temper. This unusual – and positive – emphasis can best be explained in Luigi Barzini's observation that "Italy is, in reality, a crypto-matriarchy" (202). Here Lady Capulet conforms to Barzini's thesis that, though not the most conspicuous character in Italian life, women (especially wives and mothers) are the most predominant and the ones on whom the family's stability depends.[25]

This film, which succeeds beautifully in a pictorial story and fails miserably in the spoken one, must have seemed the ideal combination: Italian settings and a mix of established English actors and newly-discovered young ones as the lovers, with other roles played by Italians, which means that for viewers of every version someone has been dubbed. However, to almost all the major critics the "scenic brilliance" was both the film's "chief glory" and "its tragic flaw" (P. Jorgenson 109) that smothered Shakespeare's play and turned it into a "sumptuous travelogue" (Hatch). Bosley Crowther's sums up the films problems and successes in his *New York Times* review.

> The lyrical language of Shakespeare . . . was plainly secondary to his [Castellani's]concept of a vivid visual build-up to his theme. His notion quite clearly was a film drama in the violent, smashing, uncompromising style of the

> Italian neo-realist school. . . . And so the most striking feature of this beautiful Anglo-Italian film . . . is the dramatic realism and sensuousness of its Renaissance *mise-en-scene* and the headlong impulsiveness and passion with which it is artfully played.[26]

Castellani was chastised for his rough abridgement of Shakespeare's play text and for interpolating newly invented scenes and specially written dialogue. For instance, at the ball Rosaline gives Romeo a mask and tells him to leave quickly. However, most of the added dialogue is not that intrusive and consists of background voices, overheard murmurs consistent with the film's realism. The cuts trimmed the play to focus on the lovers, and replaced the voices of people who surround them with beautiful pictures of architecture. There is still a sense of the lovers lost in an overpowering world, but Shakespeare's wit is missing. Notably, the Nurse has lost all her bawdy puns, as well as her scene with Mercutio (another badly cut role), and, although she still counsels Juliet to marry Paris, Juliet no longer upbraids her ("Ancient damnation! O most wicked fiend!" (3.5.248). Lady Capulet with fewer lines suffers far less from the cuts which, in her case, are well compensated for in the visuals that solidly identify her household and relations with Capulet, the Nurse, and Juliet. One of the main problems with the film was that although it is beautiful to look at, and Castellini made intelligent choices about characters and actions, he just did not get good performances from his actors. On the whole they are remarkably wooden, flat, and rather uninvolved. Laurence Harvey's Romeo is unconvincing and unenthusiastic. He would repeat the role the next year at the Old Vic directed by Zeffirelli, but with no better result. Susan Shentall is beautiful but an ice princess Juliet. Dame Flora Robson, a veteran stage actress, seems too serious to be the

comically garrulous Nurse. The only performances praised (and those not universally) were Marvyn James's Friar Laurence and Sebastian Cabot's Capulet.

Over the decades most critics have grown more tolerant of changes and additions to Shakespeare's plays, as seen in the critical praise for Luhrmann's *Romeo & Juliet.* Freed from the necessity to ask, as Bosley Crowther did in his review's title, "But Is It the Bard?" (*NY Times* Sept. 26, 1954), it is easier to appreciate Castellani's palimpsest of film choices that match cinematic conventions with Shakespeare's text – and particularly those connected with Lady Capulet. Castellani's film has received little critical attention[27] in continuing discussions of Shakespeare films, primarily because of Harvey's wretched performance, and the unfortunate dubbing that seems to make his voice the dominate mode of delivering Shakespeare's lines. (No one, to my knowledge has examined what happens to the acting in the Italian version when the English actors are dubbed). The result is that critics of Shakespeare films, with the exception of Paul Jorgensen and Rothwell, have underrated the director's many successful choices in the production.

This also means that the film's intelligent approach to the women's roles has been overlooked. This is unfortunate because Castellani consistently positions the women on screen as part of a larger community of women within the Capulet household in ways that offer new considerations for the role of Lady Capulet. It is not only a question of having more servants about – Cukor did that – but of the subtle ways in which they interact. Time and time again the film makes clear the scope of the Capulet household, the large number of "employees." For instance, unlike the usual picture of Juliet alone waiting for the Nurse to return, in Castellani's film she waits in a spacious room where several young

women are sewing. Throughout the film there is the sense that this is a well-run house and, although Capulet is clearly a newly wealthy merchant, it is a dignified looking home. Lydia Sherwood's Lady Capulet is dignified, though not stiff, suggesting that Capulet has married into the gentry, though not aristocracy. The house itself is old, stately, and large with many corridors and inner courts, but still rather simple. Juliet's room looks almost like a maid's room. The real luxury is seen in Capulet's tasteful book-lined study. (The more flashy Capulets in Zeffirelli's film also have a study where the paneling is superb but the books are conspicuously lacking.) In this film where architecture replaces dialogue,[28] this house can even be taken as a statement about Lady Capulet as careful, quiet, calm, able to manage a complex household.

Sherwood's Lady Capulet is not a distanced or neglecting mother, but one whose real business is the smooth running of a large and complex household. The day-to-day care of the child is left with the Nurse. She is kindly, but the child is not the center of her universe. For instance, it is clear in several scenes where the Nurse organizes the maids that she is not an eccentric retained for sentimental reasons, but Lady Capulet's second in command in running the complex household. It is a subtle difference, but when Cukor's Nurse claps her hands in the same manner as Lady Capulet to send a servant scurrying, it is comic parody: servant pretending to be the mistress. However, when a similar commanding clap is used by Castellani's Nurse, it carries the weight of real, and long-term, authority. It is a small detail, but one that opens up the relationship of the two women into one of shared work and mutual sympathy. Lady Capulet's initial discussion of marriage with her daughter takes place in Juliet's room while the Nurse (who has dismissed the two maids who were helping Juliet wash) continues to efficiently dress

Juliet in several layers of petticoats. When Lady Capulet absent-mindedly dismisses her. the Nurse here is more concerned about what is going on than comically insulted.

The mutual sympathy between Lady Capulet and the Nurse admirably avoids stereotyping either of them, and in its more positive picture eliminates any sense of rivalry for Juliet's affections hinted at in Zeffirelli and, especially, Luhrmann. However. there is also a downside. More than dialogue was lost in Castellani's "translation." The Nurse is not funny. Here as elsewhere "Castellani has also succeeded in abolishing all humor and lightness from the text" (Beaufort, *Monitor* September 26, 1954). I want to praise this more thoughtful, intelligent Nurse, but the truth is that one misses the laughs that are supposed to be there. If the bawdy jokes are omitted. as they are here and in Cukor. and if the directors choose not to locate comedy in dialogue or when dialogue is missing in what Rowe calls the female grotesque (as Cukor did in compensation for textual cuts) the result is an unfunny Nurse, an interpretation that goes against text. There is no longer a counterpoint for the lovers.

The problem here may also be casting. Castellani's production is a mix of Italian actors of varying degrees of notability and English actors some. like Harvey and Shentall. who are new. Others like Sebastian Cabot and Flora Robson had solid stage and movie backgrounds. and though not box office. their credentials gave the authoritative stamp of canonical authenticity that backers of Shakespeare films generally require. Not only are the Nurse's jokes cut. but Robson's appearance also works against the part's comedy. Although she resembles Edith Evans and Edna May Oliver. the English actress was cast against type as a thin Nurse, and this doesn't work. Comedy demands largesse either corporal or spiritual and Robson, though a skilled actress. has neither. Robson's

background, for example was classic British stage, including study at RADA and years at the Old Vic. However, what seemed to have been overlooked was that she almost never played comedy. For instance she played Lady Macbeth to Michael Redgrave's Macbeth, and when the film of *Rebecca* was being cast in 1938 she was a strong contender for the dark role of Mrs. Danvers, losing only to another "Lady Macbeth," Judith Anderson. Her most notable movie roles were stern women: Queen Elizabeth, twice,(*Fire Over England*, 1937; *Sea Hawk*, 1940) and an Anglo-Catholic Mother Superior in *Black Narcissus* (1947). Only slightly closer to Juliet's Nurse was her 1951 role at the Old Vic as Paulina in *Winter's Tale* – another outspoken upper-level servant.

Like Edna May Oliver in Cukor's film, Robson's face is far from feminine and is even prone to sternness. Robert Hatch in *The Nation* (January 8, 1955) found her "more nanny than Shakespeare's Rabelaisian nurse" (112). Unlike Edna May Oliver, who signaled the Nurse's comedy with rolling eyes, winks, and nudges, Robson plays the part straight, with "admirable competence . . . but fails to capture the creature's coarseness of soul" (Rothwell 2000, 128). Paul Jorgensen regretted the loss of tension resulting from "softening" the Nurse (112). Typical of the softening is her on-going "joke" of polishing Juliet's forehead or cheek after one of her frequent, quick kisses (nicely replayed when Juliet kisses the Nurse's cheek after the wedding, then automatically "polishes" the place with her handkerchief). John Beaufort felt Robson did "her best with the shredded remains of what was once an important role." Roy Walker (*The Twentieth Century 156*, November 1954) thought Robson and Mervyn James's Friar Laurence were "dear old soul[s]" (119), and British critic C. A. Lejeune also praised James and Robson saying that

Robson's "Nurse of comfort, get[s] close to the Shakespearean meaning sometimes," though with "much too little" to do (*Observer* September 26, 1954).

What does work well for both the Nurse and Lady Capulet in this film is the sense of day-to-day practicality of the well-run house, the microcosmic well-ordered society in the midst of the tumult of feuds and hot-headed young men. The film's beginning establishes the public world, Verona's main square, as a place of contention, and the women's domestic world, the Capulet courtyard, as a place of safety, but vulnerable to the outside dangers. In the opening brawl, men are killed in the public square. Women are present as potential victims in the square – they flee for safety with children in their arms, and they try to protect their business, the fruit and vegetable stands – as the killers flee to safety behind the doors and walls of home – in this case the Capulet's home. For a man to ignore the women's pleas and to step outside the door, to challenge the pursuing Montagues can result in death, as it does for the servant Abraham. (In the opening sequence a parallel is established as each family has a servant named Abraham who is killed). When Romeo comes to the ball and falls in love with Juliet, he unwittingly causes the feud to enter the female sanctuary. It comes in the name of love, through the door and over the walls, causing chaos that the women are unable to stop, just as they are unable to stop the bleeding wounds of Abraham and Tybalt.

However, before tragedy strikes, life within the house is graceful and orderly. Decorum is reflected in the clothing, which though also taken from Renaissance paintings, is less mannered than Messel's designs for Cukor where a curious element of art deco seems to inform the ornate appliqué patterns. Castellani's costumes, designed by Leonor Fini, also seem real, not merely "authentic" reproductions. The most overstated is

perhaps Lady Montague's voluminous cape and hood, worn in the formal, public appearances before the Duke; Lady Montague wears a similar one at the funeral. Castellani's Nurse is still dressed in a wimple and cowl, though it seems lighter than in Cukor – the difference is that here it is made from soft but very white cloth where in Cukor the Nurse's wimple is heavily starched, elaborately draped., and tightly wrapped around her face. Oliver's headdress stayed firmly in place, but Robson easily slips hers off to fan herself when she returns home, just as Zeffirelli's nurse also wears a wimple when out of doors and a simple white cap within. In her modest, but softly cut dresses, Castellani's Nurse looks more like a well-dressed servant, one seen in countless Renaissance paintings. Similar dresses and headpieces are worn by many of the women in the crowd scenes, and they do not signal singularity or a comic presence. Cukor's Nurse, on the other hand, was the only person dressed in her particular manner.

Throughout, Castellani presents the Nurse's role within the household more realistically. She is a supervisor with serving maids to carry the water, towels, and basins for Juliet's ablutions in act one. When it is a matter of dressing Juliet for the wedding, the Nurse again oversees a retinue of maids. When Juliet goes to see Friar Laurence, the Nurse follows at a respectful distance, walking behind with a servility that would be foreign to Shakespeare's Nurse, but that looks beautiful in the long shot of the two women moving across the square dwarfed by the looming church. Typical of what works well in the film, the distance between them is consistent with social roles, and also makes a stunning picture. The "proper" distance for a servant continues to be observed as the Nurse stays in the chancery and prays while Juliet goes off for the ceremony. Later she stays outside on the church steps while Juliet consults with Friar Laurence.

Though Robson plays the part by the book – at least what remains of the "book" – there is little to convince the viewer that she delights in the bawdy story she tells of her husband's jokes, or that she savors the role of parent-in-loco. The relationship with Juliet is obviously warm and openly affectionate. Still, when Robson's Nurse returns from the first meeting with Romeo (the actual scene is cut), she has far less physical contact with the enthusiastic Juliet, who here merely sits at her feet and only later rubs her back. Zeffirelli's and Luhrmann's Juliet sit enthusiastically and affectionately in her lap. Tellingly, by cutting her actual encounter with Romeo and the boys in the piazza, Castellani has avoided the thorny problem of Mercutio's tormenting teasing. Her strength comes in the very ordinariness of her being, the realistic recreation of the Capulet household as a functioning home, and the relationship with Lady Capulet – but not, as Shakespeare wrote the part – from her bawdy exuberance.

Castellani does not demonize Lady Capulet (Lydia Sherwood)[29] as other directors do. Instead, he makes her a warm, caring woman who is as much in touch with her young daughter as any adult can be with a teenager. She is in her forties (Sherwood was actually 48), and her appearance is slim, patrician, but neither haughty nor aristocratic. Her hairstyle was inspired by the Empress Helena in Piero's fresco of the Holy Rood in Arezzo (Lillich, *Film in Review* 7.6, June/July , and her dresses copied from various paintings are finely made, but simple and relatively unadorned. Juliet's refusal to marry Paris puzzles rather than angers her, though she herself is clearly displeased at Capulet's insistence on such a hasty wedding date. She is present in Capulet's study when the deal is made. Though obviously expected to stay silent on the matter in front of Paris, she sits in the center of the room – and the screen – in a slightly recessed window seat. The

camera pans to her several times for reaction shots as her face registers increasing dismay at the precipitous plans, perhaps because Juliet has not yet said yes or because she herself is still mourning Tybalt's death. In this film; as with Cukor, there is no hint of even a flirtation with either Tybalt or Paris. This Lady Capulet may in part be a reflection of the 1950s continued reverence for mothers, of a kind of sanctity of the home, though it is scarcely Lady Capulet as June Cleaver. In a film marred by bad acting and equally bad dubbing, Lydia Sherman's intelligent Lady Capulet is one of the film's more subtle and successful interpretations.

Zeffirelli's Lady Capulet (Natasha Parry), Juliet (Olivia Hussey) and Nurse (Pat Heywood)

**Franco Zeffirelli (1969)**

Franco Zeffirelli remains an influential stage and film director, and his film is the best-loved *Romeo and Juliet* and the one most widely used in classrooms. Zeffirelli's innovative stage production of the play for the Old Vic[30] in 1960 created a stir with its

realistic set and psychological recreation of hot Italian passions, especially its "gang" of young men. Eight years later his lavishly lush film was applauded for its innovative use of extremely young actors as the lovers. Zeffirelli brought to the film his talent as an opera director famed for opulent sets, a life-long fascination with Shakespeare, and a desire to return the story to its Italian roots. The film is considered to have been both a financial and critical success, though the original press reviews seem surprisingly querulous. Critics were impressed by the pageantry, but upset by the limited abilities of the young leads. *Variety*'s reviewer captured the general tone of these complaints that the teen actors "do not understand one tenth of the meaning of their lines . . . a drawback from which the film cannot recover" (March 13, 1968).[31] Penelope Mortimer summed it up in the London *Observer*: "It is as though Zeffirelli has made a period version of 'West Side Story' without the music" (March 10, 1968). On the other hand, the middlebrow press was more lenient. *Life* magazine's reviewer celebrated it saying, "No literate man of 1968 should miss this film" (Maurice Rapf, Life, September 6, 1968).[32] This "*Romeo and Juliet* may well prove a new and enduring shrine to the Bard," crowed the *Catholic Film Messenger* (October 31, 1968). Shakespeare scholars give it high praise. Jack Jorgen's calls it "in most ways superior" to Cukor's or Castellani because it has "energy, humor, and life where the others do not" (90).

In her production history of *Romeo and Juliet* Jill Levenson ties Zeffirelli's style, the combination of gorgeously designed sets with psychological realis, to his early influence by pre-World War II experimental theater and his experience as an actor and director of the Morelli-Stoppa company under Visconti. One of his goals in *Romeo and Juliet* was to "reveal the Italian feelings inherent in Shakespeare's version of what was

originally a Mediterranean story, to bring to its surface the passion inherent in its narrative" (Levenson 85). Along the way he also "removed old theatrical accretions" in part by approaching the script through psychoanalyzing Shakespeare's characters for a "naturalistic approach." Theater critic Kenneth Tynan applauded Zeffirelli's success in making *Romeo and Juliet*'s characters "precisely life-size" (Levenson 91).

Levenson describes Zeffirelli's stage technique for *Romeo and Juliet* as "applying Italian feelings to this masterpiece of English classical theatre" and redefining "poetry as a specifically Italian mode of expression, essentially non-verbal and extremely passionate"(89). This description also fits the movie, where the canvas is broader and Zeffirelli's use of color and action nearly dominate the viewer's experience. Although distributed by a big studio, Paramount Pictures, it was the director's independent production until more than half the film was shot and it remained very much Zeffirelli's. As such it can be written of from the auteur critical perspective (see Zeffirelli 223-230). In fact, though not typical of the film industry, all four films discussed here retained an extraordinary control over their *Romeo and Juliet*. Zeffirelli's vision of the play is a wonderful mix of modern Italian cinematic realism romantically painted on the screen as pageantry. For Zeffirelli Renaissance Italy (and perhaps modern Italy's crypto-matriarchy) holds a significant place for the Nurse and a more curious one for Lady Capulet.

On stage, Zeffirelli's attempt at a more "cinematic theater" meant that actors were directed to compensate for cut lines with intense feelings. In the film the even deeper cuts are further compensated for by the visuals, sights instead of sounds; poetic images replace poetic words. The feud between the Montagues and Capulets is that between a

declining aristocracy (Montague) and a member of the rising merchant class (Capulet). Here Romeo and Juliet act like "normal" teenagers in love, but do it in velvet against the backdrop of fabulous architecture to a romantic soundtrack by Nino Rota.

For the stage production Zeffirelli had cut about a thousand lines, one-third of the text, with the heaviest cuts being in the final two acts, and streamlined the action – no apothecary scene, no "gallop apace" for Juliet, no Paris at the tomb. In the film there were more cuts and further streamlining. However, the Nurse keeps all her scenes and a surprising number of her lines. The first glimpse of the Nurse is in a long shot of an open window seen across the courtyard. The "gaze" is Capulet's as he looks out his study window. As he describes his daughter's youth to Paris, he sees the Nurse and Juliet flitting back and forth across the window absorbed in a game of tag and hears their laughter. *Pace* Renata Adler's misgivings, this is a comforting Nurse, one who holds Juliet comfortably on her lap (and later in a comic moment even pulls Romeo onto that ample lap). She is a Nurse who sends a starry-eyed Juliet off to seek "happy nights in happy days" with a playful swat on the bottom.

Juliet (Olivia Hussey) welcomes her Nurse (Pat Heywood) home from meeting Romeo.

Zeffirelli, who is consistently successful in presenting visual images of what he deletes from text, maintains equal importance between Juliet's two "mothers" during the ball by giving each woman a nearly equal number of brief close-ups during the long ball sequence. One especially memorable shot starts with two-thirds of the screen filled with an overabundant display of food and drink. The Nurse then appears in the empty third of the screen and, with a mix of surreptitiousness and aplomb, helps herself to a glass of wine. The brief interlude is a reminder that with Zeffirelli what is gorgeous on the screen also functions to move the film along, or expand character, as it does here by giving one more image of the Nurse and her "appetite." Later at the ball when she tells Romeo that Juliet's mother is a "good lady, a wise and virtuous lady" Heywood's Nurse is sincere, filled with maternal pride as she adds, 'I nursed her daughter." Suffused with the golden light of the scene and Heywood's own warmth, the Nurse's coarse reference to Juliet's

husband getting "the chinks" comes across as a happy confidence uttered in the heady, guard-down atmosphere of the party – we've already seen her drinking. Of the four directors Zeffirelli is the only one brave enough to retain the chinks line, and he does so without damaging the integrity of the Nurse's love for Juliet.

That the Nurse struggles, not always successfully, to act with the propriety expected of an important servant in a rich, urban family is clearly seen in her attempts to repress mirth and maintain decorum in her encounter with Mercutio in the piazza. Her own struggle with decorum also suggests the Capulet's comparatively newly acquired social status. She makes a grand entrance (a long shot from the other side of the hot, dusty plaza) with a white veil floating four feet behind held up (at least for the moment) quite efficiently by Peter. She addresses the raucous young men in a voice dripping with borrowed gentility. Mercutio picks up on her overly genteel manners and pretends to be embroidering his handkerchief as he speaks to her – "pricking" the cloth with an invisible needle. This is a Nurse who giggles at the "prick of noon" and clearly has to hold back a guffaw and keep herself from joining in the bawdy banter. Only the importance of her mission and her dressed-up dignity keep her focused. Here the Nurse, with a veil crudely tied to her wimple, is visibly an inverted authority figure, a servant pretending to have parental authority. The Nurse's robe with its many-colored patches of velvet and silk is appropriately reminiscent of the Fool's motley and suggests a link between her reversal of patriarchal hierarchy and Carnival's Lord of Misrule. Zeffirelli makes it clear that in this play, as in the cycle of the Church calendar, Carnival revelry is followed by Lenten mourning.

Although Romeo joined the catcalls when the Nurse crossed the plaza, he is pleased to see her. However, for Mercutio, she is a threat from the heterosexual world that will take Romeo away. In this film, the young men are particularly cruel and are led by a Mercutio (John McEnery in a much-acclaimed performance) who teeters on the verge of madness. Mercutio's "a bawd, a bawd" is the rallying call for an attack on the Nurse that is a mock rape – and a real rape of her dignity. She is pushed, shoved, robbed of her fan,and has her skirt lifted from behind by Mercutio, who pretends to gag on the stench. When the young men surround her and pull the skirts up in the front, the tension begins to go beyond boyish foolery. This rapid escalation from joke to real threat foreshadows the way Tybalt and Mercutio's duel will escalate from macho match of showing off, with no real harm meant, to a fatal attack, which then escalate further to the savage rage in Romeo and Tybalt's fight.

Although Zeffirelli has stripped the play text to present a more modern, psychologically sound interpretation, the Nurse's role is cut in such a way that it manages to support the psychological realist approach and yet stay funny. This is partly because enough of the bawdy humor is retained, and because Haywood's Nurse, a comfortable looking country-woman, finds a balance in the physical comedy that makes the Nurse likable and avoids becoming too much of a comic grotesque. If anything Pat Heywood's Nurse is a bit too aggressive in her role as the down-to-earth peasant in an upwardly mobile family, but most critics found the British character actress's Nurse to be as fond and funny as any in the past, even though at forty-one she was younger and less exaggerated than the prototype. For Jack Jorgens Heywood is "a delightful mock nun who is . . . human throughout" (87). *Variety* found that in spite of her cleaned-up

"detergentised" dialogue she still had "a good down-to-earth robustness allied to moments of tenderness" March 13, 1968). Michael Armstrong in *Film and Filming* praised Heywood's "delightful Nurse," Milo O'Shea's Friar, and Robert Stephen's Prince, but declared that "other than that everybody else is pretty awful." Even Penelope Mortimer, who on the whole was quite unhappy with the film, found O'Shea to be "the least tiresome Friar I have ever seen and Pat Heywood is, for once, a reasonable age for the Nurse." A notable dissenter on Heywood's performance is Renata Adler who complained in the *New York Times,* this Nurse "seems too bawdy, cold and also strange – in the way that a character in a Disney movie suddenly becomes uncanny and haunts children's dreams" (287).

Another place where Zeffirelli keeps a difficult line that was cut by the other three directors is the Nurse's cry, "Tybalt, the best friend I ever had." Cukor linked the Nurse to Tybalt's death by having her in the plaza witnessing the fight, but we do not hear her delivering the news. Castellani's Nurse announces the sad news to Juliet with "we are undone." In Luhrmann the scene is cut; perhaps because in his Verona it would have been a television news bulletin. Only Zeffirelli gives the Nurse the full measure of grief. It comes as an unexpected fade and cut. The camera moves in slowly for a close-up of the slain Tybalt, and comes in so close that the screen fills with a portion of his shirt. In a fade/dissolve the screen then becomes filled with the white cloth of the Nurse's wimple. The camera lingers for a moment as the sound of women sobbing fill the soundtrack. As it pulls back it is clear that the Nurse is sobbing, and crying out for Tybalt, and Juliet is even more hysterically grief stricken.

The intense grief of this scene seems to infect the Capulet household with chaos that builds until it flies out of control in Capulet's insistence on Juliet's speedy marriage to Paris. Juliet remains in her nightgown, endlessly sobbing, driving her parents to distraction – and her father to even heavier drinking. She has been her Nurse's darling, her baby and plaything. Now she can protect Juliet physically from Capulet's anger, but is obviously unnerved by the violence of his response. When the Nurse speaks to Juliet it is as though she is trying to calm a frightened child. She seems almost convinced of her argument in favor of marrying Paris, but when she turns from Juliet to smooth the bed, she falters before softly saying she believes it with all her soul. It is proof that she is close enough to Juliet to not be fooled into thinking that everything is all right. Her doubts are reconfirmed when Juliet dismisses her for the night in a tone of voice that echoes Lady Capulet's coldness.

On film the casting of a younger Lady Capulet began with Franco Zeffirelli's 1969 film, but the ages of the Nurse and Lady Capulet had been growing younger on the stage since Zeffirelli's stage version in 1960. Although critics hailed this as innovative, the 1911 Italian silent version Juliet's mother is no older than late thirties and shows a definite interest in Paris – though without the full film it is hard to interpret just how that interest fits with her character in general. The Nurse in that film is still the family ancient, a very old lady with a walking stick. With a younger Lady Capulet comes the idea that this is a troubled marriage, and directors have often chosen to locate the trouble in an older husband with a quick and overbearing temper, and the temptations of the dashing young "cousin." Zeffirelli's Lady Capulet (Natasha Perry) says little, but much

is conveyed in her first appearance on the screen, which like Juliet's occurs in during 1.2. During his interview with Paris, Capulet looks out the window of his study and, as he rejects Paris's argument in favor of young marriages, with the response "many have been marred by doing so" he sees Lady Capulet in the window across the courtyard. The look she gives him is eloquent with ill-tempered resentment, the unhappy outcome of an arranged marriage between a young woman and much older man. She shuts the window firmly, as though closing him out. Castellani's version of the scene offers an interesting contrast. There Capulet is thoughtful and sad when he speaks of those marred by an early marriage; the observance seems linked to his comment that the earth has swallowed all his hopes, leaving only Juliet. The implication is that for Lady Capulet a too-early marriage resulted in either sterility or children too weak to survive.

Later at the ball Zeffirelli's Lady Capulet is the ultimate hostess, welcoming all, flirting politely with the guests. With Tybalt we see no hint of an affair, but a definite indication of control as she rather imperiously, though silently, instructs him to calm down. Despite her husband's strong hand, she is still a major figure of control in the family and household. Part of the key to this Lady Capulet is found in Renaissance art. She is the wife, the lady, of the wealthy merchant. The face is smooth, round, has a controlled (or disappointed) sensuality; the elaborate "beehive" hairdo is there in the paintings. Lady Montague offers an interesting physical contrast with her aristocratic face, thin, high cheekbones, and quiet authority, which both acknowledges the prince's authority and sees him as a close equal. In sumptuousness of dress both ladies are the same, but the parvenu Lady Capulet dresses in brighter colors, while Lady Montague is more subdued, but sumptuous in her blue-lined black velvets. When the families meet in

the square to claim their dead kinsmen, Lady Montague is fully dressed and in control, in contrast to Lady Capulet's "house" dress, unbound hair, and unfettered public display of grief and confrontation of the Prince's authority.

When we see Lady Capulet with the slain Tybalt in the square her hair is down and she wears a simple dress as she kneels in the street by his body. Her uncontrolled grief can be read either as proof that she is having an affair with Tybalt or as an expression of familial mourning. Zeffirelli is always cinematic on the stage and theatrical in his films. The image of a hysterical Lady Capulet prostrate over the body of Tybalt has a long ballet tradition in staging Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet*, and Zeffirelli's shot is reminiscent of Kenneth MacMillan's choreography for the Royal Ballet's production. It was first performed in 1965, in a production that Zeffirelli would most probably have been familiar with. Jill Dione describes several dancers' interpretations of Lady Capulet's "stormy presence" in the MacMillan ballet and the variations in their "hysterics" over Tybalt's body. Julia Farrow beat "her fists against her body and the floor," Anna Spelman and Georgina Parkinson thrashed "about in proper scenery-chewing fashion over the fallen Tybalt" and Elizabeth Dunn pulled out "all the hysterical stops."[33] However, there is also another cinematic allusion. The starkness of Lady Capulet's mourning figure alone on the screen in the big empty square is reminiscent of Anna Magnani at the end of Roberto Rosellinni's *Open City* (1945). When Zeffirelli's Prince pronounces Romeo's banishment, Lady Capulet glares at him with the wrath of Medusa. Unfortunately, her defiant Italian look of revenge has nowhere to go in Shakespeare's text. She returns to being the impatient wife and is far more controlled as a grieving mother with an elaborate coiffure draped with black veils.

Luhrmann's Nurse. Miriam Margolyes

**Baz Luhrmann (1996)**

A great deal has been written about all aspects of Baz Luhrmann's *Romeo + Juliet*. except for the mothers. Its history is recent. and the reviews still echo. although the shock waves from MTV Shakespeare now reverberate more softly.[34] The movie has achieved a solid place in the annals of Shakespeare films. has been the subject of a lead article in the conservative *Shakespeare Quarterly*. and has had its position as a pedagogical tool "authorized" in the recent MLA guide to teaching the play.[35] Its full title. *William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet*. with its meta-textual inclusion of Shakespeare's name and its insistence on a plus sign to replace the traditional "and" suggests a spin-off version. However. despite some radical changes. the film retains canonical status because it uses Shakespeare's words. though less than a third of them remain.[36] Otherwise. the transposition of the time to the late twentieth century and the

setting to Verona Beach, located somewhere in a make-believe Latin country (it was shot in Mexico City and on a beach in Vera Cruz, locales mistakenly identified by many commentators as Miami Beach), bring it perilously close to the derivative genre. Its widespread acceptance and praise serve as a further example of how unimportant the question "Is it Shakespeare?" has become as Shakespeare films are increasingly accepted as a legitimate part of the plays' performance history.

Although criticized by American reviewers for his lack of experience, Luhrmann is considered a multi-talented *Wunderkind* in his Australian homeland where he is noted for his work in opera, film, theater, and television. Working with the same production team of fellow art school drop-outs, Catherine Martin and Craig Pearce (who co-wrote the *Romeo + Juliet* screenplay) Luhrmann's work included award-winning stage productions of *La Boheme* (televised in America on PBS), Benjamin Britten's opera *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, rock and roll videos, and a well-received full-length film, *Strictly Ballroom*. *Romeo + Juliet* was his first big-budget film. He trimmed the story, as had his predecessors, but when he replaces Shakespeare's words with visuals it is in a postmodernist vein layered with allusions and visual puns. Billboard slogans and brand names play with Shakespeare's lines and Juliet is first seen floating like a drowned Ophelia. Unlike the previous *Romeo and Juliet* films, this one has few links with the play's stage history, but instead refers to a wide range of films. Luhrmann's technique, here and even more so in his later *Moulin Rouge*, is the collage of images, sounds, and allusions. The film's opening scene with the "boys" invokes another Australian film, *Mad Max*, while the first scene at the Capulet mansion changes gears when characters move at silent film speed. Television images are part of this filmic *bricolage*, not only in its use

of news broadcast but in Luhrmann's rock video editing techniques, including visual layering, jump cuts, wipes, and cut and reverse shots. All of this makes it even more surprising that Luhrmann's women in *Romeo + Juliet* are basically drawn from conventional and, even, traditional screen models: sweet ingénues, comic servants, and self-centered society mothers. The irony is that the palimpsest of movie allusions provides recognizable "biographies" for the characters. The characters are not foreign or historically distanced, but instead are familiar types. Within the remembered frame of other movies it is easy to intuit the backgrounds of the rich girl sheltered at home and in her private Catholic school,[37] the uneducated immigrant caretaker whose role as servant in a wealthy house raises her social status, and the bored, ill-used wife who turns to alcohol as her looks fade.

I want to focus on two aspects of Luhrmann's treatment of the "mothers," one simple – the Nurse's humor – and the other more complex – Lady Capulet and the elements of movie melodrama evoked by playing the role as a Tennessee Williams character.[38] The larger discussion of *Romeo and Juliet* as movie melodrama requires a longer and more complex exploration than can be given in this chapter. However, what is most significant here is the fact that in this most postmodern *Romeo and Juliet*, Lady Capulet (Diane Venora) becomes a throwback to the suffering wives and mothers in Hollywood women's films, the "weepies" of the 1940s and 1950s. In Luhrmann's *Romeo + Juliet* the Nurse (Miriam Margolyes) reverts to a stock, but effective, characterization of Shakespeare's Nurse. She is a fat, foolishly fond Nurse. Her social class is given a contemporary twist by playing her with a Hispanic accent. Margolyes, an

accomplished comedienne with a Cambridge degree and classic theater training, may be the most heavy-set of the four Nurses and often fits Rowe's paradigm of the female grotesque. Like Castellani's Nurse, Flora Robson, Margolyes has also played an English queen – but hers was the more lovable Queen Victoria.[39] Margolyes' Nurse mugs, rolls her eyes, and flirts outrageously, but is completely convincing in her overwhelming affection for Juliet and anyone Juliet loves, including Romeo and Tybalt. Luhrmann gives her more personal details than any of the Nurses in previous films. She even has her own room, decorated with colorful multi-patterned wallpaper and furniture that work together like the overlapping designs in a Edouard Vuillard interior. As with Zeffirelli's Nurse, comedy is tied to her appetites, her dual enjoyment of *eros* (at least as an idea and bawdy references) and food. Zeffirelli's Nurse reported to Juliet on her meeting with Romeo in the Capulet kitchen (Cukor and Castellani used the garden). Luhrmann's Juliet must wait for the news while the Nurse rummages in her own private well-stocked refrigerator and settles in her armchair to eat a pile of tea sandwiches and drink tea – holding the china tea cup with a little finger crooked outward in an excess of gentility.

Though fat, this is an energetic Nurse who neither waddles nor gets out of breath. In the screenplay's[40] description of her first entrance she "explodes out of the elevator." When she then goes up "the magnificent staircase" there is no note of her going heavily or slowly, though Lady Capulet had just been described as coming down the stairs with a "stride." (31). Freed from the traditional heavy dress, this Nurse moves lightly and swiftly in her neat maid's black uniform and apron with chic white pinstripes. Speaking personally about herself and her own weight Margolyes said that inside she is a small person darting quickly about. Brenda Bruce (a thin Nurse) spoke of how liberating it was

to play the Nurse in modern dress, and how much lighter and full of delight the character could be when not "weighted down with the layers of heavy woolen skirts, my face and head half hidden in a wimple" (94). Though so many of the Nurse's lines are cut, Margolyes' expressive mugging and Hispanic accent retain the feeling of the garrulous Nurse.

For Luhrmann's Nurse the most important moment comes when she goes to meet Romeo at Verona Beach, where the boys hang out. The Nurse's forceful self-confidence means she comes to the beach alone and has no need of Peter to carry her fan or anything else. (He's the chauffeur sitting in the sleek Town Car waiting to take her home.). The camera starts the scene with a view of her back that frames her large, well-corseted, red-dressed figure against the bright blue sky. It then switches to an intense close-up of her very satisfied looking face with its careful make up and bright lipstick. The screenplay describes her wearing "a ridiculous, all-red, 'Jackie O' style disguise of sunglasses, scarf, and parasol" (87).[41] However, Margolyes is commanding enough to give an aura of authority to this "ridiculous" outfit. As with Zeffirelli's Nurse in her patchwork velvet dress, Luhrmann dresses his Nurse in a costume suggesting the carnivalesque reversal of hierarchy, the Nurse as Carnival's King of Misrule in clothing that apes America's unofficial royalty. Part of what saves her from the totally absurd is her real concern that Romeo shall not lead her lady to a "fool's paradise."

Zeffirelli's emphasis on Mercutio led him to make the Nurse's teasing a big scene, but Luhrmann limits Mercutio to being "amazed" that Romeo "actually follows this woman," looking quizzically at Benvolio, shrugging and driving off. The only thing that remains from his attack on the Nurse is a mild swipe at her age: "farewell ancient lady."[42]

The comedy in the scene remains sweet and lies in the Nurse's physicality, her slapstick overpowering of slender Romeo, her bulk looming over him as she lectures. She leaves the scene with her dignity intact.

Margolyes' ability to switch from the comic to the dignified means that when Capulet threatens Juliet in 3.5 and the Nurse "throws herself between Capulet and Juliet" (123) nothing of the comic grotesque on the beach remains. Even though he "shunts her aside," the Nurse holds her own and is the only woman in the scene that Capulet does not attack either physically or verbally (his withering scorn in lines 169-174 has been cut so he no longer calls her a "mumbling fool" or "gossip"). As with most of the film versions, the Nurse's motivation for advising Juliet to marry Paris is ambiguous, but here it seems to come from her deep concern for the girl and is an attempt to protect her. It is not self-serving, but still is based in a servant's pragmatism. Earlier, in 1.3, it was clear that the Nurse and Juliet were masters at negotiating Lady Capulet's mood swings, but Lord Capulet's murderously violent anger has thrown them off center. Juliet's response to the advice is to become withdrawn. She dismisses the Nurse "matter-of-factly" as the camera holds "on Juliet's cold eyes, from which a single tear falls" (131-132). In this youth-centered film when the Nurse is no longer in Juliet's confidence, she falls out of the picture. Her remaining scenes in the play are cut and the next time she appears on screen is among the mourners at Juliet's funeral.

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Luhrmann's Lady Capulet, renamed Gloria Capulet,[43] (Diane Venora[44]) is far more complex and inventive than his Nurse. Although *Romeo and Juliet* is categorized in the Folio as a tragedy, the play describes itself as a "tale of woe," a phrase more apt for melodrama. Rowe and Kaplan's statements that women are identified with melodrama and men with tragedy apply to this Lady Capulet. Curiously it is this film that also offers the most rounded or fullest Lady Capulet, one with the strongest sense of a personal history created through the use of film conventions and evocation of women in other films, especially, as said above, those based on Tennessee Williams's plays. Diane Venora plays the role as though she were screen star Jessica Lange playing Blanche Dubois. She is the often-seen stereotype of the frail southern woman, though more 1930s through 1960s than current, too thin, pale, nervously unable to think for herself, slightly dipsomaniac, and lost without the flirtatious attentions of other men. Gloria Capulet's pathetic helplessness in the face of her husband's anger, the inability to reach her daughter, the distractions of wealth, of the great house, of parties, of alcohol and pills is a laundry list of the elements in Hollywood movies. We know this Lady Capulet because we have seen women like her over and over again on the screen, in films from every decade of movie making. The trick is that we have never seen her in a Shakespeare film edited like a rock video.

A momentarily androgynous Gloria Capulet (Diane Venora).

Luhrmann actually presents two separate Lady Capulets, one brunette and the other blonde. There is the comic pill-popping, fast-moving Gloria Capulet seen from 1.3 through the ball, and the sad, trophy wife seen in the remainder of the film. This second, "real," Gloria evokes a faded gentility, while the first Gloria is a comic grotesque, a parody of the vulgar nouveau riche. She is introduced with an extreme close-up of her lipsticked open mouth, shouting for Juliet (in the film the scene is clearly set up to introduce Juliet ). Music provides comments on characters and actions throughout and here Luhrmann uses opera buffo. As Peter Donaldson pointed out, in this first shot, it is not clear who this person is, or even what sex. Her hair is under a skullcap and the make-up (for the costume party) is so exaggerated that she could just as easily be a drag queen.[45] As she "strides" down the main staircase dressed with only a fluffy negligee thrown over her corset, she could still be a transvestite. In fact later in the ball scene Mercutio's mini-skirted, musical comedy drag act takes place on the same staircase and

mirrors Lady Capulets' earlier half-dressed entrance – a major difference is that she is scattered and he is in control of the moment.

James Loehlin places *William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet* in a genre he calls "teen-star-crossed-lovers-films" (121), links it to the *ur*-teen film *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955), and equates the disinterested parents in that film with Luhrmann's Capulet and Montague parents. However, he does not take into account the way Luhrmann transgresses the genre with the intensely manic comic details of Gloria Capulet's early scenes. There is an amazing lack of dignity in the initial few minutes she is on screen. In between taking Nembutal and washing it down with sherry, she is dressed in a Cleopatra costume by her maids. It is a single instance among thousands of Luhrmann's layered use of allusion: Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatara*, Hollywood's screen vamp Cleopatras that range from Theda Bara (the film races at silent film speed as the dressing progresses) to Elizabeth Taylor, even Shakespeare actress Vivian Leigh. There is also a meta-theatrical construction of character and gender, as she covers the androgynous skull cap with the Cleo wig.

Scene 1.3 in Gloria's room is played for laughs and makes clear that Juliet and her Nurse are skilled at dealing with Gloria's ricocheting moods and staying under her radar. When Gloria slams the door in the Nurse's face she looks startled at what she has done and immediately reopens it to admit the Nurse. Her comment that she was "much upon" Juliet's age when her daughter was born is met with the Nurse's eye-rolling disbelief. She is comically exasperated at her daughter's bright-eyed innocence, growls at her, and even "smushes" her face with her hand, the way that James Cagney in the 1931 gangster film *The Public Enemy* pushed a grapefruit into his blond breakfast companion's face.

Luhrmann retains lines 80-88 of Lady Capulet's speech about Paris, so Gloria describes him as "This precious book of love, this unbound lover, / To beautify him only lacks a cover." However, it is played for comedy because the "cover" is a pun on the glossy *Time* magazine she holds with Dave Paris on the cover. This is a Lady Capulet who looks at her daughter, goes "ugh" and is funny. Further, Luhrmann has cut virtually all of the Nurse's speeches, so, though she remains a comic figure, the humor in the film's version of scene 1.3 is located in the exchange between the mother and daughter, which is exactly where a teen audience would look for it. This major change remains consistent with the way Shakespeare's play starts with all the elements of comedy and then shifts inextricably into tragedy. Of the four films, Cukor's is the only other one that allows Lady Capulet a bit of gentle humor in the first act's scene. Luhrmann's opera buffo mood continues into the ball, even into the shot of Gloria dancing a tango with Tybalt and their passionate kiss at the end of the dance. It is a comic parody of a tango and a parody of a tango-inspired kiss. The diffused adulterous kiss is bracketed by the comedy of 1.3 and the following slapstick-paced chase where Juliet and Romeo jump into the elevator trying to escape Gloria, who keeps popping up with Paris in tow. When the door opens on the top floor, the Nurse who despite her weight has evidently raced up the stairs at impossible cartoon speed, faster than the elevator, is there looking like a triumphant Elmer Fudd who has caught Bugs Bunny.

The comic Cleopatra/mother is gone completely the next time Gloria Capulet appears on the screen, kneeling in her satin ball gown in the wet, muddy street, and stretched grief stricken over the body of Tybalt. Rain runs down her tragic face as she demands justice and the death of Romeo. Luhrmann allows Gloria Capulet to see Juliet's

fascination with Romeo. At the ball the lovers escape to the elevator, and just as the doors close Gloria turns around to see Juliet and Romeo. In the morning scene 3.5 when Romeo leaves Juliet's room she again catches a glimpse of him as she goes out on the balcony. As she looks down at the garden her faces registers seeing him and her understanding that he has been in Juliet's room, but it is also clear that she decides she is not even going to try to deal with this. It is obvious that denial is part of her survival strategy. It is also a tribute to Venora that she can give this added layer to the character here and throughout.

After the death of Tybalt Gloria Capulet becomes more like Lady Capulet and acquires a kind of faded dignity; her bird-like thinness emphasized by the straight skirts and modest cardigans over the shoulder, she becomes the stuff of melodrama. The sleight of hand "MTV filmmaking" disguises the fact that of the four films, the one with the sharpest, most inventive and modern look actually draws the most heavily on film clichés found in the melodramatic women's weepies of half a century before. In this film her distance from Juliet is found in her own victimization. When she takes the roses that Paris brings to the mourning Juliet, she looks wistfully at them as though they were reminders of a distant, kinder past of gentlemen callers. When she says good-night to Juliet the night before the wedding, there's a wistful longing, a desire to connect with this difficult daughter who seems to cling to childhood in a room filled with icons of angels and virgin saints. Of course, her distance from her daughter also means she does not know Juliet's strength of purpose and resolve.

Luhrmann's Lady Capulet is a battered wife. When she tries to stop Capulet from hitting Juliet, he strikes her hard enough to knock her against the wall. A thin trickle of

blood forms at the corner of her mouth. The scene is disturbingly violent. It is clear she has been struck before, but seems to be the first time he has gone after his daughter with such force. As in Castellani's film, part of her frustration and rejection of Juliet lies in the daughter's sharing the father's stubbornness. At Juliet's funeral Gloria's black veil casts bruise-like shadows on her face, which now seems ravaged with grief. On one hand this suggests a more loving mother, but on the other, consistent with the point of view of a teen movie, it also has an element of the frustrated adolescent cry: "If I die, you'll be really sorry for what you did." The final scene has all four parents standing mutely by as the bodies of Romeo and Juliet are loaded into the ambulance. The teenagers have won the generation war.

Unlike Castellani and Zeffirelli, Luhrmann does not try to separate Capulets and Montagues by indicating a difference between the Montague's aristocracy and the Capulet's new merchant wealth. Although the divide is defined as Anglo and Latino, both men have a similar slightly thuggish air, as though they had Mafia connections. Montague's "Anglo" is closer to poor Irish than aristocratic British. The more polished but not elite, Lady Montague is always dressed for a formal party in gowns and jewels. Although she looks longingly out the limo window at her son and even "struggles to control her emotions" on hearing that Romeo has a habit of "with tears augmenting the fresh morning's dew" (Pearce/Luhrmann 16), there is none of the connection between mother and son seen in Castellani and Zeffirelli. There are no parting blessings, or backward glances. They never appear together in the same frame. Cukor, who cut all Lady Montague's lines, separated her from Lady Capulet with more sedate clothing that contrasted with the latter's highly ornamented dresses and rich jewels. Luhrmann

indicates difference by having Caroline Montague (Christina Pickles) be a bit older than Lady Capulet and definitely not a trophy wife. Both women occupy an equal space in the final scene.

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These four films of *Romeo and Juliet* offer a wide range of images for Lady Capulet: dignified in Cukor, domestic in Castellani, scornful in Zeffirelli, and with problems of her own for Luhrmann. As Lady Capulet becomes younger on stage and film, the character changes. Zeffirelli and Luhrmann adhere to a film convention that links aristocratic and wealthy women with promiscuity and self-centeredness – in other words they are inferior mothers. Zeffirelli offers a balance by making Lady Montague both a member of the nobility and a loving mother. By the end of the twentieth century the image of a caring wealthy mother on screen is an anomaly, yet earlier Cukor and Castellani demonstrated how this is possible for Lady Capulet. In the thirties screen mothers, even wealthy ones, were part of a respected hierarchy that may have seen aristocrats as silly, lacking in solid middle class sense. They still belonged in a positive way to the upward class structure that films entranced their audiences with. The dominant image of mothers on the screen in early films was consistent with those in nineteenth-century novels and tied to self sacrifice. Though as the century developed, Anne Kaplan points out, that they also became the focal point of the new consumerist culture. The youth rebellion of the 1960s rose up against a generation of parents at the same time that women were reaching out for their independence through a growing

feminist movement. However, on screen the sexy mother was still the exception, *The Graduate*'s inappropriately sexual Mrs. Robinson. At the end of the century the screen mother was more complex, not so much bad as troubled, battered, psychologically abused so that it is not her fault that she is not a good mother; she is not a deliberately bad one.

In some ways Luhrmann's Lady Capulet overlaps the earlier Hollywood weepies with the later teen films. However, it needs to be noted that women's weepies in the thirties and forties occupied a major niche in filmmaking that is now held by teen movies. In both cases the consumers of these niche pictures are a group that is disempowered in the larger society, but has significant disposable income. In terms of content Brooks identifies the dominant force in melodrama – and in this context the genre term weepies can replace melodrama – as a response to the loss of natural hierarchy and a solidification of bourgeois class and nuclear family. All of these films touch on that shift. The Nurse remains a part of it when she acts as substitute parent and oversteps the hierarchal order to arrange a marriage. However, Juliet herself oversteps her role in this hierarchy. She identifies neither with her mother nor the mother-surrogate Nurse. She acts as an agent in her own fate when she marries Romeo, consummates the marriage, and fakes her death. Through the image of romantic love, she transgresses the romantic ideal by longing for physical consummation. Her final act of agency is to take her own life. The four films of Romeo and Juliet place Juliet's decisions within an adult society where women hold varying degrees of power as wives, mothers, and servants but are unable to step outside the patriarchal control of Renaissance Verona or to control the chaos it creates. Barbara Hodgdon closes her article saying that Luhrmann's film bears watching "precisely because it has been watching us" (142). This is true for all of these films and what they

say about the way directors use Shakespeare's characters as a way of "watching" women and mothers.

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[1] Although the directors for each of these films have exercised auteur-type control over them, no film is the product of a single person. However, for clarity I refer to the films throughout, and often to characters in the films, in terms of the director's name.

[2] See Eckert, 43-53, 108-25; Jackson 2000, 135-62, 212-21, Jorgens, Rothwell 2000, 125-42, Willson, 51-73.

[3] Professor Jackson kindly allowed me to consult his book in manuscript. It will be published fall 2002 by The Arden Shakespeare in the "Shakespeare at Stratford" series.

[4] A similar conclusion was reached by Ken Rothwell (Rothwell, 1990), who was drawing on his experience as a film enthusiast and not as a feminist film critic when he said that the only possible flaw in Zeffirelli's *Romeo and Juliet*, was "the movie's genius as species of the 'weepy' genre. Re-screenings sometimes make one think too glibly of *Stella Dallas*" (258).

[5] An earlier "translation," Leonard Bernstein's *West Side Story*, set in a New York slum, rewrote the role as a worldy-wise, cynical but warm-hearted friend, just slightly older than Maria (Juliet).

[6] Should there ever be a Muppet version of *Romeo and Juliet* Miss Piggy would seem the obvious choice for Nurse, but she, no doubt, would invoke star status and insist on playing Juliet.

[7] The success of films like *Thelma and Louise*, while illustrating that Hollywood can and occasionally does feature angry women without castigating them, remain the exception and Modelski's observation remains pertinent.

[8] The Victorian stage also had its share of young Juliets, including the Cushing sisters.

[10] One of the interesting things in the film (which would be a wonderful movie if it weren't for the acting) is the use of foreshadowing and overlapping experiences and emotions on the part of other characters. For instance, the stabbings and fatal beatings in the opening brawl is among young men who are a lower class is a parallel but less exalted version of the more "gallant deaths" of Tybalt and Mercutio. The humble die brutally and in silence, while noblemen speak poetry and die with grand curses. The grief of a Capulet servant as she flings herself on the body of her slain husband, sobbing "My Abraham, they've killed my man, my Abraham" foreshadows Juliet's grief, and even touches upon the Nurse's own position as a widow who obviously misses her "merry man."

[11] Garbinetti, was not a professional actor but, as tradition has it, a Venetian gondolier cast for his impressively aristocratic appearance and great air of dignity.

[12] Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks's *Taming of the Shrew* in 1929, and the 1934 British production of *As You Like It* with German actress Elisabeth Bergner and Laurence Olivier.

[13] Jennings received a bachelor's in fine arts from Yale in 1930. There is evidence of further interest in Shakespeare; a manuscript of unpublished play *This Side of Idolatry* set in London 1592, with Shakespeare, Marlowe, and Jonson. The undated manuscript is in the Library of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

[14] Messel's original designs include several dresses for Juliet, but studio politics obviously took the upper hand. Elizabeth Taylor insisted on the same ploy when she made *Taming of the Shrew* with Zeffirelli.

[15] On the nineteenth century stage Nurses wore fussy old lady dresses with layers of flounces, lace at the throat, and a little lace cap, and always used a walking stick. There is an Italian silent film version in the Folger collection where the Nurse is dressed like this, and the most famous British stage Nurse Mrs. Stirling, who played the part to Ellen Terry's Juliet, wore an almost identical costume. The more Chaucerian costume with its nod toward the Wife of Bath, may have been the invention of the design team Motley whose innovative costumes for Gielgud's productions were highly admired. In their production, according to Michael Mullen, the Nurse's dress was a dark red that kept her consistent with the color scheme for the Capulets.

[16] Between 1932 and 1940 MGM produced the following "British" films: *Smilin' Through, Treasure Island, The Barretts of Wimpole Street, David Copperfield, Mutiny on the Bounty, A Tale of Two Cities, A Yank at Oxford, Goodbye Mr. Chips, Pride and Prejudice, Waterloo Bridge.* See Glancy, espec. chapt. 3.

[17] According to Glancy (70), it lost $922,000, while other "British" films consistently had profits of over $500,000.

[18] Similar age-blind Shakespeare casting occurred with Laurence Olivier's *Hamlet* where Eileen Herlie as Gertrude was (according to her bio) only 29 to Olivier's 41 years. Even Zeffirelli's more recent *Hamlet* paired Glen Close and the nearly same aged Mel Gibson as the famous mother-son combo.

[19] All ages here, as elsewhere, are taken from Haliwell.

[20] Stirling triumphed in the role of Nurse in 1882 with Henry Irving and Ellen Terry as the young lovers, and became closely associated with the role. Agate, *The Sunday Times*, October 17, 1935, reprinted in Stanley Wells, *Shakespeare in the Theater*, 216.

[21] Greene was pleased that the censors had "slumbered through many a doubtful passage: even 'the bawdy hand of the dial'" and given the picture a Universal Certificate.

[22] All quotations in this section are from the published film scenario.

[23] A deeper discussion of issues of comedy could explore the way that heavy-set Devine is, like the Nurse, de-sexualized and curiously infantilized, in this case by his un-masculine voice and soft, eunuch appearance

[24] The newspaper article by Robert F. Hawkins, filed from Verona, was found in the NY Performing Arts Library clipping folder for this film and the only attribution given is "Cinema, 1954).

[25] Barzini is quoted in Alexander Walker's *Sex in the Movies* in reference to "sex comedies" 213-214.

[26] Review, *NYT* 22, Dec. 1954:28, quoted by Rothwell and Melzer 253.

[27] Paul Jorgenson and Roy Walker, reprinted in Ecke, are the standard sources.

[28] Baufort complained that "this is a film about 'fair Verona' with an incidental play concerning 'a pair of star-crossed lovers'" (*Christian Science Monitor*, Sept. 26, 1954.

[29] Sherwood was a minor film player, and the role was generally ignored by critics.

[30] The first time a foreign director had been invited to direct Shakespeare there.

[31] The film's publicity also focused on the teen stars. The only time Juliet's relationship with Lady Capulet was glanced at was the emphasis in articles that Hussey was the daughter of an Argentine opera singer and an English actress. In one interview Hussey praises her mother for working hard in raising her, noting "She's only 39 but she looks much older" (Sidney Fields, New York *Daily News* May 28, 1968).

[32] The word "man" strikes an odd note here, and may explain why the laudatory review mentions only one woman – Juliet, while concentrating on the male roles.

[33] Unpublished paper, SAA seminar "Shakespeare and Musical Theater" 2000, pages 5-6.

[34] See Loehlin, Rothwell 2000, Hamilton, Downing, Walker, Welsh, Hodgdon, and Hunt *passmi.*

[35] *Approaches to Teaching Shakespeare's* Romeo and Juliet, ed. Maurice Hunt.

[36] Olivier's classic *Henry V* retained a little more than a third of the dialogue for the film.

[37] The first scene with the boys includes a van full of girls in school uniforms being shepherded by a nun. The same school uniform lies on the floor of Juliet's room in an early scene. It is a lovely example of how carefully layered the materials are in the film – and the great care give to the surface details in dressing the sets.

[38] Films of Williams plays include: *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Suddenly Last Summer*. *The Rose Tattoo*, *Night of the Iguana*, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *Sweet Bird of Youth*, *The Glass Menagerie*.

[39] Margolyes' films and awards are too numerous to mention and include both major and smaller independent films, among them *Little Dorrit*, *Cold Comfort Farm*, *Age of Innocence*, as well as the voice the mother pig in *Babe*. She has played Queen Victoria on television in *Black Adder* and the British Channel Four production "Without Walls." She was awarded an OBE by Queen Elizabeth in 2001.

[40] This was published as an inexpensive dual edition that includes a screenplay and Shakespeare's text. Bantam paperbacks had also published a similar edition for *West Side Story*. This is a post-production script that includes everything that is in the film, and some material that must have been taken out in the final cut. As with Cukor's published screenplay the information on camera shots and descriptions are useful indicators of what is intended and how the characters were to be played.

[41] No one has pointed out that the tailored red suit is wonderfully evocative of Annie Libewitz's photograph of Ella Fitzgerald for an American Express Ad.

[42] Margolyes is in her forties and the role is played with energy. The screenplay's direction "The old woman nods" (131, the equivalent of 3.5) seems either inappropriate or an indication of a deeply seated youth culture on the part of the thirties-something director and writer.

[43] The naming of characters by directors is not unique to Luhrmann. Peter Greenaway included a scene for Prospero's wife in *The Tempest* and decided her name was Susannah.

[44] Venora has extensive experience playing Shakespeare, including playing Ophelia to Kevin Kline's Hamlet, as well as playing Hamlet in a later production. She is Gertrude in Almereyda's recent film adaptation of *Hamlet*

[45] Shakespeare Association of America conference paper, Los Angeles, 1996.

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