

Charles Marowitz and the Personal Politics of Shakespearean Adaptation

Submitted by Karen R. Rickers to The University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Drama, March 2012

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University.

Signature:

To my parents,
Douglas and Edna Rickers,
with gratitude and love.

Abstract

This thesis comprises an exploration of the Shakespearean adaptations created by American director Charles Marowitz while he was Artistic Director of the Open Space Theatre in London, UK. In order of creation, they are: *Hamlet* (1964; revised 1966); *A Macbeth* (1969); *An Othello* (1972); *The Shrew* (1973); *Measure for Measure* (also called *Variations on Measure for Measure*) (1975); and *Variations on the Merchant of Venice* (1977). The central inquiry of this thesis is whether Marowitz's Shakespearean adaptations adhered to his own parameters for such work, and if not, whether his objectives were subverted by other factors, political or psychological, which he unconsciously manifested dramatically within the works. Further, do Marowitz's reconstructions of Shakespeare possibly spring from a latent desire to attack the cultural authority of Shakespeare himself? In order to accomplish this inquiry, the concept of 'personal politics' will be established, this being both the political orientation of an individual in terms of social government, as well as the underlying belief systems and paradigms which influence their perceptions and reactions, as factors influencing Marowitz's adaptations.

In terms of methodology, the author will examine Marowitz's perceptions of Shakespeare's original plays, highlighting the particular concerns that motivated him to create the adaptations under analysis. The validity of these perceptions will then be tested against a precise examination of the play text, and viewed against a survey of scholarly opinion on the original work. Any sociopolitical objectives expressed by Marowitz for the adaptation will be reviewed, then juxtaposed against the historical context in which they were written in order to discern where and how the politics of the period influenced his creative impulse. The collage technique, which characterized many of Marowitz's adaptations, will be explored followed by a discussion of Marowitz's stated parameters for

the adaptation of theatrical classics. His approach to challenging the paradigm of Shakespeare's work will be scrutinized, and an analysis of the adaptation given, as well as a discussion of the effect the changes from the original text might have had on an audience and a survey of critical reaction to the resulting production, based upon reviews in the major publications of the day. At this point, the central inquiry of the thesis will be addressed: to what degree does the adaptation hold to Marowitz's own stated guidelines for Shakespearean adaptation, as well as his expressed objectives for the work in question, and if this degree is slight, what factors might account for this? In order to discern these influences, the adaptations will be examined through the lens of biographical criticism: Marowitz's autobiographical writing, as well as personal opinions and beliefs gleaned from his theatrical reviews, journal articles and texts on acting techniques, will be gathered to shed light on dramatic choices which contravene the expressed intention for the adaptations. Aspects of psychoanalytical criticism will also be referenced, particularly focusing on trends common to the majority of the works which potentially sprang from an unconscious source. Finally, comparable adaptations of the same Shakespearean work will be reviewed in terms of how they differently, and possibly more effectively, redressed Marowitz's stated concerns regarding the original work, in order to highlight why and how Marowitz's personal politics may have overturned his stated intentions.

Detailed synopses of all six plays under examination are provided in Appendix One.

Acknowledgements

I extend grateful thanks to my doctoral supervisor, Professor Mick Mangan, who acted as guide over the rocky terrain created by part-time study in a country distant from The University of Exeter. Without his incisive questioning, his good-natured criticism and, most of all, his ongoing encouragement, I might never have reached this journey's end. Thank you, Mick!

I would like to recognize the contribution of my examiners, Dr. Anna Harpin and Professor Richard Boon, whose comments spurred me to develop a greater historical context for the ideas contained herein.

Many thanks to the professors and staff at The University of Exeter for their support, both virtual and during my visits to Exeter (especially Gayatri Simons, who always made me feel welcome there). The same appreciation goes out to my fellow doctoral candidates for valuable advice and simple camaraderie.

I am beholden to The University of Guelph, who, for a truly paltry annual sum, allowed me access to their excellent research library.

And to my family and friends, who provided soft shoulders to cry on, as well as 'buck up' speeches when required, I acknowledge a joyful debt of gratitude, the magnitude of which is humbling to me. Rest assured, you are always in my heart.

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Chapter One:

Introduction

This doctoral thesis comprises an examination of the Shakespearean adaptations created by American director Charles Marowitz while he was Artistic Director of the Open Space Theatre in London, England. By date of creation, they are: *Hamlet* (1964; revised 1966); *A Macbeth* (1969); *An Othello* (1972); *The Shrew* (1973); *Measure for Measure* (1975); and *Variations on the Merchant of Venice* (1977). These six adaptations display a significant scope in terms of the methodology of Shakespearean adaptation generally. All but *Variations on the Merchant of Venice* utilize the collage technique to some extent, and some, such as *A Macbeth*, are dominated by it. The directorial adherence to the narrative of the Shakespearean original is strong in some (*Measure for Measure*, *The Shrew*), and less strong in others (*Variations on the Merchant of Venice*). Some include, for all intents and purposes, exclusively Shakespearean text (*Hamlet*) while others comprise a significant amount of original text (*An Othello*, *The Shrew*), or text from other sources (*Variations on the Merchant of Venice*, which interpolates text from Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta*).

A number of Shakespearean adaptations attributed to Marowitz – *Caesar*; *Death of Ophelia*; the musical *Timon*; and *Shakespeare's Lovers and Shakespeare's Villains* – fall outside the realm of this exploration for several reasons. None of these adaptations was created during the period under investigation, that being Marowitz's productive span between 1966 and 1977, correlating roughly to his tenure as Artistic Director at the Open Space Theatre. None has been published in a final form, although an early version of *Caesar* is available in Marowitz's *Recycling Shakespeare*¹ as *Julius Caesar*. Other than *Caesar*, which Marowitz states was produced at the Humboldt Arts Festival², none has

¹ Charles Marowitz, *Recycling Shakespeare* (New York: Applause, 1991).

² A photograph of this production is printed on pages 228 and 229 of *The Other Way*, but no additional information as to the year of production has been found. Charles Marowitz, *The Other Way: An Alternative Approach to Acting & Directing* (New York: Applause, 1999). Since *The Other Way* was published in 1999, it is obviously earlier than that date. The current website of the Humboldt Arts Festival notes that 2011 is their second year of operation, a fact which

been professionally produced. The adaptations in question remain unpublished, and are therefore not in the public domain. Although Marowitz's website advertised their availability, no copies were forthcoming upon request. Inquiries at booksellers, public libraries and university libraries failed to procure copies. However, since an early version of Marowitz's *Julius Caesar* is available, a brief account of it, and of his other Shakespearean adaptations described, is given in Appendix Two.

Marowitz presented a number of general parameters for the adaptation of classical theatre works, and the adaptations under exploration will be interrogated against these criteria in order to determine the level of Marowitz's compliance with them, as well as with his stated intentions for the work in question. In addition, other factors which influenced his process of adaptation will be examined, including the ostensibly political nature of his approach to theatre, and the political attitudes he expressed in his critical writing which may have precipitated both the creation of and the objectives for these adaptations specifically. The effect of Marowitz's utilization of the collage format will be analysed, particularly in terms of its ability to create the interior view and more accurate portrayal of everyday human life promoted by the adaptor. Finally, this thesis will consider the dual meaning of its title as perceived through the lens of biographical criticism. Politics will be defined as both the activities and philosophies related to a country's governance, and as the aggregate of an individual's relationship to and within society. In terms of the latter, the author will address the manner in which one's self-government has been influenced by one's relationship to and within society's major communities, such as religion and gender. Other social, emotional or intellectual factors which are manifest in Marowitz's general worldview and expressed in critical writing, and which may have influenced his

was confirmed in a telephone conversation with the festival's contact, so a cessation of festival activities must have occurred in the interval. *Humboldt Arts Festival*, 18 Aug. 2011 <<http://humboldtartsfestival.com>>.

Shakespearean adaptation, will be examined, particularly where they may have overturned his original goals for the work. The central inquiry of this thesis, then, is whether Marowitz's Shakespearean adaptations adhered to his own parameters for such work, and if not, whether his objectives were subverted by other factors, political or psychological, which, either consciously or unconsciously, manifested themselves dramatically within the works. Further, I will explore whether the nature of Marowitz's reconstructions of Shakespeare potentially spring from a latent desire to attack the cultural authority of Shakespeare himself.

AN ENTRY INTO SHAKESPEAREAN ADAPTATION

I became acquainted with Marowitz's writings and work in a somewhat unusual manner. While engaged in a Masters program in Staging Shakespeare at The University of Exeter in 2005, it was my practice, when time permitted, to visit the library, go directly to the 'Shakespeare section,' and once there, to walk along the shelves, running my fingers lightly against the spines of the books. As I did so, I scanned the titles, and when any popped out at me, I would take them off the shelf and read them. It was almost certainly because of my ongoing interest in environmentalism that the title *Recycling Shakespeare* made an impression and stopped my browsing mid-stride. I checked the book out of the library, and over the next 24 hours, read it with voracious interest; I simply could not put it down. I had always been a traditionalist when it came to the Shakespearean canon, although I probably would not have made that distinction prior to my Masters program with its attendant examination of Bardolatry. What I read in *Recycling Shakespeare* startled me; the principles Marowitz expressed, particularly that we do not honour Shakespeare by failing to re-interpret his work in a manner which resonates with modern audiences, made

me ponder issues hitherto unthought of. Further, the tone of Marowitz's writing was strong, confident and controversial – potent qualities when placed in combination with an unfamiliar opinion on an accustomed subject matter. I returned to the library the next day, and sought out anything else I could find by 'this Marowitz fellow,' continuing my pattern of eager interest and jarring revelation. Shakespearean adaptation, previously anathema to me, now held a place of extreme interest in my studies, so much so that, when it came time to choose a dissertation subject, I decided to research and write a Shakespearean adaptation of my own. The result, which I titled *Tempest Round a Teapot*, spring-boards off Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and explores the effect of patriarchal expectation on the confidence and will of daughters. The play, which combines Shakespearean text with original text written by myself, elides three Victorian age women with an appropriate counterpoint in *The Tempest*: Caliban, the monster, is paired with Mary Shelley, who created one of the most famous monsters of all time; Ariel, a spirit of the air, detached from the physicality of the earth, is twinned with Elizabeth Barrett Browning, who spent a significant portion of her life living in her imagination while confined to a daybed; and Miranda, the dutiful daughter, is counter pointed with Martha Jefferson, daughter of United States President Thomas Jefferson, who devoted herself to her father's needs after her mother's death. All three women had dominant fathers and absent mothers – absent either through death, or as evidenced by a lack of perceived importance in their daughters' lives – thus paralleling the parental scenario in *The Tempest*. The process of imagining, researching, writing and directing a production of the play was an incredibly fulfilling one; as a result of my tutelage with Charles Marowitz, carried out within the pages of his numerous books and articles, my concept of how to produce and re-interpret Shakespeare was widening enormously. Since that time, and subsequent to my choice of Marowitz's work as the subject of my doctoral thesis, I can say with full certainty that his creative

example has irrevocably changed the way I interpret Shakespeare, and the possibilities I see within the canon. It would be unlikely that I am the only individual so affected by *Recycling Shakespeare* and Marowitz's other works, and, while it is unquantifiable statistically in any practical way, it is interesting to consider, not only how many other devotees of Shakespeare have been inspired by Marowitz's work, but also how this has affected their subsequent productions and/or adaptations of the Shakespearean canon.

After my initial introduction to Marowitz, my ongoing reading of his works and writings aroused certain questions which deserved attention. In particular, I was intrigued by comments from colleagues which were precipitated by their participation in readings of *Tempest Round a Teapot*. There is a difference between a dramatic work and a documentary, and I was clear at all times that, in writing the piece, I had not felt the need to be consistently objective or 'fair' when exploring and portraying how unrealistic patriarchal expectations often resulted in unhappiness and a sense of unworthiness in daughters. Nonetheless, I was surprised when several colleagues – all women – described the play as 'anti-men,' with one participant hypothesizing that the writer 'didn't like men much.' Since I was the writer in question, I could answer with a high degree of authority that no such negative and generalized attitudes towards the male gender had inspired the work, but that a dislike of paternalism – that is to say, the tendency of some males to feel it natural they should dominate women, if not physically, then emotionally and intellectually – definitely had. However, in order to truthfully respond in this manner, I was forced to conduct an extremely frank perusal of my own attitudes and motives, thus raising the question: how might a writer's own beliefs, including irrational prejudices and societally supported biases, affect their creative work *vis-à-vis* Shakespearean adaptation? Might these seminal beliefs result in a personal paradigm which had the latent power to divert a

work from its intended path, or to override an intended meaning with unintentional subversions?

The Shakespearean adaptations of Charles Marowitz proved an appropriate territory to explore these questions. Not only had he elucidated the characteristic or parameters he felt beneficial for the adaptation of classical texts generally, he had also provided a significant amount of critical writing on his Shakespearean adaptations specifically. This critical writing expressed his objections to aspects of the original texts, as well as his intended strategy to address these concerns. Finally, a breadth of writing existed, including columns, newspaper interviews, journal articles, acting texts, introductions to play texts, and autobiographical narrative, from which his seminal beliefs might be discerned. Therefore, it would be possible to compare his objectives in undertaking any of the adaptations under exploration with the actual result, based upon the play text and critical reviews as published in newspapers and journals. If results did not match objectives, one might then hypothesize as to why: did Marowitz fail to follow his own stated parameters for adaptation consciously, or did underlying personal beliefs or traits possibly redirect him away from his expressed aims? Further, an examination of a number of his Shakespearean adaptations – those created between 1966 and 1977, a period associated with his tenure as Artistic Director of the Open Space Theatre in London – might reveal trends in intention or implementation attributable to these underlying paradigms, and these trends could provide a rationale for an adaptation not achieving stated goals. As well as providing further information on Marowitz's work, the conclusions of this analysis might also serve as a useful mechanism to apply to Shakespearean adaptation generally.

CHARLES MAROWITZ: A SHORT BIOGRAPHY

Charles Marowitz is relatively unique in the arts world in that his career successfully combined work as a critic, a director, an acting teacher and a playwright. An American, he spent a considerable portion of his career in London, England – primarily as Artistic Director of the Open Space Theatre, a two hundred seat experimental space located in London, first on Tottenham Court Road, and later on Euston Road.

Marowitz was born on January 26, 1934,³ and spent his childhood on New York City's Lower East side.⁴ In his teens, he took theatre classes with Blair Cutting, a disciple of Michael Chekhov based in New York, and at 17, he directed his first off-Broadway production – his own re-working of Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus*, described as 'sort-of-Marlowe, with bits of *Tamburlaine* and a few newspaper clippings worked in.'⁵ In 1956,⁶ after serving in Korea and France as a member of the American military, Marowitz called upon 'the magnanimity of the GI Bill'⁷ to finance a year's attendance at the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art (LAMDA), beginning what became an extended habitation in England and a period of fruitful contribution to experimental theatre in that country. Marowitz's time at LAMDA was short, and neither particularly happy nor productive; as he describes, it was 'a ghastly institution and, from an acting standpoint, I was its most

³ 'Charles Marowitz Biography (1934-), *Film Reference*, 29 July 2011 <<http://www.filmreference.com/film/98/Charles-Marowitz.html>>.

⁴ In a Swans.com article posted on January 1, 2008, Marowitz laments the death of his childhood friend, writer Ivan Gold. They had met in high school, and, over the many years of their friendship, had developed 'a zany, personalized, Lower-East-Side-bred style of communication that was comprehensible only to ourselves. People we knew -- adored or despised, suffered or dismissed -- were all treated with cruel mockery or outlandish dismissal in a language that was peculiar to ourselves and the New York milieu from which we had both sprung.' Swans.com is an online commentary site. Charles Marowitz, 'Parting Words,' *Swans Commentary*, 31 Dec. 2007- 1 Jan. 2008, 15 July 2010 <<http://www.swans.com/library/art14/cmarow94.html>>.

⁵ Peter Johns, Untitled Article, *Guardian* 17 Oct. 1968.

⁶ In *Confessions of a Counterfeit Critic*, Marowitz notes the year of his arrival in England as 1957, but states in the introduction to *Burnt Bridges* that he 'arrived in London in 1956.' See Charles Marowitz, *Confessions of a Counterfeit Critic* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1973) 6 and Charles Marowitz, *Burnt Bridges: A Souvenir of the Swinging Sixties and Beyond*, (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1990) 1.

⁷ Marowitz, *Burnt Bridges* 12.

lusterless fixture.’⁸ Leaving the institution, he secured a directing assignment at the Unity Theatre, ‘a Left-wing amateur theatre manned almost entirely by lower working-class men and women with a strong Communist bent.’⁹ The play was his own adaptation of Gogol’s comedy *Marriage*, which, according to a news clipping of the day, represented ‘The Method Applied to Gogol’ and which he directed ‘dashingly.’¹⁰ Shortly after the production, he opened a Method acting workshop where he ‘began the fascinating process of indoctrinating English actors into the arcane mysteries of Stanislavsky [...] inclin[ing] them towards Shakespeare, Marlowe and Webster.’¹¹

In 1958, Marowitz founded In-Stage Productions in the British Drama league’s 50 seat roof top studio/experimental theatre in Fitzroy Square; the first production, *Under the Influence*, featured the works of Beckett and Ionesco, and began Marowitz’s search for what he describes as a genre called “‘Hi Style” – a puerile classification which attempted to define the non-naturalistic tendencies of the early Absurdist and the general drift towards surrealism which was one of [his] own personal predilections.’¹²

His collaboration with Peter Brook began in 1962 when Marowitz acted as Brook’s assistant director on the Royal Shakespeare Company’s production of Shakespeare’s *King Lear*, with Paul Scofield in the title role. This association led to Brook’s inclusion of Marowitz as an ‘equal partner’¹³ on the RSC’s Theatre of Cruelty season, held at LAMDA in 1963, during which time Marowitz began work on his first version of the collage *Hamlet* which was to garner him significant attention in the future.

⁸ Marowitz, *Burnt Bridges* 15.

⁹ Marowitz, *Burnt Bridges* 17.

¹⁰ ‘The Method Applied to Gogol: Marriage at the Unity Theatre,’ *Times* 24 Feb. 1958.

¹¹ Marowitz, *Burnt Bridges* 17.

¹² Marowitz, *Burnt Bridges* 19.

¹³ Marowitz used this phrase to describe the relationship offered to him by Peter Brook. See Charles Marowitz, interview with John Wisniewski, ‘John Wisniewski Interviews Charles Marowitz,’ *Alterati*, 25 May 2009, 6 Sept. 2011 <<http://www.alterati.com/blog/2009/05/john-wisniewski-interviews-charles-marowitz>>.

The creation of the Open Space Theatre – a venue which allowed the future experimentation upon which Marowitz’s reputation is based – came to fruition through a seemingly chance encounter with a young RADA¹⁴ trained actress named Thelma Holt whom Marowitz met when she was performing in Leonid Andreyev’s *He Who Gets Slapped* at the Hampstead Theatre Club. When Holt proposed to join forces with Marowitz in the creation of the new theatre, he recognized that while he had ‘no real desire to mingle or fraternize with Arts Council bureaucrats, financiers and captains of industry, the very people on whom such a theatre depended,’¹⁵ Holt had both the desire and the talent for this very necessary administrative function. The collaboration was a productive one; throughout all but two of the twelve¹⁶ years the Open Space was in operation, Holt held key roles both on stage and off, playing Gertrude in the collage *Hamlet*, Lady Macbeth in *A Macbeth* and Katherine in *The Shrew*, as well as raising funds and undertaking the general administration of the theatre. Following growing tension between herself and Marowitz, Holt was recruited by the Round House Theatre in London and became their Artistic Director in 1978.¹⁷

During his time as Artistic Director of the Open Space, Marowitz created a number of Shakespearean adaptations, some commissioned by theatres in Holland and Germany.¹⁸ Most of these adaptations employed the collage technique which became, for a time, his signature. Several had decidedly political agendas. Almost all comprised a relatively

¹⁴ An acronym for the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, located in London, UK.

¹⁵ Marowitz, *Burnt Bridges* 113.

¹⁶ Marowitz and the Open Space outlived the time limit he advocated for the type of experimental work in which he was involved: in an interview with Eric Forsythe in 1972, Marowitz offered his agreement to ‘a theory [...] that a really good theatre company can only last seven years, eight years, and then it must finish up,’ adding ‘I can’t think of any company that, after a decade, was worth retaining.’ Charles Marowitz, interview with Eric Forsythe, appendix II, *The Poetics and Praxis of Charles Marowitz*, thesis, Carnegie-Mellon U, 1973, 386.

¹⁷ See Brian Appleyard, ‘The Engine Shed that Came Off the Rails,’ *Times* 9 Aug. 1982, and John O’Mahony, ‘Grand Dame of Bayswater,’ *Guardian* 10 Mar. 2001.

¹⁸ *The Shrew* was commissioned by The Hot Theatre, The Hague, Holland, while *An Othello* and *A Macbeth* were both first performed at the Wiesbaden Theatre Festival in Germany.

major re-working of the Shakespearean original upon which they were based. As well as garnering acclaim, these adaptations came under heavy criticism. While at the Open Space, Marowitz also produced many works by new British playwrights, including Trevor Griffiths, Peter Barnes, Joe Orton, Howard Barker, David Rudkin, and Mike Leigh, as well as American ones, such as Sam Shepard, Terence McNally and Charles Ludlam.¹⁹

Following the liquidation of the Open Space Theatre in 1980, Marowitz taught briefly at Trent Park College in Middlesex, England²⁰ before returning to America and taking up residence in Malibu, California. He served as lead entertainment critic at the *L.A. Herald Times* until the paper's demise, and founded the Malibu Stage Company in 1990.

In addition to his work as a director and playwright, Marowitz's work as a writer has been prolific. He has penned a number of critical works on acting and theatre, including *The Act of Being*²¹; *The Other Way: An Alternative Approach to Acting & Directing*; *Prospero's Staff: Acting and Directing in the Contemporary Theatre*²²; *Recycling Shakespeare*; *Roar of the Canon: Kott & Marowitz on Shakespeare*;²³ and *How to Stage a Play, Make a Fortune, Win a Tony & Become a Theatrical Icon*.²⁴ His work as a critic on a freelance basis with publications such as the *Village Voice*, the *New York Times*, the *Tulane Drama Review* and *Plays and Players* before emigrating to England and while in the UK resulted in *Confessions of a Counterfeit Critic: A London Theatre Notebook*

¹⁹ In *Off-Centre Stages*, Jinnie Schiele notes that while the policy of the Open Space included support to the work of new writers, most of the resulting productions were 'relegated to the lunchtime spot with minimal publicity.' Nonetheless, considering the financial uncertainty inherent in running an experimental theatre, the Open Space's presentation of these plays represented a significant investment in the development of new playwrights. Jinnie Schiele, *Off-Centre Stages: Fringe Theatre at the Open Space and the Round House 1968-1983* (London: Society for Theatre Research, 2005) 71.

²⁰ The only notable occurrence at this employment was his acquaintance with student Jane Allsop whom he later married. Allsop emigrated with Marowitz to America, and under the stage name of Jane Windsor, spent several years as an actress on the soap opera, *Days of Our Lives*. See Marowitz, *Burnt Bridges* 227-229, and *IMDb*, 13 Feb. 2012 <<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0934788/>> for further information.

²¹ Charles Marowitz, *The Act of Being* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1978).

²² Charles Marowitz, *Prospero's Staff: Acting and Directing in the Contemporary Theatre* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana UP, 1986). Republished as Charles Marowitz, *Directing the Action: Acting and Directing in the Contemporary Theatre* (New York: Applause, 1986).

²³ Charles Marowitz, *Roar of the Canon: Kott & Marowitz on Shakespeare* (New York: Applause, 2001).

²⁴ Charles Marowitz, *How to Stage a Play, Make a Fortune, Win a Tony and Become a Theatrical Icon* (Pompton Plains, NJ: Limelight, 2005).

1958-1971, while his later reviewing in Los Angeles is detailed in *Alarums and Excursions: Our Theatres in the Nineties*;²⁵ both combine essays on theatrical trends with collections of the author's piquant theatre reviews. His non-Shakespearean adaptations include plays by Strindberg, Ibsen, Becque, Molière and Feydeau. In terms of biography, *The Other Chekhov: A Biography of Michael Chekhov*²⁶ explored the life of actor and teacher Michael Chekhov who championed the concept of 'psychological gesture,' while *Burnt Bridges: A Souvenir of the Swinging Sixties and Beyond* is an autobiographical account of his theatrical and non-theatrical adventures in the UK. Marowitz is also a published playwright of original works, including: *Murdering Marlowe*,²⁷ a fictional account of a mortal competition between that playwright and William Shakespeare; *Sherlock's Last Case*,²⁸ which played on Broadway with Frank Langella in the title role; and *Silent Partners*,²⁹ based on Eric Bentley's association with Bertolt Brecht as described in his book, *The Brecht Memoir*.³⁰

AT THE VANGUARD: MAROWITZ AS INNOVATOR

Beyond my personal interest in Shakespearean adaptation, ample reasons exist within the field of theatre history to justify doctoral research on Marowitz and his work. Although his profile has declined in recent years, he nonetheless held a position of significance within the British theatre, particularly in the context of 'the explosion of alternative theatre spaces and forms variously dubbed the underground, the alternative and

²⁵ Charles Marowitz, *Alarums & Excursions: Our Theatres in the 90s* (New York: Applause, 1996).

²⁶ Charles Marowitz, *The Other Chekhov: A Biography of Michael Chekhov* (New York: Applause, 2004).

²⁷ Charles Marowitz, *Murdering Marlowe* (New York: Dramatists, 2005).

²⁸ Charles Marowitz, 'Sherlock's Last Case,' *Potboilers: Three Black Comedies* (New York: Marion Boyars, 1986).

²⁹ *Silent Partners* was produced by Scena Theatre in Washington, D.C. in 2006 and directed by Marowitz himself.

Charles Marowitz, *Silent Partners* (New York: Dramatists, 2008).

³⁰ Eric Bentley, *The Brecht Memoir* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern UP, 1989).

the fringe.³¹ His Open Space Theatre was at the vanguard of these small, experimental performance spaces; it produced both adaptations of classical texts and new works by rising playwrights such as Howard Brenton, David Edgar and Sam Shepard.³² His radical re-workings of the Shakespearean canon, presented both in England and farther afield, received international attention, and still hold a place of importance within the ongoing dialogue regarding the necessity to find ways to make old texts speak to new audiences.

The sociopolitical climate in Britain during the 1950s and 1960s set the stage for much of the theatrical work created by Marowitz while he was resident in Britain; in particular, 1956 and 1968 were pivotal years for the world, for Britain and for British theatre.

In *1956 and All That: The Making of Modern British Drama*, Dan Rebellato suggests that the ‘sense of frustrated apathy’ during the mid 1950s ‘reflected a more general feeling of paralysis experienced by many on the left,’³³ including members of what came to be described as the New Wave of politically oriented playwrights which rose to prominence at that time. The burgeoning support for the political left during the 1930s and 1940s was due in part to the belief that the high unemployment of the period was the product of Conservative political policies, and was therefore seen as evidence of the positive example provided by the Soviet system. When Clement Attlee won a decisive victory for Labour in 1945, unseating Winston Churchill and the Conservatives by a margin of nearly two to one in terms of elected seats, an expectation of the positive benefit resulting from the implementation of leftist policies was engendered. However, while Attlee had stated in 1944 that Labour must fight the forthcoming election on a ‘practical policy based upon the

³¹ David Edgar, ‘About Now: Contemporary British Drama,’ *Irish University Review* 28.1 (1998): 154.

³² For a comprehensive listing of productions at the Open Space Theatre between 1968 and 1979, see Schiele 210-216.

³³ Dan Rebellato, *1956 And All That: The Making of Modern British Theatre* (London: Routledge, 1999) 13.

Socialist principles in which it believes,³⁴ during his years in power between 1945 and 1951, his government failed to live up to this ideal, refusing to lift war-time sanctions outlawing work stoppages, and deploying military force in response to strikes by sections of the workforce deemed essential. The conversion of the Lend-Lease agreement with the United States into an interest bearing loan added immensely to the difficulty of post-war economic recovery in Britain, and the British people now found themselves ‘the debtors of the Empire.’³⁵ Rationing continued in some form throughout the entirety of Attlee’s tenure as Prime Minister, and was not fully abolished until 1954, allowing the Conservative government elected in 1951 to receive the positive public feeling associated with the lifting of this restriction. To the segment of the British population which had been energized by devotion to the leftist cause, the release of *The God That Failed*³⁶ in 1949, containing essays by six influential writers of the period and detailing both their affiliation with communism and their subsequent disillusionment, was demoralizing, to say the least: Arnold Wesker notes that ‘in the same way as *Freedom Road* opened my eyes and helped me to understand the workings of American capitalism, so the book of essays *The God That Failed* have [sic] opened my eyes to the workings of Soviet communism.’³⁷ After scant years of peace following the end of World War Two, and the disappointing performance of Attlee’s Labour government, a return to Conservative party rule in Britain in 1951 was followed in 1956 by the nationalisation of the Suez Canal by then Egyptian President Nasser, precipitating a short-lived attempt at occupation of the area by British and French military. During this period, ‘postwar Britain was being reshaped’ by an increasingly disillusioned youth, characterized by the ‘non-U intelligentsia who live in bed-sitters and

³⁴ Clement Attlee, quoted in Jerry H. Brookshire, *Clement Attlee* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1995) 1.

³⁵ James D. Le Sueur, *The Decolonization Reader* (London: Routledge, 2003) 51.

³⁶ *The God That Failed*, Richard H. Crossman, ed. (New York: Columbia UP, 2001) The six essays it contained were written by André Gide, Richard Wright, Ignazio Silone, Stephen Spender, Arthur Koestler and Louis Fischer.

³⁷ Arnold Wesker, *As Much As I Dare: An Autobiography (1932-1959)* (London: Arrow, 1995) 289.

divide the Sunday papers into two groups, “posh” and “wet”:³⁸ their anger, fueled by the memory of war and the present reality of nuclear threat, was exacerbated by this return to military engagement; energy began to gather for a full-scale expression of dissatisfaction. The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) was founded in 1957, precipitated in large part by an article in the *New Statesman* by J.B. Priestley which criticized comments by Aneurin Bevan at the Labour Party conference that year – comments which condoned the continuation of nuclear weaponry despite its capacity to destroy continents, and possibly the world. Priestley acknowledged Bevan’s statement that ‘independent action by this country, to ban nuclear bombs, would involve our foreign minister in many difficulties,’ but added that ‘most of us would rather have a bewildered and overworked Foreign Office than a country about to be turned into a radioactive cemetery.’³⁹

According to Simon Trussler, in the theatre, ‘1956 had seen a change of direction no less profound than in the nation at large, and theatre people were soon at the forefront of most forms of political protest.’⁴⁰ British theatre had, to this point in recent history, been largely inhabited by the drawing room works of playwrights such as Terence Rattigan and Noel Coward, but a notice to vacate was served in May of 1956 by the first of the ‘angry young men’ soon to find lodging in theatres throughout Britain: John Osborne’s *Look Back in Anger*, and his truculent hero Jimmy Porter, transported the frustrations of young Britons centre-stage. Rebellato notes that the title of Osborne’s play raised a general query as to what Porter was angry *about*; in response, he quotes Porter who laments the lack of ‘good, brave causes’⁴¹ which men of his generation were willing to die for. Rather than reflecting

³⁸ Ann Marie Adams, ‘Look Back in Realism: The Making and Unmaking of Dramatic Form in the Reception of the British New Wave,’ *Journal of Midwest Modern Language Association* 40.1 (2007): 79.

³⁹ J.B. Priestley, ‘Britain and the Nuclear Bombs,’ *New Statesman*, 2 Nov. 1957. Re-posted 12 Feb. 2007. 15 Sep. 2012 <<http://www.newstatesman.com/society/2007/02/nuclear-world-britain-power>>.

⁴⁰ Simon Trussler, *The Cambridge Illustrated History of British Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994) 321.

⁴¹ John Osborne, *Look Back in Anger*, (London: Faber & Faber, 1986) 84.

literal truth – causes such as the quest for nuclear disarmament were gathering force, for example – Porter’s text reflects Osborne’s sense of the emotional malaise experienced by many Britons at this time. The ‘politics of anger’ was present in ‘the profound conviction that society was flourishing at the expense of human feeling,’ and in the perceived need ‘to bring human emotion back into the centre of cultural life.’⁴² At the same time, the Berliner Ensemble came to England in 1956, bringing with it juddering new concepts of theatrical form, and different ways for players to interact with an audience. Theatre Workshop moved to London from the north of England in 1953, and Joan Littlewood continued to create ensemble theatre which sought to involve both audience and actors in theatre as a living process: the company encouraged playwrights such as Brendan Behan and Shelagh Delaney, and created acclaimed collaborative works such as *Oh What a Lovely War!* As Marowitz himself notes, within five years of his arrival in England in 1958, ‘playwrights like John Osborne, John Arden, Brendan Behan and Arnold Wesker were going to uproot middle-class icons such as Terence Rattigan, Noël Coward, J. B. Priestley and Charles Morgan,’⁴³ precipitating the transformation of the British theatre from a place of entertainment to one of social protest and provocative new ideas, and to ‘a medium through which matters of importance [...] might be expressed.’⁴⁴ This new swell of burgeoning playwrights to bring popular shock waves of frustration and unrest to British stages also included Peter Shaffer, Peter Nichols, Tom Stoppard, Harold Pinter, Edward Bond and Joe Orton. Since Marowitz expressed the belief that dramatists were the catalysts for the other forms of theatrical expression in a culture – acting and direction, for example – his role as

⁴² Rebellato 32.

⁴³ Marowitz, *Burnt Bridges* 18.

⁴⁴ Trussler 322.

an animator and interpreter within an experimental milieu provided the rich earth for these new dramatic seeds to take root and flourish.

The period between 1964 and 1977, during which Marowitz created the Shakespearean adaptations under inquiry, was also one of significant social change and turmoil around the world. The youth and proletariat were rising up against the forces of what they perceived to be an oppressive bourgeois social structure: demonstrations were held against war, and in favour of sexual liberty and an end to what was seen as a restrictive legal system. According to Klimke, Pekelder and Scharloth, ‘there seems to be no better terms than *freedom, justice, self-determination, emancipation, and democracy* to describe the aims and demands of the 1968 protest generation around the globe.’⁴⁵

In Marowitz’s homeland, a number of individuals key to the liberal and civil rights agendas with which he was philosophically aligned were assassinated during this period: Malcolm X was killed in 1965; both Dr. Martin Luther King and Robert F. Kennedy died violently in 1968. In addition, demonstrations against the Vietnam War were occurring frequently when, in 1968, the atrocities of the My Lai Massacre were revealed to the public, only increasing the sense of government betrayal and anti-war sentiment in the country; in 1969, Richard M. Nixon was elected President through a campaign which promised to bring an end to U.S. involvement in Vietnam. On May 4, 1970, following three days of anti-war demonstration on campus, four students at Kent State University were shot dead and nine others wounded by members of the National Guard, who had been deployed on campus two days before in response to what the city administration viewed as the local authorities’ inability to control the destructive potential of the crowds. This violent response to relatively peaceful protest – minor property damage as well as some rock

⁴⁵ Martin Klimke, Jacco Pekelder & Joachim Scharloth, *Between Prague Spring and French May: Opposition and Revolt in Europe, 1960-1980* (New York: Berghahn, 2011) 116. Italics in original.

throwing at the Guard had occurred – provoked a national strike by students which forced hundreds of American universities and colleges to temporarily close and, according to H.R. Haldeman, one of President Richard Nixon’s aides, precipitated the ‘slide into Watergate, effectively ending the Nixon administration.’⁴⁶ The leadership of their elected government had been found culpable of deception, and the disillusionment of a country which was already reeling from the loss of a near generation of young through the Vietnam War rose accordingly.

On the European continent, despite the relative prosperity of the period, protest rose to a fever pitch: in Paris, a mass uprising of approximately one million students, striking to ‘liberate man from all the repressions of social life,’⁴⁷ began on May 13, 1968; a week later, the students were joined by roughly eleven million workers, comprising about two thirds of the French workforce. Normal activity in France ground to a halt as workers occupied factories, and labourers from other occupations, including miners, teachers, rail workers, postal workers and air traffic controllers, joined the protest. In part, the uprising grew out of the Situationist International movement, begun in 1957, which merged Marxist philosophies regarding class conflict generated by advanced capitalism with the imaginative and artistic pursuits epitomized by the twentieth century European avant-garde art forms, such as Dada and Surrealism. In a 1957 report, Guy Debord, a founding member of the Situationist movement, acknowledges that ‘the perpetual conflict between desire and reality hostile to desire’ is one of ‘the main emotional drama[s] of life,’ and that his

⁴⁶ H.R. Haldeman, *The Ends of Power*, quoted in Jerry M. Lewis & Thomas R. Hensley, ‘The May 4 Shootings at Kent State University: The Search for Historical Accuracy,’ *Kent State University: Home Page of Jerry M. Lewis, Emeritus Professor Sociology*, 25 Nov. 2012 < <http://dept.kent.edu/sociology/lewis/lewihen.htm#KENT>>.

⁴⁷ *Quelle université? Quelle société?* (Paris, 1968), quoted in Michael Seidman, *The Imaginary Revolution: Parisian Students and Workers in 1968* (New York: Berghahn, 2004) 17.

movement embraced ‘the game of creating new, emotionally provocative situations.’⁴⁸

Experiencing and finding meaning in life through emotional experience, rather than through adherence to bourgeois societal values was a powerful motivator behind the student revolt of 1968. ‘Prague Spring’ began in January of that same year with the election of Alexander Dubcek as the First Secretary of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, giving rise to the beginnings of civil reform which were summarily crushed in August of that same year by the invasion of the Soviet military. Less than six months later, in January of 1969, during a ‘winter of despair,’ Czech university student Jan Palach immolated himself as ‘a desperate act of political protest.’⁴⁹ Marowitz was compelled by this incident to write a play with Alan Burns titled simply *Palach*;⁵⁰ it was presented at the Open Space Theatre in November of 1970.

In Britain, Harold Wilson and the Labour party reclaimed leadership from the Conservatives in 1964, only to be defeated at the end of two terms, then returned to power in 1974 when Conservative Prime Minister Edward Heath was unable to negotiate a coalition government with the Liberal party. The dissatisfaction of the political left with the reticence of the Labour government to significantly enact the socialist policies on which it was seminally based had begun with Attlee, and grew with Wilson as Clause Four of the Labour Party constitution mandating public ownership of resources continued to be largely ignored. Although he resisted pressure from the United States to send troops to Vietnam, Wilson alienated a large portion of his supporting voters through his response to a number of crippling strikes: the White Paper titled ‘In Place of Strife,’ created in 1969 by then

⁴⁸ Guy Debord, ‘Report on the Construction of Situations and on the International Situationist Tendency’s Conditions of Organization and Action,’ Ken Knabb, trans., *Situationist International Online*, 28 Nov. 2012 <<http://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/report.html>>.

⁴⁹ Kurt W. Treptow, *From Zalmoxis to Jan Palach: Studies in East European History* (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 1992) 126.

⁵⁰ Alan Burns & Charles Marowitz, ‘Palach,’ *Open Space Plays*, Charles Marowitz, ed. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974) 191-251.

Employment Secretary Barbara Castle, was strongly opposed by the Trades Union Congress and essentially shelved. Adding to the discontent of Britons, unemployment was high when Wilson began his second term, and remained so for the duration of his leadership. Political foment similar to that in other parts of the world was underway, with public outcry centering, not only on the Vietnam War, but also upon Britain's inclusion of nuclear weaponry in their defense policy. In *Bomb Culture*, Jeff Nuttall suggests that the population of the world during the 1960s could be divided into those whose values and beliefs were formed in a youth which preceded the advent of the nuclear age, and those who grew to adulthood in the shadow of the atom bomb. The former group, he avers, was able to find contentment in the notion that things generally work out and that the world will go on, while the latter understood on a visceral level that no such certainty regarding the continued survival of the human race or its home planet was possible after the example of nuclear destruction provided by Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August of 1945.⁵¹ While the CND, established in 1957, initially offered some hope for the future, and while public protest also focused on other issues such as apartheid, according to Nuttall, by the early part of the 1960s it was obvious that 'massive crowds and massive civil disobedience were ineffectual and nobody in Parliament was bothered about them one iota.'⁵² Peter Whitehead, writer and director of the 1967 documentary *Tonite Let's All Make Love in London*,⁵³ agrees that the end of the 1960s brought with them a sense of disillusionment – a disappointment that the actions of individuals would not have the power to change the

⁵¹ Jeff Nuttall, interview with John May, 'Jeff Nuttall: Bomb Culture and Beyond,' *The Generalist*, 8 Aug. 2005, 5 Oct. 2012 <<http://hqinfo.blogspot.ca/2005/08/jeff-nuttall-bomb-culture-and-beyond.html>>. This predilection of destruction is manifested on an individual level by Nuttall's confession, age 52 that, as a young man, 'I really didn't expect to see the age of 30.'

⁵² Nuttall, *The Generalist*.

⁵³ Sub-titled *A Pop Concerto*, this approximately hour long film is divided into a number of 'movements,' each exploring a theme of interest at the time, and underscored by music of the period. Figures prominent in the culture and counter-culture of the day appear, including Michael Caine, Mick Jagger, Julie Christie, Allen Ginsberg, Eric Burdon, the Pink Floyd, David Hockney and Vanessa Redgrave. A copy may be viewed at 'Tonite Let's All Make Love in London,' *YouTube*. 4 Jan. 2012, 20 Oct. 2012 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_gUCtUWqYbc>.

world.⁵⁴ Generally, then, a keen dissatisfaction with the state of society and the world resulted in a cynical attitude regarding one's impotence to enact change, and the energy of this disenchantment was manifested in, and possibly to some extent driven by, the theatre of the period.

The significance of Marowitz's contribution to British theatre was therefore due at least in part to his timing: he arrived in Britain during this period of enormous social change, and the resulting shift away from traditional values which emphasized an obeisance to existing societal mores surrounding everyday behaviour, sexual behaviour, dress and foreign policy was fundamentally aligned with both his ostensibly sociopolitical beliefs and his evolving theatrical practice. Amidst the turmoil of the sixties, which included a rising peace movement and accompanying protest against the Vietnam War as well as the Hippies and their belief in 'free love,' Marowitz opened the Open Space Theatre in London, and while Artistic Director there, both encouraged the work of new writers and trained a cadre of actors in the experimental techniques for which he became known.⁵⁵ Ronald Bryden relates that, after Marowitz began his work in the 1960s, 'the theater hummed with actors' stories of his unorthodox methods – improvisations, making up scenes between the lines of the play, sensitivity exercises and the like.'⁵⁶ Barry B. Witham, in a review written in 1982, agrees that Marowitz 'deserves our attention,' having 'fought part of the battle to revivify contemporary theatre' and having created, in his collage *Hamlet*, 'a vital, theatrical sensibility.'⁵⁷

⁵⁴ See Steve Chibnall, 'Standing in the Shadow: Peter Whitehead, Swinging London's Insider/Outsider,' *Framework: The Journal of Cinema and Media* 52:1 (Spring 2011): 244-277.

⁵⁵ One of these, Liz Smith, was chosen by Marowitz to take part in his improvisational theatre work taking place in Fitzroy Square: she notes that the work was rigorous; the group of actors spent a year working on exercises, after which they were 'torn to shreds by the rest of the company.' Liz Smith, interview with Glenys Roberts, 'Delighting in Life's Dottiness,' *Times* 5 May 1985.

⁵⁶ Ronald Bryden, 'Burrowing out Shakespeare's Sub-Text in *The Shrew*,' *New York Times* 21 July 1974.

⁵⁷ Bruce B. Witham, 'Review: "Ah, Sweet Mystery of Life!" by Charles Marowitz,' *Theatre Journal* 34.2,(1982): 262.

Marowitz was certainly not alone in a passionate championing of new forms of theatre during this period: in *Stages of the Revolution: Political Theatre in Britain Since 1968*, Catherine Itzin describes a virtual explosion of theatre companies, performance spaces and new playwrights: between 1968 and 1978, the number of “‘fringe’ theatre groups’ grew from half a dozen to over one hundred; in the same time period, arts centres which housed theatre facilities increased from thirty-four to over 140, not including ‘a good 200 small-scale touring venues in London and the regions.’⁵⁸ Similarly, Itzin notes that the number of playwrights wrote for alternative grew from ‘a handful’ to about ‘250 contemporary British playwrights, most of them working part- if not full-time in alternative theatre.’⁵⁹ Moreover, Marowitz’s colleagues included fellow American expatriates Jim Haynes and Nancy Meckler:⁶⁰ all contributed a great deal, albeit in different ways, to the cultural transition in which they found themselves.

Meckler’s contribution to the arts scene in Britain has spanned more than forty years, and bridged both theatre and film. Of the three Americans noted, only she came to Britain with a breadth of theatre training, having graduated from Antioch College with a Bachelor of Arts in Drama, and attained a Masters degree from NYU. She also studied at the Herbert Berghof Studio in New York City, and worked with Plexus, a company associated with the La Mama Experimental Theatre Company, before emigrating to Britain in the late 1960s and attending LAMDA. She joined the Freehold Theatre Company in London, for which she directed a number of notable productions, including *Antigone* (1969) at the Round House Theatre, and *The Duchess of Malfi* (1970). Meckler went on to become an associate director at the Hampstead Theatre in London. She directed several

⁵⁸ Catherine Itzin, *Stages in the Revolution: Political Theatre in Britain Since 1968* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1980) 110.

⁵⁹ Itzin 110-111.

⁶⁰ See Loren Kruger, ‘The Dis-Play’s the Thing: Gender and Public Sphere in Contemporary British Theater,’ *Theatre Journal* 42.1 (1990): 30 fn 14.

plays by rising playwright Sam Shepard, at least one at his request,⁶¹ and was the first woman to direct a major production – *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* in 1981 – at the National Theatre. She later became Co-Artistic Director of Shared Experience⁶² theatre company which still operates in Britain. Meckler later turned to film direction with such works as *Sister My Sister*, the 1995 film version of Wendy Kesselman's *My Sister in This House*: both play and film offer a re-telling of the 1933 murder of a Le Mans widow and her daughter by the two sisters who served as their maids.

Like Marowitz, Meckler was interested in theatre which transcended language, and which 'deployed physical and non-naturalistic methods of exploring texts.'⁶³ Not surprisingly, considering her experience with La Mama, Meckler's work at Freehold utilized 'psycho-physical exercises designed to free the actor for expression,'⁶⁴ thus sharing a common ground for exploration with Marowitz, as well as with Jerzy Grotowski in Poland and Joseph Chaikin in the United States. Both Marowitz and Meckler utilized the process of collective creation, and both were cognizant of its strengths and limitations. Meckler relates that an early attempt at Freehold to create a production without a director ended up being shaped by 'one person [who] had an idea and was able to impose it. You couldn't say in the end that it hadn't been directed.'⁶⁵ Similarly, Marowitz indicates that a company of actors and designers possesses 'more originality and imagination than any

⁶¹ In 1977, at the playwright's request, she directed the premiere production of Sam Shepard's *Curse of the Starving Class*, having previously directed the premieres of two other Shepard plays: *Action* in 1974 at the Royal Court Theatre Upstairs, UK, and the American premieres of *Action* and *Killer's Head* in 1975 at the American Place Theatre. See Stephen J. Bottoms, *The Theatre of Sam Shepard: States of Crisis*, Cambridge Books Online, June 2011, 15 Sep. 2012 <<http://ebooks.cambridge.org/ebook.jsf?bid=CBO9780511586255>>, and Philip Roberts, *The Royal Court Theatre and the Modern Stage*, Cambridge Books Online, Sep. 2009, 15 Sep. 2012 <<http://ebooks.cambridge.org/ebook.jsf?bid=CBO9780511486074>>.

⁶² For information on Shared Experience, see their website at <<http://www.sharedexperience.org.uk>>.

⁶³ Roland Rees, *Fringe First: Pioneers of Fringe Theatre on Record* (London: Oberon, 1992) 19.

⁶⁴ Theodore Shank, 'Collective Creation,' *Re-Direction: A Theoretical and Practical Guide*, eds. Rebecca Schneider & Gabrielle Cody (London: Routledge, 2002) 229.

⁶⁵ Shank 229.

single director could possibly muster,⁶⁶ while noting that ‘no democratically elected committee has ever succeeded in creating a work of art.’⁶⁷ Nonetheless, while Meckler and Marowitz embraced similar ideologies regarding artistic creation, they used them to achieve different ends. On the website for Shared Experience, Meckler indicates that she approaches the creative process as an opportunity to investigate an idea or conduct an inquiry with the collaborative assistance of the actors. Marowitz, while espousing the virtue of the collective intelligence, was more likely to bring an already articulated ‘message’ to the start of rehearsals, and actor collaboration, if it occurred, did so as the servant to the concept already formalized. Displaying a shade of the Machiavellian, he indicates that the director, ‘using all the ingenuity traditional to his calling [...] leads the actor to insights which have been carefully planted for his discovery.’⁶⁸ As well, examples will be given later in this thesis of the remarkable images created by Marowitz as visual metaphors of the ideas he wished to communicate, while Meckler notes that powerful imagery can actually have a distancing effect on an audience through which they become passive viewers of spectacle. The Shared Experience approach employs physicality as an outward manifestation of the inner state of the characters, rather than as an intellectual concept, and this in her opinion strongly connects the audience members viscerally with the action.⁶⁹

Like Marowitz, Jim Haynes served in the American military, arriving in the United Kingdom for service at Kirknewton Air Force Base near Edinburgh. After leaving the military, he opened ‘The Paperback,’ the first bookstore in the UK to sell exclusively

⁶⁶ Marowitz, *How to Stage a Play* 64-65.

⁶⁷ Marowitz, *Prospero’s Staff* 103.

⁶⁸ Marowitz, *The Act of Being* 52.

⁶⁹ The information on Shared Experience methodology admittedly reflects Meckler’s work at a later period of her career than that under exploration in this thesis, but represents a theatrical sensibility which has both points of contact and differentiation from that of Marowitz. Nancy Meckler, interview, ‘The Rehearsal Process’ & ‘What is Shared Experience?’, *Shared Experience*, 15 Sep. 2012 <<http://www.sharedexperience.org.uk/videos.html>>.

paperback books, which, according to Marowitz, operated as a ‘club house’ in which nightly ‘abstruse entertainments’⁷⁰ took place. A short time after, Haynes founded the Traverse Theatre in a derelict building in Edinburgh, and began producing new works: he notes that ‘we did virtually nothing but British or world *premières*,’⁷¹ which began to garner attention from the London critics, as well as intense interest from writers and their agents. In 1964, Haynes invited Marowitz to direct Jack Richardson’s *Gallows Humour* at the Traverse; based in London, Marowitz suggests that he ‘gradually became a kind of artistic director *in absentia* – constantly on the phone to Jim in Edinburgh suggesting plays, actors, strategies, etc.’⁷² Haynes came to London to found the London Traverse Theatre Company at the Jeannette Cochrane Theatre in Holburn, an opportunity arranged by then Minister of Culture Jennie Lee in conjunction with Arnold Goodman, who at that time was Chairman of the Arts Council. Although, according to Marowitz, Haynes ‘loathed the burnished wood and institutional patina of the architecture,’⁷³ the productions were notable on more than one level: Yoko Ono presented her first Happening there, and two theatre productions, Joe Orton’s *Loot* and Saul Bellow’s *The Bellows Plays*, transferred to the West End. Later, Haynes created the Arts Lab in an old warehouse in Drury Lane: ‘London in 1967 was the capital of the world,’ he relates, ‘and the Arts Lab was very definitely one of its centres.’⁷⁴ Its performance schedule was highly fluid with many spontaneous events. Haynes notes that audiences came to the theatre as a destination, rather than to a particular play, and that a large blackboard in the lobby listed the evening’s events in the same way that a restaurant listed its daily specials. The Arts Lab ‘was like a melting pot’ containing

⁷⁰ Marowitz, *Burnt Bridges* 127.

⁷¹ Jim Haynes, *Thanks for Coming!*, Jim Haynes, comp. (London: Faber and Faber, 1984) 56.

⁷² Marowitz, *Burnt Bridges* 127.

⁷³ Marowitz, *Burnt Bridges* 131.

⁷⁴ Haynes, *Thanks for Coming!* 151.

‘an incredible mixture of human beings’:⁷⁵ a mixture which, at various times, included Dick Gregory, John Lennon and Yoko Ono, Michael X, James Baldwin, Mama Cass, Christine Keeler and Ronnie Laing. Not only individuals benefited from this experimental environment: one of the many groups which utilized the Arts Lab as a performance space was Meckler’s Freehold Theatre Company. Marowitz notes that other Arts Labs ‘sprang up’ around the country, so that, in effect, Haynes had created ‘a mini cultural phenomenon in Britain.’⁷⁶ During this period of his career, Haynes was also instrumental in the creation of two publications of note. The first, initially called *International Times* (later shortened to simply *IT* after objections from the daily newspaper, the *Times*) was established primarily to aid in promotion of the London Traverse, but soon, according to Haynes, was regarded as the mouthpiece of the counter-culture community, in which all ‘interesting or alternative events’⁷⁷ received free publicity. The second publication, which was founded by Haynes in conjunction with Heathcote Williams and Germaine Greer, was established to communicate concepts of sexual freedom and was accordingly titled *Suck*. Understanding that the English authorities would close down such a publication immediately, *Suck*, subtitled *That Sexpaper*, operated out of Amsterdam.⁷⁸

The relationship between Marowitz and Haynes offers a fascinating study in comparison and contrast, both in terms of their personalities and their approaches to theatre. In *Burnt Bridges*, Marowitz titles his chapter on Jim Haynes ‘Doppelganger from Shreveport,’⁷⁹ and in the letter he contributed to Haynes’ autobiography, *Thanks for Coming!*, he notes that, as he and Haynes were ‘roughly the same age, both tall, bearded and American,’ the British would distinguish them by describing Haynes as ‘the “nice”

⁷⁵ Haynes, *Thanks for Coming!* 154.

⁷⁶ Marowitz, *Burnt Bridges* 132.

⁷⁷ Haynes, *Thanks for Coming!* 144.

⁷⁸ See pages 217 through 237 in *Thanks for Coming!* for more information on this publication.

⁷⁹ Marowitz, *Burnt Bridges* 127.

American,’ and Marowitz as ‘that hard-assed bastard.’⁸⁰ Their approaches to theatre, and to life, although sharing points of contact, could not have been more different. While Marowitz had relatively little training or experience in acting or directing, Haynes had absolutely no background in theatre whatsoever, and admits in his autobiography that he was drawn to the genre largely because of his attraction to American actress Jane Alexander. Haynes’ chief talent was as a ‘connector’⁸¹ – he believed, for example, that the cultural presentations at the Arts Lab were themselves ‘secondary to the primary purpose of bringing people together’⁸² – and as a facilitator of the talents and energies of others. When he was approached by Steven Berkoff in the late 1960s regarding the use of the Drury Lane Arts Lab as a venue for Kafka’s *In the Penal Colony*, Haynes notes that his policy as an artistic producer was ‘to try never to say no.’⁸³ Marowitz acknowledges that ‘Jim was considered by many the great catalytic figure of the 1960s – the guy who, by consulting his four-volume telephone book, could almost immediately make things happen’; on the basis of an ‘irresistible congeniality,’ rather than intellect or originality, he ‘became the bridge between the Underground and the Establishment.’⁸⁴ That being said, Haynes’ approach to theatre, perhaps best described as ‘everybody do their own thing,’ often left Marowitz ‘squirming with contempt,’⁸⁵ and declaring that ‘being uncritical and indiscriminating, is irreconcilable with art.’⁸⁶ Despite Haynes’ important place as a producer and facilitator of counter-cultural activities, his autobiography reveals little depth of personal vision into the

⁸⁰ Charles Marowitz, *Thanks for Coming!*, Jim Haynes, comp. (London: Faber and Faber, 1984) 129.

⁸¹ The term ‘connector’ in this context was popularized by Malcolm Gladwell in his book *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference* (Boston: Little, Brown, 2000). Gladwell characterized connectors as individuals with generous attitudes, large circles of influence and an enormous desire to bring the right combinations of people together in order to create frisson and a new outcome.

⁸² Jim Haynes, *Thanks for Coming!* 169.

⁸³ Jim Haynes, letter to Robert Cross, 3 Feb. 1995, quoted in Robert Cross, *Steven Berkoff and the Theatre of Self-Performance* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2004) 94.

⁸⁴ Marowitz, *Burnt Bridges* 129.

⁸⁵ Marowitz, *Thanks for Coming!* 129.

⁸⁶ Marowitz, *Thanks for Coming!* 129.

conceptual underpinnings at work in the creative endeavours of the day, and this is in complete contrast to Marowitz, whose manifestos on adaptation, theatre, and the ‘classics,’ are invariably cogently and passionately articulated, whether or not one agrees with the concepts being put forth. Marowitz exemplifies his notion of the modern director as ‘someone who challenges the assumptions of a work of art [...] for unless the author’s work is engaged on an intellectual level equal to its own, the play is merely transplanted from one medium to another.’⁸⁷

Within a theatrical community stretching old boundaries and embracing new freedoms, through his participation in the creation of one of the first alternative theatres in London as well as the production of both groundbreaking new works and audacious takes on old classics, Marowitz held an important place as an experimenter and catalyst. Since the demise of the *Los Angeles Herald* and his role as their resident critic, and since being replaced as Artistic Director of the Malibu Stage Company which he founded, Marowitz’s notoriety has undoubtedly dwindled, both in England and in North America. Nonetheless, his place within a vibrant and transformational theatre community during the 1960s and 1970s should not be underestimated.

THE METHODOLOGY EMPLOYED IN THIS EXPLORATION

The methodology described herein will be employed in the exploration and analysis of the six Shakespearean adaptations under consideration. First, Marowitz’s perceptions of Shakespeare’s original play based upon statements made within his critical writing will be discussed, including his perception of the intellectual substructure of the play, and any underlying assumptions upon which the action and characterizations are based. Marowitz’s

⁸⁷ Marowitz, *Prospero’s Staff* 6.

specific concerns with or negative reactions to Shakespeare's play text, particularly those which motivated him to create the adaptation under analysis (since his adaptations were primarily created to address personal concerns), will be foregrounded. The validity of these perceptions will then be explored based upon a precise examination of the play text in question, and juxtaposed against a survey of scholarly opinion. Any sociopolitical objectives expressed by Marowitz for the adaptation will be reviewed, then juxtaposed against the historical context in which they were written in order to discern where and how these factors may have influenced his creative impulse. Next, Marowitz's approach to challenging the paradigm of Shakespeare's work, including strategies designed to deal with particular concerns, will be scrutinized. Since one of Marowitz's primary parameters for classical adaptation states that the adaptor/director must have something specific and original to communicate, the 'message' he was attempting to share through the adaptation will be discussed. It should be noted that, while the term 'message' may be discouraged during traditional scholarly inquiry, it is the term utilized by Marowitz himself, and thus will be employed during discussions within this thesis.⁸⁸ An analysis of Marowitz's adaptation will be given, focusing on the effect changes from the original play text might have had on an audience, and critical response, based upon reviews in the major publications of the day, will be incorporated. Facets of the adaptation text or production notes that manifest evidence of Marowitz's personal 'ur-text,'⁸⁹ the unconscious ideology which may have influenced his work, will be noted. The compliance of the adaptation with

⁸⁸ When discussing his parameters for successful adaptation, Marowitz uses the term 'message' several times: the adapted material must deliver 'a quite specific and original message; a message which does not merely duplicate' that of Shakespeare's original work. See Charles Marowitz, introduction, *The Marowitz Shakespeare* (New York: Marion Boyars, 1990) 24. In some cases, he substitutes 'statement,' or '[w]hat I wanted to say' as when speaking of *The Shrew*: see page 17 of the same source.

⁸⁹ Marowitz used the term 'ur-text' in two ways: first, in the dictionary meaning of an original source, and second, referring to an actor's visceral responses within the text's given circumstances – responses which lie beneath psychology and which relate primarily to spiritual and instinctual reactions to stimuli. See Charles Marowitz, introduction, *The Marowitz Shakespeare* 24 and Marowitz, *The Other Way* 130.

Marowitz's stated parameters for adaptation, will be explored, and possible conscious or unconscious factors affecting a lack of compliance will be considered. Finally, I will examine other adaptations of the same Shakespearean work which offer useful comparisons in light of the manner in which they differently, and possibly more effectively, redressed the concerns Marowitz identified.

To a significant degree, this thesis is situated within the realm of biographical criticism, in that evidence of Marowitz's opinions and beliefs will be gathered from his autobiographical writing, as well as from his theatrical reviews, online columns, journal articles and texts on acting techniques. To a lesser degree, psychoanalytical theory will be referenced as a tool through which human psychological elements may be observed as potentially unconscious precipitators of a writer's themes, metaphors and narrative incidents.

Biography-based criticism fell out of favour in the late twentieth century with the rise of 'New Criticism' which prioritized a formalist approach, and 'coined the term *intentional fallacy* to refer to the mistaken belief that the author's intention is the same as the text's meaning.'⁹⁰ Stein Haugom Olsen further reminds that the very concept of 'meaning' as it applies to a literary, and therefore by extension, a dramatic, work is fraught with difficulty. It is possible to speak of the 'meaning' of words, sentences and even metaphors, based upon linguistics, but questions of a literary work's 'meaning' require interpretation, particularly 'an interpretation of parts and passages, of characters, setting, symbols, structure, action, rhetorical features'⁹¹ rather than of the work itself. In time, the demise of New Criticism was supplanted by Barthes' Structuralism and finally with the rise of Postmodernist thinking, but more recent developments in critical theory have seen a

⁹⁰ Lois Tyson, *Critical Theory Today: A User-Friendly Guide* (New York: Routledge, 2006) 136.

⁹¹ Stein Haugom Olsen, 'The "Meaning" of a Literary Work,' *New Literary History* 14.1 (1982): 16.

revival of interest in the relationship between the artist and the work. The rise of New Historicism in the United States and Cultural Materialism in the United Kingdom resulted in ‘the reembedding of texts in rich (social) historical as well as theoretical contexts,’⁹² opening the door to the exploration of synergies between the life of a creative artist and their work. For example, in ‘Projections of the Inner “I”’: Anthony Powell, George Orwell and the Personal Myth.’ D.J. Taylor draws conclusions regarding Orwell’s life and work which resonate with similar inferences made later in this thesis regarding Marowitz. He indicates that each of Orwell’s ‘five reality novels’ involves ‘the setting up of a solitary anti-hero in opposition to a hostile world,’ and that this world ‘is at heart Orwell’s own [...] in each case twisted subtly out of kilter, decorated with all the subliminal horrors that oppressed Orwell as much as his characters.’⁹³ Taylor further reminds of the ability of cultural works to increase an awareness of one’s place in the world as well as a sense of unity with its other inhabitants when he states that Orwell’s work, like that of ‘any great writer,’ will be read ‘both for what it tells us about the person who wrote it, and what it tell us about ourselves, the people we are, have been, and shall become.’⁹⁴ Therefore, rather than utilizing information regarding Marowitz’s life to infer a concept of ‘meaning’ within his Shakespearean reconstructions, this thesis will employ his status as a member of the Jewish religion, evidenced by being born within that faith, to form the basis of an analysis regarding the way in which his reluctance to be included in the stereotypes associated with that group might have diverted him from his ostensible objectives for the adaptations under study, in particular *Variations on the Merchant of Venice*. As well, due consideration will be given to the social context in which Marowitz created the adaptations under scrutiny,

⁹² Cristanne Miller, ‘Whose Dickinson?’ *American Literary History* 12.1&2 (2000): 21.

⁹³ D.J. Taylor, ‘Projections of the Inner “I”’: Anthony Powell, George Orwell and the Personal Myth,’ *Life Writing: Essays on Autobiography, Biography and Literature*, ed. Richard Bradford (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) 46-47.

⁹⁴ Taylor 54.

and the ways in which historical events may have affected both the impetus to create them and the manner in which he did so.

Further, while this thesis does not claim to offer a thorough Freudian or Lacanian reading of Marowitz or his work, reference will be made to certain aspects of psychoanalytical thought in order to explain instances in which Marowitz stated a desire to address particular issues through his adaptation of a Shakespearean work when an examination of the resulting play text reveals a different outcome. The application of this theory, therefore, will centre around its division of human thought, motives and desires into those which are *conscious* and those which are *unconscious*, noting the latter's enormous, albeit covert, effect upon an individual's behaviour. As Marowitz himself suggests, in an age of post modernism 'we are more concerned with the processes beneath both character and action than we are with either in their own right,'⁹⁵ and it is therefore apt that this psychological inquiry follows the same basic path as the corresponding theatrical one. When a director or actor explores a theatrical work, '[t]he text yields to the sub-text,' states Marowitz, 'the sub-text to the ur-text':

As a play progresses, we discover a character's hidden motives, then the character discovers the roots of his own motives or those of others who have challenged or opposed him, and stage by stage, we shear away the layers of concealment with which society and psychology have obfuscated our strongest needs and deepest drives.⁹⁶

In general terms, this also parallels Marowitz's journey through a consideration of the acting process: early in his life, he was drawn to the psychological realism of the

⁹⁵ Marowitz, *The Other Way* 131.

⁹⁶ Marowitz, *The Other Way* 130.

Stanislavsky system, which teaches actors to search between the lines of text to discover the unspoken wants of a character, characterized by Stanislavsky as ‘sub-text’; later, Marowitz helped to inculcate this system in Britain through his acting studio. But, after delving into the writings of Antonin Artaud, he found Stanislavsky’s psychology-based system limiting, due to its being ‘rooted in a reverence for scientific rationalism [...] An attitude to life which believed that man, being primarily a social animal, could be analyzed and defined according to certain fixed criteria.’⁹⁷ Marowitz further indicated that the ‘emotional release’ engendered in a Stanislavsky based actor by the recreation of a desire or need within the imagination or memory ‘is rarely transferred into the context of a play’ since the power of resulting actions ‘is not necessarily their verifiable truthfulness but the fact that they connect up with a narrative strand in the audience’s imagination.’⁹⁸ In an interview with director Robert Lewis, Marowitz muses, ‘Are there meanings and pertinences in a play that nestle below psychological subtext [...] Is there something beneath psychology?’⁹⁹ Later, he answered his own question, stating: ‘Beyond the ego and beneath the id, there is a territory from which astounding insights can be dredged up to the world above’¹⁰⁰. Through the work of Artaud, he sought to help actors tap into the pool of unruly human desires and instincts which lay beneath the rational and relatively controlled realm of the intellect. Marowitz’s work with actors as a director became grounded in a series of physical, emotional and auditory exercises which he called ‘The Work Out,’ and which sought to release the actor from the linear logic of the intellect in order to access more seminal desires and actions.

⁹⁷ Marowitz, *The Other Way* 73. Although he began his work in England as a Method acting teacher, in the essay, ‘The Infernal Café,’ Marowitz noted that the Stanislavsky System ‘has the dubious distinction of having spawned the most simplistic and reductive acting-theory in the western world.’⁹⁷

⁹⁸ Marowitz, *The Other Way* 113.

⁹⁹ Marowitz, *Prospero’s Staff* 81.

¹⁰⁰ Marowitz, *The Other Way* 127.

If one considers Marowitz's Shakespearean adaptations as the 'text' or 'action,' then the sub-text which motivated that action was the largely rational and political objectives he brought to the original work: his alleged desire to reveal the misogyny and violence he claims lie at the true heart of the original play, for example, in the case of *The Shrew*; his need to right the humiliation and misrepresentation of 'the Jew' as personified by Shylock in the case of *Variations on the Merchant of Venice*. His conscious beliefs regarding Shakespeare's source plays shape, at a very germane level, the nature of his adaptation. But just as the ur-text lies beneath the sub-text, so there are unconscious paradigms resident within Marowitz's psyche which exert significant influence over the ways in which he shapes his recensions: a pessimistic world-view, for example, which manifests itself in the work's protagonist being betrayed and destroyed by all around him; or the habitual perception of female characters strictly limited to the actions of provoking and satisfying male desire. Speaking of the expression of hidden psychological impulses and literary criticism, Peter Barry suggests that

the unconscious, like the poem, or novel, or play, cannot speak directly and explicitly but does so through images, symbols, emblems, and metaphors. Literature, too, is not involved with making direct explicit statements about life, but with showing and expressing experience through imagery, symbolism, metaphor and so on.¹⁰¹

If both the unconscious mind and an artist's work manifest themselves within symbols and metaphors, then it will be worthwhile to explore the unconscious paradigms of the creative mind – in the vocabulary of this thesis, Marowitz's 'personal politic' – since the resulting

¹⁰¹ Peter Barry, *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1995) 102.

analysis relies upon discernment, not of what an artist consciously wishes to show, but what is unconsciously revealed within their work through their choice of thematic material and language tools. On this basis, it is difficult for an individual to mask themselves within a particular stance or ‘pose,’ since their latent beliefs and desires will manifest themselves without the involvement of the conscious mind which creates such a persona.

Further, there is a strong degree of alignment between Freud’s psychoanalytical theory and Marowitz’s statements regarding artistic creation. For example, Freud suggested that dreams ‘have proved that *what is suppressed continues to exist in normal people as well as abnormal, and remains capable of psychological functioning,*’ and, further, that ‘dreams themselves are among the manifestations of this suppressed material.’¹⁰²

Dreams therefore are capable of providing access to the content of the unconscious mind.

Marowitz, in his turn, confirmed the connection between dreams and art, speaking of the dream state as ‘the greatest narrative-making machine in the world. [...] Art is the language which enables us to inter-communicate on the level of dreams. “Suspending our disbelief” is just another way of saying we are capable of collective dreaming.’¹⁰³

Marowitz also alludes to a link between the collage genre and the unconscious mind when he suggests that a pre-knowledge of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* exists in ‘our collective unconscious’ before we have ever encountered the text as a sort of ‘centrifugal myth,’ and that ‘when one assembles a collage version of the play, or a discontinuous gambol through its themes and issues, that myth is reactivated.’¹⁰⁴

Relatively little is known about Marowitz’s early life, particularly regarding details of his relationship with his parents and/or other family members. However, utilizing the

¹⁰² Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1967) 608. Italics in original.

¹⁰³ Marowitz, *The Other Way* 160.

¹⁰⁴ Marowitz, *Roar of the Canon* 168.

biographical information available, including the religious and cultural community into which he was born, as well as the general precepts of psychological development associated with psychoanalytical theory, this thesis will attempt to identify the broad thematic reflections of these influences present in Marowitz's Shakespearean adaptations. It will then compare these creative results to the playwright's stated intentions for the work in an attempt to discern whether aspects of Marowitz's cultural, religious or psychological background may have dislocated the adaptation thematically from the often sociopolitical beliefs he sought to communicate. The evidence of the personal politics affecting Marowitz's creative work will rely upon illustration through example from the six adaptations under investigation, supplemented by selected works which lie outside this scope, as well as by a careful examination of Marowitz's critical writing. Given Marowitz's penchant for contradiction, the opinions expressed in his critical writing should be examined with a certain amount of respectful skepticism; in the same way, it would be difficult to obtain reliable information on the adaptor's latent motivations through interview, since the paradigms of interest may be well protected within the unconscious, and therefore not directly expressed. However, the analysis of inherent patterns of belief articulated within Marowitz's creative works allow inclusion of metaphoric as well as literal expression, and thus the deduction of the causal factors involved in the recension under exploration.

Since a penetrating analysis of several of these works will be necessary to shed light upon the questions under investigation, the adaptations will be considered using varying degrees of detail. The analysis of socio-political objectives is central to this thesis, and since Marowitz believed, 'as did every good radical of the period, that any theatre which didn't essay the social and political verities of those troubled, Cold War, Suez-haunted

times was not worth the newsprint it took to trash it,¹⁰⁵ I will concentrate in particular on those adaptations which display the strongest political objectives. Therefore, *Variations on the Merchant of Venice* has been chosen for intense scrutiny due to its strong sociopolitical context; the degree to which it displays the issue of personal politics and its effect on adaptation; and the degree to which it achieved the objectives set out by Marowitz himself. Two other adaptations – *Hamlet* and *An Othello* – will be analysed in moderate depth, the former due to its seminal status both in terms of Marowitz’s Shakespearean reworkings and his use of the collage genre in this métier; and the latter on the basis of its use of largely non-Shakespearean text and strong socio-political subject matter. The three remaining adaptations under examination – *A Macbeth*, *The Shrew* and Marowitz’s *Measure for Measure* – will be explored in less depth for several reasons. Both Marowitz’s *Measure for Measure* and *The Shrew* show relatively little renovation of Shakespeare’s original work, with only slight re-arrangement of text; while *The Shrew* contains interpolated modern scenes, the narrative from Shakespeare’s *The Taming of the Shrew* is left more or less in its original state. Although each new production of a previously staged play is, at a seminal level, an adaptation in view of the manner in which a different director, team of designers and cast of actors re-interpret the material, these two works by Marowitz differ from his more radical renovations of the Shakespearean canon in that they rely mainly on a new construction and rendering of character intention, and therefore may be interpreted as extreme directorial re-interpretations rather than renovations. In terms of *A Macbeth*, the collage format employed by Marowitz does constitute a radical re-working of Shakespeare’s play, but the objectives described by Marowitz – an exploration of trinitities within the original text, for example – fail to meet his own expressed criteria regarding

¹⁰⁵ Marowitz, *Burnt Bridges* 24.

either a challenging of the intentions of the original work, or the creation of an original and specific meaning through the adaptation. Because of this, and since Marowitz's collage genre will be explored fully through his *Hamlet, A Macbeth* will also be analysed with similar rigour but less depth.

MAROWITZ'S PARAMETERS FOR CLASSICAL ADAPTATION

Charles Marowitz had 'had a curious love-hate relationship with certain old plays – mostly those of Shakespeare,'¹⁰⁶ and had been creating adaptations of them for approximately ten years when he published them in 1978 as *The Marowitz Shakespeare*. Not content to reproduce dramatic classics with strong adherence to the text and dynamics of the original work or its performance paradigms, his iconoclastic adaptations attempted to find modern relevance in the original works by treating them with less than traditional respect. Marowitz states:

Once I wrote: "We need to rape classics without respect but with love and passion." Now, I would qualify that by saying: we have to force the classical texts to give us new answers. But to obtain new answers, we have to bombard them with new questions.¹⁰⁷

During the period under investigation which coincides with his tenure as the Artistic Director of the Open Space Theatre in London, he discerned 'three basic requisites' of theatrical experiments in Shakespearean adaptation which embody 'a head-on confrontation with the intellectual substructure of the plays, an attempt to test or challenge, revoke or destroy the intellectual foundation which makes a classic the formidable thing it has

¹⁰⁶ Marowitz, introduction, *The Marowitz Shakespeare* 11.

¹⁰⁷ Marowitz, *Roar of the Canon* 14.

become.’¹⁰⁸ First, Marowitz states, the director must have a point of view they wish to communicate, and then have the capacity to mold the raw material of the original play into a new shape which ‘delivers a quite specific and original message,’ one which does not ‘merely duplicate the statements of the ur-text.’¹⁰⁹ The adaptation under examination, then, should not be merely a new slant on the original play, but one of those ‘brazen acts of treason and heinous acts of infidelity which shake to their very foundations the pillars of the original work.’¹¹⁰ In doing so, the new work forces the original play to be transformed by the influence of a novel contention which replaces the premise of the original work with different, often contrapuntal ideas, allowing audiences to both connect with the contemporary assumptions, and to view the old in a new light.

This leads us to the second of Marowitz’s requisites: the play chosen by the adaptor must possess sufficient flexibility to be shaped into the new form which supports the director’s thematic concept, despite being ‘weighted [...] with the author’s original intentions and the accumulation of four or more hundred years of fixed associations.’¹¹¹ If this elasticity is not present in the play, or when the directorial point of view is incompatible with the matter of the original play, the result will often be an example of the ‘fractured, aberrant, willfully “avant-garde” productions where minds, patently inferior to Shakespeare’s, are trying to foist ideas which wilt in comparison.’¹¹²

Marowitz’s final point involves shedding our beliefs as to the sanctity of Shakespeare’s texts: ‘when the ideas generated by the given material are not reconcilable with the work as it stands,’ he suggests, ‘it is politic to change the original rather than, out

¹⁰⁸ Marowitz, introduction, *The Marowitz Shakespeare* 24.

¹⁰⁹ Marowitz, introduction, *The Marowitz Shakespeare* 24.

¹¹⁰ Marowitz, introduction, *The Marowitz Shakespeare* 25.

¹¹¹ Marowitz, introduction, *The Marowitz Shakespeare* 24.

¹¹² Marowitz, introduction, *The Marowitz Shakespeare* 24.

of respect or timidity, produce a set of clanging incompatibles.’¹¹³ According to Marowitz, this may be the most interesting aspect of adaptation, since the frisson which emerges from the juxtaposition of Shakespeare’s text and action against ideas which were not in existence during the Elizabethan period is not only acceptable but desirable if the concept has been engendered by the original play. The works which cleave to these stated parameters, avers Marowitz, are not mere renovations, but ‘creations in their own right: ideological extensions of the work from which they sprang.’¹¹⁴

Further, Marowitz suggests that

[t]he question is not, as it is so often put, what is wrong with Shakespeare that we have to meddle with his works, but what is wrong with us that we are content to endure the diminishing returns of conventional dramatic reiteration; that we are prepared to go to the theatre and pretend that what dulls our minds and comforts our world-view is, by dint of such reassurances, culturally uplifting; not to realise that there is nothing so insidious as art that perpetuates the illusion that some kind of eternal truth is enshrined in a time-space continuum called “a classic.”¹¹⁵

Marowitz emphatically states the need for the radical redistributions and renovations inherent in contemporary Shakespearean adaptation to navigate, as Robert Brustein eloquently puts it, ‘between the Scylla of dry academicism and the Charybdis of empty fashion.’¹¹⁶ Marowitz expressed a particular dislike of Shakespearean adaptations which in

¹¹³ Marowitz, introduction, *The Marowitz Shakespeare* 24.

¹¹⁴ Marowitz, introduction, *The Marowitz Shakespeare* 25.

¹¹⁵ Marowitz, introduction, *The Marowitz Shakespeare* 25.

¹¹⁶ Robert Brustein, ‘More Masterpieces,’ *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art* 30.3 (2008): 2.

effect cloak the play in ‘alien contemporary ideas’ in an attempt to produce relevance to a modern audience, but which provide little illumination of either the original or the new dramatic context through the juxtaposition: ‘there is a difference between recycling a classic, redistributing its parts and allowing it to say something different from what was originally intended and simply changing its period and trying to impose historical parallels which simply do not fit.’¹¹⁷ Whereas Marowitz strives to reinterpret, the adaptations he despises – he specifically mentions a reassignment of *Richard III* to the era of the Nazis, an obvious allusion to the National Theatre’s production starring Ian McKellen and directed by Richard Eyre – provide nothing more than a new façade: they are driven by a quest for novelty and, as such, represent ‘the curse of classical theatre in our time.’¹¹⁸

PLACING THESIS IN THE CONTEXT OF SIMILAR EXPLORATIONS

Considering his place in the world of experimental theatre during a pivotal period in British theatre history, little has been written substantively about Charles Marowitz and his work. Jinnie Schiele’s *Off-Centre Stages: Fringe Theatre at the Open Space and the Round House 1968-1983* divides its focus between the production history of Marowitz’s London based experimental theatre, and that of the Round House, but does not concern itself with the methodology of the creative work to any degree. A significant number of journal articles have been written on Marowitz, as well as newspaper articles; in addition, production reviews in both journals and newspapers have been numerous. The majority of the journal articles, as well as the reviews relating to the Shakespearean recensions, are included in the bibliography at the end of this thesis.

¹¹⁷ Marowitz, *Alterati*.

¹¹⁸ Marowitz, *Alterati*.

While several Masters level dissertations have been completed on Marowitz and his *métier*, the most recent in 2011, only two other doctoral theses have been written in English on the work of this radical adaptor of the Shakespearean canon.¹¹⁹

The most recent, titled *Charles Marowitz: The Semiotics of Collage and Dramatic Classics*, was written by Mona M. S. Mohamed and submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English Literature in August of 1997 at The University of Kent at Canterbury. Mohamed essentially follows two streams of investigation: the first is an exploration of the collage genre, and the degree to which this format is capable of communicating theatrical meaning, both traditional and new; the second is an inquiry into the validity of classical adaptation based on an analysis of Marowitz's Shakespearean and non-Shakespearean classical adaptations.

In the introductory chapter, Mohamed gives substantial biographical information on Marowitz, then places him and his work within the changing sociopolitical landscape in Britain during the 1960s and 1970s, acknowledging his position as a theatre creator 'at the forefront of many of the pioneering dramatic practices of the period.'¹²⁰ Chapter One provides a firm background, both practical and theoretical, of the collage genre so often employed by Marowitz. The title of the thesis utilizes semiotics to describe the highly subjective meanings which are created alongside what is ostensibly the 'actual' meaning of an artistic work, and recognizes the discrete yet interconnected streams relating to a dramatic text as a work of literary art, and a theatrical performance of that text which comprises visual, auditory and possibly even olfactory information unavailable within the literary form of the work 'as text.' The collage format uses the concept of syntax to alter

¹¹⁹ A M.Phil dissertation titled *Memorable Mutilations: Charles Marowitz's Restructuring of Plays by William Shakespeare*, submitted to the University of Birmingham in 1997 by J.R. Storry, was not consulted in the writing of this thesis, but may be of interest to others pursuing similar investigations.

¹²⁰ Mona M.S. Mohamed, *Charles Marowitz: The Semiotics of Collage and Dramatic Classics*, thesis, U of Kent at Canterbury, 1997.

the ‘meaning’ of a dramatic classic, usually increasing the subjectivity of its reception in the process.

Chapter Two furnishes a definition of the ‘dramatic classic’: citing the opinions of scholars such as T.S. Eliot and Harriet Hawkins, Mohamed considers the diametrically opposed perceptions of classics as either works of the highest artistic quality, or as works which capture public affection and loyalty in the long term, leading to their classification as bourgeois art which appeals to the lowest common denominator. She then locates the classic within an historical context: while the dramatic classics, including the canon of Shakespeare, were derided by Brecht and Artaud as a ‘retrogressive and inhibiting influence,’¹²¹ according to Mohamed, the 1960s in Britain saw a return of interest in and appropriation of these classics by the generation following the raft of dramatic ‘angry young men’ such as Osborne and Pinter. The climate of political unrest created by this generation’s unhappiness with, for example, the nuclear threat and the war in Vietnam, inspired a rise of dramatic satire in which classic works imparted new ideas through their juxtaposition against public perception of the original work. Mohamed then debates the validity and legitimacy of works of adaptation based upon these classics. While acknowledging critical opinion that ‘classical theatrical productions are necessarily interpretations of the original work,’¹²² she iterates Marowitz’s beliefs that an adaptation of a dramatic classic, if it employs the original work as a raw material in its production, rather than as a merely modified end product, deserves to be considered a new dramatic work and to be judged in this way, rather than as a bastardization.

In subsequent chapters Three through Five, all of Marowitz’s Shakespearean and non-Shakespearean adaptations are lightly analysed, with an emphasis on the collage

¹²¹ Mohamed 140.

¹²² Mohamed 145.

format and its suitability for the expression of political themes. In particular, Mohamed recognizes the difficulty of collage, which is a largely subjective, visceral and experiential technique, to effectively hold and express political beliefs which are, by their nature, rational and conceptual, and therefore oppositional to the essence of the genre. She also notes that the success of collage generally depends greatly upon public familiarity with the original work, and ‘the national and cultural authority of the play as a classic, and finally the iconic and cultural significance of the protagonist in dramatic literature.’¹²³ Marowitz’s tendency towards psycho-sexual subtexts is discussed, as well as the contradiction inherent in his desire for his adaptations to be perceived as original works, which simultaneously derive both their themes and their cultural significance from the classics they challenge and deride.

The second, earlier doctoral thesis by Eric Forsythe at Carnegie-Mellon University in 1973 is titled *The Poetics and Praxis of Charles Marowitz*, and focused on Marowitz’s work up to 1972, and particularly on Marowitz’s role as a ‘stimulus’¹²⁴ within the theatrical and greater artistic community. Forsythe devotes considerable energy to a discussion of the nature of the ‘avant-garde,’ as well as the difficulty of the adaptor generally to create a personal and stylistic approach, which implies a certain fixation of technique, within an ever-changing milieu defined by the ongoing invention of its participants. He also discusses Artaud, one of Marowitz’s seminal influences, as well as Meyerhold, whose work was also a source of inspiration to him.

In the second section of his thesis, titled ‘The Poetics,’ Forsythe focuses on Marowitz’s critical writing, dividing early criticism (i.e. during the 1950s) from later work (the 1960s and 1970s), and commenting on broad trends and consistent assumptions within

¹²³ Mohamed 391.

¹²⁴ Forsythe 1.

this critical commentary. The period covered by Forsythe's thesis, and in which Marowitz completed the writing under examination, was fractured and inconsistent; these are the same characteristics which Forsythe attributes to Marowitz's commentary, thus 'characterizing Marowitz's critical corpus as the poetics of a period rather than that of a man.'¹²⁵

The third section, titled 'Praxis,' examines Marowitz's creative work with a concentration on the collage technique and on his adaptation of *Hamlet*. Critical response to the productions, as evidenced by reviews in newspapers and journals, is explored.

Two appendixes are of particular use to researchers of Marowitz's work: the first is a listing of all plays he directed between 1948 and the end of 1972; the second is an interview with Marowitz conducted by Forsythe in August of 1972.

This thesis is distinct from the two which preceded it largely because, as a director, actor and playwright, my interest lies primarily in the practical aspects of Marowitz's adaptations, both texts and productions, rather than with conceptual theory, and this predilection is manifested in the explorations which comprise this writing. Specifically, this thesis explores Marowitz need to adapt Shakespeare's works based on their conflict with his personal beliefs, then asks whether the resulting adaptations adhere to his own professed parameters for successful adaptation, and whether they do or no, discusses the particular effect of the changes he made to Shakespeare's original work in terms of the information and experience being presented to an audience. In addition, I am interested in the concept of personal politics, defined as both one's affiliation to externally located philosophies of how society is best governed and as the internally located beliefs which are so deeply hidden with one's personal paradigm as to be directly unexpressed, yet still

¹²⁵ Mohamed 44.

capable of exerting a powerful influence upon one's creative work. In particular, this thesis will explore the manner in which Marowitz's pessimistic worldview; scopophilic tendencies linked to a misogynistic perception of women; embarrassment over cultural heritage; and resentful response to the positive reception of the creative work of others, have diverted the director/adaptor from accomplishing his stated objectives for particular adaptations. As well as analyzing Marowitz's Shakespearean adaptations along these lines of interrogation, I also provide examples of other adaptations of the same Shakespearean play for the purpose of critical comparison with Marowitz's works.

COLLAGE AS A PERFORMANCE GENRE

While recognized generally as a iconoclastic director, the theatrical technique with which Charles Marowitz is most closely associated is that of the theatrical 'collage': a discontinuous format which he believes theatrically embodies the 'psychologically disjointed and confused',¹²⁶ narrative of modern life. Since collage traditionally foregrounds the speed of modern life in its delivery, and attempts to affect an audience's traditional perceptions within a theatrical event, this aspect of Marowitz's work, both within the field of Shakespearean adaptation and without, is resonant with the postmodernist movement. If, as Mark Fortier describes, modernism 'has often been characterized by experimentation in the arts, by a drive towards the new,'¹²⁷ then 'postmodernity is [...] as if modernity has been put on overdrive.'¹²⁸ In line with this penchant for experimentation, Marowitz relates that, '[a]ccording to official mythology,'¹²⁹

⁶² Charles Marowitz, introduction, *The Marowitz Hamlet & the Tragical History of Dr. Faustus* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970) 38.

¹²⁷ Mark Fortier, *Theory/Theatre: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2004) 174.

¹²⁸ Fortier 175.

¹²⁹ Marowitz, *Burnt Bridges* 55.

he had an active role in the first Happening in Britain,¹³⁰ which took place at the Edinburgh Drama Conference in 1962.¹³¹ Lacking any traditional narrative, the Edinburgh Happening was comprised of a series of seemingly unconnected events, creating ‘a number of different areas of interest’ throughout the hall, which Marowitz reports ‘completely flummoxed’¹³² the television cameras recording the conference. ‘A Happening,’ says Marowitz, ‘is seen from as many standpoints as there are participants and witnesses; that is, in large part, its allure and what sets it apart from a play, in which there is common consent about centres of interest and, usually, meaning as well.’¹³³ He reports developing an extreme interest in the form, which seemed to him ‘a welcome alternative to texts and conventional *mise en scène*.’¹³⁴ As well, Happenings broke apart traditional notions regarding the required physical characteristics of a theatre, thus transforming any space, including the great outdoors, factories, lunch rooms and downtown streets, into potential venues. Marowitz, along with Ken Dewey (who had instigated the Edinburgh event), produced a Happening called *Exit Music* at the Open Space: audience members arrived at the theatre only to be loaded on buses and ferried around London ‘whilst a number of specific calculated events took place at designated points *en route*.’¹³⁵ According to Marowitz, the audience members, now in the role of witnesses, soon understood that the purpose of the occasion was to observe various actions and events, after which ‘they began to see things which had always been there but had been rendered invisible by their own routine lack of

¹³⁰ Although a certain amount of uproar was expressed over the Edinburgh Happening, in general, media attention to these events was light. According to Günter Berghaus, ‘British newspapers did not have at that time any critics with a special responsibility for covering these kinds of performances. The arts and theatre journals did not recognize Happenings as a legitimate art form and rarely mentioned them at all.’ See Günter Berghaus, ‘Happenings in Europe,’ *Happenings and Other Acts*, ed. Mariellen R. Sandford (London: Routledge, 1995) 322 n55.

¹³¹ See pages 55-66 of *Burnt Bridges* for a full account.

¹³² Marowitz, *Burnt Bridges* 58

¹³³ Marowitz, *Burnt Bridges* 58.

¹³⁴ Marowitz, *Burnt Bridges* 65.

¹³⁵ Marowitz, *Burnt Bridges* 66.

perception.’¹³⁶ The plethora of their sightings, many of which could not possibly have taken place, led him to believe that “seeing” was only the threshold of “imagining” and, if properly orchestrated, one could easily (sometimes fatally) lead to the other.’¹³⁷ The postmodernist movement’s enthusiasm for challenging traditional forms of perception, portraying an incomplete or broken narrative, fragmenting characters and present a tapestry of theatrical textures and media, can be found in a number of the Marowitz adaptations under exploration in this thesis.

Marowitz turned to the discontinuous format of collage theatre due to his dissatisfaction with the classical precepts on which drama has traditionally been based, and in which he alleges the writer is imprisoned: ‘His characters are *established*, his relationships *develop*, his plot thickens, and his conflicts resolve. In short, he plods on in his Aristotelian way, perpetuating the stock jargon of drama and the arbitrary time-system of the conventional theatre.’¹³⁸ Other artistic forms, such as cinema and literature, have been incorporating a discontinuous time frame for a sufficient period of time that we should, avows Marowitz, be familiar with the convention; nonetheless, ‘theatre, so long in the marble clutches of Aristotle, finds it impossible to function except chronologically.’¹³⁹ While this narrative structure has served well in the past, Marowitz questions the verisimilitude of Aristotle’s linear *protasis*, *epitasis* and *catastrophe* as an honest representation of modern human experience:

[t]he most persuasive argument against the formalism of beginning-middle-and-end is that it is not truthful. Our lives simply do not unfold like that. Their rhythms are erratic;

¹³⁶ Marowitz, *Burnt Bridges* 66.

¹³⁷ Marowitz, *Burnt Bridges* 66.

¹³⁸ Marowitz, introduction, *The Marowitz Hamlet & the Tragical History of Dr. Faustus* 38.

¹³⁹ Marowitz, introduction, *The Marowitz Hamlet & the Tragical History of Dr. Faustus* 37.

their points of focus, varied and unpredictable; their time-structure, if not actually broken, psychologically disjointed and confused.¹⁴⁰

Through collage, Marowitz seeks a theatrical form which, in his opinion, will deliver a more truthful representation of human existence, and places himself historically towards the end of an evolution which has taken drama from the external truth of Naturalism, through the psychological inner truth of Realism, and onward towards the imaginative journeys of Surrealism and the existential philosophizing of the Theatre of the Absurd. These new genres strove to ‘abandon rigid performance conventions’¹⁴¹ in order to achieve a greater resonance with the discontinuous and fragmented flux of modern life:

[t]he surge towards Expressionism then Surrealism then the Absurd to what we now woollily call post-modernism, has been a series of attempts to counter the limitations of preceding forms – to grapple with that streaming, intangible, ineluctable flow which we recognize as the source of art.¹⁴²

The problem, as Marowitz sees it, is that art, ‘even in its most anarchic and revolutionary forms [...] even when the intention is anti-art,’ involves imposing form and order onto the unpredictable flux of reality; art exists to give shape to life’s ‘ceremonies, rituals, actions, paradoxes, contradictions, ideas and feelings’¹⁴³ while life itself simply experiences them. In order to create meaning from the occurrences of life, the artist must step back from the flux so they are able to reflect and evaluate, but this necessary distancing from reality also ensures that the experience of life is second-hand, and therefore what is portrayed through

¹⁴⁰ Marowitz, introduction, *The Marowitz Hamlet & the Tragical History of Dr. Faustus* 38.

¹⁴¹ Marowitz, *The Other Way* 163.

¹⁴² Marowitz, *The Other Way* 164-165.

¹⁴³ Marowitz, *The Other Way* 164-166.

art cannot be an entirely valid representation. Similarly, collage is Marowitz's response to his frustration with the manner in which art has succumbed to 'form,' because 'it is precisely this "ordering" of life through art which has falsified it; made it pat and simplistic; formulaic and unconvincing.'¹⁴⁴ But since collage, with its rehearsed and ordered discontinuity, is merely another way in which art creates 'form' out of the formless flux of life, it cannot help but lead the artist, 'not to the fringes of "the cutting-edge" but into that unvariegated wilderness which inspired his desire to discriminate between life and art in the first place.'¹⁴⁵ Despite this, Marowitz believes that the collage format has the attribute of a greater verisimilitude to reality than the genres that have preceded it based on its ability to alter a play's 'time-signature,'¹⁴⁶ since 'its rhythms are closer to the ones that whip us through the Underground rush hour than the ones that nudged Shakespeare through the hills of Warwickshire' recognizing that '[t]he two overriding contemporary facts are speed and change.'¹⁴⁷ Within the collage format, the sudden shifts in location; in stage image; in the transformation of character; and in texture and tempo, amount to a monumental increase in the speed of the work's delivery,¹⁴⁸ and 'when you have the advantage of speed [...] (without, one must add, the loss of definition), not only do you change the nature of what is being said, you also change the purpose for saying it.'¹⁴⁹ It would have been helpful had Marowitz given us a more precise understanding of what he

¹⁴⁴ Marowitz, *The Other Way* 164.

¹⁴⁵ Marowitz, *The Other Way* 166.

¹⁴⁶ Marowitz, introduction, *The Marowitz Shakespeare* 13.

¹⁴⁷ Marowitz, introduction, *The Marowitz Hamlet & the Tragical History of Dr. Faustus* 40.

¹⁴⁸ See Marowitz, *The Marowitz Hamlet & the Tragical History of Dr. Faustus* 40: Marowitz stresses that this speed of delivery has 'nothing to do with *pace*, the mechanical acceleration of Aristotle's "slow time," but his meaning is unclear. In *Physics*, : Aristotle states clearly that although '[c]ontinuous time is long or short; and quantitative time is [reckoned by] many or few [periods of time ...] there is no fast or slow time, any more than even the number with which we count is fast or slow.' Aristotle, *Physics*, trans. Richard Hope (Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1961) 82. In his *Athenian Constitution*, : Aristototle refers to the 'slow time [which] brings justice in its train.' Aristotle, *Athenian Constitution*, trans. Frederic G. Kenyon (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger, 2004) 11. Neither of these seems to relate to theatrical pace, which, despite Marowitz's references to Aristotle, is based on an actor's committed intention, rather than 'mechanical acceleration.' In the words of Uta Hagen: questions of pacing, rhythm and tempo 'are now, always have been, and always will be the results of the actions, how you head for your objectives under the correctly defined circumstances.' Uta Hagen, *Respect for Acting* (New York: Macmillan, 1973) 204.

¹⁴⁹ Marowitz, introduction, *The Marowitz Shakespeare* 13.

means by ‘definition,’ but one may hypothesize that he implies ‘a statement of meaning’; if so, then he is declaring that the often imagistic and expressionistic scenes of the collage are capable of conveying a precise meaning – a highly debatable suggestion considering that meaning will generally be received differently by different audience members. Further, Marowitz is far from conclusive, or even consistent, when describing the ability of collage to communicate any precise meaning to an audience. He asserts that ‘all of us know Hamlet, even those of us who have never read the play or seen it performed [because there is] some smear of Hamlet somewhere in our collective unconscious which makes him familiar,¹⁵⁰ and that this is evidenced by the spectators’ comments made after witnessing the 85 minute collage adaptation – comments which Marowitz insists were ‘as valid and often as knowledgeable as those of scholars and veteran theatregoers.’¹⁵¹ Despite this (and within the same introductory chapter), he claims that ‘one of the prerequisites for Shakespearian collage is the audience’s general familiarity with the play,’¹⁵² and that ‘[i]t is because we know the continuity of a play like *Hamlet* that we are able to experience it discontinuously.’¹⁵³ Further, he admits that ‘[t]he fundamental problem of theatrical discontinuity is communication’ in that, by deleting the narrative structure, you eliminate the audience’s opportunity of ‘meeting your characters and watching them develop through actions. There is no reason why they should understand sporadic flashes out of a story to which they come as strangers and of which they see nothing but disconnected bits.’¹⁵⁴ For this reason, discontinuous works, including works by Marowitz, tend to originate from well known works so that the original narrative provides a basis of understanding within the

¹⁵⁰ Marowitz, introduction, *The Marowitz Hamlet & the Tragical History of Dr. Faustus* 10. Not all who saw the collage *Hamlet* shared this opinion: in an article in *The Times*, drama critic Irving Wardle referred to a production as ‘about as helpful as Charles Marowitz’s *Hamlet* collage would be to an audience of eskimos.’ Irving Wardle, ‘Experiment in an alien classic,’ *Times* 15 June 1977.

¹⁵¹ Marowitz, *Roar of the Canon* 167-168.

¹⁵² Marowitz, introduction, *The Marowitz Hamlet & the Tragical History of Dr. Faustus* 15.

¹⁵³ Marowitz, introduction, *The Marowitz Hamlet & the Tragical History of Dr. Faustus* 39-40.

¹⁵⁴ Marowitz, introduction, *The Marowitz Hamlet & the Tragical History of Dr. Faustus* 38.

flashes of reality which are unrelated by time, and which comprise the adaptation.

However, Marowitz also indicates that life's narrative is 'the accumulation of discontinuous events spread over a long period of time, eventually assembled into a story' – that we, as humans, possess an innate ability to piece together the 'information, hunches, guesses, lies and hearsay'¹⁵⁵ we gather on our fellows, and construct an accumulated meaning out this chaos of data. The problem, Marowitz proposes, is that the theatre has been operating for centuries on the basis of Aristotelian form, and spectators have become habituated to this falsely linear depiction of reality. The only life we know in a more or less continuous manner, states Marowitz, is our own, and even this is interrupted by bursts of memory, as well as the surreal events which clobber and caress us during the altered state of consciousness typified by dreaming sleep. The dream-life, Marowitz believes, 'makes artists out of all of us,'¹⁵⁶ and the job of the actor is to have conjured up that "dream world" in [their] waking world.'¹⁵⁷ If, then, the collage is intended to directly affect the spectators on a subconscious level of dreams and myths, accordingly the lack of communication of a precise narrative may not be germane to the process.

Marowitz specifically refers to a collage's speed changing the *purpose* of what is said, and this relates to his parameters for adaptation generally: the collage, 'although it tends to cover familiar ground (refers to characters, alludes to situations, comments on themes),' does so in order to deliver a new and specific theme – otherwise it 'would simply be another way of cutting meat.'¹⁵⁸ Marowitz acknowledges that the work of Stanislavsky 'enables actors to uncover psychological subtext; that is, the stew of living meaning directly

¹⁵⁵ Marowitz, introduction, *The Marowitz Hamlet & the Tragical History of Dr. Faustus* 39.

¹⁵⁶ Marowitz, *The Other Way* 160.

¹⁵⁷ Marowitz, *The Other Way* 35.

¹⁵⁸ Marowitz, introduction, *The Marowitz Shakespeare* 13.

underneath the text.’¹⁵⁹ But beneath psychological subtext, within the world of the subconscious, ‘[b]eyond the ego and beneath the id, there is a territory from which astounding insights can be dredged up to the world above’¹⁶⁰ if a director and actors are willing to forgo the known path. Following from Stanislavsky through to Artaud, the pursuit of a dramatic work’s psychological sub-text is followed by a search for what Marowitz describes as the ‘ur-text,’ the seminal human needs and desires which have been concealed, often due to their conflict with societal dictates. The challenge for the artist, and particularly for the director, is how to reveal, then convey, those mental states, using the practical theatrical tools available:

[i]s it not possible to use the theatre to reflect states of mind more accurately – not simply by removing settings but by implementing the space-of-the-stage so that its visual elements convey psychic moods, not only ‘period’ environment and physical locations?¹⁶¹

In the world of film, the task is less onerous, as dissolves to flashbacks or even to abstract images which convey particular emotional states are easily accomplished; however, they are far from impossible in the world of theatre, given the breadth of lighting, including projection and sound effects, available to the modern director. According to Marowitz,

[i]t is a very limited view of reality which contends that a play must take place in a concrete setting; almost like saying that life ‘takes place’ in one’s home, whereas we know that

¹⁵⁹ Marowitz, *Prospero’s Staff* 81.

¹⁶⁰ Marowitz, *The Other Way* 127.

¹⁶¹ Marowitz, introduction, *The Marowitz Hamlet & the Tragical History of Dr. Faustus* 35-36.

where we are is always a secondary consideration to who we think we are and what we happen to be feeling.¹⁶²

The strength of Marowitz's argument lies in the truth that fluidity of staging may well communicate emotional state more effectively than a realistic approach, and while this is not a new concept, it is a valid one. As he explains,

the fact remains that tangible settings perpetuate physical locales when the scene has shifted to other, more significant planes. And when, for instance, the dramatic reality of a scene suggests barrenness and desolation, the sight of settings and furniture cannot be blotted out of an spectator's mind as easily as it can from the character's.¹⁶³

With particular reference to the play under scrutiny,

[n]o scenery I have ever seen can keep up with the progress of a play like *Hamlet* because it really takes place in the actor's and spectator's shifting consciousness. That is the best place to stage any play [...] an area where colour, texture, object, and shape dramatize interior rather than exterior reality; where simultaneity of visual effects produce chords as sonorous and as exciting as those in modern music.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶² Marowitz, introduction, *The Marowitz Hamlet & the Tragical History of Dr. Faustus* 35.

¹⁶³ Marowitz, introduction, *The Marowitz Hamlet & the Tragical History of Dr. Faustus* 35.

¹⁶⁴ Marowitz, introduction, *The Marowitz Hamlet & the Tragical History of Dr. Faustus* 37.

The use of a flexible and minimalist setting, therefore, allows the quick shifts and transformations of the collage format a full range of motion in terms of creating and/or enhancing settings for the action which convey emotional as well as practical locales.

Chapter Two:

Marowitz's Hamlet

AN OVERVIEW

It is appropriate to begin an exploration of Charles Marowitz's Shakespearean adaptations with his collage version of *Hamlet*, as it was his first and arguably his 'flagship' re-working of classical texts. Also, Marowitz revised the piece a number of times and produced it internationally; one may therefore surmise that, unlike *An Othello* which was written in approximately three weeks,¹ *Hamlet* has received sufficient attention from the director/playwright to render it a work more fully embodying his notions of adaptation than others for which such revision and attention was lacking.

Marowitz's collage versions of *Hamlet* grew out of the Royal Shakespeare Company's Theatre of Cruelty season which began in the fall of 1963, during which he and Peter Brook, along with a cast of actors, began exploring the practical implementation of Artaud's theories as they applied to both the creation and use of a play text, and the resulting stage performance. In particular, they sought to investigate a theatrical creative method in which the text surrendered precedence to 'the collective imagination of the actors harnessed in such a way as to discover what an ensemble itself might "author,"'² and to explore 'a consciousness deeper than the one mired in familiar social circumstance.'³ The exercises which Marowitz devised as a starting point for the ensemble 'coaxed the actor into sounds, moves, spatial metaphors and non-verbal improvisation which, once glimpsed, were immediately understood to come from the labyrinth out of which human communication springs,'⁴ and which correspond to Artaud's descriptions of the imagined spectacle with which his Theatre of Cruelty reverberated. For example, an exercise under

¹ See Charles Marowitz, 'An Othello Casebook,' *The Act of Being* 163. Marowitz describes the play as being 'literally dashed out within three weeks.'

² Marowitz, *Burnt Bridges* 85.

³ Marowitz, *The Other Way* 111.

⁴ Marowitz, *Burnt Bridges* 86. Examples of these exercises may be found on Appendix Two, 'Notes on the Theatre of Cruelty,' found in Marowitz, *The Act of Being*, particularly pages 128-136.

the category of ‘Sound-and-Movement Similes’ in Marowitz’s ‘Notes on the Theatre of Cruelty’ began naturalistically, with an actor receiving a letter expressing news of an extreme nature, either positive or negative. In the final beat of the exercise, the actor allowed themselves to transition out of naturalism into a vocal and physical expression of their emotional state. Marowitz notes that, at first, the actors did so in a relatively banal manner: they ‘jumped for joy, fell into weeping, bolted upwards with surprised, stamped with rage.’⁵ However, after the actors released themselves from naturalistic expression,

[s]ounds were created which had the resonance of wounded animals; of pre-historic creatures being slain by atomic weapons. Movements became stark and unpredictable. [...]
Facial expressions, under the pressure of extended sounds, began to resemble Javanese masks and Zen sculpture.⁶

Marowitz states that he had been applying Artaud’s precepts for about seven years at his own theatre company, In-Stage,⁷ as well as in New York previous to his arrival in London, before Brook attended his In-Stage production of Ray Abell’s *A Little Something for the Maid*, ‘a short, discontinuous play which involved a fragmentary encounter between a man, a woman and a telephone.’⁸ In 1962, Marowitz was hired as Assistant Director on Brook’s Beckettian production of *King Lear* starring Paul Scofield and afterward was engaged as an artistic collaborator for the Theatre of Cruelty season. The two directors shared an interest in forms of theatrical communication which lay beyond the language based narrative of traditional theatre, and both, in future years, engaged in activities which delved further into this interest: Marowitz went on to explore discontinuous theatre

⁵ Marowitz, *The Act of Being* 129.

⁶ Marowitz, *The Act of Being* 130.

⁷ See Marowitz, *Burnt Bridges* 84.

⁸ Marowitz, *Burnt Bridges* 82.

through collage adaptations of classical plays; Brook presented his controversial production of Peter Weiss' *Marat/Sade*, then, some nine years later, assembled a small company of committed actors and toured them across Africa, where they created largely improvised performances in public spaces such as market squares, learning that 'some of the deepest aspects of human experience can reveal themselves through the sounds and movements of the human body in a way that strikes an identical chord in any observer, whatever his cultural and racial conditioning.'⁹ As part of their Theatre of Cruelty season and congruent with these interests, Brook and Marowitz began work on a collage version of *Hamlet*¹⁰ which explored what they considered to be the essential 'spirit' of the play in a discontinuous manner. Their explorations focused on the degree to which the essentials of Shakespeare's play might be communicated through a discontinuous renovation which jettisoned the syntax of the original narrative.

Although Marowitz complained that 'writing anything at all about *Hamlet* immediately induces a sense of playing the imposter, because a director, like a playwright, is supposed to say what he means in his work,'¹¹ he left a considerable amount of critical writing regarding the development of the several versions of his collage *Hamlet*, and therefore the play provides invaluable access to his objectives and justifications for and of collage theatre generally. These aims and justifications centre primarily around the concepts of perceptions of reality and the traditional use of language in theatrical storytelling. Noting that adaptors have been unearthing themes and meanings in the original plays of which Shakespeare would have been ignorant, Marowitz also suggests that

⁹ Michael Gibson & Peter Brook, 'Brook's Africa,' *TDR* 17.3 (1973): 50.

¹⁰ Marowitz relates that the seed for this exploration was born out of a discussion he had with Peter Brook after the latter had attended the his production of *A Little Something for the Maid*; 'Brook had said it would be fascinating to see Hamlet played that way, re-shuffled like a deck of familiar cards.' Charles Marowitz, 'Notes on the Theatre of Cruelty,' *Tulane Drama Review* 11.2 (1966): 157.

¹¹ Marowitz, introduction, *The Marowitz Hamlet & the Tragical History of Dr. Faustus* 9.

what has remained sacrosanct in Shakespeare is the language, the structure and the narrative. One of the questions behind the present undertaking is to discover to what extent one can juggle *those* elements and still maintain contact with what is essential in *Hamlet*.¹²

In terms of the collage format, his ambitions with his adaptation of *Hamlet* were therefore three-fold. First, believing that ‘the re-structuring of a work, the characters and situations of which are widely known, is an indirect way of making contact with that work’s essence,’¹³ he was striving to create a theatrical work from unconnected bits and pieces of the original play, which nonetheless remained true to his perception of the spirit of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*. The notion of the adaptor as artist, rather than merely technician, was also germane to his inquiry: if *Hamlet* was an ‘old vase,’ he pondered, might it be broken into pieces, reassembled into a completely new form, ‘and still retain the spirit of the original?’¹⁴ The necessity to understand exactly what comprises ‘the spirit’ of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* aside, Marowitz is clearly enunciating a creative, rather than a reductive, process. Second, coherent with his interest in the theories of Artaud, he was attempting to discover the extent to which a particular point of view on a classic work might be communicated in a form which did not rely upon ‘the crutch of narrative.’¹⁵ Third, Marowitz felt strongly that over familiarity with the original play, and particularly with its famous quotations and soliloquies, built up through thousands of productions over the last four hundred years, had created a context in which the words themselves no longer engendered a potent effect on an audience. Disputing C.S. Lewis’ contention that ‘one

¹² Marowitz, introduction, *The Marowitz Hamlet & the Tragical History of Dr. Faustus* 14-15.

¹³ Marowitz, introduction, *The Marowitz Shakespeare* 12.

¹⁴ Marowitz, introduction, *The Marowitz Hamlet & the Tragical History of Dr. Faustus* 10.

¹⁵ Marowitz, introduction, *The Marowitz Hamlet and the Tragical History of Dr. Faustus*.

better understands the nature of Hamlet by receiving the Poem rather than analysing the Prince,' Marowitz is adamant that '*Hamlet* is no longer the "Poem."' ¹⁶ He believes that it is adherence to the narrative of Shakespeare's play which renders *Hamlet* stagnant, and denies audiences a fresh and, because it has the potential to address new questions, a fuller relationship with the play.

MAROWITZ'S PERCEPTIONS OF SHAKESPEARE'S *HAMLET*

In terms of his perception of the original *Hamlet* and its title character, Marowitz is direct and unequivocal:

I despise Hamlet.

He is a slob.

A talker, an analyser, a rationalizer.

[...]

You may think he's a sensitive, well-spoken and erudite

fellow, but frankly, he gives me a pain in the ass. ¹⁷

Marowitz's apparent loathing of Hamlet derives chiefly from his perception of the character as a man of many words but little action, whose 'loquacious moralizing' is only 'a pretext for cowardice.' ¹⁸ In short, to Marowitz, Hamlet personifies 'the Paralyzed Liberal,' ¹⁹ the man of many words but little action.

¹⁶ Marowitz, introduction, *The Marowitz Hamlet and the Tragical History of Dr. Faustus* 11. This quotation represents Marowitz's interpretation of Lewis' essay, and is not a direct quotation from the essay itself. See C.S. Lewis, 'Hamlet: The Prince or The Poem,' *Proceedings of the British Academy* XXVIII (London: Humphrey Milford, 1942) .

¹⁷ Marowitz, *Roar of the Canon* 157.

¹⁸ Marowitz, *Roar of the Canon* 168.

¹⁹ Marowitz, *Roar of the Canon* 168.

Marowitz is only slightly less denunciative of Hamlet's friend, Horatio, whom he pronounces 'a rotter [...] a careerist [...] and an] obnoxious Yes-man';²⁰ this assessment leads him to punish the character by expunging him from the collage *Hamlet* altogether. Nonetheless, his comments on Horatio lend further insight into his thoughts on Hamlet himself, since '[i]f the old adage is true and one can read people by looking at their friends, then [Horatio is] an accurate gauge of Hamlet's inadequacies.'²¹ In a 'letter' to Horatio, Marowitz proclaims,

[i]t is no wonder Hamlet thinks so highly of you. You possess the very same fault that cripples him: the inability to permit conviction to give birth to action. You lack the moral gumption that makes a man forsake fruitless intellectual roundabouting for the sharp, straight path of direct action. [...] Not being "Passion's slave" is one thing, but being so devoid of passion that every rapier-thrust is converted to a pinprick is just elaborate hypocrisy.²²

During the 1960s, commitment to a theatre which provoked awareness of the need for political change led to significant infighting within the theatrical community on the basis of what one artist often perceived to be a colleague's façade of action, rather than its true counterpart; Richard G. Scharine suggests that, in terms of the playwrights of the period, 'dialectical disagreements are frequently expressed in personal attacks.'²³ In 1963, John Arden advertised a free-wheeling theatrical entertainment to take place at his home in North London, the purpose of which was ostensibly to respond to fellow playwright Arnold

²⁰ Marowitz, *Roar of the Canon* 159.

²¹ Marowitz, *Roar of the Canon* 160.

²² Marowitz, *Roar of the Canon* 159-160.

²³ Richard G. Scharine, 'Books in Review: Catherine Itzin, *Stages in the Revolution: Political Theatre in Britain Since 1968*,' *Theatre Journal* 33.4 (1981) 553.

Wesker, whom he stated had indirectly called him a ‘Paralyzed Liberal.’ In the ad, Arden invites the general public to help him ‘overcome this paralysis which he is inclined to admit’ by attending an open house which would release ‘the forces of Anarchy, Excitement, and Expressive Energy,’²⁴ thus hypothetically dispelling the charges of inaction with which he had been confronted. Wesker himself later became the target of a similar charge in 1970 when Derek McGrath, writing in the publication *Black Dwarf*, ‘dismissed Wesker’s socialism as “a tremulous flirtation with ‘progressive’ ideas.”’²⁵ That same year, David Mercer, ‘one of the first self-declared Marxist playwrights of the sixties,’²⁶ came under heavy criticism from D.A.N. Jones of the *Listener* on the basis that he had had the temerity to hold up the less than sterling Soviet precedent of ‘prisons, torture, censorship, military repression and falsified history’²⁷ and his subsequent doubt as to it being an appropriate model for implementation in Britain. As well, Mercer’s own mental issues, which included a nervous breakdown in 1957 and a subsequent association with the British Institute of Psycho-analysis, created an interest in psychological considerations which became manifest in his plays, prompting Jones to query, “Why is this Marxist so concerned with the psychological problems of declassed individualists?”²⁸ The notion of what constituted suitable ‘action’ for the artist committed to social change was therefore much debated during the period. Ed Berman, who clarified that the word ‘political’ is ‘not a code word for “Marxist,”’²⁹ tended to see politics as something to be deeply engrained in structure, and his Inter-Action company was set up accordingly:

²⁴ John Arden, quoted in Simon Trussler, ‘Political Progress of a Paralyzed Liberal: The Community Dramas of John Arden,’ *Drama Review: TDR* 13.4 (1969): 182. Other sources suggest that Wesker’s actual phrase was ‘wishy-washy liberal.’ See Itzin 102 and Michael Patterson, *Strategies of Political Theatre: Post-War British Playwrights* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003) 55.

²⁵ Itzin 103.

²⁶ Itzin 91.

²⁷ D.A.N. Jones, ‘Mercer Unmarxed,’ *Listener* 14 May 1970.

²⁸ Jones, *Listener*.

²⁹ Ed Berman, from a 1978 unpublished interview with Catherine Itzin, quoted in Itzin 52.

although operating officially as a charity, the leadership and living arrangements were essentially cooperative and communal; their original vision plan embraced both the concept of a pension fund for their workers and a system of sabbatical leave. Marowitz's desire to reproach the 'Paralyzed Liberal' was therefore in step with the discussions of the day even within the community of theatre artists exploring sociopolitical subject matter. Whether his choice of Shakespeare's Hamlet is an appropriate subject upon whom to address this issue, and whether other, possibly unconscious, desires both aided in this choice and effectively undermined his coherent communication of this accusation, will be dealt with later in this chapter, as well as in Chapter Six.

The Danish prince's lack of action, according to Marowitz, is seen in many areas of the play, beyond Hamlet's failure to revenge his father's murder: it also can be discerned in his acceptance of the usurpation of the Danish crown by his uncle; his acquiescence to his mother's societally barred incest; his adherence to his uncle's command to voyage to England; and his lack of common sense in allowing the murderous, usurping Claudius to lure him into a duel with Laertes. On a different note, it is a common complaint amongst theatre directors that every audience member feels themselves a capable critic, moreover bearing a duty to express their comments to the trained and practiced individuals who have created the work just seen: it is therefore possibly an annoyance closer to home that causes Marowitz to decry Hamlet's 'egoistic delight in providing banal acting-tips to hardy old professionals such as the Player King.'³⁰ As well, Marowitz questions whether Hamlet is a coward, as he himself suggests, or 'simply a poseur, a frustrated actor who *plays* the

³⁰ Marowitz, *Roar of the Canon* 168.

scholar, the courtier and the soldier as an actor (a very bad actor) assumes a variety of roles to which he is not naturally suited.’³¹

The character’s failure to evoke violent means to accomplish his ends seems a particular point of contention for Marowitz, who asserts that ‘violence, were it performed, would be an honorable response to the greater violence committed against the dead King,’³² as well as an appropriate service to his country. In Marowitz’s eyes, Hamlet’s inaction results in the death of the royalty of Denmark and the country’s presumed takeover by the leaders of Norway; subsequently, ‘[t]he “damndest defeat” in the play is not Claudius’s murder of the king, but the loss of an entire country due to the cantankerous neurosis of one man who wasn’t up to his job.’³³ Marowitz hates Hamlet and his place in the mythos of modern history so entirely, it seems, that he finds murder less deplorable than ineptitude. In fact, Marowitz goes so far as to say that Hamlet is ‘a very disreputable person. Hamlet, given the code of honour that existed at the time, behaves very reprehensibly. He *should* have committed murder.’³⁴ Unfortunately, Marowitz is quite simply incorrect in this assertion. In *The Elizabethan Hamlet*, Arthur McGee reports on the religious training received by every Elizabethan, which included the absolute condemnation of revenge as laid out in the interpretative writing on the sixth commandment, ‘Thou shalt not kill.’ Christians were forbidden murder as a physical action, but were also counseled against ‘the murder of the heart and of the tongue.’³⁵ ‘Elizabethan moralists condemned revenge as illegal, blasphemous, immoral, irrational, unnatural, and unhealthy – not to mention unsafe.

³¹ Marowitz, *Roar of the Canon* 157.

³² Marowitz, *Roar of the Canon*. This opinion anticipates *Variations on the Merchant of Venice*, and Marowitz’s decision to override traditional Jewish religious prohibitions against violence in order that Shylock might end the play a victor by murdering his British/Venetian adversaries.

³³ Marowitz, *Prospero’s Staff* 130-131.

³⁴ Charles Marowitz, interview with Peter Ansorge, ‘The Memoirs of Marowitz,’ *Plays and Players* (Oct. 1972): 21. Italics in original.

³⁵ *Early Writings of John Hooper D.D.*, Parker Society (1853) 368, quoted in Arthur McGee, *The Elizabethan Hamlet* (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1987) 3.

Moreover, not only did revenge violate religion, law, morality, and common sense, it was also thoroughly un-English.³⁶ There was, then, ‘no ambiguity in the basic religious instruction of the Elizabethans. God was Justice and only He could revenge. Thus in human terms there was no such thing as “just revenge.”’³⁷ Accordingly, any example of action described as ‘just revenge’ in dramatic literature was undertaken by characters with evil motives, as demonstrated in plays such as *The Spanish Tragedy*, *The Massacre at Paris*, *Faustus*, and *The Revenger’s Tragedy*.³⁸ McGee also cites Dekker’s *The Witch of Edmonton*, in which Mother Sawyer is offered ‘just revenge against thy foes,’³⁹ not by a good spirit, but by the Devil. Therefore, Elizabethan playwrights were able to present the notion of ‘just revenge’ in their scripts, as they knew their audiences would identify it as the work of an evil apparition which sought to tempt a character into un-Christian action. Hamlet himself acknowledges this when he ponders:

The spirit that I have seen
May be a dev’l, and the dev’l hath power
T’assume a pleasing shape, yea, and perhaps,
Out of my weakness and my melancholy,
As he is very potent with such spirits,
Abuses me to damn me.⁴⁰

Therefore, while Marowitz condemns Hamlet for his failure to exhibit what he describes as the honorable response of violence by revenging his father in accordance to the Ghost’s exhortations, this is a modern perspective on the action of Shakespeare’s play which bears

³⁶ Eleanor Prosser, *Hamlet and Revenge* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1971) 10.

³⁷ McGee 4.

³⁸ See Chapter One of McGee, *The Elizabethan Hamlet* for details of these characters.

³⁹ Thomas Dekker, *The Witch of Edmonton: A Critical Edition*, ed. Etta Soiref Onat (New York: Garland, 1980) 201.

⁴⁰ William Shakespeare, ‘Hamlet,’ *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Princeton: Houghton Mifflin, 1974) II.ii.598-603. All further quotations from the play in this thesis will be from this source, and will be shown as ‘Shakespeare, *Hamlet*’ followed by the act, scene and line numbers.

no relation to either the context in which it was written, or the likely reception of the original audiences. Marowitz is certainly free to make a conscious decision to place his adaptation within a modern context regarding revenge: his error lies in ascribing dishonour to Shakespeare's hero for not following a modern moral paradigm in spite of his Elizabethan time period.

That the adaptor has taken a personal dislike to the character of Hamlet is clear; he himself goes so far as to describe it as 'one's deep-seated prejudice against the character,'⁴¹ so the question that naturally arises is from whence does this prejudice spring? One hypothesis might be that the argumentative nature of the 'bearded, New York upstart'⁴² who, for some years has 'had a curious love-hate relationship with certain old plays – mostly those of Shakespeare,'⁴³ attempts to tear Hamlet down out of an unconscious resentment that others have raised him up. If this is the case, it would explain why Marowitz looks at the character with tunnel vision, failing to see the positive qualities of intelligence and perception, focusing *only* on Hamlet's failure to act decisively in seeking revenge by murdering his uncle, and ignoring the religious precepts against revenge within his society which create a difficult dilemma for a loyal son.

His criticism of Horatio has already been noted, but Marowitz's assessments of other characters in the play seem likewise unfavourable, perhaps resulting from a need for them to possess qualities that would support his negative opinion of Hamlet. For example, in *Prospero's Staff*,⁴⁴ Marowitz equates Ophelia with Lolita, the title character from the novel by Vladimir Nabokov. Dolores Haze, also known as Dolly, Lolita and simply L, is a precocious twelve year old girl who is desired and soon possessed by her middle-aged step-

⁴¹ Marowitz, *Roar of the Canon* 168.

⁴² Marowitz, *Burnt Bridges* 76

⁴³ Marowitz, introduction, *The Marowitz Shakespeare* 11.

⁴⁴ See *Prospero's Staff* 129.

father, Humbert Humbert. After the death of her mother, Humbert attempts to seduce Lolita, only to find that it is she who seduces him, having previously lost her virginity at summer camp. Banned in the UK for two years as pornographic, Nabokov's tale resonates with male perceptions of innocence versus sexuality in young women. It is of interest, therefore, that Marowitz, who was thirty years old at the time he produced the collage *Hamlet* at his In-Stage company, identifies Ophelia with Lolita, and admits that he 'cannot think of Ophelia except erotically.'⁴⁵ Later in the chapter, he concedes that, '[t]o say that Ophelia is like Lolita is at once a distortion and an extension of certain truths about the character as Shakespeare depicts her.'⁴⁶

When directing his gaze towards Hamlet Sr., Marowitz similarly draws conclusions regarding the character of Hamlet's father and stepfather with little textual support and a clear bias against the title character:

King Hamlet: this rasping, vengeful old codger who ruled a kingdom already rotten – for the corruption at court certainly existed before Claudius ever came to the throne; [... r]uler of a war-torn state; advancer of toads like Polonius; husband to a vain, fickle creature like Gertrude; father of a wishy-washy son.⁴⁷

He concludes that '[e]verything we discern about the dead king and the kingdom he bequeathed throws doubt upon his character.'⁴⁸ However, while an adaptor is free to modify characters as they see fit, Marowitz contends that he takes his characterization of Hamlet Senior from Shakespeare's play and this is not borne out by an examination of the

⁴⁵ Marowitz, *Prospero's Staff* 126.

⁴⁶ Marowitz, *Prospero's Staff* 129.

⁴⁷ Marowitz, *Prospero's Staff* 129-130.

⁴⁸ Marowitz, *Prospero's Staff* 130.

text. Far from being an ‘old codger,’ Hamlet Sr., according to his son, possessed ‘[a]n eye like Mars, to threaten and command’; ‘a grace was seated on [his] brow:/ Hyperion’s curls, the front of Jove himself.’⁴⁹ Further he was blessed with ‘A combination and a form indeed, / Where every god did seem to set his seal / To give the world assurance of a man.’⁵⁰ Nor can this assessment be discarded as Hamlet’s filial loyalty: an accomplished warrior in life, according to Horatio, his Ghost displayed ‘that fair and warlike form / In which the majesty of buried Denmark / Did sometimes march.’⁵¹ Horatio relates that Hamlet Sr. was ‘prick’d on’ and ‘Dar’d to the combat’⁵² by the elder Fortinbras, and in slaying the Norwegian king, won all the lands of which the latter was possessed: rather than being a war torn state, Denmark was the beneficiary of Hamlet Senior’s military prowess. Further, to decry King Hamlet as vengeful, presumably for desiring his son to seek retribution for his murder, then to decry the younger Hamlet as paralyzed for failing to accomplish this vengeance, seems contradictory at best.

Claudius, usually perceived as a villain, receives a more positive evaluation from Marowitz: ‘Hamlet decries the moral side of Claudius’s character, but from all we see, Claudius is an efficient monarch and a tactful politician.’⁵³ But this can hardly be viewed as an appropriate defence. Hamlet decries the King’s morality because he not only murdered; he murdered his own brother and Hamlet’s father. Claudius’s aptitude for administration and politics hardly renders these heinous actions benign, and to argue so on his behalf raises questions as to both the morality and the logic of Marowitz himself.

In short, an examination of Marowitz’s perceptions of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* in terms of its major characters leads to the hypothesis that he has projected a personality type

⁴⁹ Shakespeare, *Hamlet* III.iv.55-57.

⁵⁰ Shakespeare, *Hamlet* III.iv.60-62.

⁵¹ Shakespeare, *Hamlet* I.i.47-49.

⁵² Shakespeare, *Hamlet* I.i.83-84.

⁵³ Marowitz, *Prospero’s Staff* 130.

he finds personally repugnant onto the title character, and then has readjusted his evaluation of the other characters to support this bias.

MAROWITZ'S OBJECTIVES IN HIS *HAMLET*

One of Marowitz's primary parameters for adaptation is that a new work should communicate a novel meaning, one which challenges the implicit themes of the original work. Additionally, 'a collage must have a purpose as coherent and proveable [sic] as any conventional work of art.'⁵⁴ It is interesting to note that Marowitz's root objectives regarding his collage *Hamlet* appear to have changed significantly between its first 28 minute incarnation created in 1964 during the Theatre of Cruelty season and the 85 minute version, first performed in 1966, under exploration in this thesis. Writing of his collaboration with Peter Brook in a lecture presented to the Deutsche Shakespeare-Gesellschaft West in 1987, and published in *Roar of the Canon* in 2001, he described their desire to determine whether the play could still convey its original 'nuances and insights' in a discontinuous version which 'transmitted the play in bits and pieces, the way glistening shards of glass catch the eye of a spectator in a mobile.'⁵⁵ His illustration of an intention to shatter Shakespeare's *Hamlet* into gleaming fragments seems to communicate both beauty – since mobiles are usually created to attract the eye in a pleasurable way – and complexity – since the shards of glass reflect the multiplicity within the original work, and their diverse shapes and colours invite the viewer to experience this intricacy. However, in the Introduction to *The Marowitz Shakespeare*, published in 1990, his stated objective was to de-throne the classical image of the melancholy Dane as a sensitive hero, and thereby 'to indict the values which he represented; values which (i.e. misdirected moral concern,

⁵⁴ Marowitz, introduction, *The Marowitz Shakespeare* 13.

⁵⁵ Marowitz, *Roar of the Canon* 166.

intellectual analyses as action-substitute, etc.) were, in [his] view, disreputable in our society.’⁵⁶ Further, he asserts that these values have been inculcated into the mores of modern society due to repeated exposure to plays, of which Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* is a prime example, and that ‘by assaulting the character of Hamlet, one was deriding the supreme prototype of the conscience-stricken but paralyzed liberal: one of the most lethal and obnoxious characters in modern times.’⁵⁷

What Marowitz is describing is a move from an experiment on the nature of the discontinuous genre and its effect on the complexity of a classic text, into the depiction of the original play’s protagonist in a singular and reductive manner. While the original narrative has been fragmented and arranged into a new and discontinuous form, Shakespeare’s portrayal of the character of Hamlet as a powerful mind besieged by indecision when confronted with a complicated situation has been narrowed to a somewhat cartoonish rendering of an actionless coward. This process of reducing the complexity of Shakespeare’s characters and narratives is a common occurrence in Marowitz’s adaptations, as will continue to be discussed in upcoming chapters, and forces a consideration of the appropriateness of such an action in terms of his expressed objective: changing public opinion of the character of Hamlet. Shakespeare’s characters have engaged the popular imagination for over four hundred years, at least in part due to their verisimilitude to the human beings around us. Harold Bloom notes for example, that while Marlowe’s Barabas is ‘no more a Jew than [...] Faustus a Christian,’⁵⁸ Shakespeare’s Shylock has come to represent the essential ‘Jew.’ ‘So immense is the power of Shakespearean mimesis,’ states Bloom, that it holds the capacity to harm while it

⁵⁶ Marowitz, introduction, *The Marowitz Shakespeare* 13.

⁵⁷ Marowitz, introduction, *The Marowitz Shakespeare* 13.

⁵⁸ Harold Bloom, introduction, *William Shakespeare’s The Merchant of Venice: Modern Critical Interpretations*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House, 1986) 2.

illuminates human nature.⁵⁹ If Shakespeare has, in effect, created near archetypal characters through mimesis, it seems doubtful that a character with less dimension, such as Marowitz's Hamlet, would engage the popular imagination in the same way.

Also, in order to achieve his objective of representing an actionless Hamlet, Marowitz must select only that text and those behaviours within Shakespeare's play which support the viewpoint he wishes to communicate, and this is characteristic of a propaganda technique identified as 'Card Stacking' by the now defunct Institute for Propaganda Analysis.⁶⁰ Card Stacking involves selecting and communicating only those facts or beliefs which support a particular perspective, discarding others that would allow a fuller, truer and therefore more realistic picture to be presented. The debate regarding the relationship between art and propaganda is a complex one, but a few points are worthy of inclusion within this context. The first question of interest is whether creative art has the ability function as propaganda in terms of changing public opinion on particular topics. Eliseo Vivas in 'Art, Morals and Propaganda' notes the Marxist stance that, since all art 'expresses the ideology of the artist,' and since art undeniably has 'practical effects' on those who encounter it, 'one must also grant that all art is propaganda.'⁶¹ For Vivas, this is a specious argument; he responds by articulating that 'Art leads to contemplation, to knowledge in the Aristotelian sense'; 'Art does not lead to action.'⁶² Joseph Wood Krutch offers his belief that while '[p]ropaganda [...] is not incompatible with literature, [...]the real business of literature is [...] the communication of an aesthetic experience, and the most striking

⁵⁹ Bloom, introduction, *The Merchant of Venice: Modern Critical Interpretations 2*.

⁶⁰ Marowitz's knowledge of and/or conscious use of propaganda techniques is unknown. However, his use of the term 'message' when describing his adaptations is consistent with the terminology employed in propaganda, as is the term 'glittering generality,' employed by Marowitz in comments given at a public luncheon in 1970. See de Jongh, 'An Undaunted Moralist,' *Guardian*. 'Glittering Generality,' a seldom used phrase, is another propaganda technique identified by the IPA.

⁶¹ Eliseo Vivas, 'Art, Morals, and Propaganda,' *International Journal of Ethics* 46.1 (1935): 90-91.

⁶² Vivas 93.

characteristic of an aesthetic experience is a certain disinterestedness.⁶³ It must be observed that both of the comments given above were written before World War II, long before the theatre of Brecht made its impact upon the theatrical world, and long before the arts activism of the 1960s. Perhaps the best argument against the narrowing of content within a dramatic work in an attempt to manipulate viewer attitudes lies with the lack of effectiveness it demonstrates in terms of evoking a long term change of opinion in those encountering it: in terms of forms of communication which present only one side of an argument, as opposed to two, an experiment at Princeton University found that

among members of the audience who were initially *opposed* to the communicator's position, a two-sided presentation (including mention of opposing as well as supporting arguments) was much more effective in producing opinion changes in the desired direction than was a one-sided presentation (which mentioned only arguments supporting the communicator's position).⁶⁴

This indicates that Marowitz might have been more successful, both in terms of changing the public perception of the character of Hamlet, as well as potentially transferring this opinion to the hypothetical character of the paralyzed Liberal, had a less reductive depiction of the Danish prince been given.

The difference between Marowitz's approaches between the original and later versions of the adaptation is clearly visible in photographs of the productions. A still from the original version of the collage *Hamlet* during the Theatre of Cruelty season⁶⁵ shows the

⁶³ Joseph Wood Krutch, 'Literature and Propaganda,' *English Journal* 22.10 (1933): 797-799.

⁶⁴ Arthur A. Lumsdaine and Irving L. Janis, 'Resistance to "Counterpropaganda" Produced by One-Sided and Two-Sided "Propaganda" Presentations,' *Public Opinion Quarterly* 17.3 (1953): 312.

⁶⁵ See Marowitz, *The Other Way* 150, 162.

cast performing in neutral costumes with a vaguely Elizabethan feel rendered in shades of black, grey and white; the women are wearing long skirts and full jackets. In contrast, a photograph of the production of the 85 minute script under exploration, staged at the Bankside Globe in 1975, displays a soft, pudgy Hamlet swinging on a rope while wearing running shoes and a Wittenberg University sweatshirt;⁶⁶ Gertrude resembles a society matron in full evening dress. A still of the 1969 version at the Open Space shows Hamlet dressed in loose black pants, t-shirt and smock jacket, while Ophelia has her hair in pigtails and is wearing what looks like a child's party dress – short with a pleated skirt and a ribbon at the waist – along with white knee socks and black patent shoes.⁶⁷ Schiele in *Off-Centre Stages* describes Ophelia's make-up in this production as 'rouged like a puppet-doll with round red blobs on her cheeks and huge spidery eyelashes painted on the skin all around her eyes.'⁶⁸ What these photographs, in combination with Marowitz's comments, suggest is that a re-direction was implemented between the first and subsequent versions, and that the shift in costuming paralleled one from a broad exploration of discontinuous technique to a production which embodied a narrow directorial meaning. This new directorial meaning springs from Marowitz's disapproval of Hamlet's ultimate unwillingness to employ violence to achieve what the adaptor construes as a just end, simultaneously manifesting his anger at the perceived disservice Shakespeare's play has performed upon the world by nurturing the image of the actionless left-wing individual as a positive member of society. In a dramatic reversal, it is no less than violence that Marowitz has personally unleashed on Shakespeare's character and his play:

⁶⁶ See Marowitz, *The Other Way* 44.

⁶⁷ *Getty Images*, 6 Feb 2012 <<http://www.gettyimages.ca/detail/news-photo/natasha-pyne-as-ophelia-nikolas-simmonds-as-hamlet-and-news-photo/2642532>>.

⁶⁸ Schiele 24. The make-up Schiele describes is not visible in the photograph noted, which portrays what is described as a 'mock scene.' Presumably the still was taken outside the performance schedule and full make-up was not employed. This type of make-up *is* visible, however, in a photograph of the 1972 production in Aarhus, Denmark, found at Marowitz, *The Other Way* 190. Confirmation that Marowitz directed the production may be found at Forsythe 374.

Without wishing to vent that animus against the received-perception of “the vacillating Dane,” there would have been no point or purpose in the adaptation. Being unable to take a knife and cut up Hamlet himself one did the next best thing which was to take a scissors and cut up the play in which he had been enshrined.⁶⁹

When creating his collage *Hamlet*, Marowitz was particularly interested in using the collage genre’s discontinuity to give the audience an interior look at the title character, since ‘with *Hamlet*, the collage treatment had the intention of transmitting experience from the play through the eyes of the central protagonist.’⁷⁰ There are times at which Marowitz frames his adaptation of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* as an exploration by confronting the process with questions regarding point of view. For example, knowing that the collage would present the play ‘in bits and pieces,’ he asks,

what would flashes from the play look like if seen from the vantage-point of the central character; that is to say distorted and exaggerated as they might appear to the mind of a highly pressured young man with neurotic tendencies suffering from delusions and hallucinations?⁷¹

Yet this pre-supposes that the character of Hamlet is exhibiting a real, rather than a feigned, madness, and on this basis, any revenge to which Hamlet’s dead father persuades him is an unhappy manifestation of this madness. If Hamlet is actually deluded, how can he be sure that what he sees and hears is real? Marowitz sidesteps the question by stating that ‘[f]or a

⁶⁹ Marowitz, *Roar of the Canon* 168.

⁷⁰ Marowitz, introduction, *The Marowitz Shakespeare* 14.

⁷¹ Marowitz, *Roar of the Canon* 166.

man locked in a fantasy, *real* and *unreal* are meaningless terms. Everything that enters his perceptions is real *for him*.⁷² Despite this, Marowitz condemns the character for not acting madly; for not taking action on the basis of his father's ghost's story. Can Hamlet *be* neurotic, deluded and suffering from hallucinations – that is to say, actually mentally ill – and still be judged for failing to enact the logical, linear thought process of 'you did *this*, so I must do *that* in order to bring about justice'? Is it logical or appropriate to assess an individual as lunatic, then to upbraid them for being someone who 'has eloquent opinions about every subject under the sun but, when faced with a real challenge, merely wilts and wanes like the gutless piece of baloney he is'?⁷³ Similarly, Irving Wardle notes that Marowitz, 'instead of judging the Prince against a real society, claims that the society is entirely a projection of the hero's fantasy,'⁷⁴ so that, as represented by Hamlet, the 'paralyzed Liberals' against whom Marowitz rails would of necessity be hallucinatory and paranoid for the comparison to be apt.

Further, it is difficult to understand how portraying the action from Hamlet's interior point of view could possibly serve the task of deriding him as a representative of those persons who moralize without taking action, since an interior perspective will always convey a sympathetic rationalization of a path taken: even the most heinous murderer can find a personal justification for their actions.

AN ANALYSIS OF MAROWITZ'S *HAMLET*

Marowitz's collage *Hamlet* includes only text from the original play, but it is significantly re-arranged, and often re-distributed to other characters. The cast has been

⁷² Marowitz, *Prospero's Staff* 129. Italics in original.

⁷³ Marowitz, *Roar of the Canon* 168.

⁷⁴ Irving Wardle, 'Hamlet in a permissive age,' *Times* 6 Apr. 1968.

reduced to eleven actors, with Polonius doubling as the Clown with only a minimal change in portrayal or appearance suggested as appropriate by Marowitz.⁷⁵

The Action-less versus the Action-oriented

Marowitz's expressed intention with his collage was the indictment of Hamlet as the paralyzed Liberal, and he therefore presents the character as weak and vacillating; this weakness is deliberately juxtaposed against the strength and action of Fortinbras. For example, the play begins with a deliberate comparison between the title character and the Swedish prince: the two characters '*stand facing each other*,'⁷⁶ after which Fortinbras moves forward to confer with his Captain, and '*HAMLET falls in behind the CAPTAIN like a soldier in the ranks*.'⁷⁷ This contrast of the action-oriented leader to the action-less follower is repeated many times throughout the production, supporting Marowitz's objective of exposing his perception of Hamlet's lack of decisive action. This objective also explains his choice of the soliloquy, 'How all occasions do inform against me,' as a central and organizing theme for the collage. The soliloquy is severely edited in the adaptation, and shared with Fortinbras:

HAMLET: How all occasions do inform against me,
And spur my dull revenge. What is a man
If his chief good and market of his time
Be but to sleep and feed? A beast, no more:
Sure that he made us with such large discourse

⁷⁵ A note on the *Hamlet* cast page suggests that either a 'swift change in vocal characterization' or a slight change in appearance, 'for example, by putting a grey-gloved hand to his chin to suggest a beard,' would be appropriate to distinguish between the Clown and Polonius characters. Marowitz, 'Hamlet,' *The Marowitz Shakespeare* 28.

⁷⁶ Marowitz, 'Hamlet,' *The Marowitz Shakespeare* 29. All further quotations from this source will be listed as 'Marowitz, *Hamlet*' followed by the page number.

⁷⁷ Marowitz, *Hamlet* 29.

Looking before and after, gave us not
That capability and god-like reason [sic]

FORTINBRAS. (*Accusingly*) To rust in us unus'd.⁷⁸

'Discourse,' in this setting, refers to 'reasoning, thought, reflection,'⁷⁹ and since this portion of the text, isolated from what follows in the original play, speaks to man's need for logical deliberation, it is an odd editing of the soliloquy in view of Marowitz's expressed objective to present the ineffectiveness of talk versus action. Later in the full text of Shakespeare's version of the soliloquy, Hamlet expresses sentiments more coherent with Marowitz's concerns, namely

I do not know

Why yet I live to say, "This thing's to do,"
Sith I have cause, and will, and strength, and means
To do't.
[...]

O, from this time forth,

My thoughts be bloody, or be nothing worth,⁸⁰

and it is strange that the adaptor chose not to incorporate this text, possibly relying on an audience's familiarity with the play to fill in the blanks. Nonetheless, brought forward from IV.iv in the original play⁸¹ to very close to the beginning of the collage, the text, divided between Hamlet and Fortinbras, sets up a tension between a bestial lack of consciousness, and human thought and action, as well as the disparity Marowitz wishes to establish between the two characters.

⁷⁸ Marowitz, *Hamlet* 30.

⁷⁹ Alexander Schmidt, *Shakespeare Lexicon and Quotation Dictionary I* (New York: Dover, 1971) 311.

⁸⁰ Shakespeare, *Hamlet* IV.iv.43-66.

⁸¹ The soliloquy is completely absent in the First Folio of 1623, but is present in the Quarto of 1604, as well as in modern editions based on that quarto.

Later, alone on stage with Hamlet, Fortinbras attempts to stir him to action, first by suggesting that ‘some vicious mole of nature’ in men ‘[s]hall in the general censure take corruption / From that particular fault.’⁸² Hamlet continues in this vein, ‘*[a]s if not understanding the implication.*’⁸³ The stage directions note that Fortinbras, ‘*trying another tack*’ with the ‘Right to be great’ text, continues ‘*[u]rging direct action,*’ only to have Hamlet respond with proposed delay:

HAMLET. No.

When he is drunk asleep, or in his rage,

Or in the incestuous pleasure of his bed ...

FORTINBRAS (*He’s heard it all before*)

Ay sure, this is most brave.

HAMLET: (*On the defensive*) The spirit that I have seen

May be the devil ... the devil hath power

To assume a pleasing shape.⁸⁴

The stage directions note that Fortinbras is ‘*unmoved by this ruse,*’ finally ‘*washing his hands of him [Hamlet] completely,*’⁸⁵ and exiting the stage. HAMLET then speaks directly to the audience: ‘Had *he* the motive and the cue for passion / That I have, he would drown the stage with tears / And cleave the general ear with horrid speech.’⁸⁶ These ongoing comparisons between Hamlet and Fortinbras serve Marowitz’s objective to cast aspersions on Hamlet’s tendency to talk without backing his speech up with action, but they do so in an extremely bald manner, implying cowardice and/or indolence as the cause, without

⁸² Marowitz, *Hamlet* 63-64.

⁸³ Marowitz, *Hamlet* 64. Italics in original.

⁸⁴ Marowitz, *Hamlet* 64-65. Italics in original.

⁸⁵ Marowitz, *Hamlet* 65. Italics in original.

⁸⁶ Marowitz, *Hamlet* 65. Italics in original.

taking into account the very real philosophical dilemma in which the prince is caught regarding societal dictates against revenge.

Laertes' angry resolution is also juxtaposed against Hamlet's inertia in the adaptation: when the former confronts Claudius upon the discovery of Polonius' death, he declares, 'I'll not be juggled with. / To hell allegiance; vows to the blackest devil,' whereupon the stage directions note that Hamlet responds '*[w]eakly trying to match LAERTES' passion.*'⁸⁷ At Ophelia's graveside, after learning of her burial in unsanctified ground, Laertes leaps into his sister's grave, reappearing with her body. He then proceeds to take action by directly accosting the man who would block his sister's ascent into heaven: 'I tell thee, churlish priest, / A ministering angel shall my sister be / When thou liest howling.'⁸⁸ When Hamlet re-enters the scene, attacking Laertes' passion, he is portrayed as a mere puppet, prompted by the clown to 'Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounced it to you, trippingly on the tongue.'⁸⁹ After Hamlet's sudden outburst of zeal, his mother queries his emotional state, since he is speaking to the 'incorporal air':⁹⁰ in Marowitz's version of the play, even the action-oriented spirit just exhibited by the Danish prince has been in his imagination only, and he collapses onto his mother, declaring that he is mad.

An Internalized Point of View

As previously discussed, Marowitz chose to portray the world of Elsinore as seen through the eyes of a man experiencing neuroses, who has trouble distinguishing reality from hallucination. One way in which he does this is through the elision of characters, both

⁸⁷ Marowitz, *Hamlet* 33. Italics in original.

⁸⁸ Marowitz, *Hamlet* 56.

⁸⁹ Marowitz, *Hamlet* 56.

⁹⁰ Marowitz, *Hamlet* 57.

in Hamlet's mind, and within the play's staging. In contrast with his *A Macbeth* which foregrounded 'the peculiar knot of trinities that winds its way through the play,'⁹¹ the collage *Hamlet* focuses on binaries, creating a theatrical alchemy blending Ophelia with Gertrude, and the Ghost of Hamlet Sr. with Claudius: 'the dead father with the stepfather; the faithless mother with the seemingly faithless mistress; the past with the present; the actual with the illusory.'⁹² Marowitz goes so far as to state that 'Fortinbras is Hamlet; Hamlet is Fortinbras: in everything, that is, but leadership, resolution and action,' further noting erroneously that it is 'curious that Hamlet and Fortinbras never perform on the stage together.'⁹³ In the case of Ophelia and Gertrude, Marowitz alludes to an Oedipal complex existing within Hamlet, evidenced in the prince's distaste

that he could sink to the same kind of lechery with Ophelia as his mother has committed with his step father and that Ophelia should be as accessible to him as Gertrude was to Claudius. It is the classic repulsion of the lover who despises his sexual object because he discovers she is just as readily enjoyed by others.⁹⁴

In essence, Marowitz is describing Freud's Oedipal complex as it applies to Hamlet. In the most classic version of this dysfunction, the guilt produced by a young man's latent sexual desire for his own mother causes him to divide the world of womanhood into 'good' girls

⁹¹ Marowitz, introduction, *The Marowitz Shakespeare* 14-15.

⁹² Marowitz, *Prospero's Staff* 129.

⁹³ Marowitz, introduction, *The Marowitz Hamlet & the Tragical History of Dr. Faustus* 19. Marowitz's statement discounts the context in which the original play would have been performed, since the Elizabethans tended towards a juxtaposition of characters on stage, providing a simultaneous foreground and background to the action. For example, while scene IV.iv is present in the First Folio of 1623 in a highly edited version containing only nine lines of text between Fortinbras and his Captain, the 'Good' Quarto of 1604 contains a full scene, including the soliloquy, 'How all occasions doe informe against me,' upon which Marowitz bases his adaptation. In the quarto version, an entrance of '*Hamlet, Rosencraus, [sic] &c.*' is noted, but no exit for Fortinbras or his army, indicating that they may well have been onstage as a background for both the scene and the soliloquy. See *Internet Shakespeare Editions*, 8 Sept. 2011 <<http://internetshakespeare.uvic.ca/Annex/Texts/Ham/Q2/scene/4.4 - tln-2743.26>>.

⁹⁴ Marowitz, introduction, *The Marowitz Hamlet & the Tragical History of Dr. Faustus* 23-24.

(like his mother) and ‘bad’ girls with whom, like whores, one may have intercourse without guilt. At times, the young man seduces a young woman who, due to her chastity, is a ‘good’ girl and as such resembles his mother, but her acquiescence to his sexual overtures moves her from one category to the other, provoking disgust and the need to abandon her.⁹⁵ In *Hamlet*, Gertrude herself has transformed from ‘good’ to ‘bad’ due to her relationship with Claudius, and ‘both being guilty (in his mind) of the same sin,’⁹⁶ Hamlet confuses Ophelia and Gertrude in the discontinuity of his own jumbled thoughts, on which the collage is framed. Similarly, in this unreal world springing from the title character’s hallucinatory state, his father’s ghost sometimes changes places with his usurping uncle, and takes the role of the Player King: during the performance of the play within the play, the Ghost ‘*[h]istrionically*’ begins the text which describes his own murder:

But soft, methinks I scent the morning’s air:
Brief let me be: sleeping within my orchard,
My custom always in the afternoon,
Upon my secure hour⁹⁷

The stage directions note that the Ghost kneels down, at which point Hamlet utters a version of the text which occurs in the original play when he discovers his uncle at prayer:

Now he is praying,
And now I’ll do it.
And so he goes to Heaven,
And so I am revenged.⁹⁸

⁹⁵ See Tyson 14-15 for further discussion on this topic.

⁹⁶ Marowitz, introduction, *The Marowitz Hamlet & the Tragical History of Dr. Faustus* 24.

⁹⁷ Marowitz, *Hamlet* 48. Italics in original.

⁹⁸ Marowitz, *Hamlet* 48.

The stage directions set out that ‘CLAUDIUS *is suddenly discovered kneeling in GHOST’s position*’; the King continues in the same melodramatic tone with

What if this cursed hand
Were thicker than itself with brother’s blood,
Is there not rain enough in the sweet heavens
To wash it white as snow?⁹⁹

This fluid reality is consistent with Marowitz’s desire to portray the events from Hamlet’s hallucinogenic point of view, and it is particularly effective in this instance, since it is Hamlet’s text, which relates not to his father but to Claudius, which creates the jump resulting in the replacement of the Ghost by the King.

Unsettling Shakespeare’s Cultural Authority

Marowitz’s place within the postmodernist movement has been discussed in the Introduction to this thesis, and, ‘[p]ostmodern work often takes the form of parody, which has a highly divided and ambivalent relation to its object of imitation.’¹⁰⁰ An attack on a societal status quo is therefore not unexpected within Marowitz’s oeuvre. However, it is impossible to read the play text of Marowitz’s *Hamlet* while visualizing the staging as expressed through stage directions without drawing the conclusion that one of the adaptor/director’s primary motives is to unseat the cultural authority of Shakespeare’s most famous character and most highly quoted play by presenting both in a tone of ridicule. Beyond this, possibly at a subconscious level, his desire to deride may have zeroed in on a much narrower slice of society: Marowitz has consistently mocked the academic

⁹⁹ Marowitz, *Hamlet* 48. Italics in original.

¹⁰⁰ Fortier 176. Fortier gives credit to the Canadian theorist Linda Hutcheon in this discussion.

community, often in scathing terms,¹⁰¹ highlighting what, in his opinion, comprises the great divide between those who create artistic work, and those who merely interpret it in minute and irrelevant detail. A director, Marowitz pronounces, ‘is supposed to say what he means in his work and leave speculation to that peculiar breed of niggling intellectual that actually enjoys picking at the chicken bones of art in order to recreate a semblance of the whole bird.’¹⁰² In his own critical writing on *Hamlet*, he compares the indecisive Dane to the ‘less demonstrative activists’ who actually *do*: in this side-by-side evaluation, Marowitz contends, ‘the pseudo-adventurousness of the “intellectual position” is woefully revealed.’¹⁰³ Certainly, a successful attack on Shakespeare’s most famous play would ultimately ricochet towards the academic community which nurtures *Hamlet*’s ongoing acclaim through critical writing.

Additionally, Marowitz, as a Jew raised in the predominantly Christian society of the United States; as a dissident Yank living in a British society steeped in tradition; and as a self-described ‘poisonous mole and [...] outspoken critic,’¹⁰⁴ has considerable experience filling the role of ‘the Other’ in society. It is not difficult to conceive that he might consciously or unconsciously foster a strong desire to strike back at the ruling conservative majority of society, particularly since this group of individuals contains many of the intellectual critics who are most likely to have judged his modern approach to theatre and adaptation negatively. Mohamed supports this hypothesis when she suggests that

Marowitz’s iconoclastic adaptation of the play is not as much concerned with the modern political relevance of the play as

¹⁰¹ Several exchanges between academics and Marowitz are related in Chapter Six. See Marowitz, *Recycling Shakespeare 5* for Marowitz’s comparison of academic scrutiny of the canon to ‘one chimpanzee fastidiously picking the nits off another.’

¹⁰² Marowitz, *Prospero’s Staff* 116.

¹⁰³ Marowitz, introduction, *The Marowitz Hamlet & The Tragical History of Dr. Faustus* 18.

¹⁰⁴ Marowitz, *Burnt Bridges* 15.

it is a personal vendetta against Shakespeare as a symbol of bourgeois culture and Hamlet as characterized through the reverence of tradition.¹⁰⁵

The examples of Marowitz's desire to reduce the authority of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* are numerous. Early in the play, using text from Shakespeare's Closet scene III.iv, Gertrude reproves Hamlet with, 'Nay then, I'll set those to you that can speak,' causing Hamlet to lash back with 'Do not come your tardy son to chide.'¹⁰⁶ From this slight dramatic platform, Marowitz has the scene cut '*into school flashback*' in which Gertrude sets up as teacher to Hamlet, Ophelia, Laertes and Clown, declaring in a mixture of what was originally Polonius' and Hamlet's text: 'Come, come and sit you down, / And these few precepts in thy memory / See thou character.'¹⁰⁷ Gertrude and her students then begin '*beating out the iambic rhythm with their fingers against their palms,*' and chanting the text of Polonius' famous advice to his son '*in a strictly scanned sing-song.*'¹⁰⁸ After a brief period of skipping in a circle while chanting the text,

([a]ll stand formally in a line and recite in a childish sing-song.)

To think own self be true,

And it must follow as the night the day

Thou canst not then be false to any man.¹⁰⁹

Since Marowitz judges Polonius to be one of Claudius's 'toads,'¹¹⁰ it logically follows that his advice to Laertes must be of no great worth, and his child-centred dramatization of this

¹⁰⁵ Mohamed 161.

¹⁰⁶ Marowitz, *Hamlet* 39

¹⁰⁷ Marowitz, *Hamlet* 39. Italics in original.

¹⁰⁸ Marowitz, *Hamlet* 39. Italics in original.

¹⁰⁹ Marowitz, *Hamlet* 40. Italics in original.

¹¹⁰ Marowitz, *Prospero's Staff* 130.

advice surely corresponds to this evaluation. Later in the play, Claudius, in the guise of the Player King, intones the fratricidal monarch's fearful querying in a manner described in the stage directions as '*[h]ammering,*'

What if this cursed hand
Were thicker than itself with brother's blood,
Is there not rain enough in the sweet heavens
To wash it white as snow,¹¹¹

concluding with an even better known line of text when, '*as Player-King, apologizing for [his] performance,*' he begs, 'Forgive me my foul murder.'¹¹² In Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Claudius' lines spoke to his shame and desperate desire for absolution, but in Marowitz's collage, there is little place for that depth of feeling. In this and other instances, the emotional complexity of the play is reduced drastically.

The reduction of emotional depth and complexity is a common element in Marowitz's Shakespearean adaptations, one identified more than once in critical reviews. His response is that such diminution is a normal part of the production process; that, while Shakespeare's text is capable of being interpreted in a multitude of ways, a directorial concept, by its very nature, requires that a plethora of interpretations be reduced to a single choice. However, the narrowing in the adaptations refers not merely to the directorial concept in which the production is grounded, and the collage *Hamlet* provides an excellent field upon which to discuss this point. The title character of Shakespeare's play must find his way through a tangle of relationships and responsibilities in order to chart a course of action (or inaction): he owes a duty to his father, but also to his mother and his uncle as the present regent, and these duties directly contravene one another. Further, there is a lack of

¹¹¹ Marowitz, *Hamlet* 48. Italics in original.

¹¹² Marowitz, *Hamlet* 49. Italics in original.

certainty which makes his choices even more difficult: his obligation to avenge his father's death by murdering his uncle depends upon his father's spirit being both real and truthful, and not a devil sent to tempt him. Shakespeare's Hamlet thus finds himself in the unenviable position of having to make a decision, the outcome of which is absolutely final and, if taken on incorrect information, a heinous act of regicide. The richness of this conflict resonates with audience members who, while not sharing the details of the scenario, can nonetheless relate to the difficulty of making an important decision with incomplete evidence, as well as the human tendency to sometimes dwell on the peace and freedom of the grave. In comparison, Marowitz's somewhat cartoonish version of the Danish prince does not engage with such a dilemma, since he is shown from the start as a weakling who is incapable of making such a difficult decision. Since it is the tension of the choice yet to be made by the introverted and philosophical Dane which engages the viewer in Shakespeare's original, and which creates the psychological dynamic which maintains that engagement, Marowitz's reduction of the complexity of the play's conflict, achieved through a lessening of the title character's ability to perceive and actually consider conflicting paths of action and inaction, must tend to be viewed as a less than positive outcome.

Returning to the notion of an attack on the cultural authority of Shakespeare's play, it is not only the major characters who become tools in Marowitz's task of finding fault with an acclaimed play, and in Hamlet's friendly duo, he finds utensils well suited to the task. J.C. Trewin in *Five & Eighty Hamlets* describes Rosencrantz and Guildenstern as 'that exasperatingly inseparable pair of shadows involved briefly in espionage and surveillance,' adding 'I would watch competent young actors [...] trying manfully to suggest that there was more difference between them than between Tweedledum and

Tweedledee.’¹¹³ Nonetheless, Marowitz takes this evaluation to comic extremes when the stage directions of the collage *Hamlet* describe that ‘ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN, as vaudeville team, dance on. They are linked by a long rope that connects one to the other.’¹¹⁴ Their first verbal encounter with Hamlet, in which they admit that ‘On Fortune’s cap/ We are not the very button’ ends with them proclaiming themselves ‘Her privates we’ while clutching their testicles, after which the stage directions note that ‘[a]ll yoke it up.’¹¹⁵ Seconds later, Hamlet releases them from the rope, delivering a forceful kick to Guildenstern’s posterior; the latter rubs his smarting derriere, and declares, ‘Now cracks a noble heart.’¹¹⁶ Quick and subtle humour which in Shakespeare’s original work comprises faintly ribald word play is rendered obvious and vulgar in Marowitz’s adaptation: in theatre parlance, it is ‘sent up.’ In other words, the material is rendered ridiculous as an attack on the cultural authority of the original play. Michael Billington, who nonetheless described the production as ‘fascinating,’ cites this incident when suggesting that the production ‘could afford to jettison its few cheap and easy laughs.’¹¹⁷ Later, in a version of the Laertes-Hamlet duel scene, Laertes is seen out-gallanting Hamlet to the accompaniment of enthusiastic Court applause. When Hamlet attempts to return this hit with ‘The play’s the thing/ Wherein I’ll catch the conscience of the King,’ the stage directions note that ‘[a]ll boo and hiss HAMLET’s lame reply.’¹¹⁸ A few lines later, still desperately attempting to raise his status, Hamlet rattles off one famous line after another:

O what a rogue and peasant slave am I

O that this too too solid flesh would melt

¹¹³ J.C. Trewin, *Five & Eighty Hamlets* (London: Hutchinson, 1987) 139.

¹¹⁴ Marowitz, *Hamlet* 36. Italics in original.

¹¹⁵ Marowitz, *Hamlet* 36. Italics in original.

¹¹⁶ Marowitz, *Hamlet* 38-39. Italics in original.

¹¹⁷ Michael Billington, ‘Review of *Hamlet* – Open Space,’ *Plays and Players* Sept. (1969): 53.

¹¹⁸ Marowitz, *Hamlet* 52. Italics in original.

There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
Frailty thy name is woman – the rest is silence.¹¹⁹

The CLOWN, acting as referee in this duel of words, '[g]rudgingly'¹²⁰ acknowledges a hit. Although this same text, spoken with commitment and understanding within the world of the original play, still has the power to move an audience, in this specific instance, the adaptor should be given the benefit of the doubt: Marowitz may be attempting to confront us with the glib patina of an over-worn banality, created by countless exposures to the lines in their original setting. Marowitz's Hamlet is unable to take any action beyond reciting well known phrases which, in this context at least, have no meaning whatsoever; the audience is therefore invited to reconsider what validity these lines now possess, and possibly to assess them anew. Alternatively, however, Marowitz may be continuing to 'send up' the material in what amounts to a petty attack on the oft quoted text of a much beloved play, with no other real desire than to diminish its status in our cultural history. The tactic is repeated in the final scene of the play, when Hamlet is surrounded by the other characters who jeer at him, laughing hysterically. Hamlet attempts to stem their laughter through recitation of several of his most familiar lines, but receives only ridicule in return:

HAMLET. (*Weakly*) To be or not to be that is the question.

(*All laugh.*)

(*Weakly*) The play's the thing wherein I'll catch the
conscience of the King.

(*All laugh again.*)

¹¹⁹ Marowitz, *Hamlet* 52.

¹²⁰ Marowitz, *Hamlet* 53. Italics in original.

(Vainly trying to find the right words) There is something rotten in the state of Denmark.¹²¹

Not content with ridiculing Shakespeare's play, Marowitz has a simultaneous desire to jeer at the character of Hamlet, which expresses itself in the text on many occasions. In the last scene of the play, the Ghost (Hamlet Senior) comes forward with his son's toy sword in his hands. The stage directions note the delivery as '*[m]ock frightened*' as the Ghost encounters Hamlet with

Angels and ministers of grace defend us:
Be thou a spirit of health, or a goblin damn'd,
Bring with thee airs from Heaven or blasts from Hell?
Be thy intents wicked or charitable,
Thou comest in such a questionable shape
That I will speak to thee. I'll call thee Hamlet.¹²²

The stage directions read that at the conclusion of the speech, the Ghost '*[p]uts [the] toy sword under HAMLET's arm, like a crutch. The Cast, now fully assembled, expresses its delight over the GHOST's send-up.*'¹²³ Within a few moments,

[t]he laughter sharply cuts out. A powerful, stark silence issues from everyone. No one moves. Slowly HAMLET's frame begins to bend, gradually his knees sag and his back arches until he slumps down on to his knees. Then his head slowly rolls forward on to his chest and he sinks even further, on to his haunches. He leans on his toy sword for support.

¹²¹ Marowitz, *Hamlet* 66. Italics in original.

¹²² Marowitz, *Hamlet* 66. Italics in original.

¹²³ Marowitz, *Hamlet* 66. Italics in original.

*This descent takes a good deal of time, and occurs in total
silence.*¹²⁴

It is the annihilation of Hamlet, orchestrated by Charles Marowitz, and the adaptor's contempt and hatred for the character could not be more fully represented. Yet it is questionable that it contributes to Marowitz's objective of deriding the 'supreme prototype of the conscience-stricken but paralyzed liberal: one of the most lethal and obnoxious characters in modern times.'¹²⁵ It is the ridicule that is most convincing in terms of Marowitz's hostile intentions toward both the play and its title character. Had the rest of the characters simply turned their back on Hamlet with a sigh as he parroted some of Shakespeare's best known phrases, and turned towards Fortinbras as he leapt into action, the contrast between talk and action would have been evident, and Marowitz's expressed intention might have been achieved. But through the nightmarish laughter of the cast, including the ghost of Hamlet's father; Hamlet's own mother; Hamlet's lover and, in this adaptation, what amounts to his mentor, Fortinbras, no such contrast is effectively drawn, derailing the adaptor's desire to deride the paralyzed liberal in favour of a general denunciation of an acclaimed playwright's flagship work. Ironically, if Marowitz did intend to diminish the cultural authority of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, his actions may have had the opposite effect, since 'Marowitz's conscious irreverence towards the Shakespearean classic only asserts its authority as a masterpiece that is capable of inspiring and instigating a strong albeit negative reaction.'¹²⁶

¹²⁴ Marowitz, *Hamlet* 66-67. Italics in original.

¹²⁵ Marowitz, introduction, *The Marowitz Shakespeare* 13.

¹²⁶ Mohamed 165-166.

COMPARATORS TO THE MAROWITZ *HAMLET*

When different adaptors work with the same source material, and areas of overlap in terms of aims and objectives, a study of their different outcomes allows a greater understanding of the effect of their contrasting methodologies. Therefore, a juxtaposition of the collage *Hamlet* against works created by peers in a similar time frame will be helpful in illuminating Marowitz's strategies in its creation. In addition, the effectiveness of his tactics in achieving his stated goals may be usefully compared to the goals and outcomes of his peers, possibly discovering ways in which he, or they, may have reach those objectives with greater success. The two adaptations of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* chosen for this comparison are Joseph Papp's '*Naked*' *Hamlet* and Peter Brooks' *The Tragedy of Hamlet*.

Papp's self titled '*Naked*' *Hamlet* is a natural choice for this comparison, since it was created during the same time period as the collage *Hamlet*, and shares the same inventive yet radical approach to re-interpretation of textual meaning and given circumstance. However, Papp expresses high praise for the Shakespearean canon, stating

[t]o me, he's the symbol of everything that's great on the stage – a marvelous, nourishing greatness. [... H]is plays give you an insight into the processes of life that is not available in as concentrated a form anywhere else,¹²⁷

while Marowitz describes having, at best, a 'curious love-hate relationship'¹²⁸ with the works of the Bard, often evaluating Shakespeare's best loved works with considerable negativity. This oppositional opinion on the canon, combined with a similarity of theatrical

¹²⁷ Joseph Papp, quoted in Kenneth Turan & Joseph Papp, *Free for All: Joe Papp, The Public, and the Greatest Theater Story Ever Told* (New York: Doubleday, 2009) 62.

¹²⁸ Marowitz, introduction, *The Marowitz Shakespeare* 11.

approach to the play will offer insight into the effect of an opinion of the original text's worth on the final adaptation.

Marowitz and Peter Brook were colleagues on the Theatre of Cruelty season in which the former's initial version of the collage *Hamlet* was created; as directors, they shared an ongoing interest in discontinuity, as well as the exploration of Artaudian principles. Therefore, despite Brook's version of *Hamlet* being created at his performance space in Paris in 2000, many years after either Marowitz's or Papp's adaptations, the later production offers another opportunity to discern how two directors beginning from approximately the same starting point may arrive at very different destinations in the work under investigation.

Joseph Papp's 'Naked *Hamlet*'

Joseph Papp's self-titled 'Naked *Hamlet*' was produced at the Public Theatre in New York City in December of 1967, approximately four years after Marowitz's twenty-eight minute adaptation was created during the RSC's Theatre of Cruelty season, and only twenty months of so after his re-worked eighty-five minute version was performed in London by his In-Stage company. It is uncertain whether either director witnessed the other's adaptation, and Papp does not reference Marowitz's version in his production handbook, published in 1969. A number of similarities, both in intentions as expressed by the directors, and in stage business, provide a fruitful comparison between the two productions.

The 'Naked *Hamlet*' takes its name from the contents of a note sent by Hamlet to Claudius: the former is absent from the play for approximately five hundred lines, during which time he is sent to England, taken by pirates, and finally, according to the

aforementioned note, ‘set naked’¹²⁹ back in Elsinore. Papp views these ‘off-stage happenings’ as possible evidence of

an expressionistic trip of the mind, a film in super-fast motion going through Hamlet’s head, [leading Papp] to believe that Hamlet never leaves Denmark at all but undergoes a transformation allowing him to do what he has to do in the swift and final scenes of the play.¹³⁰

This expressionistic approach dominated the production, seemingly attempting to portray Hamlet’s perspective from within the 1960s American culture of experimentation with mind altering drugs and a rebellion against military tyranny.

Papp cuts the text of Shakespeare’s play dramatically, resulting in a running time of about ninety minutes.¹³¹ The basic narrative storyline is maintained, but the text is fragmented, and reassigned to different characters. The production involves an abundance of audience involvement: everything from lines being directed to particular audience members; through bags of peanuts thrown to spectators by Hamlet disguised as a vendor; and culminating in Hamlet, in the final scene, selecting an individual who will come on stage and shoot him with a pistol. Further to this, there were instances in which the actors ostensibly come out of role and react to rehearsed incidents as if these events were part of the outside ‘reality’ and not occurring within the world of the play. For example, at one point Martin Sheen as Hamlet discharges a round from his (prop) handgun at Ralph Waite portraying Claudius. The stage directions in the production handbook note that Waite

¹²⁹ Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, IV.vii.45.

¹³⁰ Joseph Papp, Ted Cornell & William Shakespeare, *William Shakespeare’s ‘Naked’ Hamlet: A Production Handbook* (New York: Macmillan, 1969) frontpiece.

¹³¹ The running time was confirmed by two separate critics: see Wardle, ‘Hamlet in a Permissive Age,’ *Times* and Clive Barnes, ‘Theater: Slings and Arrows of Outrageous Papp,’ *New York Times*, 27 Dec. 1967.

*lunges for Marty [...] both are restrained by some of the other actors. The stage is in chaos. "You little bastard, what's the idea?" "That's the third time you've pulled that." "Let me at the little son of a bitch." Gradually order is restored, and Ralph agrees to take the last moment again. As Marty starts his last line, Ralph erupts and yells, "No, I'm not going to do it. I don't have to take that kind of crap." He stalks off stage pursued by most of the other actors trying to get him back. The few that are left on stage don't know what to do and exit in confusion.*¹³²

This type of self-conscious theatricality punctuates a production in which the audience could never know absolutely where the play ended and reality began. While springing from an expressionistic portrayal of Hamlet's point of view on the action, this absence of a verifiable reality is consistent with Papp's seminal image of the play as filled with 'distraction,'¹³³ and arguably fulfills his objective of unseating the audience's familiarity with the narrative, allowing them to view the action with fresh eyes and ears. It is an objective which he shares with Marowitz, but one which Papp is able to complete without ridiculing either the play or its title character.

Physically, the production takes place on a stage transformed into 'a large, high room, perhaps a prison, perhaps a fortress,'¹³⁴ the upstage of which is dominated by two levels of metal catwalks. The dominant visuals in terms of walls and floor are grey and

¹³² Papp, *'Naked' Hamlet* 103. Italics in original.

¹³³ Papp, *'Naked' Hamlet* 24.

¹³⁴ Papp, *'Naked' Hamlet* 39.

metallic. Many members of the court are dressed to ‘suggest a modern military camp.’¹³⁵ Ophelia is ‘sexy’ and ‘miniskirted,’¹³⁶ revealing a common perception by Papp and Marowitz of the character as primarily a sexual object.

Despite the massive cuts in text, the Papp adaptation ‘generally retained the original order of events’¹³⁷ but drastically altered the manner in which the events were presented. For example, in a rendition of the well-known scene with the Gravedigger at Ophelia’s graveside, Hamlet, in his guise as Ramon, the Puerto Rican janitor, takes on the Gravedigger’s text while the Ghost performs that of Hamlet. Following an abridged version of the graveside scene, Hamlet and the Ghost create havoc, in unison proclaim, ‘Why here, insanity!’ at which point ‘[t]he vaudeville play-off music strikes up and the Ghost with a wave, runs off [...] Hamlet [...] climb[s ...] to his perch’¹³⁸ on the catwalk, where, still in Ramon’s Puerto Rican accent, he delivers the ‘To be or not to be’ soliloquy. Like Marowitz, Papp saw aspects of vaudeville in the original play, although, in the case of the collage *Hamlet*, the vaudeville aids in the ridicule of Rosenkrantz and Guildenstern while Papp integrates the genre in a more playful way. Additionally, the use of the Puerto Rican accent for this well known soliloquy achieves the objective of a fresh reception for at least one audience member, who, in a letter to the editor of *The New York Times* and quoted in Papp’s production handbook, admits that ‘I found myself listening hard to all the words, for they came alive.’¹³⁹ Another example of Papp’s retention of the storyline while modifying its delivery is evident in the absence of the ‘players’ and their performance of ‘The Mousetrap’: in another self-consciously theatrical moment, Hamlet hands the drunken

¹³⁵ Alan Rich, ‘Theater: *Hamlet*,’ *Time*, 5 Jan. 1968, 6 Jan 2011
<<http://www.time.com/time/printout/0,8816,712085,00.html>>.

¹³⁶ Rich, *Time*.

¹³⁷ Irving Wardle, ‘Transatlantic Rituals,’ *Theater* (Summer 1969): 40.

¹³⁸ Papp, ‘*Naked*’ *Hamlet* 144. Italics in original.

¹³⁹ Papp, ‘*Naked*’ *Hamlet* 11.

Claudius a copy of Shakespeare's play script of *Hamlet*, and persuades him to read the Ghost's lines in which Claudius' fratricide is revealed. This resonates with Marowitz's *Hamlet*, in which the 'play within the play' is performed by the Ghost, '*playing as old time tragedian*' in front of '*an eighteenth-century elaborately ornamented theatre box*'¹⁴⁰ – effectively a theatre within a theatre. Since both adaptations attempt to present the world of the play from the title character's emotional viewpoint, this self-referential tactic arguably serves to portray Hamlet's view of a world of deception, in which those around him play roles rather than speaking the truth.

As previously suggested, Papp and Marowitz shared a common goal when creating their adaptations, although their conceptions may have differed drastically. Just as Marowitz chose to configure the adaptation from the point of view of the title character, in whose unbalanced mind reality is twisted and distorted, Papp asserts that

there is no way to direct the play without looking at it through the eyes and the feelings of Hamlet. [...] He looks at Elsinore and its inhabitants in the same way Picasso might look at a face or conventional landscape. The characters that people his brain are remolded, recolored, reshaped so that they bear slight resemblance to what they really are. And what are they, really? Nothing but what Hamlet's thinking makes them.¹⁴¹

However, the two directors differ in terms of their belief in Hamlet's level of sanity, Marowitz viewing the Danish prince as neurotic and subject to hallucinations; Papp

¹⁴⁰ Marowitz, *Hamlet* 48. Italics in original.

¹⁴¹ Papp, '*Naked*' *Hamlet* 19. Italics in original.

deeming the argument irrelevant from a practical standpoint. In a note within the production handbook titled ‘Scholarly query,’ Papp addresses this issue:

“Is Hamlet mad or only pretending to be mad?” This question has vexed scholars for generations, and the answer can now be seen clearly to be, “No.” If an actor and not a scholar asks this question, tell him to play the scene that is put before him and not to concern himself or the audience with psychology.¹⁴²

The final statement of this quotation is a puzzling one, since it seemingly places the emphasis on the gestalt of action, rather than on a character’s emotional state. Nonetheless, Papp’s perception of the world of the play provides as unifying a theme for his adaptation as Hamlet’s neuroses are for Marowitz’s: based on Hamlet’s reference to ‘this distracted globe,’¹⁴³ Papp finds, within this image the description of Hamlet’s own mind, the world of the play within the Globe Theatre, and the world itself, ‘all equally distracted.’¹⁴⁴ Further, if this chaotic distraction comprises the world of the play, ‘then all the psychological questionings – the why’s – become totally irrelevant,’¹⁴⁵ and the action is effectively liberated from an obeisance to logical narrative as well as a sense of logical syntax. Just as Marowitz found justification for the collage form of his adaptation in the perplexed neuroses of its title character, so Papp has found a similar justification for the wild free-spirited transformation he has imposed upon Shakespeare’s play. However, this ‘distraction’ also provides a pathway of differentiation: while Marowitz’s central preoccupation is with Hamlet’s inaction, Papp asserts that in his adaptation,

¹⁴² Papp, *‘Naked’ Hamlet* 74.

¹⁴³ Shakespeare, *Hamlet* I.v.97.

¹⁴⁴ Papp, *‘Naked’ Hamlet* 24.

¹⁴⁵ Papp, *‘Naked’ Hamlet* 25.

Hamlet is unleashed – catapulted and flung into the midst of the court (and the audience), leaving havoc and wreckage in his wake. This is the dynamic that underlies the production. The hoary question, “Is Hamlet a man of action or words?” has no relevance here.¹⁴⁶

Equally certain is that this dynamic of chaos provided a radical freedom in terms of the director’s, adaptor’s and actors’ ability to freshly and freely explore the title character’s emotional volatility within the world of the play, in comparison to Marowitz’s more tightly defined world which was shaped to support his stated agenda to ‘delineate a criticism of the type of person Hamlet was and, by inference, to indict the values which he represented.’¹⁴⁷

The two directors also diverge in terms of how they approach the language of the play, but with ironies on both sides which cannot be ignored. Marowitz insists that Shakespeare’s plays have been ‘literally talked into the ground,’ in the process becoming ‘indelible images shaped and reshaped by succeeding generations and full of myriad associations.’¹⁴⁸ The role of the adaptor, in his opinion, is focus a beam upon those associations and images in a way that sheds light upon the desires and actions of a modern audience. Papp, on the other hand, avows the primacy of language in human existence, as well as in theatrical production: ‘Words have power. Words must be spoken. Words left unsaid are a form of destruction, of death, of nihilism, of the eradication of the living impulse. [...] The world has changed through words. The world will change again

¹⁴⁶ Papp, ‘*Naked*’ *Hamlet* 20.

¹⁴⁷ Marowitz, introduction, *The Marowitz Shakespeare* 13.

¹⁴⁸ Marowitz, *Recycling Shakespeare* 59.

through words.’¹⁴⁹ In terms of the play itself, ‘*Hamlet* is a work of art in which words [...] determine the outcome of lives. [...] It is word play which leads to sword play.’¹⁵⁰

Despite this, and while both directors encouraged their actors to reinterpret Shakespearean text, Marowitz chose to include only original text in his production, while Papp interpolated modern vernacular within and around Shakespeare’s text. For example, after Claudius, gesturing towards his brother’s portrait, describes the memory of Hamlet Senior’s death as ‘green,’¹⁵¹ a guard removes the painting, while another guard hangs a portrait of Claudius in its place. Claudius notices his portrait, and calls to the guard: during the exchange the characters refer to each other by the name of the actor playing them:

CLAUDIUS: [...] Paul!

GUARD[...]: Yeah, Ralph.

CLAUDIUS: The damned thing is upside down.

GUARD: Jesus, Ralph, I’m sorry. [*He turns the picture right side up.*]¹⁵²

Later in the play, Rossencraft and Gilderstone question Hamlet as to the whereabouts of Polonius’ body; the scene concludes:

GILDERSTONE: A thing, my lord!

HAMLET: Of nothing. Bring me to him.

b) *A telephone bell rings.*

Oops, that’s for me.

¹⁴⁹ Papp, ‘*Naked’ Hamlet* 28.

¹⁵⁰ Papp, ‘*Naked’ Hamlet* 28.

¹⁵¹ Papp, ‘*Naked’ Hamlet* 47.

¹⁵² Papp, ‘*Naked’ Hamlet* 48. Italics in original.

c) Hamlet moves to the party table and picks up two small party horns, holding one to his ear and one to his mouth. He laughs and chuckles.

Hello? Oh yes, marvellous, marvellous.

(d) He holds out the horns to Gilderstone who takes them but doesn't seem to hear anything.

It's for you.

(e) Gilderstone is still listening at the telephone, and all the others are watching him. Hamlet runs for the nearest exit.

Hide fox, and all after!

*(f) Gilderstone throws down the horns, and they all start after Hamlet.*¹⁵³

However, while Papp and Marowitz express conflicting beliefs regarding language, there are also areas of congruence in their thinking: Marowitz argues that 'language itself is no longer the play's essential ingredient. It is their metaphysic, their subterranean imagery, that means most to us today.'¹⁵⁴ Similarly, when Papp asserts that '[w]ords change as ideas change [and that w]hat is unchangeable are the symbols underlying the consciousness of words,'¹⁵⁵ he echoes the notion that language is only the signpost of something which lies within the deeper ground of the human sub-conscious and unconscious. Further, in terms of Shakespeare's play, Papp suggests that its texture is 'richly endowed' with meaning, that 'it is possible in this time to rearrange the words, to shatter them, to blow them at the moon and watch them float down into the lives of the characters like so many fragments of living

¹⁵³ Papp, 'Naked Hamlet' 125. Italics in original.

¹⁵⁴ Marowitz, *Recycling Shakespeare* 58-59.

¹⁵⁵ Papp, 'Naked' Hamlet 28.

matter and begin to form into new shapes, but within this process not lose the deep continuous symbols underlying them.’¹⁵⁶

Considering that they shared the objective of molding a production which would allow audiences to see and hear *Hamlet* freshly, it is interesting that Marowitz perceived so little common ground between himself and his fellow American director. In *Prospero’s Staff*, published in 1986, Marowitz had this to say about Joseph Papp’s 1968 ‘Naked *Hamlet*’:

Several years ago in New York, Joe Papp presented a version of *Hamlet* that, by flamboyantly declassifying the work (intruding slang and street language), tried to imply a kind of “No More Masterpieces” approach to the text.(4) It was, of course, preposterous, and was rejected as such. Pique, impotent rages at convention, desperate bids to *épater le bourgeois*, or fatuous attempts to try to change the fashion are never legitimate pretexts for directorial interpretation – although in the presence of a truly original conception, all of these things come into play.¹⁵⁷

Since Marowitz is known to re-issue his writing under new titles and in new collections,¹⁵⁸ it is possible that this quotation was written a number of years before *Prospero’s Staff* was published, as indicated by his reference to Papp’s production taking place only ‘several years ago.’ What is not clear is the proximity in time this opinion occupied in terms of his

¹⁵⁶ Papp, ‘Naked’ *Hamlet* 28.

¹⁵⁷ Marowitz, *Prospero’s Staff* 37.

¹⁵⁸ For example, ‘Wrestling with Jan Kott,’ ‘Harlotry in Bardolatry’ and ‘How to Rape Shakespeare’ were all published in *Recycling Shakespeare* in 1991, but were included as chapters in *Roar of the Canon*, published in 2001. Similarly, the introduction to *The Marowitz Hamlet*, published in *The Marowitz Hamlet & The Tragical History of Dr. Faustus* in 1970, was re-published almost verbatim as ‘Adjusting the Classical Stance’ in *Prospero’s Staff* in 1986. Portions of the introduction to *The Shrew*, published in 1975, were included within the introduction of *The Marowitz Shakespeare*, published in 1978. Marowitz, introduction, *The Shrew* (London: Calder and Boyars, 1975).

own adaptation of *An Othello*, which was produced first at the Wiesbaden Theatre Festival in May of 1972 and at his London based Open Space Theatre in June of that year, since Marowitz's adaptation re-wrote a considerable amount of Shakespeare's text into 'slang and street language.' It would be relevant to understand whether Marowitz was motivated to copy the very strategy he reviled in Papp's production, since the term 'intruding' does bring a negative connotation to the creative tactic, or whether his negative opinion of Papp's adaptation more generally sprang from an innate tendency to criticize others engaged in pursuits similar to his own. Regarding his assertion that the production, which featured a radical re-interpretation of the Shakespearean narrative to the sound of 'mind-bending rock music,'¹⁵⁹ was 'preposterous, and was rejected as such,'¹⁶⁰ a review in *Time*, a national American magazine, voiced no such certainty: 'Papp [...] has located Hamlet deep in the mind of its characters, which, it may be argued, was Shakespeare's intent. The results are uneven, but dazzling and convincing at their best.'¹⁶¹ Further, the reviewer felt that 'Papp has clearly made a serious attempt to demonstrate the viability of Shakespeare's insights into men's weaknesses in terms of modern theater.'¹⁶² Wardle compared the two productions and found essential similarity:

[b]oth productions were prepared on the assumption that the relevance of the play could be better revealed by dislocating its formal mechanism: partly because audience response is dulled by over-familiarity with the form, but even more

¹⁵⁹ Rich, *Time*

¹⁶⁰ Marowitz, *Prospero's Staff* 37.

¹⁶¹ Rich, *Time*.

¹⁶² Rich, *Time*.

because five-act linear continuity no longer corresponds to
the simultaneous discontinuity of ordinary life.¹⁶³

To Wardle, the difference between the two plays was partly to be found in the ease of their reception: the story line of Papp's production, 'for all its Puerto Rican gags at the graveside,' could be easily followed by anyone, regardless of their knowledge of Shakespeare's play, while Marowitz's *Hamlet* required 'a sophisticated audience, as his effects so often depend on being able to cross-relate the original text to the way in which it has been twisted.'¹⁶⁴ This last comment reflects the difference in the way the directors approached the audience's potential familiarity with the text. For example, in Papp's version, Hamlet is lying in his coffin bed when a '*long, green, rubber hand emerges from the bed-clothes,*'¹⁶⁵ eventually touching him on the shoulder. Hamlet leaps out of the coffin in fear, shouting 'Angels and ministers of grace defend us!'¹⁶⁶ Those spectators who are familiar with Shakespeare's play will recognize this text as Hamlet's ejaculation upon first seeing his father's ghost, and since the green hand is being manipulated by the character of the Ghost within the adaptation, this is humorous on two levels: if you don't know Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, the comment is an apt one within the stated action; if you *do* know Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, then the altered scenario of the first meeting between Hamlet and the Ghost provides humour both in and of itself, and as a resonance of the original play. But a knowledge of the play is not necessary for the perception of the text as apt within the scenario. In Marowitz's *Hamlet*, this same text is uttered in an ironic manner by the Ghost while advancing on the frightened title character holding the latter's toy sword. The text in this instance works theatrically precisely because of the unsuitability of the words within

¹⁶³ Wardle, *Theater*.

¹⁶⁴ Wardle, *Theater*.

¹⁶⁵ Papp, '*Naked*' *Hamlet* 55. Papp. Italics in original.

¹⁶⁶ Papp, '*Naked*' *Hamlet* 55.

the adaptation's given scenario, in that it plays *against* the prevailing reception of the lines when they are uttered in their original context. Shakespeare's Hamlet required the protection of the heavenly defenders when confronted by a spectre which could have come from Hell; Marowitz's Ghost is in no danger whatsoever from the frightened and gutless Hamlet portrayed in the collage. Only by knowing both contexts is one able to assess this meaning. However, Wardle's comments fly in the face of Marowitz's previously quoted statement that audiences who saw his adaptation without knowledge of the original work nonetheless wrote comments afterward that were as 'knowledgeable as those of scholars and veteran theatergoers.'¹⁶⁷ Wardle also acknowledges that a key difference between the Marowitz and Papp productions was in the perceived intention of the directors for the title character: Papp's Hamlet 'may have been a drop-out, and high on some illicit preparation or other, but you were supposed to like him'; he is fallible, human, but still capable of 'get[ting] things done.'¹⁶⁸ Marowitz's 'deranged clown [...] is impotent to change the situation; and in so far as he is humanized at all, he is there to provoke contempt.'¹⁶⁹

Peter Brook's *The Tragedy of Hamlet*

Peter Brook created *The Tragedy of Hamlet* much later than the other adaptations: in the fall of 2000, at his performance space in Paris, Bouffes du Nord. Performed by eight actors with extensive doubling and tripling, the play script comprised substantial cuts in Shakespeare's text, allowing it to run approximately 140 minutes with no intermission. The Shakespearean text that remained was rearranged, and the scenes reordered: Brook, like Papp and Marowitz, believes that '[t]he reason for doing *Hamlet* is for people to

¹⁶⁷ Marowitz, *Roar of the Canon* 168.

¹⁶⁸ Wardle, *Theater*.

¹⁶⁹ Wardle, *Theater*.

receive it as a new experience.’¹⁷⁰ The reordering of such a well known play not only lessens the ability of an audience member to compare it with ‘thousands of other versions,’¹⁷¹ but also leads them to question, in a precise way, ‘what this order tells, or what, in fact, it tells not.’¹⁷² For example, Hamlet’s first text in this adaptation is, ‘O that this too too sallied flesh would melt,’¹⁷³ which when moved ‘to such an early position in the action [...] worked as exposition, rather than – as it usually does – a recapitulation of the character’s mood.’¹⁷⁴ Also, Brook chose to move the ‘To be or not to be’ soliloquy from III.i to III.iv, so that the ‘get thee to a nunnery’ scene with Ophelia ‘became almost exclusively about Hamlet’s brutal response to manipulation and surveillance’¹⁷⁵ by Claudius and Polonius. Later,

Ophelia’s function as a catalyst for Hamlet’s thoughts and feelings remained associated with “To be or not to be” in its transposed position. Following the death of Polonius and removal of his corpse, Hamlet stood alone at the center of the carpet. Ophelia slowly crossed over the back of the stage, looking briefly at him. Hamlet, following her with his eyes, his back now to the audience, hung his head. On her exit, he turned to us, [...] and delivered the vaunted soliloquy. Placed here the speech acquired a valuable specificity. Having made his first kill and acknowledged the emotional devastation of a woman he had cared for, Hamlet’s

¹⁷⁰ Peter Brook, interview with Margaret Croyden, *Conversations with Peter Brook, 1970-2000* (New York: Faber & Faber, 2003) 256.

¹⁷¹ Brook, *Conversations* 256.

¹⁷² Brook, *Conversations* 257.

¹⁷³ Shakespeare, *Hamlet* I.ii.129. Other editions may substitute ‘sullied’ or ‘solid’ in the place of ‘sallied’ in this quotation.

¹⁷⁴ Kate D. Levin, ‘Two Hamlets,’ *Shakespeare Quarterly* 53.1 (2002): 107.

¹⁷⁵ Levin 108.

ruminations on life, death, suicide, and self-determination
were manifestly urgent.¹⁷⁶

While at least one critic felt that, '[w]hile streamlining the action, Brook's cuts and rearrangements sometimes obscured events and their motivations,'¹⁷⁷ the reports from those witnessing performances during the North American tour of the production largely concern themselves with interpreting the transpositions of scenes and text, just as Brook had suggested.

Unlike Marowitz, who reorganizes a classic in order to 'revoke or destroy the intellectual foundation which makes a classic the formidable thing it has become,'¹⁷⁸ Brook's work as an adaptor of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is reminiscent of an art restorer, who brings consummate skill and respect for the original work to the removal of the countless layers of yellowing tarnish and audience expectations created by past productions, since '[u]nder layers and layers of superstructure is a great play.'¹⁷⁹

Brook, like Marowitz, eschewed an extensive stage setting, preferring a minimalist approach comprising 'a single blood orange-colored carpet,'¹⁸⁰ six cushions and a few benches.

While Marowitz excised Horatio as unnecessary to the action and foregrounded Fortinbras as a foil for the title character, Brook found the Norwegian prince 'not relevant to the central tragedy'¹⁸¹ and present in the action primarily to embody Shakespeare's belief that 'life goes on' at the end of a play, as well as at the end of a war or tragedy. Despite removing the scene in which Polonius renders the oft quoted advice to his son, Brook

¹⁷⁶ Levin 108.

¹⁷⁷ Kenneth J. Cerniglia, 'Review,' *Theatre Journal* 54.1 (2002): 158.

¹⁷⁸ Marowitz, introduction, *The Marowitz Shakespeare* 24.

¹⁷⁹ Brook, *Conversations* 256.

¹⁸⁰ Margaret Croyden, *Conversations with Peter Brook, 1970-2000* (New York: Faber & Faber, 2003) 253.

¹⁸¹ Brook, *Conversations* 259.

establishes Laertes as a central foil to Hamlet, since the latter ‘does not rush like a madman into revenge’ but asks himself, ‘What is the meaning of this?’ while Laertes ‘asks no questions. Father killed; I kill the killer ... He enters into a sordid plot and dies knowing that he has been used.’¹⁸² Unlike Marowitz, who condemns Hamlet for his inaction, Brook perceives him as ‘full of energy and passion and observation and self-doubt, like every human being should be.’¹⁸³ Further, the contrast between the self-doubting Hamlet and the revenging Laertes ‘changes the view that Hamlet is incapable, that he is weak, that there is something wrong with him.’¹⁸⁴ Flowing with the current of tradition that perceives Hamlet as a multi-dimensional human character of intelligence, passion and conscience, Brook seeks largely to understand and reveal him, rather than to judge and disparage him as Marowitz does.

Brook and Marowitz share a passion to explore the portions of human existence which lie beneath language: as Brook notes, ‘even the text is a false god [...] my goal is to try to penetrate what is behind the text, what the author was truly trying to say.’¹⁸⁵ All three directors chose to allow ‘something from the past [to] live in the present’¹⁸⁶ through modernization. However, unlike Papp, who specifically chose to employ ‘cheap jokes’ in order to ‘let a little air into the play and make it approachable,’¹⁸⁷ or Marowitz, who, ‘unable to take a knife and cut up Hamlet himself [...] cut up the play in which he had been enshrined,’¹⁸⁸ Brook maintains that ‘[i]n our version, the modernizing was done with the

¹⁸² Brook, *Conversations* 261.

¹⁸³ Brook, *Conversations* 261.

¹⁸⁴ Brook, *Conversations* 261.

¹⁸⁵ Brook, *Conversations* 261-262.

¹⁸⁶ Brook, *Conversations* 262.

¹⁸⁷ Papp, ‘*Naked*’ *Hamlet* 48.

¹⁸⁸ Marowitz, *Roar of the Canon* 168-169.

deepest respect,¹⁸⁹ and this respect arose from a desire to achieve dramatic aims as much as from any sense of Bardolatry:

[m]odernizing *Hamlet* is not bringing in gimmicks, but digging deeply into the text to find the level where one touches the fibers that have been buried through the years and have led people to think that the text is sacrosanct.¹⁹⁰

While none of the three directions employed Artaud's system of non-verbal shrieks and cries, the Bouffes du Nord audiences, as francophones witnessing a play performed in English, were able to experience the text as something other than language, which Brook both anticipated and nurtured: '[t]he pure sound and texture of the words carry an enormous weight of meaning. Ninety-five percent of the French viewers followed the sound, the movement, and the rhythm of the language, even though they didn't speak English.'¹⁹¹ It is important in this scenario for the actor to be

sensitive to words and appreciate the taste and sound and imagery of a word [...] What the actor needs to work on all the time is finding the thought behind each word. When you do that, you find that there is a music in thought.¹⁹²

CONCLUSIONS

Marowitz created his collage *Hamlet* with the political purpose of indicting the title character's lack of action, and with him, the paralyzed liberals of society. In an attempt to accomplish this, he skewed his interpretation of the other characters in Shakespeare's play

¹⁸⁹ Brook, *Conversations* 262.

¹⁹⁰ Brook, *Conversations* 263.

¹⁹¹ Brook, *Conversations* 264.

¹⁹² Brook, *Conversations* 264.

to support what he admits is a prejudice against the play's protagonist. However, the director's real, albeit unexpressed intention, was almost certainly to reduce the cultural authority of Shakespeare's play and the character of Hamlet through a course of open ridicule of the character and the text.

The subjective nature of the imagistic and expressionistic collage format tended to operate in opposition to the needs of Marowitz's stated political objective since the ineffectiveness of those who merely 'fume,' believing that 'the intensity of their convictions in some way affects the issue'¹⁹³ is more likely to be proven through logical rather than emotional means. Had Marowitz adapted Shakespeare's play in such a way that Hamlet's perceived inaction was juxtaposed against the negative outcomes resulting, and if additionally, the desired action was shown leading to inevitable positive results, then his expressed objective would quite possibly have been achieved. For example, if, in Marowitz's perception, Hamlet has simply murdered Claudius immediately after encountering his father's ghost, then he would not have met with his mother in her closet; Polonius would not have been stabbed; Ophelia would not have drowned; Gertrude would not have drunk the poison; Laertes would not have been nicked by the poisoned rapier; and Hamlet himself would likewise have escaped death. Only the murderer, Claudius, would have died. Because Hamlet did not take the immediate revenge Marowitz thought appropriate, the body count is significantly increased. Whether or not one agrees with Marowitz in terms of the appropriateness of revenge within the given circumstance, one must concede that the logical and sequential portrayal of Hamlet's inaction or action juxtaposed against positive or negative outcomes would tend to communicate the benefit of

¹⁹³ Marowitz, introduction, *The Marowitz Hamlet & the Tragical History of Dr. Faustus* 18.

action over ‘loquacious moralizing’¹⁹⁴ to which Marowitz objects more effectively than the expressionistic portrayals found in the collage *Hamlet*. Political statements which engage the emotions are also more likely to be classified as propaganda than as polemic: that Marowitz is attempting to ‘sell’ us something is obvious, but perversely, he does it while claiming to maintain contact with the essence of Shakespeare’s play, ‘weav[ing] endless variations’ on its ‘essentially *mythic*’¹⁹⁵ theme:

The ‘myth’ of the play is older than the play itself, and the play’s survival in the modern imagination draws on the centrifugal myth on which it is based. And when one assembles a collage version of the play, or a discontinuous gambol through its themes and issues, that myth is reactivated.¹⁹⁶

In his introduction to the collage *Hamlet*, Marowitz describes the hypothesis of Elphin Jones regarding the dominant myth in Shakespeare’s play *vis á vis* the role of the ‘sacred queen’ being fought over by the dominant male and the younger challengers: since Claudius has unseated Hamlet Sr. as the ‘sacred King,’ Hamlet’s revenge upon his uncle would require the son to ‘marry his mother’ and take his father’s mythic place, creating ‘[t]he overtones of the Oedipus conflict which actors and directors have “read into” *Hamlet*’¹⁹⁷ throughout the years. It is an interesting piece of scholarly hypothesis, and one visible within the collage *Hamlet* in the pairing of Ophelia and Gertrude. Yet it is difficult to understand what role the integration of this mythic overtone into the adaptation occupies in the achievement of Marowitz’s stated objective. Instead, it is evidence of ‘an

¹⁹⁴ Marowitz, *Roar of the Canon* 168.

¹⁹⁵ Marowitz, introduction, *The Marowitz Hamlet & the Tragical History of Dr. Faustus* 31. Italics in original.

¹⁹⁶ Marowitz, *Roar of the Canon* 168.

¹⁹⁷ Marowitz, introduction, *The Marowitz Hamlet & the Tragical History of Dr. Faustus* 32.

unbridgeable gap between the interpretation Marowitz so eloquently outlines in his introduction and that perceived from the script'¹⁹⁸ of the collage.

It is not unexpected, therefore, that his expressed intention to utilize the collage *Hamlet* to render an indictment of the listless liberal would be doomed from the start, and Marowitz is honest regarding his relative failure in this endeavour:

I now accept that the stylistic innovations in the work were so overwhelming it was difficult to insinuate this idea very lucidly, and I fully accept the fact that most of the public which responded to the collage were more taken with its theatricality than its thesis.¹⁹⁹

Billington agrees with this assessment when he concedes that, '[w]hile admitting the theatrical effectiveness of it all, I wouldn't claim the collage technique yields any specially fresh insights into the play.'²⁰⁰ Since, as Marowitz previously describes, his adaptation was inspired precisely by the desire to direct his anger at the indecisive Hamlet, the failure to communicate this message is fundamental in an evaluation of the degree of alignment of the collage *Hamlet* to the adaptor's own stated objectives. Despite this, when speaking of the 'thousands' of people who attended his adaptation without having seen or read the original work, Marowitz alleges that 'their impressions (derived from discussions after the performance) were as valid and often as knowledgeable as those of scholars and veteran theatregoers.'²⁰¹ Unfortunately, Marowitz does not include any of these audience

¹⁹⁸ Mohamed 158.

¹⁹⁹ Marowitz, introduction, *The Marowitz Shakespeare* 14.

²⁰⁰ Billington, *Plays and Players*.

²⁰¹ Marowitz, *Roar of the Canon* 167-168.

comments in his Introduction to the published version of the collage *Hamlet*,²⁰² and therefore it is difficult to surmise what sort of impressions he deemed ‘valid.’

Moreover, the director admits to being

chastened by the knowledge that many artists imagine they are communicating clear-cut intentions when, in fact, they are conveying something entirely ambiguous which, being approved for unexpected reasons, persuades them (hypocritically) to relinquish their original demands in regard to their work.²⁰³

It is unclear whether Marowitz includes himself amongst the ‘many artists’ mentioned, but since *The Marowitz Hamlet* garnered him a substantial amount of notoriety while failing to satisfy the objective for which he created it, this is certainly a valid hypothesis.

²⁰² In the preface to his production handbook, Joseph Papp did include a sampling of both positive and negative reactions to his ‘*Naked Hamlet*’ which provide some idea of the manner in which the work was received. See Papp, ‘*Naked Hamlet*’ 10-11.

²⁰³ Marowitz, introduction, *The Marowitz Shakespeare* 14.

Chapter Three:

An Othello

AN OVERVIEW

Charles Marowitz's *An Othello* is a radical re-working of Shakespeare's *Othello*, created incorporating the collage technique but with the addition of a significant amount – as much as sixty percent – of new text written by Marowitz himself and interpolated with a severely edited version of the original play. Commissioned by the Wiesbaden Festival in Germany, *An Othello* had its first performance there on May 26, 1972 before returning to England for a run at the Open Space Theatre, London in June of that same year.

MAROWITZ'S PERCEPTIONS OF SHAKESPEARE'S *OTHELLO*

Marowitz confesses that he 'felt a great frustration always seeing *Othello* from a contemporary standpoint – that is to say, bringing to it contemporary anticipations – and never having those anticipations satisfied.'¹ The productions never encompassed what he discerned to be the racial aspects of Shakespeare's play in a way which might reverberate with modern audiences, particularly those who experienced the civil rights movement in North America first hand, in comparison to the more personal narrative of the *crime passionnel* of a man murdering his wife. Marowitz compares the situation to that of modern Jews who he believes attend productions of Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* with the hope it will in some way illuminate the history of Jewish oppression which culminated in the Holocaust. His opinion, expressed in the production Casebook compiled by John Burgess and first published in *Theatre Quarterly* in 1972, was that

there was no great relevance in reviving *Othello* today
without accommodating the black revolutionary spirit

¹ Charles Marowitz, 'An *Othello* Casebook,' ed. John Burgess, *The Act of Being* (London: Martin Secker & Warburg, 1978) 164. The casebook was originally published in *Theatre Quarterly* 2 (Oct/Dec 1972): 163-196. Further quotations from this source will be listed as *An Othello Casebook*, followed by the page number.

irrationally lodged in an audience's expectations that made me want to tackle it; and by tackling it, I mean by-passing Shakespeare's original intentions and extracting only what I needed to achieve my own purposes.²

In a conversation with Marowitz found in *Roar of the Canon*, Jan Kott affirms that it is impossible to know with certainty how *Othello* was received in Shakespeare's time, but that during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries 'it was one of the most frequently revived of Shakespeare's plays with a strong emphasis on its domesticity';³ in these productions, the context of politics and race was considered unimportant. That being said, he acknowledges that, for modern audiences, this view of the play is less interesting than one incorporating exactly these concerns, and for Marowitz, any scrutiny of the Moor seems almost entirely planted in a modern socio-political plane of awareness. In the Introduction to the published play text of *The Shrew*, he states that

Othello, in a white context, is noble, courageous, forthright and commendable. But place one other black into that context and his credibility is immediately undermined. Fill it with thousands of members of an under-privileged black society and his position is morally untenable.⁴

Several years earlier, in an article in the *Guardian* written just prior to *An Othello's* London run, Marowitz was less restrained in his declamation:

Othello is an awe-inspiring Uncle Tom. Only a toadie and relentless brown-nose would have worked his way up the

² Marowitz, *An Othello Casebook* 164.

³ Jan Kott, interviewed by Charles Marowitz, *Roar of the Canon* 49.

⁴ Marowitz, introduction, *The Shrew* 15.

ranks to the position of General. Only a racial traitor would have accepted the ideals Othello has had to support to reach his exalted position.⁵

The Vietnam war had recently ended⁶ when Marowitz created *An Othello*, and the beliefs he espouses regarding the necessity for black military officers to overlook their commitment to their race in order to rise in the armed forces find some support within the writing of and about the period. A large proportion of the black American population perceived Vietnam as a ‘white man’s war,’ and further, as a war in which people of an only slightly lighter hue were defending their prerogative to choose how they would be governed, and what rights they would possess, which doubtless sounded a resonant tone. Worse, the loss of black soldiers in this conflict, waged by white America against a different non-white society, offered little or no hope of improvement to the African American population in America in terms of equality of civil rights, if history was any indicator. Natalie Kimbrough notes that one of the ways in which African Americans sought acceptance as equal members of American society was through participation in civic duties, including service in the military during times of war, but that their loyalty was continually questioned by the white majority; that returning black soldiers were shunned by the nation as a whole; and that an increase in civil liberties on the basis of their service was virtually nonexistent. Moreover, the prejudicial environment and segregation within the armed forces – not legally sanctioned but still *de facto* based upon its traditions and the learned attitudes of military personnel – ensured that African American soldiers continued to endure discrimination ‘even in a situation in which they were willing to sacrifice their

⁵ Charles Marowitz, ‘The Moor, the Merrier,’ *Guardian* 8 June 1972.

⁶ A ceasefire agreement was signed in 1973 by Henry Kissinger, at that time an advisor on National Security Affairs to then President Richard Nixon, and by the leader of the North Vietnamese delegation Le Duc Tho; all American troops were subsequently withdrawn that same year. ‘Battlefield: Vietnam – Timeline,’ *PBS.org*, 19 Nov. 2012 <<http://www.pbs.org/battlefieldvietnam/timeline/index4.html>>.

lives for the country that denied them the basic human right.’⁷ On April 4, 1967, Dr. Martin Luther King spoke at Riverside Church in New York City, describing the irony of watching both black and white soldiers on television, killing and dying together for a country that wouldn’t let them sit in the same schools or live on the same block in their homeland. Further, in a pamphlet titled *Dr. Martin Luther King, Vietnam and Civil Rights* published in 1967, Herbert Aptheker confirms ‘the palpable connection between racism and colonialism, and between racism and colonialism and aggressive warfare,’⁸ and quotes the *Richmond Planet*, described as ‘a leading Negro paper of the period,’ which ‘warned, in 1898, that “the American Negro cannot become the ally of imperialism without enslaving his own race.”’⁹

Other factors influenced the perception of the Vietnam war as one weighted in favour of White Americans in the African American mindset, including the disparity between the percentage of black versus white Americans drafted from the population qualified for service, and the extremely small number of African Americans who served as officers rather than as enlisted men.¹⁰ To add fuel to this discord, the Black Power Movement at the time accused the white majority of implementing an ‘African American “final solution”’ in which the deployment of black soldiers to high risk combat assignments, as well as ‘psychobiochemical mind control’ and ‘a Pentagon-sponsored “forget for-Peace” program that would induce mass amnesia,’ would create an effective

⁷ Natalie Kimbrough, *Equality or Discrimination?: African Americans in the U.S. Military during the Vietnam War* (Lanham, MD: UP of America, 2007) 43.

⁸ Herbert Aptheker, *Dr. Martin Luther King, Vietnam and Civil Rights* (New York: New Outlook, 1967) 3.

⁹ Aptheker 5.

¹⁰ *If We Must Die: African American Voices on War and Peace*, ed. Karin L. Sanford (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008) 222. For example, of the individuals who qualified for military service during the Vietnam war, 30% of blacks were actually drafted compared to only 18% of whites. Similarly, only 0.2% of American marine officers were African American, while their group constituted 7.6% of enlisted personnel.

genocide upon the black population.¹¹ The presentation of a black soldier who betrays his own people in order to gain the approval and remuneration of white society, which Marowitz wished to address in his adaptation of Shakespeare's *Othello*, was therefore extremely timely.

Much of the foundation utilized by Marowitz in *An Othello* was borrowed from the writing of civil rights activist Malcolm X who decried white society's tendency to lift a minority of black individuals out of their social milieu and effectively display them as the ideal African-American: one whom has integrated successfully, but in a limited manner, into the power structure of white society, by acquiescing to that society's dictates and culture. A Black celebrity, states Marowitz, 'is a tool of white society to placate the hostilities of the black masses.'¹² This practice, for which X employed the metaphor of the 'house Negro' versus the 'field Negro,' offered the semblance of a movement towards racial equality without delivering any true improvement to the vast majority of the black population. It is this judgment of the Moor as the single member of his race living a privileged lifestyle sanctioned by the white power structure that Marowitz chooses as the foundation of his adaptation, and it is a concept which held currency not only during the period in which *An Othello* was created, but in recent times as well. An interesting case in point is Colin Powell, a black American who served in Vietnam as a Major, later gaining promotion to the rank of General before being appointed American Secretary of State during the George W. Bush administration. As late as 2002, Harry Belafonte, a Black American entertainer of Jamaican origin, compared Powell to a house slave, and President George Bush to his white master, further adding that Powell's true purpose was to foster

¹¹ Kimbrough 53. The veracity of this accusation is uncertain, but it nonetheless fuelled the feeling amongst African Americans that Vietnam was a war which did not serve their desire for equality.

¹² Marowitz, 'The Moor, the Merrier,' *Guardian*.

the illusion that the Republican president's cabinet possessed more diversity than was actually present in any practical way. According to the Belafonte,

Colin Powell is permitted to come into the house of the master, as long as he will serve the master according to the master's plans. And when Colin Powell dares suggest something other than what the master wants to hear, he will be turned back out to pasture. And you don't hear much from those who live in the pasture.¹³

An unidentified political strategist, quoted in an August 2000 article in *Village Voice*, described Powell as 'what white people want all black people to be: a black man who accepts the system and who will defend the system to the death.'¹⁴

Nonetheless, the lack of modern relevance Marowitz discerns in Shakespeare's *Othello* may spring from his most basic perception of the play: a perception that *Othello* is 'an eloquent melodrama concerning a *crime passionel*'¹⁵ rather than a tragedy. In this opinion, he is in agreement with Lionel Abel, who states that *Macbeth* is Shakespeare's only real tragedy. Abel bases this on his analysis of a tragedy necessarily requiring *hubris* on the part of the protagonist, leading to that character's *nemesis*. When the protagonist believes themselves to be invulnerable, it is this belief which leads to their downfall and destruction; to live on beyond this destruction 'is to become capable of daemonic power,'¹⁶ the daemon lying somewhere between the human and god in terms of power and status. *Macbeth*'s feeling of invulnerability towards the end of Shakespeare's play certainly lives

¹³ Harry Belafonte, quoted in 'Belafonte Slams Powell,' *FoxNews.com*, 10 Oct. 2002, 19 Nov. 2012 <<http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,65286,00.html#ixzz2Cm52lnqN>>.

¹⁴ Quoted by Peter Noel, 'The Uncle Tom Dilemma: Are Blacks Like Colin Powell Asking African Americans to Sell Out?,' *VillageVoice.com*, 15 Aug. 2000, 19 Nov. 2012 <<http://www.villagevoice.com/2000-08-15/news/the-uncle-tom-dilemma/>>.

¹⁵ Marowitz, *An Othello Casebook* 15.

¹⁶ Lionel Abel, *Metatheatre: A New View of Dramatic Form* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1963) 2.

up to this concept, and in comparison, the excessive self-pride of *hubris* is lacking in Shakespeare's *Othello*. It must be noted, however, that Abel's assessment is self-described in its sub-title as *A New View of Dramatic Form*, one that is not shared by D.D. Raphael in his text, *The Paradox of Tragedy*. Raphael suggests that 'the moderately good man, brought to disaster not by vice but by some *hamartia* ('error,' 'fault'), [...] in Aristotle's opinion [...] is the ideal tragic hero.'¹⁷ Since *Othello*'s fall results from a fatal error in terms of his extreme jealousy, the play falls well within this precept. As well, A.C. Bradley refutes Marowitz's designation of the play, stating that '[o]f all Shakespeare's tragedies, [...] *Othello* is the most painfully exciting and the most terrible.'¹⁸ He attributes this to the manner in which the action is established: while the marital discord created by Iago affects the action at some distance into the narrative, the plot then catapults at significant speed towards the mortal deeds of the last scene, which possesses an extraordinary emotional power to affect an audience. In the Introduction to *New Casebooks: Othello*, editor Lena Cowen Orlin quotes Samuel Pepys, who attended *Othello* in 1660 and wrote in his famous diary that 'a very pretty lady that sat by me, called out, to see Desdemona smothered.'¹⁹ At a performance in Baltimore in 1822, a soldier in the audience was so incensed when the Moor began to strangle his white wife that he shot the actor playing *Othello*, wounding but not killing him.²⁰ Orlin cites another case in New York City in 1943 when a woman in the audience was heard to whisper, 'Oh God, don't let him kill her ... don't let him kill her ...'²¹ over and over again. Bradley concurs: 'Nowhere else in Shakespeare do we hold our breath in such anxiety and for so long a time as in the later Acts of *Othello*.'²²

¹⁷ D.D. Raphael, *The Paradox of Tragedy* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1960) 18.

¹⁸ A.C. Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy*, 4th ed. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006) 131.

¹⁹ Lena Cowen Orlin, introduction, *New Casebooks: Othello* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004) 1.

²⁰ See Orlin 2.

²¹ Orlin 2.

²² Bradley 133.

However, returning to Marowitz's contention regarding Shakespeare's *Othello*, strong emotionality may be present in melodrama as well as in tragedy: therefore *Othello*'s ability to inspire audience reaction should not be perceived as a categorizing characteristic. Traditionally, it is the size of the heroic figure that separates tragedy from melodrama, since the latter is more concerned with the travails of the ordinary man. Bradley notes that Shakespeare's later tragic heroes possessed 'something colossal, something which reminds us of Michael Angelo's figures'²³ and that Othello

is the first of these men, a being essentially large and grand, towering above his fellows, holding a volume of force which in repose ensures pre-eminence without an effort, and in commotion reminds us rather of the fury of the elements than of the tumult of common human passion.²⁴

While the size of Othello's character and deeds may help define him as a tragic hero, on a practical level, the Moor's decline from these heights to an almost infantile state during the action, at the mercy of seizures and under Iago's complete control, is problematic for some black actors, as African-American actor Laurence Fishburne explains: '[I]t's challenging to that aspect of having pride in one's own race and one's people. [...] He goes from being this great general to being almost an infant. [...] You can't get around it; it's in the text.'²⁵ Harold Bloom agrees: 'To see Othello in his unfallen splendor, within the play, becomes a little difficult, because he so readily seems to become Iago's dupe.'²⁶

²³ Bradley 130.

²⁴ Bradley 131.

²⁵ Laurence Fishburne, 'Two Actors on Shakespeare, Race, and Performance: A Conversation between Harry J. Lennix and Laurence Fishburne,' *Shakespeare Bulletin* 27.3: 404.

²⁶ Harold Bloom, *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human* (New York: Riverhead, 1998) 434.

Another frequent interpretation of the character of Othello is that of a civilized Barbarian who, during the course of the play, essentially reverts to ‘type,’ and this can also create problems for the actor of colour. Marowitz describes directing a production of Shakespeare’s *Othello* in which the title role was portrayed by a talented black actor who was reluctant to occupy the character’s anger and fierceness inspired by his belief in Desdemona’s infidelity, preferring to show only a calm and civilized exterior. After working intensively with his Othello, and eventually helping him to ‘find’ the role, Marowitz discovered that the actor secretly worried that to play the character’s savagery might serve to confirm the prejudice already held by white society against men of colour, ‘and so unconsciously he was pulling all his punches.’²⁷

MAROWITZ’S OBJECTIVES IN *AN OTHELLO*

Marowitz avers that *An Othello* differed from his earlier adaptations in that it was the first in which a new implication or ‘message,’ one which contradicted that of the playwright, had been imposed.²⁸ He specifically repudiates any notion that a director must respect the author’s intention for a given work, stating that ‘[t]he emergence of what we would call the modern director coincides not with his imposed authority on the physical elements of production, but his intercession with a playwright’s ideas,’²⁹ and that a director who remains steadfast to authorial intention is renouncing his responsibility to the work in progress. What is more difficult to decipher is the code by which Marowitz determines the author’s meaning, since Shakespeare is not available for input, nor is there a store of his critical writing on the play in question. As well, an author’s meaning or intention for their

²⁷ Marowitz, *How to Stage a Play* 40.

²⁸ See Marowitz, introduction, *The Shrew* 14.

²⁹ Marowitz, *Recycling Shakespeare* 2.

work is necessarily construed by and through the director and actors who re-create a production, even if no re-structuring is taking place. There will therefore be as many different interpretations of an author's ideas and potential meaning as there are productions and creative teams developing them: every re-mount of an original script is, in this light, an act of adaptation. Marowitz believes that Shakespeare's play encourages an audience to 'feel enormous sympathy for a tormented black man,'³⁰ while *An Othello* positions the character as a traitor and pawn; the adaptation attempts to serve a civil rights agenda which springs from a different source than the tale of passion, betrayal and murder written by Shakespeare, and thus acts, as the adaptor states, in opposition to the original meaning of the play.

While Marowitz originally intended to include only Shakespeare's original text, and to edit and re-configure this text in a way which focused on the racial conflict, this proved difficult, and in order to re-shape the play into a vehicle for his concept of racial activism, he began to write a substantial amount of original text. Marowitz describes his adaptation as being inspired significantly by the writings of Black activists Malcolm X and Stokely Carmichael, as well as by those of James Baldwin. Malcolm X had utilized the metaphor of the 'house Negro' and the 'field Negro' in a speech delivered at the North Negro Grass Roots Leadership Conference in November of 1963:³¹ a review of the London production of *An Othello* by Jules Aaron³² specifically notes that Marowitz quoted from this speech by X in the house program, an indication of the metaphor's strong place in the directorial concept. According to X, in the days of slavery, the slave population could be divided into

³⁰ Marowitz, *Roar of the Canon* 62.

³¹ Malcolm X, *Malcolm X Speaks*, ed. George Breitman (New York: Grove, 1966) vii. Born Malcolm Little in Omaha, Nebraska on May 19, 1925, X became a powerful leader in the black civil rights movement during the 1960s, first as a member of the Nation of Islam and a supporter of Elijah Muhammad, and later as founder of the Muslim Mosque, Inc. in New York City.

³² Jules Aaron, 'Reviewed Works: *Macbett* by Eugène Ionesco, *An Othello* by Charles Marowitz,' *Educational Theatre Journal* 25.1 (1973): 107.

two groups: the house Negro and the field Negro. The former, a minority of the overall population, lived a life of relative luxury: they were well clothed, shod, fed and housed. They lived in the master's home, and 'loved the master more than the master loved himself. They would give their life to save the master's house – quicker than the master would.'³³ The overwhelming majority of slaves were field Negroes, whose style of living was impoverished in comparison to their house brother. They were ill-clad, ill-fed and housed in shacks; they were beaten 'from morning to night.'³⁴ In contrast to the house Negro, who loved and prayed for the master's health and well-being, the field Negro hated the master: '[w]hen the master got sick, the field Negro prayed that he'd die.'³⁵ The house Negro, who had been given the slight education required for their position by the master, was held up by the plantation owners as an example to the field Negroes of how obedience could result in a better life, and in that way, to control them. In the same speech, X described how this tactic was still used by the white ruling class in the 1960s: a white man 'takes a Negro, a so-called Negro, and makes him prominent, builds him up, publicizes him, makes him a celebrity [...] and a Negro leader'³⁶ and then uses him to subdue the revolutionary instinct of the black populace. X refers to these individuals as 'Uncle Toms,' an allusion to the character in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*³⁷ by Harriet Beecher Stowe. Dr. Martin Luther King, because he persuaded his followers to love in the face of hate, and therefore, in X's opinion, to suffer patiently under the indignity of social injustice in America, was categorized by X as an 'Uncle Tom' figure.³⁸

³³ X, *Malcolm X Speaks* 11.

³⁴ X, *Malcolm X Speaks* 11.

³⁵ X, *Malcolm X Speaks* 11.

³⁶ X, *Malcolm X Speaks* 13.

³⁷ Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (London: Harper, 2011).

³⁸ One such comment by Malcolm X, in which he stated that 'today Martin Luther King is just a 20th [sic] century or modern Uncle Tom, or a religious Uncle Tom,' was made during an interview with Kenneth Clark as part of a program produced in 1963 by an American public television station. For a transcript of the interview: Malcolm X, interview with Kenneth Clark, *The Negro and the American Promise*, Public Television, WGBH, Boston, 27 May 2011

In *An Othello*, Marowitz casts Othello as the ‘house Negro’ to the Venetian nobility, and re-positions Iago as the ‘field Negro’ who strives, through incendiary remark, to prick Othello into recognizing his compromised position and re-joining the black alliance. In this way, and referencing Coleridge’s famous description of Iago’s ‘motiveless malignity,’ he suggests that

a legitimate motivation can be provided for Othello’s destruction. And with this tool, I managed to make Iago subvert Othello at every turn – as a racial traitor, a political dupe, and a conformist actor in a potentially revolutionary context.³⁹

Both Othello and Iago were portrayed by black actors.

AN ANALYSIS OF *AN OTHELLO*

An Othello, in many ways, is an example of the Marowitz’s potent theatrical skill juxtaposed against his tendency to reduce complex situations to simple black and white scenarios, adopting misleading stereotypes in the process. For example, early in the performance, Marowitz employs his mastery of theatrical imagery to create conceptual representations which have the power to remain firmly entrenched in the viewer’s psyche;⁴⁰ in the original production, all of these images were juxtaposed against the simple but innovative set by Robin Don featuring a cage of chains and bars surrounding the actors on

http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/mlk/sfeature/sf_video_pop_03_tr_qry.html. For a digital clip of the interview: Malcolm X, interview with Kenneth Clark, ‘Malcolm X – Dr. King is an Uncle Tom,’ mrholtshistory, YouTube, 9 Feb 2011 < <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Rr-aRxItpw&feature=related>>.

³⁹ Marowitz, introduction, *The Shrew* 16.

⁴⁰ The power of the images in *An Othello* is confirmed by their presence in a number of critical reviews of the production. Aaron’s review in *Educational Theatre Journal* compliments the image of Desdemona at the beginning of the play, as described herein, as well as the other images specifically mentioned in this chapter. Billington similarly makes note of the efficacy of several of the productions key visual images. Michael Billington, ‘Marowitz *Othello* at the Open Space,’ *Guardian* 9 June 1972.

four sides. The first of these images is revealed as the lights come up on the opening scene: Desdemona – blonde, fair-skinned and dressed entirely in white – stands statue-like, seemingly imprisoned within a beam of light from above; from the darkness behind her, a pair of black arms slowly encircles her. The stage directions note that ‘*[s]he yields to them,*’ after which there is a sudden cacophony of angry human voices, during which she is ‘*spirited away.*’⁴¹ It is a powerful image which cogently communicates the discomfort experienced in some quarters of society regarding physical involvement by black men and white women. Unfortunately, this has the effect of positioning Marowitz’s adaptation primarily as a discord of miscegenation, displacing it from the more broadly based exploration of civil liberties and race which he had articulated. Nonetheless, from the standpoint of audience reception, it represented a powerfully theatrical opening to the adaptation. A brief space later, Marowitz as director creates two more spectacular theatrical images. Shortly after Othello’s promise to the Duke to encounter the Turks in Cyprus, a ‘storm’ scene occurs, intended by Marowitz as a ‘memory [... which] leads into [Othello’s] epileptic fit.’⁴² The Moor stands centre stage on the deck of an imaginary ship, encircled closely by Brabantio, Lodovico, Cassio and the Duke. As Othello begins to suffer an epileptic seizure, the characters surrounding him spin out on a rope which is tied between them and various parts of Othello’s body, effectively pulling him in many directions. This visual representation of a man being wrenched by the opinions and political needs of others, while his own beliefs struggle to maintain control – one of the ropes was in his own hands – is a cogent one which supports the overall theme of the adaptation. During this seizure, Othello experiences a number of ‘visions,’ the first of

⁴¹ Charles Marowitz, ‘An Othello,’ *Open Space Plays*, ed. Charles Marowitz (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974) 259. Further quotations from this source will be shown as ‘Marowitz, *An Othello*’ followed by the page number. Italics in original.

⁴² Marowitz, *An Othello Casebook* 167.

which is the infidelity of Desdemona; Desdemona appears, at first loving to her husband, but soon propositioning Cassio, confessing to him her hatred of Othello, adding, ‘If thou canst cuckold him, / Thou dost thyself a pleasure, me a sport.’⁴³ At this point, the third in the triptych of *An Othello*’s evocative stage images occurs: the infamous handkerchief, which Marowitz and designer Don reconstructed in Brobdingnagian proportions, flutters to the stage floor from the flies,⁴⁴ engulfing Desdemona, just as the loss of it engulfs her within Othello’s suspicion in the original work. On it, she is ‘gangbanged’ by Cassio, the Duke and Lodovico while Othello watches ‘horrificed’⁴⁵ and her father Brabantio collects a fee for her services. The handkerchief, patterned with strawberries, provides both a bed and an ironic context for the sexual commandeering of Desdemona: strawberries traditionally are a symbol of love and sensual desire, but the red blotches on the white ‘sheet’ are emblematic of virginity, since historically the families of new brides would display the sheets from the nuptial bed, stained with the blood of the virgin’s torn hymen, as evidence of her purity.⁴⁶ Although, in hindsight, one may question whether these images furthered Marowitz’s stated objective of endowing his adaptation with the spirit of the civil rights movement, their visual power can hardly be questioned.

In terms of Marowitz’s creation of stereotypes which fail to accurately depict the truth of the racial disharmony being explored, there are many instances which call into question his ability to objectively perceive and portray the broader picture of a complex scenario. For example, in a soliloquy directed to the audience, Desdemona coolly speaks of her sexual desire for Othello:

⁴³ Marowitz, *An Othello* 276. This text was spoken in the original play by Iago to Roderigo.

⁴⁴ This was certainly the intention, which may have been achieved at the Wiesbaden venue, but would have been difficult at the Open Space, which had a very low ceiling above the stage. See *The Act of Being* 174.

⁴⁵ Marowitz, *An Othello* 277.

⁴⁶ See Lynda Boose, ‘Othello’s Handkerchief: “The Recognizance and Pledge of Love”,’ *Critical Essays on Shakespeare’s Othello*, ed. Anthony Gerard Barthelemy (New York: Macmillan, 1994) 56-57.

Wouldn't you have, if you'd had the chance? Not just big,
and not just black, but holy and black, strong and black,
elegant and black. From a world so warm and sweet, so bred
to pleasures and to craft that its smallest pot is a priceless
relic, and its simplest peasant, a prince in miniature. A
culture we can never hope to understand – except by loving
those representatives of it who walk through our trashy white
streets like ambassadors from an enchanted land.⁴⁷

Desdemona, in this adaptation, operates primarily from a sexual perspective, as is common with Marowitz's female characters, but in this case she makes use of sexuality to bond with her mystical notion of the exotic sensuality of Othello. It is his blackness, and not himself, which is the object of her attraction. Marowitz's sexualization of Desdemona is also evident towards the end of the play when she taunts Iago: 'You'd give anything to get into my pants, wouldn't you?'⁴⁸ In the Venetian society found in *An Othello*, female power apparently exists only in a woman's ability to trigger a man's sexual desire, just as the only power available to a black man is garnered through providing another 'service' to the ruling white power structure. Overall, *An Othello* depicts white women as sexually motivated, attracted to black men primarily to satisfy their carnal needs with little desire to give or receive true intimacy. Marowitz's interpretation of Desdemona is made problematic by his decision to reduce the three female characters of Shakespeare's play – Desdemona, Emilia and Bianca – to a single female character, thereby shrinking the fuller perspective of female attitude expressed by the trio to a solitary point of view. In the original play, the purity and

⁴⁷ Marowitz, *An Othello* 292.

⁴⁸ Marowitz, *An Othello* 299.

idealism of Desdemona were offset by the practical philosophy of Emilia⁴⁹ and further contrasted to the possessive romantic jealousy of Bianca. Marowitz effectively creates Desdemona as the sole voice of womanhood in his adaptation, then sexualizes her to a degree which negates the possibility of the character representing the true breadth of female opinion in such matters. Like Lady Macbeth in his *A Macbeth*, Marowitz's portrayal of Desdemona positions women as creatures who use men for their own aims, and suck the life out of them sexually.

In general, simple human affection, let alone love, is in short supply in Marowitz's *An Othello*, perhaps because the concept of a generous love has no significant place in Marowitz's psyche, as he himself admits. In his acting tome, *The Other Way*, he relates the aftermath of a rehearsal session in which an actress, who had, with Marowitz, undergone a long and ultimately successful struggle to find 'a way out of the darkness' in terms of the material being worked, accused him of not "know[ing] how to give any love!" It was a heartfelt indictment,' Marowitz relates, 'it hurt, and I guess it was true.'⁵⁰ It is apparent from his frequent use of sexual metaphor to illustrate common situations that Marowitz himself operates on a highly sexual interpretation of the world, and it is therefore no surprise that many of his characters, including the female characters, show themselves to be likewise motivated. For example, Marowitz often employs sexual metaphors in non-sexual situations. Two of the chapters in Marowitz's *The Roar of the Canon* are titled 'How to Rape Shakespeare' and 'Harlotry in Bardolatry': the former invokes sexual violence, the latter sexual commerce. Similarly, in *The Other Way*, he expresses an opinion that '[a]

⁴⁹ Interestingly, Marowitz views Emilia as a 'low comic' character, explaining that Shakespeare did not allow his tragic figures to 'fraternize' with this genre of individual, and thus rejecting any motivation for evil by Iago towards Othello on this basis. See Marowitz, introduction, *The Shrew* 15-16.

⁵⁰ Marowitz, *The Other Way* 133.

dramaturg is a pimp who takes a fee from both the whore and the john.⁵¹ In *Prospero's Staff*, he alleges that Hamlet receives pleasure from lashing himself for his own inaction, stating: 'It is very much like the situation of a man who derives more satisfaction from masturbation and erotic imagery than from intercourse with a real woman.'⁵² Stage direction, according to Marowitz, 'like sex is a highly private affair and more often than not, you don't watch others doing it.'⁵³ And finally, in his article, 'The Marowitz Macbeth,' speaking of the process of adapting Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, he says,

[a]ny interpretation of any so-called 'classic' is like an old whore yielding to a new client's embrace. If Shakespeare's 'old whore' resisted this particular embrace, there would be grounds for withdrawing gracefully or otherwise, but what impressed me working on the play in this frame-of-mind is that the 'old whore' lammed into it like nobody's business.⁵⁴

Based on this tendency to perceive the world on the basis of sexual motives and actions, it is hardly surprising that Marowitz has projected similar motives onto *An Othello's* sole instrument for womanhood. Unfortunately, by doing so he is appropriating the female voice, just as he has done with the voice of black culture, and the verity of that voice suffers accordingly.

Similarly, Marowitz chooses to portray Brabantio as a Jew, speaking in what the stage directions describe as a 'Yiddish accent';⁵⁵ as Desdemona becomes the sole spokesperson for the female gender, so her father is cast as the sole mouthpiece for an

⁵¹ Marowitz, *The Other Way* 157.

⁵² Marowitz, *Prospero's Staff* 123.

⁵³ Marowitz, *The Other Way* 1.

⁵⁴ Charles Marowitz, 'The Marowitz Macbeth,' *Theatre Quarterly* 1 (1971): 48-49. While exemplifying his use of sexual metaphor, this assertion tends to contradict other statements on the creation of *A Macbeth*: 'for me, *A Macbeth* was always something of a bloodless exercise in cut-up techniques. [...] cutting up *Macbeth* was a little like slicing salami.' Marowitz, introduction, *The Marowitz Shakespeare* 15.

⁵⁵ Marowitz, *An Othello* 295. Italics in original.

entire culture, and in this case, the representation is a predominantly negative one.

Brabantio's text in *An Othello* indicates that Jewish fathers are xenophobic and segregationist:

Would you like your daughter to marry one? Some joke. My daughter *did* marry one and I can tell you, I wouldn't like my daughter to marry one. [...] Oy Got [...] what am I supposed to do – show how broad minded I am? No, it's nothin'. You want to marry a schvarza, go 'head. Blessings on you. You want to make me a laughing-stock of the whole neighbourhood, I should die from shame, why not?⁵⁶

He goes onto to detail his argument against miscegenation:

We are all equal in the eyes of God. [...] Equal Shmequal. Look, you don't breed a bitch with a canary; a duck with a horse; a mouse with an elephant. [...] If God had wanted us to get together, don't you think he'd have given us a little sign? You know, maybe given us white faces and black arms, or white noses and black toes – some little clue that it was all supposed to mix in.⁵⁷

Ironically, the Yiddish Brabantio divides the assembled company into white and black, placing himself in the former category, despite the fact that his Jewish antecedents suffered severe discrimination, evidenced by centuries of pogroms culminating in the atrocities of the Holocaust, at the hands of the white power structure. Although white, he is still a Jew.

⁵⁶ Marowitz, *An Othello* 295. According to online dictionaries, 'schvarza' probably derives from the Yiddish word 'shwarts' meaning 'black,' but some disagreement exists as to whether the term has a negative connotation. *Yiddish Dictionary Online*, 29 May 2011 <<http://www.yiddishdictionaryonline.com>>; *Your Dictionary*, 29 May 2011 <<http://www.yourdictionary.com/schvartze>>.

⁵⁷ Marowitz, *An Othello* 295-297.

Nor are the complications inherent in the gradations of colour present within the Jewish faith and culture noted.⁵⁸ At other points in his monologue, Brabantio perpetuates the longstanding image of Black Americans as recently descended from jungle dwellers: ‘And it ain’t just in the colours. There’s the background; the upbringing; the history. My father, whatever he was, he wasn’t climbing trees in the jungle with a grass *shmata* between his legs.’⁵⁹ Based on the sole Jewish voice within *An Othello*, Hebrew fathers are shown to fulfill cultural stereotypes by saying ‘Oy vey’ and using Yiddish words like ‘shmata,’ and, of greater concern, to hold decidedly racist beliefs. While some Jews undoubtedly share a prejudice against people of colour, and while Malcolm X, the black activist whose writings inspired Marowitz’s adaptation, spoke on many occasions of his perception of this alleged Jew-on-Black racism, there is enormous evidence that American Jews made a significant contribution, both personally and monetarily, to the civil rights movement of the 1960s. According to Howard Sachar, author of *A History of Jews in America*, while a small percentage of Southern Jews were ‘ardent segregationists,’ they were ‘entirely atypical of Jews even in the Deepest South.’⁶⁰ Further,

Julius Rosenwald chairman of Sears Roebuck, contributed more generously in behalf of Southern blacks than did any philanthropist in American history. Rosenwald was Chicagoan, but his munificence was continued by his daughter, Edith Stern of New Orleans, whose Stern Family

⁵⁸ For example, the Lemba are a tribe located in southern Africa whose links to the Jewish faith were proven through DNA testing by Tudor Parfitt and David Goldstein of University College London. For further information, see *The Lemba, the Black Jews of Southern Africa*, 1 June 2011 <<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/israel/familylemba.html>>.

⁵⁹ Marowitz, *An Othello* 295. ‘Shmata’ is a Yiddish word meaning ‘rag’ or ‘anything worthless.’ *Yiddish Dictionary Online*, 29 May 2011 <<http://www.yiddishdictionaryonline.com>>.

⁶⁰ Howard Sachar, ‘Jews in the Civil Rights Movement: Working to extend America’s Freedoms,’ *My Jewish Learning*, 13 Sept. 2011 <http://www.myjewishlearning.com/history/Modern_History/1948-1980/America/Liberal_Politics/Black-Jewish_Relations/Civil_Rights_Movement.shtml>.

Fund in later years contributed vast sums to civil rights activities in the South.⁶¹

Sachar also reports on the large number of Jewish individuals recruited in 1914 by Joel Spingarn to the board of the recently founded NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People). Additionally approximately 30 percent of the non-black volunteers who participated in civil rights protests were Jews. One such individual, Andrew Goodman, was posthumously catapulted into the national spotlight when his body, along with those of his colleagues, James Chaney and Michael Schwerner, was discovered in Mississippi, the victim of violence by the Ku Klux Klan. The three men, two white and one black, had been registering black voters in that state. As Sachar notes, Jewish participation in the American Civil Rights movement was an altruistic one: '[t]he Jews had long since achieved their own political and economic breakthrough. Rarely had any community gone to such lengths to share its painfully achieved status with others.'⁶² Therefore, while a small percentage of American Jews would have agreed with the sentiments expressed by Brabantio in *An Othello*, they would not have been in the majority; Marowitz's decision to have one Jewish voice onstage expressing racist dogma expresses no more of the 'truth' of the situation than his sexualization of Desdemona does as a spokesperson for women.

Another stereotype depicted is the 'red-neck' Southern military officer, as presented by the Duke: in contrast to Shakespeare's Duke, Marowitz's creation is highly prejudiced against black men and virulently opposed to miscegenation. During an exchange with Cassio, the Duke speaks in a Southern accent, and spews racial hatred toward Othello on the basis of his miscegenation:

⁶¹ Sachar, *My Jewish Learning*.

⁶² Sachar, *My Jewish Learning*.

IT'S A FUCKING SHAME! A FUCKING DISGRACE!

Every regiment in the country's laughin' up their sleeve.

Coon General and his White Pussy. Goddammit, men

ought'a be able to bridle their appetites; ought to have some

regard for their reputation; the reputation of their comrades.⁶³

Employing the concept of skin colour as 'the outward face of the inner soul,' the Duke elides the Elizabethan notion of the 'Chain of Being' with the modern military concept of the 'Chain of Command' in order to bludgeon Cassio into denigrating Othello as a 'BLACK-HEARTED MOTHER-FUCKER.'⁶⁴ He then orders Cassio to take over Othello's posting, since '[w]e don't want a bloody coon General trottin' around these islands with a white pussy in tow, and subvertin' the authority of our rule.'⁶⁵ The Duke thus fulfills the most blatant stereotype of the Southern redneck lawman, and no other contrasting voice is supplied. Attitudes towards miscegenation in the southern United States are more complex than what is expressed by Marowitz's Duke, but it cannot be argued that significant intolerance on the issue was present, and further, that public opinion surrounding miscegenation has changed significantly since Shakespeare's *Othello* was first performed. There is evidence to suggest that Othello's relationship with Desdemona would have seemed exotic, but not entirely inappropriate, to the Elizabethan audiences who first attended the play. Certainly their marriage is not the only liaison or potential liaison between a black man and a white woman in the Shakespearean canon, nor in the larger dramatic literature of the day. Anthony Barthelemy notes that

⁶³ Marowitz, *An Othello* 282.

⁶⁴ Marowitz, *An Othello* 284-285.

⁶⁵ Marowitz, *An Othello* 286.

in plays, masques, and pageants by Shakespeare's contemporaries from Jonson to Webster, black characters appear in greater numbers than many initially would believe. [...]n most of those works the black characters hold high social positions, and in the plays, most marry white women.⁶⁶

The enslavement of blacks by Britain and the colonies in the new world undoubtedly had a negative effect on the perception of intermarriage, increasing resistance to miscegenation. Overall, miscegenation is a complex subject which mingles, not only white and black blood, but concepts of status, innate fear and desire. However, the salient point *vis-à-vis An Othello* is that miscegenation, while present in Shakespeare's *Othello*, has little currency in Marowitz's stated theme for his adaptation: a discussion of civil rights. Jenny Sheridan, in her *Plays and Players* review, hits the nail on the head when she states:

Black Power and Jealousy do not mix, simply because the opposing positions, once established within the *Othello* context, cannot develop in any meaningful way. Uncle Tom-Othello is destroyed by a 'crime passionel' [sic], and however skillfully you may try to get this together with the politics of race, you are left with a mixture that refuses to gel.⁶⁷

This is because the civil rights movement had little to do with passion between the races, and a great deal to do with equal access to education, employment and housing. As Stokely Carmichael describes, to a large percentage of the white population, integration 'means

⁶⁶ Anthony Barthelemy, introduction, *Critical Essays on Shakespeare's Othello*, ed. Anthony Gerard Barthelemy (New York: Macmillan, 1994) 7.

⁶⁷ Jenny Sheridan, 'An Othello: Two Views,' *Plays and Players* (Aug., 1972): 40.

black men wanting to marry white daughters; it means “race mixing” – implying bed or dance partners. To black people, it has meant a way to improve their lives – economically and politically.’⁶⁸ Marowitz has unsuccessfully attempted to merge these disparate concepts; rather than creating an original paradigm with which to challenge the intellectual substructure of the original work, he has created nothing more than a series of negative stereotypes. The question which arises, then, from any surmise regarding Marowitz and the tools – emotional, sexual and intellectual – with which he perceives the world, relates to the personal perspective he brings to subjects under dramatic inquiry while purporting to communicate a much broader vision of society, and the extent to which this ‘personal politic’ unintentionally derails his expressed socio-political intentions for a dramatic work.

Nonetheless, *An Othello* does effectively focus attention on the continuing dilemma of whether success as judged and rewarded by white society renders a powerful black man an ‘Uncle Tom.’ After Othello describes to the Venetian leadership the way in which his narrative of past adventures won Desdemona’s heart, the company freezes with the exception of Iago, who moves among them giving his assessment of the General’s betrayal of his community for pecuniary recompense. Iago accuses Othello of being ‘that special kind of something; that up-and-at ‘em, I’m shootin’-for-the-moon House Nigger who knows when to nod and when to keep mum; [...] and not givin’ a fiddler’s fuck who you killin’ and for what, cause the gravy’s pourin’ in.’⁶⁹ This accusation, whether or not apt, still persists in the twenty-first century: Peter Noel notes that the ‘politics of “I’m-gittin’-mine” is deeply routed in the Uncle Tom Dilemma,’ and quotes Louis Clayton Jones who describes it as an inevitable perplexity for the intelligent individual of colour who seeks a

⁶⁸ Stokely Carmichael & Charles V. Hamilton, *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America* (New York: Vintage, 1967) 37.

⁶⁹ Marowitz, *An Othello* 265.

successful career in one of the many professions which support the prevailing political and/or economic system which in some way oppresses their own people.⁷⁰

On a directorial note, an interesting tactic by Marowitz was his concept, presented for significant periods during the last part of the adaptation, that

Othello, Desdemona and Iago apart from being *dramatis personae* in Shakespeare's work, are also character [sic] in the received world of literature which has been accumulating for centuries. They [...] now exist as characters in isolation from their original context,

and thus are able to step outside the theatrical framework of the play to 'question, worry and possibly subvert the originals which gave them birth.'⁷¹ This technique carries two important benefits: it jars the traditional theatrical pretence, thus startling the audience into full attention; and it simultaneously reminds the viewer that the 'character' of Othello is a role, hopefully bringing with it the understanding that roles on stage extend beyond the proscenium and exist powerfully in the world beyond. As critic Jules Aaron notes, like the 'Uncle Tom' House Negroes of the 1960s, Othello is 'assigned his role by the god-like White Establishment. Whether he likes it or not, he must play that role correctly to the last prescribed moment.'⁷² Within this liminal world where characters and actors segue into each other, Othello refuses to play the role of the jealous black savage who murders his wife, forcing the Duke and Lodovico to cut his throat to end the story as originally told. Billington describes the final image of the play, in which the white characters look to one another and smile, as 'chilling' – 'the play's white survivors smile conspiratorially at each

⁷⁰ Noel, *VillageVoice.com*.

⁷¹ Marowitz, 'The Moor, the Merrier,' *Guardian*.

⁷² Aaron 108.

other having disposed of the troublesome blacks.’⁷³ That being said, a lone individual being surrounded and destroyed by colleagues and lover is a common image in Marowitz’s adaptations – both *The Marowitz Hamlet* and *A Macbeth* end in a similar manner – effectively communicating Marowitz’s view that the world in which the characters, and by association, the audience, live is a dangerous place, replete with disloyal and malevolent people.

As has been previously stated, Marowitz’s key objective in his *An Othello* was to ‘accommodate the black revolutionary spirit irrationally lodged in an audience’s expectations,’⁷⁴ but the critics were divided on whether he had achieved this. While admiring his ‘constant directorial inventiveness,’ Billington states, ‘the acid test is whether Mr Marowitz’s “total overhaul” of the tragedy [...] actually makes it more relevant to contemporary racial attitudes. And the answer is a reluctant No.’⁷⁵ Wardle felt that Marowitz had successfully moved ‘the supposedly marginal issue of race to the dramatic centre’ and offered general praise to Marowitz as an adaptor of the Shakespearean canon: ‘One reason for valuing this director is that he is not afraid of his sacred author, and is prepared to butcher him in a good cause with no pretence of “following the playwright’s real intentions.”’⁷⁶ None of the critics questioned the aptness of Marowitz, a white Jew, to appropriate the story of Black Othello’s ‘sell-out’ to White society, nor the manner in which the director had reduced a complex situation to a series of stereotypes. Billington did note that ‘Othello and Iago represent contrasting black stereotypes’⁷⁷ but he perceived it as Marowitz’s ‘boldest innovatory stroke.’

⁷³ Billington, ‘Marowitz *Othello* at the Open Space,’ *Guardian*.

⁷⁴ Marowitz, introduction, *The Shrew* 15.

⁷⁵ Billington, ‘Marowitz *Othello* at the Open Space,’ *Guardian*.

⁷⁶ Irving Wardle, “‘An’ *Othello* – Open Space,’ *Times* 9 June 1972.

⁷⁷ Billington, ‘Marowitz *Othello* at the Open Space,’ *Guardian*.

Notably, the adaptation suggests that black men possessing revolutionary spirit speak largely in a superficially uneducated idiom punctuated by expletives and spiced with words like ‘cock,’ ‘pussy’ and ‘nigger.’ This was apparently a conscious choice on Marowitz’s part:

I started out right from the beginning working to make the most blatant contrast possible between all the kind of mother-fucking, shit, white-pussy type phrases that would come into Black American speech, so as to get the maximum conflict between that, the hip contemporary language, and traditional Shakespearian verse.⁷⁸

Nonetheless, this portion of *An Othello*’s concept is puzzling in that none of the black civil rights leaders on whom the adaptation is ostensibly based – Malcolm X, Stokely Carmichael or James Baldwin – speak remotely in this vein, as evidenced by interviews and speeches recorded from that period, and/or their published writings.⁷⁹ A concrete example of Marowitz’s manipulation of the Black ‘voice’ will be helpful in illustrating this situation. In his first monologue, Iago also utters a scenario of black male sexual violence against white women which is repeated twice more during the adaptation:

it was Whitey who made the black woman the symbol of slavery and the white woman the symbol of freedom, and everytime you embrace a black woman you embraced slavery

⁷⁸ Marowitz, *An Othello Casebook* 186. Italics in original.

⁷⁹ For examples of their written language, see Carmichael & Hamilton, *Black Power*; X, *Malcolm X Speaks* and James Baldwin, *Nobody Knows My Name: More Notes of a Native Son* (New York: Dial, 1961). For examples of their spoken language, see the following: James Baldwin, interview with Kenneth Clark, *Citizen King: Three Perspectives*, WGBH, Boston, 27 May 2011 <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/mlk/sfeature/sf_video_pop_04_qt.html>; Malcolm X, *Malcolm X on Front Page Challenge*, 5 Jan. 1965, 21 Sept. 2011 <<http://www.cbc.ca/archives/discover/great-interviews/assassination-of-malcolm-x.html>>; and Eldridge Cleaver, ‘Speech at UC Irvine - 1968,’ You Tube: Footage World, 21 Sept. 2011 <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tdi-NNfUF3A>>.

and everytime you put your arms around a white woman, you
was huggin' freedom.⁸⁰

This section of text is an almost direct quote from 'The Allegory of the Black Eunuchs,' written by Black Panther leader Eldridge Cleaver during his incarceration in Folsom Prison and published in his 1968 collection of essays titled *Soul on Ice*:

I know that the white man made the black woman the symbol
of slavery and the white woman the symbol of freedom.
Every time I embrace a black woman I'm embracing slavery,
and when I put my arms around a white woman, well, I'm
hugging freedom.⁸¹

There are two notable changes made by Marowitz to this text: Cleaver's 'white man' has been changed to 'Whitey' and 'hugging' has been changed to 'huggin'.' The first of these changes turns a descriptive into a racial epithet, the act of a white playwright further radicalizing the words of a black radical; the second represents a white playwright altering the articulate and grammatically correct writing of a black man to better fulfill the stereotype of black idiom, which is literally inarticulate (hence the dropping of the 'g') and which sounds, to the white ear, uneducated. All of Iago's text, other than that written by Shakespeare, displays one or both of these two characteristics of radicalization and lack of articulation. A case in point is this speech by Iago, which follows immediately after that just quoted:

And did you tell her, when she was givin' you up her world
of sighs, that when you had your furry black cock into her, it
wasn't love you was wantin' but revenge, and when you were

⁸⁰ Marowitz, *An Othello* 266.

⁸¹ Eldridge Cleaver, 'The Allegory of the Black Eunuchs,' *Soul on Ice* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1968) 160.

on top of her, you were gratifyin' the urge to kill – for all
those centuries the white man killed you.⁸²

Compare this to a similar section in Cleaver's essay, 'On Becoming,' also contained in *Soul on Ice*:

Rape was an insurrectionary act. It delighted me that I was defying and trampling upon the white man's law, upon his system of values, and that I was defiling his women – and this point, I believe, was the most satisfying to me because I was very resentful over the historical fact of how the white man has used the black woman. I felt I was getting revenge. From the site of the act of rape, consternation spreads outwardly in concentric circles. I wanted to send waves of consternation throughout the white race. [...] If I had not been apprehended I would have slit some white throats.⁸³

Note the difference in tone between the first, written by a white man in what he considers to be a black idiom, and the second, written by a black man who actually experienced the thoughts and emotions communicated. Not only is Marowitz's version of Cleaver less articulate (noting, again, the dropped g's in every word ending in 'ing'), it substitutes the rational tone of the latter with a sexualized vocabulary most evident in the use of 'furry black cock.' Marowitz is effectively 'defining' the black radical through the speech with which he has endowed Iago, and this is not his right as an individual outside of that cultural group.

⁸² Marowitz, *An Othello* 266.

⁸³ Cleaver 14.

Moreover, although Iago is commenting upon a consensual sexual act between Othello and his wife, there is implicit violence in the text: the striving for revenge rather than love; the gratification of a desire to ‘kill’ in retribution for past hostility by those of Desdemona’s white ancestry against Othello’s black forebears. When one couples this with the source material – Eldridge Cleaver’s writing describing his serial rape of white women as a professed act of insurrection – there is a strong implicit comparison between Othello’s sexual liaison with Desdemona and the rape of a white woman by a black man. In making this link, Marowitz has arguably appropriated opinion articulated by one black man and, in assigning it to a near archetypal Shakespearean character, invested it in an entire population of black men as ‘truth.’ In doing so, he has unwittingly added his endorsement to a previously expressed white-based prejudice against blacks. In “‘Looking at One’s Self through the Eyes of Others’: W.E.B. Du Bois’s Photographs for the 1900 Paris Exposition,” Shawn Michelle Smith reports that

[i]ncreasingly over the course of the late nineteenth century, white Americans evoked the imagined “new negro crime” of raping white women in order to legitimize violence upon African American bodies(6); white lynch mobs called forth an image of the black male rapist in order to justify the torture and mutilation of black men.⁸⁴

In support of Smith’s categorization of this ‘new negro crime’ as ‘imagined,’ the theory that black men have a latent desire to rape white women as an expression of their anger against white oppression is not borne out by statistical evidence. If most black men, like

⁸⁴ Shawn Michelle Smith, “‘Looking at One’s Self through the Eyes of Others’: W.E.B. Du Bois’s Photographs for the 1900 Paris Exposition,” *African American Review* 34.4 (2000): 583. In note 6, Smith reports: ‘in “Some Fresh Suggestions about the New Negro Crime,” in the *Harper’s Weekly* of 23 January 1904, the editor proclaims, “The assault of white women by colored men may fairly be described as the ‘new’ negro crime” (120).’

Cleaver, viewed the rape of white women as an act of insurrection, as well as revenge for past harms inflicted upon them through the racial hatred of white society, it would be logical to assume that they would rape white women more often than women of their own colour. However, in an article published in The University of North Carolina journal *Social Forces*, Scott J. South and Richard B. Felson found ‘little support for the hypothesis [...] that interracial rape reflects black economic deprivation and politicalization’;⁸⁵ the incidence of interracial and intraracial rape were essentially equal in the American cities studied, regardless of the level of poverty, lack of employment and inequality suffered by black residents. Further debunking the myth of the ‘new negro crime,’ all other circumstances being equal, black rapists showed a slight preference to rape women of their own colour rather than white women. Cleaver, a black man suffering the indignities of racial inequality in the United States, made statements voicing a belief which was true to himself, not necessarily to all members of his race, but by creating Iago as a choric character who speaks outside of the dominant theatrical action, Marowitz presents these opinions as if they are true for black men generally, and therefore clouds the verity of a complex and highly incendiary issue.

Another concern in terms of the reduction of the subject matter relates to Marowitz’s decision to portray the dogma of Black activists at a particular point in their history – namely, their most provocative and aggressive period – without taking into account the manner in which their positions evolved; his editing therefore renders their voices incomplete. Although during his tenure with the Nation of Islam and his involvement with Elijah Mohammed, X was virulently anti-white and opposed to

⁸⁵ Scott J. South & Richard B. Felson, ‘The Racial Patterning of Rape,’ *Social Forces* 69.1 (1990): 71. While this paper was published in 1990, the data upon which the conclusions were based were gathered between 1972 and 1975 in thirteen American cities; therefore the data are extremely relevant to the period during which *An Othello* was created.

integration, which he believed would weaken black independence and power, there was a profound shift in his thinking after he visited Mecca in 1964. Fellow activist Gloria Richardson relates the contents of a postcard sent to her by X during his visit to the Middle East:

“Allah has blessed me to visit the Holy City of Mecca, where I witnessed pilgrims of all colors” – and “all colors” is underlined – “from all parts of this earth displaying a spirit of unity and brotherhood like I’ve never seen before. It is truly a sight to behold.”⁸⁶

Upon his return to America, he wrote:

In the past, yes, I have made sweeping indictments of *all* white people. I will never be guilty of that again – as I know now that some white people *are* truly sincere, that some truly are capable of being brotherly toward a Black man. The true Islam has shown me that a blanket indictment of all white people is as wrong as when whites make blanket indictments against Blacks.⁸⁷

When Canadian journalist Pierre Berton, interviewing X in 1965, noted that X had previously expressed strong disapproval of both integration and intermarriage and inquired whether his views on this subject had changed since his recent journey to Mecca, X replied,

I believe in recognizing every human being as a human being – neither white, black, brown or red; and when you are dealing with humanity as a family there’s no question of

⁸⁶ Malcolm X, *Malcolm X: Make It Plain*, ed. Cheryl Y. Greene (New York: Viking Penguin, 1994) 177.

⁸⁷ X, *Malcolm X: Make It Plain* 220-221. Italics in original.

integration or intermarriage. It's just one human being marrying another human being, or one human being living around and with another human being.⁸⁸

The anti-White dogma expressed by Iago throughout the production does not capture these sentiments, nor does the play accurately present X's final position on the blending of the races, both in the workplace and in the marital bed, although these opinions were expressed some years before Marowitz created his adaptation. Marowitz had the opportunity through his Othello character to express this evolution in X's ideology, just as his Iago character had promoted X's earlier views, but instead, he chose to give a one-sided and incomplete snapshot of another race's narrative. Even Eldridge Cleaver, who had participated in the serial rape of white women as an act of insurrection, came to view his actions in a very different light. In an act of truly poignant self-judgment, he wrote:

After I returned to prison, I took a long look at myself and, for the first time in my life, admitted that I was wrong, that I had gone astray – astray not so much from the white man's law as from being human, civilized – for I could not approve the act of rape. Even though I had some insight into my own motivations, I did not feel justified. I lost my self-respect. My pride as a man dissolved and my whole fragile moral structure seemed to collapse, completely shattered. That is why I started to write. To save myself.⁸⁹

⁸⁸ X, interview with Pierre Berton, *The Pierre Berton Show*, CFTO-TV, Toronto, 19 Jan. 1965, quoted in *Malcolm X Speaks* 197.

⁸⁹ Cleaver 15.

That Marowitz read and utilized Cleaver's book has been shown by the almost exact quotation from the essay 'The Allegory of the Black Eunuchs' utilized in *An Othello*. The passage quoted above is literally only a paragraph or two farther into the essay 'On Becoming' in which Cleaver describes his experience as an insurrectionary rapist, on which Marowitz undoubtedly based a portion of Iago's text. This is therefore almost certainly an example of the adaptor deliberately choosing to exclude the broader picture of the Black activist's doctrine.

The question then remains: *is* Marowitz the appropriate theatrical voice to undertake an examination of the internal politics of the black civil rights movement? Based on the play text, *An Othello* communicates the notion that, while black men in leadership roles in a white controlled society may appear honourable, they have sold out their culture and their community, and are therefore deserving of censure by others of their race. Unfortunately, Marowitz's criticism of the 'house Negro' Othello through Iago, newly created as a black revolutionary, might be interpreted as nothing more than one more lash of the whip on a black back, delivered by the ruling white power structure. It represents a lack of cultural sensitivity when the Caucasian Marowitz uses one black character as a mouthpiece to discredit another in his adaptation, since the criticism, while spoken by Iago, was written by Marowitz himself. It is nearly impossible for an individual from another culture to fully understand the issues, emotions and deeply engrained beliefs of an oppressed people to such an extent that they can speak for that culture in a valid and appropriate manner. Further, rather than resulting from an extensive survey of the civil rights movement, Marowitz admits that *An Othello* was 'literally dashed out within three weeks,'⁹⁰ during which time he 'caught up with' the last ten to fifteen years of black

⁹⁰ Marowitz, *An Othello Casebook* 163.

revolution in America.’⁹¹ As well, John Burgess relates in the production Casebook that he was

[s]truck by how little the actors are contributing to the shape of the production. [...] The effect of this is to throw more weight on the director’s contribution since he is the sole arbiter of what is or is not relevant, and to discourage any independent invention.⁹²

According to Burgess, then, the Black members of the cast – Anton Phillips playing Iago and Rudolph Walker playing Othello – had relatively little input into the actual creation of the production, other than as actors. The play text of *An Othello* is essentially the opus of Marowitz alone, a white man’s indictment of the internal politics of black culture. And while Marowitz proclaims that ‘there is not one original political idea in the play,’⁹³ and that his adaptation derives almost entirely from concepts espoused by Malcolm X, X’s own words suggest that he would have viewed this appropriation of his voice negatively: ‘When you hear me open up my mouth against another black man, no white man can put words in my mouth, nor can any white man sic me on another black group.’⁹⁴ Marowitz himself relates this concern, when he recalls that during the process of writing and rehearsing *An Othello*, he experienced ‘this dogging fear of “what right has this white New York Jewish intellectual to write about these things that don’t directly pertain to him?” [...] I’ve not suffered the things that are dramatized in this play.’⁹⁵ During the period in which he adapted *Othello*, certain thoughts regarding the potential adaptation of *The Merchant of*

⁹¹ Marowitz, *An Othello Casebook* 164. At this point, Marowitz had been resident in the UK for approximately 15 years.

⁹² Marowitz, *An Othello Casebook* 178. Burgess notes on page 171 of the Casebook that a request by Marowitz for comments or reactions after the first read-through resulted in silence, followed by a few questions relating to inconsistencies within the roles, but no ‘general criticism.’

⁹³ Marowitz, *An Othello Casebook* 164.

⁹⁴ X, *Malcolm X Speaks* 189.

⁹⁵ Marowitz, *An Othello Casebook* 165.

Venice were beginning to percolate in his brain; he explains that a political adaptation of Shakespeare's *Merchant* would be less worrisome, because

I knew that if there were to be protests they would be from the Jewish Welfare Board and places like that – from my own people. I was a little more worried about *Othello* because I didn't want to have to deal with the Black Panthers.⁹⁶

Obviously, Marowitz was able to sufficiently overcome his concerns regarding possible conflict with the Black Panthers in order to complete *An Othello*, but this does not mean that he declined to define both the dogma and the idiom of the Black radical. This is significant in that the Civil Rights Movement, and particularly Black Power, rightly emphasizes the need for the Black community to resist defining themselves in relation to the white power structure, and instead to demarcate their own identity within a larger society. As Shirley N. Weber states, '[c]ontrary to myths, the Afro-American community was not, and is not, an empty vase waiting for America to fill her with culture.'⁹⁷ Self-definition necessitates an exclusion of outside power and perception, as Stokely Carmichael explains:

It is our position that black organizations should be black-led and essentially black-staffed, with policy being made by black people. White people can and do play very important supportive roles in those organizations. [...] All too frequently, however, many young, middle-class, white Americans, like some sort of Pepsi generation, have wanted

⁹⁶ Marowitz, *An Othello Casebook* 165. This is one of the few examples of Marowitz describing himself as a member of the Jewish community. Marowitz makes no mention of a negative response to the adaptation by the Black Panther organization, nor was one noted in coverage by the major media of the Open Space production.

⁹⁷ Shirley N. Weber, 'Black Power in the 1960s: A Study of Its Impact on Women's Liberation,' *Journal of Black Studies* 11.4 (1981): 483.

to “come alive” through the black community and black groups. [...] They have sought refuge among blacks from a sterile, meaningless, irrelevant life in middle-class America. [...] The black organizations do not need this kind of idealism, which borders on paternalism.⁹⁸

While Marowitz might argue that his role as playwright was not to *make* policy but simply to give voice to the already stated policy of Black leaders, the act of creating a work of theatre demands a process of intense editing and shaping of raw materials that, in and of itself, represents a defining influence. If his expressed objective was to accommodate a black revolutionary spirit in his adaptation, then the essence of that black revolutionary spirit is the ability for black culture to define itself.

In terms of Marowitz’s own stated criteria for the adaptation of classics, his level of adherence to these guidelines within *An Othello* is moderately high. The ideas communicated within the new work do strongly confront the seminal nature of Shakespeare’s *Othello*, which is occupied with the human issues of love, betrayal, jealousy, and the tragic fall of an imperfect but noble man. While the concept of ‘otherness’ is present within the original script, Marowitz himself observes that, within Venetian society, Othello’s prowess as a military general ensures that ‘his power-to-deliver-the-goods is not in question and so his ‘outsiderness’ never becomes an issue.’⁹⁹ *An Othello*, however, utilizes the same dramatic context to focus specifically on the politics of race, thereby fulfilling Marowitz’s suggestion that recensions of ‘classic’ works should confront the assumptions of the ur-text. As well, he notes his preference for an elasticity within the original script which allows it to stretch to meet the demands of the adaptation’s thematic

⁹⁸ Carmichael & Hamilton 83-84.

⁹⁹ Marowitz, *Roar of the Canon* 58.

‘message,’ but that, if such pliancy is not present, ‘it is politic to change the original rather than, out of respect or timidity, produce a set of clanging incompatibles.’¹⁰⁰ On this front, he chose to increase the elasticity of Shakespeare’s *Othello* through the inclusion of new dialogue which specifically addressed the civil rights issues being presented. *An Othello* therefore meets Marowitz’s own parameters for adaptation, while simultaneously raising concerns in terms of the stereotyping and appropriation of voice discussed in this chapter.

COMPARATORS TO *AN OTHELLO*

It is difficult to find strong comparators for Marowitz’s *An Othello*, in that adaptations of Shakespeare’s *Othello* are less numerous than those based on other plays in his canon. The BBC produced an updated version of *Othello* comprised entirely of Andrew Davies’ modern text, and starring Eamonn Walker as Othello, Keeley Hawes as Desdemona and Christopher Eccleston as Iago. Although the language and the social context were updated, the narrative and thematic concerns were basically the same as in the original play – the back cover of the DVD begins its description with ‘Obsession, jealousy, betrayal. A powerful black man in a white society’¹⁰¹ – and it therefore provides insufficient basis for comparison to Marowitz’s significant re-working. Similarly, the American film ‘O’¹⁰² updated the story to modern day America, placing it on a high school campus and depicting the love affair between Odin, the black ‘captain’ of the basketball team and Desi, his white girlfriend, but its lack of a socio-political treatment does not allow significant comparison to *An Othello*.

¹⁰⁰ Marowitz, *The Marowitz Shakespeare* 24.

¹⁰¹ ‘*Othello* (2002),’ *Amazon*, 9 June 2011 <<http://www.amazon.com/Othello-Keeley-Hawes/dp/B00005YUND>>.

¹⁰² See *IMDB*, 9 June 2011 <<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0184791>>. The film stars Julia Stiles, Josh Hartnett and Mekhi Phifer.

Two Canadian plays – *Harlem Duet* and *The Othello Project* – offer sufficient similarity to Marowitz’s civil rights focus and/or textual re-organization, and therefore will form the basis of the following comparisons. *The Othello Project* was created and directed by a White Canadian male, who, like Marowitz, expressed concern about the appropriation of another culture’s story and voice. As well, *The Othello Project*, like *An Othello*, combines an attempt at the conjoining of Shakespeare’s narrative with events of the American Civil Rights movement, notably the murder of a black man and his two white colleagues as they attempted to register black voters in Cypress, Mississippi, offering an interesting parallel with Marowitz’s work. *Harlem Duet*, on the other hand, was written by a Black-Canadian woman with personal experience of the racial issues being presented, and therefore provides a suitable contrast to Marowitz’s alleged appropriation of the Black voice.

Djanet Sears’ *Harlem Duet*

An adaptation described as a ‘prequel’ to *Othello*, *Harlem Duet* was written by Canadian Djanet Sears and premiered by Nightwood Theatre, a professional feminist theatre company, at the Tarragon Extra Space in Toronto in 1997; it was therefore created more than twenty-five years after *An Othello*. Naturally, the content of Marowitz’s adaptation, shaped by the writing of the civil rights leaders of the 1960s, and inspired by the energetic vernacular of the Black Panthers, will differ from that created by a playwright writing of key periods in Black history from the relative safety of Canada at the turn of the millennium. Nonetheless, a comparison between the two plays provides valuable insight into the way a young Black woman solves the concerns of Shakespeare’s *Othello* for members of her own gender, race and community.

According to Sears, ‘Shakespeare’s *Othello* had haunted me since I first was introduced to him.’¹⁰³ She describes the experience of seeing Laurence Olivier portraying ‘the Black part for a Black male actor’ as the ‘grain of sand in the belly of the oyster’¹⁰⁴ that, after years of irritation, grew into a play. Set in the heat of late summer in Harlem during three time periods – 1860-1862; 1928;¹⁰⁵ and the present day, ‘at the corner of Martin Luther King and Malcolm X boulevards,’¹⁰⁶ *Harlem Duet* explores the emotional journey of Billie, the imagined first wife of Othello, as she loses her husband to his white lover, Mona. Although predominantly set in the present day, the action constantly shifts between the three timelines, and the same actors play the main characters (described as Billie and Othello, HIM/HER and HE/SHE) in all three. The strawberry handkerchief acts as a link between the different realities: in 1860, the character HER declares it, ‘A token ... an antique token of our ancient love.’ ‘My wife,’ HIM responds. ‘My wife before I even met you.’¹⁰⁷ In 1928, SHE reminds HE of when he gave her the token: ‘Your mother’s handkerchief. There’s magic in the web of it. Little strawberries. [...] You kissed my fingers...and with each kiss a new promise you made...swore yourself to me...for all eternity.’¹⁰⁸ Picking up this thread, in present day Harlem, Billie describes Othello as, ‘My mate...throughout eternity.’¹⁰⁹ The love of a black man and a black woman is thus referenced as a powerful force spiraling through time. In the present day, Othello wants to

¹⁰³ Djanet Sears, ‘Notes of a Coloured Girl: 32 Short Reasons Why I Write for the Theatre,’ *Harlem Duet* (Toronto: Scirocco Drama, 1997) 14.

¹⁰⁴ Sears, ‘Notes of a Coloured Girl: 32 Short Reasons Why I Write for the Theatre,’ *Harlem Duet* 15.

¹⁰⁵ Sears chose significant years for her different timelines. In 1860, Abraham Lincoln was elected the 16th President of the United States, having identified slavery as an injustice that America must overturn; late that year, South Carolina succeeded from the union and called for a Southern Confederacy and the Civil War began shortly afterward. The Okeechobee Hurricane swept through Florida in 1928, killing hundreds of largely Black migrant farm workers, most of whom were then buried in an unmarked mass grave in West Palm Beach, Florida; 1928 was also the birth year of Black poetess Maya Angelou.

¹⁰⁶ Djanet Sears, interview with Mat Buntin, ‘An Interview with Djanet Sears, *Canadian Adaptations of Shakespeare Project*, 12 June 2011 <http://www.canadianshakespeares.ca/i_dsears.cfm>.

¹⁰⁷ Djanet Sears, *Harlem Duet* (Toronto: Scirocco Drama, 1997) 35. All future quotations from this play will be listed as ‘Sears, *Harlem Duet*’ followed by the page number.

¹⁰⁸ Sears, *Harlem Duet* 21.

¹⁰⁹ Sears, *Harlem Duet* 75.

give the handkerchief to his new white fiancée, so Billie uses her skills at alchemy to create a venom with which she impregnates the cloth so that it will poison Mona; during a moment of grief, she inadvertently transfers the toxin onto her own face, endangering her own life. The handkerchief thus segues from a symbol of love to a vessel for hate, and in both cases, the emotion affects the woman who gives as well as the person who receives.

Throughout the adaptation, which was written almost 30 years after *An Othello*, the questions of race; the ‘holy grail’¹¹⁰ of whiteness; and the lingering effects of slavery, the civil rights movement and integration, are explored from both Billie’s and Othello’s viewpoint. Othello believes that his attraction to white women is the result of black women’s inability to see beyond his skin colour and the historical patterns it implies:

Yes, I prefer White women. They are easier – before and after sex. [...] We’d make love and I’d fall asleep not having to beware being mistaken for someone’s inattentive father. I’d explain that I wasn’t interested in a committed relationship right now, and not be confused with every lousy lover, or husband that had ever left them lying in a gutter of unresolved emotions. [...] To a Black woman, I represent every Black man she has ever been with and with whom there was still so much to work out. The White women I loved saw me – could see me. [...] I am a very single, very intelligent, very employed Black man.¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ Sears, *Harlem Duet* 55.

¹¹¹ Sears, *Harlem Duet* 71.

When Billie accuses him of ‘looking for White respect,’ he indignantly responds, ‘White respect, Black respect, it’s all the same to me.’¹¹² Billie, however, perceives that what he terms ‘this race shit’¹¹³ is merely his inability to recognize his own identification with the white power structure, since, for black men and women, ‘progress is going to White schools...proving we’re as good as Whites [...] Our success is Whiteness.’¹¹⁴ As HER in the early timeline explains, when HIM is lynched after he chooses to stay to serve the white daughter of his master, rather than flee to Canada:

“The only way to become White [...] was to enter the Whiteness.” And when he found his ice queen, his alabaster goddess, he fucked her. Her on his dick. He one with her, for a single shivering moment became...her. Her and her Whiteness.¹¹⁵

Billie, the modern day equivalent of HER, sees that nothing has really changed in this regard: black men are still striving to acquire status and self-worth through liaison with white women, but in addition, white women are also acquiring a kind of prestige from the relationship:

Here, before me—his woman—all blonde hair and blonde legs. Her weight against his chest. His arm around her shoulders [...] He’s proud. You can see he’s proud. He isn’t just any Negro. He’s special. That’s why she’s with him. And she...she...she flaunts.¹¹⁶

¹¹² Sears, *Harlem Duet* 55.

¹¹³ Sears, *Harlem Duet* 55.

¹¹⁴ Sears, *Harlem Duet* 55.

¹¹⁵ Sears, *Harlem Duet* 91.

¹¹⁶ Sears, *Harlem Duet* 44.

Later, the action reveals that Othello's status as a man, which he describes as 'unrecognized'¹¹⁷ in a relationship with a Black woman, is no stronger in his liaison with white Mona. While packing up his things at what was once their shared apartment, old desires rekindle: Billie and Othello have just made love when Mona impatiently buzzes the intercom. Othello rushes to tell her with unconscious innuendo that 'I'm not done yet. There's more here than I imagined,'¹¹⁸ promising to let her know when he is finished packing. There is no response from Mona. The stage directions note that '*OTHELLO's demeanour changes*' as he stumbles over himself in an attempt to mend this rift of unspoken anger: 'Mona? Mona? I'm coming, OK? I'll be right... Just wait there one second, OK? OK?'¹¹⁹ Mona relents, but Othello's position as something less than a 'man' in their relationship has been revealed both to Billie and to the audience. Although he has decried the opinion of Black feminists that Black men fall short of their responsibilities as fathers and husbands, and declared that the strength of Black women is precisely what prevents the men from developing their own personal power, it is clear that his present relationship has provided no significant improvement in terms of enabling a real sense of empowerment, and we cannot help but feel sympathy for him. While Billie is drowning in her grief over the loss of her husband and lover, Othello desperately attempts to crawl out from the morass of prejudice held by a past generation, and stand on the yet unattained ground of equality which will allow him to live with pride: he wants more than anything else to be a man, without further categorization based on race. As he says to Billie,

You're the problem if you don't see beyond my skin. If you
don't hear my educated English, if you don't understand that

¹¹⁷ Sears, *Harlem Duet* 70.

¹¹⁸ Sears, *Harlem Duet* 61.

¹¹⁹ Sears, *Harlem Duet* 61.

I am a middle class educated man. [...] Things change, Billie.

I am not my skin. My skin is not me.¹²⁰

In an interesting way, *Harlem Duet* creates echoes of the themes expressed in *An Othello*: Othello is once again a version of the ‘Uncle Tom’ character who identifies with the white power structure, while Billie is the ‘field Negro,’ the counterpart to Marowitz’s Iago, who not only sees the price being paid for this identification, but also uses this understanding to prick the conscience of her ‘house Negro’ ex-husband. And there are other similarities between the two adaptors. In an interview with Daniel Fischlin for the CASP (Canadian Adaptations of Shakespeare Project) website, Sears describes many of the same general desires as Marowitz in terms of Shakespearean adaptation: ‘I see Shakespeare as a jumping off point, a place to challenge either Shakespeare himself or the status quo or society, and/or an opportunity to look at things from another perspective.’¹²¹ Likewise, she agrees that Shakespearean characters are larger than themselves: ‘Othello’s an archetype. Mythic in proportion. Everyone knows Othello and there is a remarkable enjoyment that comes from looking at someone you think you know very well from another perspective.’¹²² Both are addressing what could be described as a sociopolitical agenda. On the other hand, the differences within their created works are relevant: while Marowitz has stayed close to the original storyline, despite the use of new text, Sears has springboarded off Shakespeare’s play into a new narrative and an entirely new play text which touches on and resonates with the original text at key points. Marowitz’s narrative employs a highly stylized and vulgarized vernacular, while Sears’ text is decidedly poetic and metaphoric in nature. A significant difference between the approach taken by each

¹²⁰ Sears, *Harlem Duet* 73-74.

¹²¹ Sears, *Canadian Adaptations of Shakespeare Project*.

¹²² Sears, *Canadian Adaptations of Shakespeare Project*.

adaptor is that Marowitz began his creative process, following a brief period of research, with a specific and relatively narrow viewpoint he wished to communicate to an audience – that Othello was a dupe of white society who betrayed his own people – and offered little justification or alternate opinion on the subject. Sears, on the other hand, treated the dramatic process as a journey of personal inquiry:

The central question for me was how could I begin to look at *Othello* from my own perspective? What do I think of him? Who would he be if he were alive today? What kind of mythic archetype has he become? Those are the questions that that piece raised in me.¹²³

Although writing from a female perspective, Sears' process of inquiry allowed for an exploration of the effect of prejudice on both men and women of colour; her use of multiple points in history, from pre-Civil War to modern day, permits the development of a broader understanding of these issues; and the use of Shakespeare's *Othello* as the ocean of mythology on which her complex play sails represents her innate ability to explore and shape while allowing an audience to perceive different versions of the 'truth' – both Billie's and Othello's – and come to their own conclusions. For Billie, the issue really is black and white; for Othello, his life as a modern black man has grown beyond a simplistic and dichotomous classification based on skin tone. The potential for an audience to understand and accept both of these viewpoints simultaneously, without judging either to be the entire truth of the situation, represents Sears' skill as a playwright delivering a complex polemic. In comparison, *An Othello* presents only one perspective – Marowitz's stated belief that a black man whose success stems from service to a white majority is betraying his own

¹²³ Sears, *Canadian Adaptations of Shakespeare Project*.

people – and this perspective is presented to the onlookers without other possible points of view, allowing little opportunity for a dialectic engagement in the ideas. As well, unlike Marowitz, Sears, as a woman of colour, is writing of her perception and experience within her own culture; there is no possible accusation of an appropriation of voice, as was previously discussed in the case of Marowitz's *An Othello*. Sears' ability to present the duality of Othello's struggle bridging the chasm between White and Black society, rather than portraying him as either a villain or a victim, may well arise from her knowledge of the culture being presented: a knowledge unavailable to Marowitz as an outsider to that milieu.

Rod Carley's *The Othello Project*

The Othello Project was created by Canadian director Rod Carley in 1995, and is therefore similar in terms of historicity to *Harlem Duet*. However, it employs the murder of three civil rights workers – Andrew Goodman, James Chaney and Michael Schwerner – in Cypress, Mississippi in 1964 as its historical setting, placing it close to *An Othello* in terms of dramatic timeline. As the play opens, we see two men, their faces covered, dumping a body in the swamp, and then shift to the torture room presided over by Iago, where two of the civil rights workers – one black and one white – are threatened with blow torches and firearms. Iago and Roderigo are both members of the Ku Klux Klan in this rendition, and Othello is a Captain in the Federal Bureau of Investigation, where Cassio is also an agent. Brabantio is a Southern Senator, Desdemona his daughter, and Bianca his black maid. A Clown character, black and from the Voodoo tradition, has been added and functions as a mostly non-verbal 'chorus' throughout the play. The text and narrative are

almost entirely unchanged,¹²⁴ but the challenge of the Turkish invasion has been altered to the crisis created by the murder of the three civil rights workers.

Carley notes that when he originally applied for funding from the Ontario Arts Council in 1994 to create the production, he was turned down, ‘the rationale being that it was a possible case of voice appropriation on my part – a Caucasian director depicting the racism of the early 1960s,’¹²⁵ but that he was able to overcome this objection by gathering letters of support from the African and Jamaican communities in Toronto and was successful in his second application. However, any comparison to Marowitz’s appropriation of the Black voice in *An Othello* is not germane, in that Carley was actually appropriating no other voice than Shakespeare’s. While the play was *set* within a new historical-political context, it had only a limited ability to *comment* on that context because it followed the narrative of Shakespeare’s play, and employed only original text. For example, the stage directions in the opening scene of Carley’s play text relate that ‘two civil rights workers (one black and one white)’¹²⁶ are revealed on stage during the opening dialogue, tied and gagged; they are later threatened with a blow torch. However, since civil rights workers possess no uniform or other distinguishing characteristics, it is far from certain that an audience would recognize the men as two of the three murdered activists – Chaney, Goodman and Schwerner – on whom Carley based the contextual milieu for the production without signage or explanation in interpretative material, such as a house programme.

¹²⁴ There is, quixotically, the interpolation of a small amount of text from II.ii of Shakespeare’s *Measure for Measure* concerning sexual disease.

¹²⁵ Rod Carley, interview, ‘An Interview with Rod Carley,’ *Canadian Adaptations of Shakespeare Project*, 13 Sept. 2011 <http://www.canadianshakespeares.ca/i_carley.cfm>.

¹²⁶ William Shakespeare, ‘The Othello Project: Playscript,’ *Canadian Adaptations of Shakespeare Project*, Rod Carley, adapt., 13 Sept. 2011 <http://www.canadianshakespeares.ca/a_othello.cfm>, 1.

At the root of Carley's approach is the notion that linear time separates audience members from understanding and accessing the Shakespearean canon, and that this impediment may be overcome by transplanting the work into a setting closer to the present day. When interviewed by Fischlin of CASP, Carley offered the opinion that

[o]ne adapts a Shakespearean text to help more clearly define it for a modern audience. Different time periods become a window through which Shakespeare can be glimpsed and historical parallels allow for the appreciation of Shakespeare's universality. In seeking to shorten the gap between Shakespeare's world and our own I find that by finding an appropriate modern setting, it is easier for an audience to embrace his work as they already have a sense of modern history that they can relate to.¹²⁷

He 'felt that *The Othello Project*, in particular, helped audience-goers see *Othello* anew.'¹²⁸

Carley has raised an interesting point for debate, since, for certain of Shakespeare's plays, the social mores of modern society create a decidedly different perspective on key events in their narrative. For example, seen from the distance of over four hundred years, the speculative jealousy that leads Othello, an individual of great physical prowess and magnitude of spirit, to strangle his wife is viewed as a tragic crime of passion, and audience sympathy is as much with Othello as it is with his murdered wife. However, modern media attention on spousal abuse, including the murder of women by their life partner, has tended to move this event from *crime passionel* to simple murder, and sympathy tends to lie with the victim. Therefore, while moving the action of a Shakespearean play to a modern period

¹²⁷ Carley, *Canadian Adaptations of Shakespeare Project*.

¹²⁸ Carley, *Canadian Adaptations of Shakespeare Project*.

may allow an audience to perceive the characters as ‘more like them,’ it is important to note that other shifts in perception will also be taking place.¹²⁹ The actions of Othello, the noble Moor of the seventeenth century, may well be viewed differently from those of Othello, the FBI agent in a modern time period. Ultimately, there is something troubling about pairing Shakespeare’s *Othello*, which, as Marowitz states, essentially revolves around a *crime passionel*, with the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, without altering the play in a way which thematically shifts it from the personal to the public realm: the significance and profundity of an entire race’s battle for equality, for a position in society in which they might feel pride, is lessened by the comparison.

Carley also chose to introduce a supernatural element to the narrative, with the Clown performing various voodoo rituals as a complement to the main action, and the murder of Desdemona accomplished during the gothic horror of a thunder and lightning storm: Shakespeare’s play text is almost entirely secular in content – in comparison, for example, to *Macbeth* or *King Lear* – which, as Bradley notes, leaves the mind ‘more bound down to the spectacle of noble beings caught in toils from which there is no escape.’¹³⁰ The lot of Shakespeare’s Othello arises from his own error in believing Iago’s slander as well as his lack of faith in the woman he loves, whereas Carley positions the outcome of the lovers as the result of supernatural elements beyond their control, thus weakening the poignancy of their fate. In the end, while the production may have been theatrically pleasing, it seems unlikely that it would have shed new light on Shakespeare’s play.

¹²⁹ While most of Shakespeare’s tragedies took place in the distant past *vis-à-vis* the Elizabethan period, *Othello* was relatively current: the invasion of Cyprus by the Turks took place in approximately 1570, only 30 to 35 years before the play was first performed. See Bradley 133-34.

¹³⁰ Bradley 135.

Interestingly, while Carley has felt free to tamper with many elements in the play described, one of his central parameters for Shakespearean adaptation regarding textual integrity distinctly separates him from Marowitz in terms of method:

The ideas [sic] is to find a transplanted setting that doesn't force you to tamper with the text. [...] Only when the political, societal, and historical elements of the original match with the new setting is your adaptation working. Otherwise, you are overriding Shakespeare's text to fit your own vision. The key is to find a new context for the original in which to explore its themes.¹³¹

Marowitz, of course, held a strong belief in the benefit of overriding and even challenging Shakespeare's vision, and this has a certain aptness in terms of approach. It is difficult to understand how the narrative of a four hundred year old full length play with the twists and sub-plots of which Shakespeare is capable of mirroring a modern scenario so thoroughly that a switch of context could fit the action of the piece without significant changes in text, and further, that this methodology would actually *illuminate* the original work. In comparison to Carley, who strove to embrace Shakespeare's work in a new way, Marowitz was attempting to create an entirely new work – one which did *not* embrace Shakespeare's original intentions. Ultimately, Marowitz at least had the bravery to commit major renovations on Shakespeare's *Othello* in an attempt to tell a particular story about the energy of the American black Revolutionary spirit; if he did not do so as effectively as critical judgment might wish, it might be best to reference Malcolm X, the activist on

¹³¹ Carley, *Canadian Adaptations of Shakespeare Project*.

whose writings Marowitz based his work, who said simply, ‘I fought the best that I knew how.’¹³²

CONCLUSIONS

While showcasing Marowitz’s ability to create arresting theatrical images, *An Othello* raises concerns regarding his tendency to reduce complex sociopolitical circumstances into the expression of a single viewpoint, creating multiple stereotypes in the process. A more evenhanded approach would have allowed both sides of the argument – that Othello is a traitor to his race, rather than a tragic hero – to be heard, and opposing opinion is certainly available. While Malcolm X decried Martin Luther King as an ‘Uncle Tom,’ the size of the latter’s following in the years of civil rights activism leading to his death offers confirmation that many saw the worth inherent in his non-violent style of resistance to white oppression. A theatrically based exploration of the issues surrounding the approaches of X and King might have illuminated the situation more fully, while the single viewpoint shared by Marowitz shifts the adaptation into something perilously close to propaganda, specifically through the ‘Card Stacking’ technique identified in the last chapter. Based on Marowitz’s lack of inclusion of alternative viewpoints on his delineation of Othello as an ‘Uncle Tom’ – viewpoints held not only by other sectors of society, but also by the very civil rights activists on whose writings he ostensibly founded the ‘message’ of his adaptation – there is potential justification in applying the term ‘propaganda’ to *An Othello*. Since Marowitz specifically notes his desire to ‘force the classical texts to give us new answers [...] by bombard[ing] them with new questions,’¹³³ this propagandistic approach must raise legitimate concerns regarding the

¹³² X, *Malcolm X: Make It Plain* 1.

¹³³ Marowitz, *Roar of the Canon* 14.

comprehensiveness of the answers produced. The portrayal of Desdemona along psychosexual lines and of Brabantio as a Jew harboring prejudiced views regarding race both may stem from unconscious paradigms in Marowitz's 'personal politic' which will be addressed in more detail in Chapter Six.

Beyond this, Marowitz's appropriation of another culture's voice with little real collaboration with members of that community, while simultaneously editing the expression of its ideological torchbearers, leads to an inappropriate and only marginally informed definition of that culture's voice. At root, Shakespeare's original text, which at the most seminal level comprises a personal tale of miscegenation and resulting *crime passionnel*, is so disparate in nature from the sociopolitical conflict of the Civil Rights movement that Marowitz's attempt to elide the two provides little significant illumination of either the original work or the adaptation.

Chapter Four:

Variations on the Merchant of Venice

AN OVERVIEW

Set around the bombing of the King David Hotel in Jerusalem on July 22, 1946, *Variations on the Merchant of Venice* features an interpolation of text from Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* with Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* in order to accommodate a decidedly new take on the conflict between Shylock and his Christian adversaries. It had its first performance at the Open Space Theatre in London on May 17, 1977, and was published in *The Marowitz Shakespeare* in 1978.

Born to Jewish parents, Marowitz grew up in the predominantly Jewish area of New York's Lower East Side. He was not an observant Jew during his time in England, based upon information available in his critical writing, nor did he tend to describe himself as a member of the religious culture into which he was born; the possible correlation between Marowitz's relationship with his Jewish heritage and his treatment of Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* is discussed in some depth in Chapter Six.

Although he does not specifically describe the impetus for his creation of *Variations on the Merchant of Venice* in 1977, the preceding decade had seen a number of military engagements and terrorist attacks directed against the state of Israel which could easily have provided inspiration for the adaptation. On September 5, 1972, eleven Israeli athletes in Germany to compete at the Munich Olympics died during an attack by a Palestinian terrorist group called Black September, and although three of the terrorists were taken into custody by German authorities, on October 29 of that year, a Lufthansa jet was hijacked, and the release of the Palestinians involved in the Munich attack demanded. The German government capitulated, and the terrorists were released, representing a potentially demoralizing lack of retribution for Israel. Palestinian terrorists were also responsible for the murder of the Israeli ambassador to the United States in March of 1973, and 1974 saw

several terrorist attacks on Israel resulting in the deaths of a significant number of children. However, in the years leading up to 1977, Israel began to take a more aggressive military stance against terrorism. According to the Jewish Virtual Library, a number of assassinations of known Palestinian terrorists guilty of attacks against Israel were carried out between 1972 and 1977, including the deaths of four men who had taken part in the Munich massacre.¹ Further, on June 27, 1976, less than a year before Marowitz began *Variations*, an Air France passenger plane traveling from Tel Aviv to Paris was hijacked and flown to Entebbe in Uganda where 105 Jews were held hostage to demands for the release of convicted terrorists held in Israel. In this case, Israel sent in a squad of counter terrorists from the Israel Defense Forces which mounted a dramatic rescue of the hostages, garnering international media coverage. According to the *New York Times*, the rescuers ‘were greeted as heroes when they returned home, and the raid gained a legendary aura.’² The events of the raid were quickly turned into several major motion pictures, including *Victory at Entebbe*³ starring Burt Lancaster and Anthony Hopkins and *Raid on Entebbe*⁴ starring Charles Bronson. This ‘daring night-time raid,’⁵ in which Israel and Israelis were transformed from the victims of terrorism to the heroic warriors against terrorism, fully protected by the brave actions of Jewish warriors, may have contributed to Marowitz’s decision to portray Shylock, not as a victim of the oppressor (the Christians in Shakespeare’s original play, and the British in Marowitz’s adaptation), but as a warrior who emerges victorious over them.

¹ See ‘Target Killings of Terrorists,’ *Jewish Virtual Library*, 25 Nov. 2012

<<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Terrorism/hits.html>>. A fifth member of the Black September team responsible for the Munich massacre was assassinated in 1979.

² Richard Goldstein, ‘Dan Shomron, Leader of Entebbe Airport Rescue, Is Dead at 70,’ *New York Times*, 27 Feb. 2008, 6 Dec. 2012 <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/27/world/middleeast/27shomron.html?_r=0>.

³ ‘Victory at Entebbe (1976),’ *IMDB*, 6 Dec. 2012 <<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0075391/>>.

⁴ ‘Raid at Entebbe (1976),’ *IMDB*, 6 Dec. 2012 <<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0076594/>>.

⁵ Terence Smith, ‘Hostages Freed as Israelis Raid Uganda Airport; Commandos in 3 Planes Rescue 105- Casualties Unknown Israelis Raid Uganda Airport and Free Hijackers’ Hostages,’ *New York Times*, 4 July 1976, 6 Dec. 2012 <<http://select.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=F60816FA38591B728DDDAD0894DF405B868BF1D3>>.

MAROWITZ'S PERCEPTIONS OF SHAKESPEARE'S *THE MERCHANT OF VENICE*

In terms of Marowitz's perceptions of Shakespeare's *Merchant*, he emphatically states that

[t]he paradox of *The Merchant of Venice* has always been that it's a boring old play with a fascinating fringe-character. Remove Shylock and you've got one of the most insubstantial comedies Shakespeare ever collated. Play him as intended and he is a buffoon with enthralling inconsistencies of character. To play *The Merchant* as it ought to be played, one has to be remorselessly committed to trivia.⁶

While Marowitz describes Shakespeare as 'the first writer of his time to humanize the villainous Jew,'⁷ he nonetheless concludes that *The Merchant of Venice*'s chief fault is the imbalance of injustice it creates based upon 'that contemptible trial scene in which Shylock is progressively humiliated, stripped of all property and dignity and sent packing from the courtroom a forced convert, a disreputable father, an unmasked villain.'⁸ Marowitz notes that this imbalance revolves greatly around the portrayal of the title character, Antonio: if the merchant is portrayed sympathetically, as the target of Shylock's anti-Christian hatred,

⁶ Marowitz, *Confessions of a Counterfeit Critic* 176.

⁷ Marowitz, *Roar of the Canon* 62. Marowitz's assertion is inaccurate: Friedlander refers to Robert Wilson's play, *The Three Ladies of London*, and that playwright's depiction of the Jewish character Gerontus. Gerontus is 'represented in a very favourable light, as an upright Jew only anxious to obtain his own property by fair means.' Friedlander further states that Shakespeare was probably aware of Wilson's play, which pre-dates *The Merchant of Venice*. Gerald Friedlander, *Shakespeare and the Jew* (London: George Routledge & Sons, 1920) 29.

⁸ Marowitz, introduction, *The Marowitz Shakespeare* 22. Interestingly, in the introduction to this collection of his adaptation, published in 1990, Marowitz describes being 'angered' by the trial scene. A good deal of the material from this introduction, and particularly the quotation cited here, was included in an essay entitled 'How to Rape Shakespeare' which is found in his later work, *Roar of the Canon*, published in 2001. By this time, his emotional response to the trial scene had been downgraded to 'irritated.' See Marowitz, *Roar of the Canon* 173.

‘then *The Merchant* remains a hideous travesty on race relations.’⁹ The seminal task in creating a more just balance, then, he suggests, is to present Shylock’s actions as a response to Antonio’s anti-Semitic contempt.

Further, states Marowitz, Shakespeare’s play presents a portrayal of a Jew that the modern theatregoer must inevitably view through the patina of ‘the last seventy-five years of Jewish history which includes European pogroms, the Hitler “death camps,” the rise of Jewish Nationalism and the Arab-Israeli conflicts.’¹⁰ It requires ‘strenuous mental calisthenics,’ Marowitz comments, for the modern viewer to believe that the Jew portrayed in *The Merchant of Venice* ‘has no actual contemporary parallel; that a red-wigged, joke-Jew¹¹ has no real affinities with an Israeli businessman or a modern Hebraic scholar,’ but since ‘a cultural tendon [...] links all Jews with their history,’ this notion that Shylock, as an imaginary character created by an Elizabethan playwright, projects no shadow onto the modern Jew is only plausible ‘if one is prepared to put the contemporary sensibility to sleep.’¹² There are actually several ideas being posited here. The first is that our perceptions of the character of Shylock as a Jew cannot easily be severed from our beliefs regarding modern day Jews; while it is difficult to quantitatively prove or disprove this notion without sampling the attitudes of a sufficient number of modern individuals from an appropriate number of diverse cultures and communities, it may provide a rationale for the setting Marowitz chose for his recension, since the bombing of the King David Hotel had

⁹ Marowitz, *Confessions of a Counterfeit Critic* 177.

¹⁰ Marowitz, introduction, *The Marowitz Shakespeare* 22.

¹¹ Shylock was traditionally played with red hair and a red beard, mimicking the locks of Judas Iscariot as portrayed in the medieval mystery plays. Although it continued well into the Restoration, this tradition was broken on January 26, 1814 when Edmund Kean played the character in a black wig; interestingly, this may have come about through sheer necessity, since the impoverished Drury Lane Theatre required actors to supply their own wigs, and the equally impoverished Kean may not have possessed one of the requisite red colour. See Toby Lelyveld, *Shylock on the Stage* (Cleveland, Ohio: P of Western Reserve U, 1960) 8; and E.E. Stoll, ‘Shylock,’ *Shakespeare Studies: Historical and Comparative in Method* (New York: G.E. Stechert, 1942) 20. Some critical thought makes claims that Shylock is fashioned after the Commedia delle’Arte character of Pantalone, as Marowitz alludes in his description ‘joke-Jew.’ There is no evidence, however, that Richard Burbage, the actor likely to have portrayed the first Shylock, did so in a stereotypical or ‘stock’ manner, nor does the depth of the writing render this interpretation inevitable.

¹² Marowitz, introduction, *The Marowitz Shakespeare* 22.

occurred only about twenty years before the creation of *Variations*. The second concept proffered is that the vivid awareness created by the news media of the starvation and genocide in Hitler's death camps, the creation of the state of Israel and the efforts of the early Israelis to survive their Palestinian attackers, must inevitably impact audience perception of Shylock's treatment of and by the Gentile characters in the play; although the nature of this impact is not specified, the inference is that it has resulted in a negative judgement. Again, without a methodical and statistically appropriate sampling of the attitudes of potential audience members, this is little more than opinion: nonetheless, anecdotal information can provide some confirmation of this concept. Dr. Solomon Goldman, the former Director of Jewish National Fund of America's Department of Education, notes that

[t]he policies of the State of Israel were often severely criticized even by its friends as being primarily nurtured by the "never again," combative post-Holocaust psychology. This hypercritical attitude towards Jews is best illustrated by the discovered diary of the late 33rd president of the United States, the folksy and generally admired, Harry S. Truman. On July 21, 1947, after a ten minute telephone conversation with Henry Morgenthau Jr., he penned the following entry: "The Jews, I find are very, very selfish. They care not how many Estonians, Latvians, Finns, Poles, Yugoslavs or Greeks get murdered or mistreated as DPs (displaced persons) as long as Jews get special treatment." It should be noted that this entry was made only two years after

WWII, when the ovens of Auschwitz, Buchenwald and Dachau hardly had time to cool off.¹³

The third inference derived from Marowitz's statements is that Shylock has been stereotyped in a particular and negative way by viewers and readers throughout the four hundred years which separate us from his conception, and that this negative characterization¹⁴ is therefore all but inescapable in modern performance.¹⁵ However, far from a consistent negative stereotyping of the character over the past four centuries, there has been a trend towards an exploration of both the nobility of Shylock and the prejudice of Elizabethan society as manifested by other characters in the play.

After their expulsion from England in 1290, the absence of practicing Jews within England, coupled with their negative dramatic portrayals and the negative mythology fostered by the prejudice of former years, created the Jew as a sort of 'bogy-man' in the Elizabethan mindset. 'Hatred of the Jews in the sixteenth century is not a matter of conjecture,' states Lelyveld in *Shylock on the Stage*; '[r]eviling the Jew was part of the social convention of Shakespeare's day.'¹⁶

The first performance of Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* is recorded as taking place on February 10, 1605.¹⁷ There is a great deal of conjecture as to how Richard

¹³ Solomon Goldman, 'The Shoah and September 11: 2001-2011 Reflections of a Survivor,' *This Jewish Week*, 7 Sept. 2011, 30 Sept. 2011 <http://www.thejewishweek.com/editorial_opinion/opinion/shoah_and_september_11_2001_2011_reflections_survivor>.

¹⁴ Even Shylock's name provides rich fodder for discussion in the debate as to whether the character was created with the stain of negative connotation. Gollancz offers both a negative and positive spin to the name: while acknowledging that Shylock is possibly derived from 'Shaloch,' the Hebrew word for 'cormorant,' which in turn was a colloquial word for 'usurer,' Gollancz also cites a reference in the Peter Morwyng translation 'of the pseudo-Josephus [...] when the Jews were besieged they resolved to send three of their number to go and interview a Roman General, Antonio, who was then at Askalon, and one of the chosen three within the city was Schiloch.' See Israel Gollancz, *Allegory & Mysticism in Shakespeare: A Medievalist on The Merchant of Venice* (London: Geo. W. Jones, 1931) 24-25.

¹⁵ This is congruent with Marowitz's concept of Shakespearean characters as something akin to a set of Jungian archetypes: the characters have come to *mean* something to audiences, in and of themselves, and it is this 'imagery-cum-mythology' upon which Marowitz builds in the creation of his adaptations. See Marowitz, *Recycling Shakespeare* 15.

¹⁶ Marowitz, *Recycling Shakespeare* 7.

¹⁷ Although the play was entered into the Stationers' Register by James Roberts in July 22, 1598, it was possibly written as early as 1594, based on possible textual references to the trial of the Queen's physician, Roderigo Lopez, a Marrano convicted of treason and executed shortly thereafter. Another possible textual reference to the St. Andrew, a Spanish

Burbage, probably the first Shylock, portrayed the character. The actor's funeral elegy includes reference to a number of his more memorable roles, including 'the red-haired Jew, / Which sought the bankrupt merchant's pound of flesh, / By woman-lawyer caught in his own mesh',¹⁸ supporting conjecture that Shylock was originally portrayed with red-hair. While it is possible that Burbage's original conception of the character was essentially comic, or even that the role may have been created by low comedian Will Kempe,¹⁹ Lelyveld asserts that 'there is no evidence that Shylock was played as a comic character in Shakespeare's day.'²⁰ Nonetheless, the sympathy of the Elizabethans would have lain decidedly against the Jewish character, and they would have applauded his defeat and forced conversion as the evidence of justice in a God-fearing Christian world.

At the tail end of the Restoration, the play fell victim to the trend to adapt the Shakespearean canon, and in 1701, George Granville (later Lord Lansdowne), produced his take on *The Merchant of Venice* titled *The Jew of Venice*, the prologue of which indicates its attitude towards Shylock: 'Tonight we punish a stock-jobbing²¹ Jew. / A piece of justice, terrible and strange.'²² In 1741, Charles Macklin, a low comedian, stressed the negative aspects of the character, making Shylock appear 'something of a monster,'²³ so much so that many members of the audience thought Macklin himself must be a kind of

vessel captured at Cadiz, is found at IV.i.133-7 that would date the play at approximately 1596. See John Russell Brown, introduction, *The Arden Edition of the Works of William Shakespeare: The Merchant of Venice*, 7th ed. (London: Methuen, 1961) xxi-xxvii.

¹⁸ Israel Gollancz, preface, *The Aldus Shakespeare: The Merchant of Venice* (London: Funk & Wagnalls, 1968) viii.

¹⁹ See John Gross, *Shylock: Four Hundred Years in the Life of a Legend* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1992) 89.

²⁰ Lelyveld 7.

²¹ 'Stock-Jobbing' in the Elizabethan era meant 'a sharp, cunning, cheating Trade of Buying and Selling Shares of Stock.' See Lelyveld 15. Gross notes that the majority of stock-jobbers were non-Jews, since 'Jewish representation was limited by a law enacted in 1697 to just under 10 per cent.' See Gross 93.

²² George Granville, quoted in Gross 92.

²³ Lelyveld 22.

devil. So powerful was Macklin's portrayal that it 'turned Shylock into a metonymy for "Jew" and a synonym for "conniving Jew."'24

On January 26, 1814, the then virtually unknown actor Edmund Kean changed the history of Shylock forever when he walked onto the stage of the Drury Lane Theatre without the previously requisite red hair. According to newspaper reports at the time, 'the "terrible energy" of his Jew "drew down a thunder of applause" from a half-filled theatre.'²⁵ The review of the performance in the *Theatrical Observer* 'revealed Kean's sympathetic, and even compassionate treatment of Shylock. For the first time, the stage-Jew was taking on human form, and for the first time the audience was able to appreciate it.'²⁶ Kean's startlingly new interpretation of the character is described by William Hazlitt in his *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays*: we went to the theatre, says Hazlitt, expecting to see what we usually see – 'a decrepit old man, bent with age and ugly with mental deformity, grinning with deadly malice, with the venom of his heart congealed in the expression of his countenance.'²⁷ He and his fellow playgoers were disappointed, says Hazlitt, 'because we had taken our idea from other actors, not from the play.'²⁸ It took the courage of the cataclysmic Kean to 'clear away the rubbish,'²⁹ allowing a new and human Shylock to emerge to the light. In an ironic reverse echo of Charles Macklin, the rumour spread that Kean was undoubtedly a Jew himself, 'since no one but a Jew could infuse Shylock with this awesome and terrifying tone of Hebraic majesty.'³⁰

When Sir Henry Irving took on the role in 1879, 'all [Shylock's] evil qualities appeared to be due to the persecution of his race and the indignities inflicted upon

²⁴ Daniel Schwarz, 'Review: *Anti-Semitic Stereotypes: A Paradigm of Otherness in English Popular Culture, 1660-1830* by Frank Felsenstein,' *AJS Review* 21.1 (1996): 178.

²⁵ Brown xxxiii.

²⁶ Lelyveld 45.

²⁷ William Hazlitt, *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays* (New York: 1845) 178, quoted in Lelyveld 43.

²⁸ Hazlitt, quoted in Lelyveld 43.

²⁹ Hazlitt, quoted in Lelyveld 43.

³⁰ Lelyveld 53.

himself.³¹ Irving's Shylock was 'a representative of a race which generation after generation has been cruelly used, insulted, execrated. It is an hereditary hate, but to this as the play progresses are added individual wrongs that make him inexorable and fiendish.'³² A review in *The Theatre* in December of 1879 concurs: 'He feels and acts as one of a noble but long oppressed nation.'³³ '[H]e had moments of sheer humanity,' Robert Hichins declares in describing Irving's Shylock, 'when one felt with him, and almost, or quite, suffered with him.'³⁴ Perhaps the most compelling evidence of the changing audience reception to the character is a statement in the *Herald* describing an article in a rival newspaper: 'The *Spectator* depicts Irving's Shylock as a man "whom none can despise, who can raise emotion both of pity and of fear, and make us Christians thrill with a retrospective sense of shame."³⁵

William Poel, with an intention to re-create an 'authentic' Elizabethan performance, directed a portrayal of Shylock as a red-haired comic figure: the production 'was not generally acclaimed by the critics'³⁶ and when Herbert Beerbohm Tree took on the role in 1908, this blip in the performance history of the role was not repeated. Tree's wife described her husband's Shylock as 'passionate, long suffering; by turns majestic and debased. [...] His large wistful eyes seemed to reveal the long tragic history of a persecuted race.'³⁷ While Marowitz created his adaptation of *Merchant* in 1972, and therefore was responding to social factors present during that time, looking beyond that period at more modern instances of the play's production illustrates a continuation of the trend to view Shylock sympathetically. When Christopher McCullough interviewed Antony Sher

³¹ Brown xxxv.

³² *Herald* 7 Nov. 1883, quoted in Lelyveld 83.

³³ *Theatre*, Dec. 1879, quoted in Lelyveld 83.

³⁴ Robert Hichins, *We Saw Him Act*, eds. H.A. Saintsbury & Ceil Palmer (London: Hurst & Blackett, 1939) 166, quoted in Lelyveld 83.

³⁵ *Herald* 8 Nov 1897, quoted in Lelyveld 85.

³⁶ Lelyveld 97.

³⁷ Maud Tree, 'Herbert and I,' in *Herbert Beerbohm Tree*, ed. Max Beerbohm (London, n.d.) 149, quoted in Lelyveld 99.

regarding his interpretation of Shylock for the 1987 Royal Shakespeare Company production, the actor quickly identified his primary query in exploring the role: '[W]hat was very clear to me from the outset was that playing Shylock the Jew corresponded to a political contradiction that obsesses me still [...] It is the syndrome of the persecuted turning into the persecutor.'³⁸ Sher brought to the role his own experience growing up as a Jewish, white South African, whose parents had escaped from anti-Semitic persecution in Europe only to participate willingly in the abusive Apartheid regime. Sher describes Shylock as 'representative of that very human syndrome' and his primary concern was to illustrate for the audience, 'perhaps in a stronger way than Shakespeare's words alone do for our society,'³⁹ the abusive treatment the character suffered every day: since Shakespeare's text refers to Antonio voiding his rheum on the usurer, Sher's beard was bedaubed with his fellow actors' saliva on a daily basis in the rehearsal hall. The production also highlighted the 'barbaric behaviour' of Salerio and Solanio, suggesting that the ongoing goading of Shylock by these characters was key in 'provid[ing] him with the motive [...] to carry through with the bond.' 'I think,' states Sher, 'if you can really gain a feeling for that social milieu, that cultural texture, you are well on the way to confronting the problems the play presents to our post-Holocaust society.'⁴⁰

There can be little doubt, then, that a slow and steady transformation was in progress between Shakespeare's creation of the character at the crux of the Jacobean period to the time of Victoria and up to the modern day. While Shylock was originally portrayed and perceived as a representative of a conniving, greedy and evil tribe, the evolution of society brought with it a softening of this prejudice, and a trend towards portrayals of the

³⁸ Christopher J. McCullough, *The Merchant of Venice* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005) 47.

³⁹ McCullough 48.

⁴⁰ McCullough 48-49.

humanity of Shylock, as well as an understanding the motives which forced him towards his vengeful actions.

In terms of the other concerns Marowitz expresses regarding Shakespeare's *Merchant*, they spring from the adaptor's particular point of view, and are therefore, while valid, not indisputable. As Marowitz asserts, there can be little doubt that Shylock is humiliated during the course of the trial scene, in that he is brought from a place of power to a place of powerlessness, deprived of both fortune and faith. However, while Gratiano's insults might be supposed to be a primary source of humiliation, Shylock was sufficiently inured to abuse of this kind to render it harmless to his sense of self-respect. Indeed, after a particularly vicious assault, in which Gratiano calls Shylock an 'inexcrable dog!' the moneylender responds without name-calling: 'Till thou canst rail the seal from off my bond,/ Thou but offend'st thy lungs to speak so loud.'⁴¹

Shylock's forced conversion to Christianity, which Marowitz includes in his objections to the original play, is not found in any of the known sources of *The Merchant of Venice* and therefore can be seen as Shakespeare's own invention. In placing this plot device into context, it is important to recall that the Elizabethan era was one of enormous religious deception. Scant years before the play was written, the entire British population had been forced into religious conversion from Catholicism to Protestantism by the edict of Henry VIII, then forced back to Catholicism by his daughter, Mary I when she attained the throne. Although Elizabeth I officially returned the country to Protestant worship, the primacy of that religion during her reign remained under constant threat, from within as well as without, and countless noblemen lost their lives when it was discovered that they

⁴¹ William Shakespeare, 'The Merchant of Venice,' *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974) IV.i.128-140. All future quotations from this source will be listed as 'Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*' followed by the act, scene and line number.

clung to the ‘true church’ of Rome. Further, since the Jews were formally expelled from England by Edward I in 1290, the only members of that religion which were officially present in the country were Conversos – those that had ostensibly accepted Christianity – but since Christian families were still privately practicing Catholicism while publicly professing themselves to be members of the Church of England, it is at least quite possible that many Conversos similarly practiced their faith in private.⁴² The expedience of conversion must therefore have been an accepted paradigm in the Elizabethan mindset; they would have understood that practically it could mean as little as a formal and public declaration of adherence to a new faith without spiritual commitment to it. Only the extremely pious might have seen it as a true issue of principle.

Is Shakespeare’s Shylock a disreputable father as Marowitz states? Much is made of his passionate outcry in III.i when speaking to Tubal: ‘I would my daughter were dead at my foot, and the jewels in her ear! Would she were hears’d at my foot, and the ducats in her coffin!’⁴³ A father who would prefer cold metal to a living daughter would certainly seem bereft of all paternal affection, even though the daughter in question had made herself as dead to him, both by stealing from him, and by abandoning their shared faith in order to marry a Christian. If, as Marowitz alleges, the play thus brands Shylock as an uncaring parent, one need look no further than other well known plays within the canon to discover that, in Shakespeare’s mind, heartless fathering was not exclusively a Hebrew attribute. Lear, in the play which bears his name, warns Cordelia that her reticence to proclaim her love for him would ‘mar [her] fortunes,’⁴⁴ and went on scant lines later to ‘disclaim all [his]

⁴² See Cecil Roth, *A History of the Jews in England* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1941) 139-44, as well as Lelyveld 6, for further information.

⁴³ Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice* III.i.87-90.

⁴⁴ William Shakespeare, *King Lear*, *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974) I.i.94. All future quotations from this source will be shown as ‘Shakespeare, *King Lear*’ followed by the act, scene and line number.

paternal care,⁴⁵ stating his daughter would be ‘as a stranger to my heart and me.’⁴⁶

Leontes in *The Winter’s Tale* abandoned his daughter and indirectly killed his son through his base and baseless jealousy. In *Much Ado About Nothing*, Hero was ostensibly her father’s beloved daughter, yet when she is falsely accused of being unchaste, Leonato not only entreats Fate to ‘take not away thy heavy hand,’ judging death to be ‘the fairest cover for her shame,’ he further threatens his unconscious daughter:

Do not live, Hero, do not ope thine eyes;
For did I think thou wouldst not quickly die,
Thought I thy spirits were stronger than thy shames,
Myself would, on the rearward of reproaches,
Strike at thy life.⁴⁷

In *Romeo & Juliet*, the heroic daughter of the Capulets is similarly unfortunate. Secretly married to Romeo, Juliet refuses her parents’ proposed union to Paris, leading her mother to snap, ‘I would the fool were married to her grave!’⁴⁸ More voluble but no less virulent, Capulet threatens to throw his daughter out of his house, enjoining her to ‘hang, beg, starve, die in the streets.’⁴⁹ And these daughters of Christian fathers had been guilty of nothing more than a dislike of hypocrisy, baseless attacks against their parentage or virginity, and disobedience. In comparison, Jessica, who acknowledges ‘what heinous sin is it in me / To be ashamed to be my father’s child’,⁵⁰ who steals the turquoise⁵¹ keepsake ring given to her

⁴⁵ Shakespeare, *King Lear* I.i.113.

⁴⁶ Shakespeare, *King Lear* I.i.115.

⁴⁷ William Shakespeare, ‘Much Ado About Nothing,’ *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974) IV.i.115-127. All future quotations from this source will be shown as ‘Shakespeare, *Much Ado About Nothing*’ followed by the act, scene and line number.

⁴⁸ William Shakespeare, *Romeo & Juliet*, *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974) III.v.140. All future quotations from this source will be shown as ‘Shakespeare, *Romeo & Juliet*’ followed by the act, scene and line number.

⁴⁹ Shakespeare, *Romeo & Juliet* III.v.192.

⁵⁰ Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice* II.iii.16-17.

father by her dead mother and frivolously trades it for a monkey, is ultimately the most deserving of a father's curses.

When one examines the text, there is only one scene, II.v, from which one may presume to judge Shylock's conduct towards his daughter. During the scene, he calls his daughter by her name, describes her as 'my girl,'⁵² and fails to utter a single hurtful word to her. It is possible that Jessica has already displayed behaviour that warns her father of her interest in Christians, since, before leaving for dinner with Bassanio, he instructs her,

Lock up my doors, and when you hear the drum
And the vile squealing of the wry-neck'd fife,
Clamber not you up to the casements then,
Nor thrust your head into the public street
To gaze on Christian fools with varnish'd faces;
But stop my house's ears.⁵³

Had he not had some anticipation of just the behaviour he describes, based on Jessica's past actions, it is possible he would have been less specific in his direction, yet far from berating her, he speaks benignly. Upon exiting, he offers his daughter advice worthy of Polonius: 'Fast bind, fast find -- / A proverb never stale in thrifty mind.'⁵⁴ Where is the disreputable fathering to which Marowitz alludes?

Further, Israel Gollancz declares Jessica's betrayal to be a causal factor in her father's desire for revenge against Antonio and Christian society:

⁵¹ According to Gross, '[t]he fact that the stolen ring was a turquoise gives it added significance, since turquoises were widely believed to have magical properties.' They allegedly changed colour to warn the wearer of danger, and restored amity between husband and wife. See Gross 56.

⁵² Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice* II.v.15.

⁵³ Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice* II.v.29-34.

⁵⁴ Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice* II.v.54-55.

[i]t was Jessica who more cruelly struck the heart of Shylock with anguish. Jessica becomes the instrument for distraction, for determining this side of Shylock's character – that is, the distraught man, keen for vengeance at all costs and not willing to yield, almost maddened, grotesquely maddened.⁵⁵

Gollancz suggests further that Shakespeare knew enough about the Jews to know that 'our Jew may be in the public mind the vilest usurer. [...] But there is one tender point, the sanctity of the home life.' In Gollancz's mind, the destruction of his family and home must therefore be seen as strong motivation for Shylock's violent outburst, made in a moment of anger and anguish, against his daughter.⁵⁶

On another note, in 'Shakespeare's Outsiders,' Marowitz states that

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE is not a play about money, venture capitalism, Judaism, Christianity, social justice, nuptial lotteries or Shakespeare's hang-up with Marlowe's JEW OF MALTA. It seems to me to be a play in which the author tries to balance three incompatible styles: Romance, Comedy and Tragedy.⁵⁷

While opening an interesting can of worms, Marowitz is skirting the real issue through sleight of hand: he tells us what he believes the play is *not* about thematically, but not what it *is* about. His definition of what the play *is* sidesteps his original null-definition of thematic contact into the concept of structure and form through his reference to style.

⁵⁵ Gollancz, *Allegory and Mysticism* 30. Gollancz offers the hypothesis that Shakespeare derived Jessica's name from the Bible: Haran's daughter was named Iscah, which he asserts means 'She that looketh out.' This suggestion holds wonderful dramatic resonance when one considers Shakespeare's character who looks out her father's windows into the Christian world, both literally and metaphorically.

⁵⁶ The opinion of Israel Gollancz regarding *The Merchant of Venice* is of particular interest in a discussion of anti-Semitism, in that he was a Jew (the son of Rabbi Samuel Gollancz), a scholar, and a prominent and respected member of the Victorian and Edwardian societies in which he lived. See 'Obituaries: Sir Israel Gollancz,' *Times* 24 June 1930.

⁵⁷ Marowitz, *Roar of the Canon* 53.

Marowitz goes on to link the literary styles to particular thematic concerns within the original play, allotting the lottery for Portia's hand in marriage, her pursuit by Bassanio and her reciprocating attraction to him, as well as the loyalty of the Bassanio/Antonio friendship, to the Romance section of the stylistic trio. The Comedy portion of the script, says Marowitz, relates to 'Shakespeare's depiction of a stereotypical 16th [sic] century Jewish usurer who sees people almost exclusively as property (a blindspot that extends even to his daughter)' as well as the antics between Nerissa and Portia regarding the three men who venture against the caskets for the heiress' hand, which he likens to 'a kind of Renaissance version of "Who Wants to Marry a Millionaire."'58 As to the third stylistic prong,

[t]he Tragedy of course is rooted in the play's Trial Scene in which Antonio's life is imperiled by a tenacious plaintiff who, demanding that the Court apply the letter of the law, is unaware that the law is not graven in stone but etched in tablets of clay which can either bend or break depending on who handles them.⁵⁹

He goes on to compare Portia's prohibition of the spilling of a single drop of blood as the kind of legal loophole which lawyers love, but which seem inane to the general public: alluding to the defeat of Al Gore's presidential contention, it is 'the equivalent of a dimpled-chad which disqualifies an otherwise legitimate ballot.'⁶⁰ Marowitz ponders the validity of Shylock's contract, and the law that surrounds it, at some length before stating:

⁵⁸ Marowitz, *Roar of the Canon* 53.

⁵⁹ Marowitz, *Roar of the Canon* 53.

⁶⁰ Marowitz, *Roar of the Canon* 53.

[t]he tragedy then is that the law, as practiced in Venice, is not impartial but prejudiced against the Jew as later laws throughout Europe unquestionably were, and as American laws were against blacks from the birth of the Republic right up to the present day.⁶¹

The law favours the Venetians in Shakespeare's *Merchant*, states Marowitz, precisely because it is a man-made set of rules dictated by those in power, aimed against their enemies, and wielded by judges and lawyers who costume themselves as the acolytes of Truth and Justice by donning elaborate robes and powdered wigs. Should a situation present itself in which the law, as it exists, empowers the outsider over the ruling group, then, as in Portia's courtroom, a contravening law will be created or found which supercedes that favouring the enemy alien, so that the status quo *vis-à-vis* the possession of power is maintained. Shylock's error, Marowitz asserts, was that, '[b]eing Talmudic rather than worldly, intellectual rather than practical,' he failed to understand the pragmatism of the Venetian court; had he, adds Marowitz, been 'half as bright as his clever badinage in the Trial Scene,' he wouldn't have attempted to overturn the power infrastructure by asking the court to rule on a case which 'no matter what its rights in law, he could not possibly win.'⁶²

MAROWITZ'S OBJECTIVES IN *VARIATIONS ON THE MERCHANT OF VENICE*

Marowitz's primary objective in the creation of his adaptation of Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* was to 'reorder [the play] and "vary" its moral implications.'⁶³ Further, his belief that Shylock and Antonio occupied opposite ends of a bi-polar construct of good and evil in the original play motivated him to find a way to reverse this dichotomy. His

⁶¹ Marowitz, *Roar of the Canon* 54.

⁶² Marowitz, *Roar of the Canon* 55.

⁶³ Marowitz, introduction, *The Marowitz Shakespeare* 22.

impression that British Prime Minister Clement Attlee had been responsible for the deaths of European Jews by blocking their emigration to Israel prompted him to set his *Variations* in Jerusalem during the period of the British Mandate, specifically around the bombing of the King David Hotel at the conclusion of World War II. (This setting will be dealt with in greater detail during the analysis of the adaptation.) Beyond Shylock and Antonio, Marowitz sought to achieve this moral reversal for their greater communities as well, and was pleased that *Variations* created a scenario in which ‘all the British characters are rather conniving and reprehensible – concerned only with gain whereas Shylock, whatever his faults, does have a larger purpose.’⁶⁴

On a structural note, and making reference to his earlier adaptation of *Measure for Measure*, Marowitz states that in order for it to

achieve its effects, it had to stick as closely as possible to Shakespeare’s original storyline, veering away at precisely those points where the moral impact would be greatest. The same approach was employed in *Variations on the Merchant of Venice*.⁶⁵

AN ANALYSIS OF *VARIATIONS ON THE MERCHANT OF VENICE*

Variations on the Merchant of Venice is comprised of an interpolation of text from Christopher Marlowe’s *The Jew of Malta* with Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice* in order to obtain a decidedly different response by the Jewish characters to the prejudiced behaviour of the Christians. Large portions of the play are strikingly similar to the Shakespearean original; this was part of Marowitz’s strategy in breaking audience

⁶⁴ Charles Marowitz, ‘Giving Them Hell,’ *Plays and Players* 24 (1977): 15.

⁶⁵ Marowitz, introduction, *The Marowitz Shakespeare* 21.

perceptions of a 'classic' work. As is typical of Marowitz's adaptations, the Shakespearean scenes are re-ordered, and text is exchanged from one character to another in an attempt to achieve a different moral balance. Both the Launcelot Gobbo character and his father are removed, and the Jewish character named Chus, mentioned briefly by Jessica in III.ii, is added.

Marowitz's Historical Setting

Marowitz sets his adaptation against a factual historical background: the scene is Palestine in 1946, towards the end of the British Mandate, and the key event upon which the action revolves is the bombing of the King David Hotel in Jerusalem on July 22, 1946 by the Jewish militant group, the *Irgun*. He describes his rationale for this *mise en scene*, and through it, the assumptions he wishes to confront and defeat, in his introduction to *The Marowitz Shakespeare*:

So long as Antonio remained 'a good man', [sic] Shylock must be a villain and so I set about putting Antonio's character into question. By setting the action in Palestine during the period of the British mandate, one had a ready-made villain. The anti-semitism engendered during this period was mainly the result of the policies of Clement Attlee's Middle East policy which severely restricted immigration to Jerusalem, thereby forcing hundreds of thousands of escaping Jews to return to Europe and the concentration-camps [sic] that awaited them. These policies were (quite unfairly) personified by Ernest Bevin, the Foreign

Secretary of the time. By identifying Antonio with Bevin and the lethal policies of the Attlee government and lining up Shylock with the nationalist forces, particularly the more extreme groups like the Irgun, one created a completely different balance between the social forces in the play.⁶⁶

In order to assist the reader in understanding whether Marowitz's new assumptions are valid, a detailed history of the events leading up to the bombing of the King David Hotel is provided in Appendix 3. To summarize, however, Marowitz created his adaptation out of a highly complex political puzzle, based on what he describes as the anti-Semitic policy of the British Government. Specifically, in his written response to the critics' reaction to *Variations on the Merchant of Venice*, published under the title 'Giving Them Hell' in *Plays & Players*, Marowitz states that: 'Antonio was patterned, very loosely, on Ernest Bevin who, for many Jews, personified Attlee's anti-semitic foreign policy; a policy which restricted immigration to Jerusalem and doomed hundreds of thousands of Jews to incarceration in Nazi death-camps.'⁶⁷

The concern with this justification is three-fold. First, Marowitz refers to Attlee's 'lethal policies' that forced Jews to 'return to Europe' and meet their deaths in the camps. However, Clement Attlee did not become Prime Minister, nor did Bevin become Foreign Secretary, until the defeat of Winston Churchill's coalition government on July 26, 1945, months after the liberation of the concentration camps by the Allies⁶⁸ and the unconditional surrender of the Germans on May 7, 1945. Previous to this date, Attlee had been Britain's Deputy Prime Minister, the head of the Labour party and thus second in command to

⁶⁶ Marowitz, introduction, *The Marowitz Shakespeare* 22-23.

⁶⁷ Marowitz, 'Giving Them Hell,' *Plays and Players* 15.

⁶⁸ According to a Holocaust Timeline, Auschwitz was liberated on January 19, 1945; Buchenwald on April 10, 1945; and Dachau on April 29, 1945. The liberation of smaller camps (Mauthausen, Ohrdruf) had similar dates. See 'Holocaust Timeline,' *The History Place*, 11 Dec. 2009 <www.historyplace.com/worldwar2/holocaust/timeline.html#maut-lib>.

Churchill, who led the Conservatives. Attlee's primary duties during this period involved chairing the Lord President's Committee, which was responsible for civil affairs, and most notably, for the health of the British economy. He had no hand in the writing of the Palestinian White Paper of 1939 and thus cannot legitimately be blamed for the lack of safe refuge for Jews wishing to emigrate to Palestine. In fact, the Labour party, of which Attlee was the head, 'opposed Britain's 1939 white paper limiting Jewish immigration [...] and insisted that the League of Nations mandates commission determine Jewish access. Attlee himself objected to implementing the white paper's policy in early 1940.'⁶⁹ According to one biographer,

[w]ith the allies' victory in North Africa in spring 1943, Attlee joined in the Cabinet's major reappraisal of Palestine policy. His June memorandum recommended a Cabinet-committee study and Anglo-American cooperation if possible. *This, however, was Attlee's only significant wartime involvement in the issue* [italics added].⁷⁰

Moreover, Marowitz points his finger of blame in the wrong direction even in terms of the post-War British response to the Palestine problem: Ernest Bevin, and not Clement Attlee, 'was the architect of Britain's Palestine policy'⁷¹ post-World War II. Bevin's brusque nature, as well as his strong pro-Arab and anti-Zionist stance, tended to brand him as an anti-Semite, and Chaim Weizmann, then president of the World Zionist organization, 'described Bevin's first major Parliamentary speech on Palestine as "brutal, vulgar and anti-semitic."⁷² The designation of anti-Semite, is, however, far from conclusively

⁶⁹ Brookshire 139.

⁷⁰ Brookshire 139.

⁷¹ Wm. Roger Louis, *The British Empire in the Middle East 1945-1951* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1984) 383.

⁷² Louis 384.

deserved: it could also be true that Bevin was merely sensitive to the Arab Palestinians' desire for just treatment; he publicly opined that the re-integration of European Jews into the populations of their home countries was a more appropriate tactic than widespread emigration to Palestine.

Israel's first Prime Minister, Golda Meir, was quoted as saying: 'One cannot and must not try to erase the past merely because it does not fit the present.'⁷³ Whether Marowitz had decided upon which version of the past he wished to build upon in his adaptation, and then, consciously or unconsciously, erased or distorted any factual history that did not comply with his stated objective of reversing the balance of moral rectitude between the Christian and Jewish characters, is uncertain. It is possible that he based his statements on either a personal remembrance of the political scenario,⁷⁴ or on his general knowledge based on what others had told him, without undertaking the research required for accuracy in this regard. It should be further stated that this inaccuracy, in and of itself, does not entirely unseat his new set of assumptions for the adaptation, since Attlee and Bevin are embodiments of British strategies, such as the 1939 White Paper, which *did* have a role in abandoning European Jews, resulting in their imprisonment in Nazi death camps. However, Marowitz's agenda is decidedly more political than that of the original play: '[p]olitics [...] has replaced religion and trade as the mainspring of the action,'⁷⁵ agrees Billington in his review of the opening night of *Variations*. Marowitz is, by his own admission, striving to identify Antonio as 'bad' by associating him with British policy that led to Jewish persecution and death, and Shylock correspondingly 'good' due to his activities as a freedom fighter working *for* the Jewish people. He is painting his work upon

⁷³ Timing unknown.

⁷⁴ Born in 1934, Marowitz would have been a small boy when World War II began in 1939; 10 or 11 when it ended in 1945; and a teenager during the post-war years.

⁷⁵ Michael Billington, 'First Night: *Merchant of Venice* – Open Space,' *Guardian* 18 May 1977.

an international canvas, and the audience is shown his portrait of peoples rather than people – nations rather than individuals. Since his scope is broad, so is the capacity for prejudice against nations, and the individuals who represent them – precisely what Marowitz wished to confront in his adaptation. To learn that Marowitz was blatantly inaccurate in his depiction of those responsible for the questioned British policy, and that, subsequently, the wrong individuals are the focus of blame, puts into question Marowitz’s understanding of the situation being dramatized, and weakens the validity of his assumption. Moreover, in his essay, ‘Jan Kott: Feeding the Hungry,’ Marowitz suggests that

Kott’s life and work point up the intellectual paucity of most people in the theater. It isn’t scholarship or erudition that is lacking; it is sound and sensitive connections between the written word and the lived lives of the characters Shakespeare put on the stage.⁷⁶

The simple historical errors presented as truth by Marowitz in his discussion of *Variations on the Merchant of Venice* make one direct his comments towards his own work: it is indeed his own scholarship which was lacking in this situation.

Second, very complex issues have been simplified⁷⁷ in a manner comprising a blinkered view of history – a view that emanates from a particular and partisan stance on Marowitz’s part – and, as has been previously discussed, the international canvas on which this story is being painted requires some breadth of objectivity in order for the work not to become merely a form of counter-propaganda. Britain’s decision to restrict Jewish

⁷⁶ Charles Marowitz, ‘Jan Kott: Feeding the Hungry,’ *Theater* 32.3 (2002): 18.

⁷⁷ See Don Peretz, ‘Reviewed Work: *Days of Fire* by Samuel Katz,’ *Middle East Journal* 22.4 (1968): 507. When summarizing Katz’s depiction of the ‘Jewish nationalist movement during the 1930s and the 1940s,’ Peretz concludes that ‘there is not, nor has there been anything so simple as “the Zionist,” or “the Jewish,” position on Palestine or on any aspect of the Palestine problem including relationships with Great Britain, the Arabs and other policy matters, large or small.’ Samuel Katz was a founding member of the *Irgun*.

immigration was based on a number of factors: to describe them as anti-semitic implies that they were founded solely on a desire to harm the Jewish people, which was clearly not the case. The political milieu during this period was complex,⁷⁸ and political decisions were anything but black and white. While pro-Zionists strove to bring about a Jewish national home in Palestine, a general sense of justice demanded that the British Mandate also serve the needs of the Palestinian Arabs. As well, in light of the growing aggression of the Hitler's National Socialists, Britain desperately needed to preserve its relationship with their then Arab allies (including Egypt and Saudi Arabia) – relationships that would be jeopardized if the Palestinian Arabs were treated unfairly. It was, on many fronts, a no-win situation for the British, and while their decision to limit Jewish immigration to Palestine may have been motivated by self-interest and political expedience, it was not necessarily motivated by anti-Semitism. This was, after all, a nation that had chosen voluntarily to aid in the creation of a Jewish national state some years before.

Third, dramatic issues have been likewise simplified, rendering them decidedly black and white: is it an absolute that Antonio and Shylock must occupy diametrically oppositional positions on the good versus evil continuum? This simplification is clearly true in Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta*, in which Barabas is the one-dimensional personification of evil, but Shakespeare's Shylock provokes an audience to question the prejudice of the Venetians precisely because he is multi-dimensional. In comparison, it is difficult to imagine a discussion of Barabas's 'inner life,' since the playwright offers readers no insight into such a dimension in the character. Since human beings are never entirely good or evil, neither can Shylock be, if his humanity is being accepted as de facto.

⁷⁸ Readers are directed to Appendix Three of this thesis for a more detailed account of these factors.

Therefore, Marowitz's desire to find 'a ready-made villain'⁷⁹ in Clement Attlee to inhabit his drama so that Shylock, in contrast, could be 'good' is overly simplistic, thus failing to express the truth of a complex situation.

This being said, Menachem Begin, formerly of the *Irgun*, was elected as Israeli Prime Minister in June of 1977 on a platform that endorsed the necessity to safeguard Israel through military might, and

some in Israel were inclined to see Marowitz's play and his terrorist Shylock as a timely and necessary rejoinder not to the British, but to any foreign incursion. [...] And though many on the left undoubtedly viewed Marowitz's pastiche as satire and political criticism, there were others for whom his Shylock was a decided and necessary improvement on the original, especially during an ongoing period of intensive conflict that evinced extreme anxiety within Israel.⁸⁰

In summary, then, the use of a key event in recent history involving the worlds of Christianity and Judaism was a keen stroke on the part of Marowitz, and in the hands of a more subtle adaptor, might have induced a believable counter-illumination of the cultural authority of Shakespeare's play.

Marowitz's Parameters for Adaptation

The specificity and originality of *Variations on the Merchant of Venice*, two key parameters expressed by Marowitz for successful adaptation, lie both in its *mise en scène*,

⁷⁹ Marowitz, introduction, *The Marowitz Shakespeare* 22.

⁸⁰ Mark Bayer, 'The Merchant of Venice, the Arab-Israeli Conflict, and the Perils of Shakespearean Appropriation,' *Comparative Drama* 41.4 (2007-8): 485. *Variations on the Merchant of Venice* opened in 1977, not long after the Yom Kippur War between Israel and Egypt in 1973 and the Six-Day War in 1967.

and in the role occupied by Shylock, as well as in its use of a complementary drama of the period to which the original work was a corollary. The setting of the play within the time period of the British Mandate in Jerusalem; the use of the bombing of the King David Hotel; and the re-casting of the Jewish usurer as a freedom fighter and revolutionary, are all original refractions on Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*.

Another of the three requisites Marowitz sets out for successful adaptation of a classic work is elasticity; specifically, that the content of the original play must be able to bend in the direction required to accommodate the new intentions of the adaptor. It is inherently obvious that Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* was *not* elastic enough to accommodate Marowitz's intended objective in adaptation, since he found it necessary to incorporate text from Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* in order to achieve his goals. This is not surprising considering the degree of change he desired: Shakespeare's Shylock has no text which, when placed within a new context, could move him from a man suffering victimization to the vigilante actively pursuing revolution. Marlowe's Barabas, however, does possess text that expresses a strategy of active violence against the ruling powers of society; for this reason, as well as for the alleged historical connection between *The Jew of Malta* and *The Merchant of Venice*,⁸¹ it was a logical choice for Marowitz to employ Marlowe's play for interpolation in his adaptation. In the same way, Jessica's transformation from ashamed betrayer to loyal co-conspirator required text assigned to Marlowe's Abigail.

81 According to Barton, Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* was originally performed around 1589, but was revived in 1594 during the trial of Queen Elizabeth I's physician, Roderigo Lopez: 'The original stimulus for *The Merchant of Venice* may have come from Shakespeare's memory of the trial. More important, probably, was the influence of Marlowe's play.' Anne Barton, introduction, 'The Merchant of Venice,' *The Riverside Shakespeare* 250. However, Ribner disagrees: 'That *The Jew of Malta* exerted much influence upon *The Merchant of Venice* is a questionable proposition which can be positively neither denied nor affirmed.' Irving Ribner, 'Marlowe & Shakespeare,' *Shakespeare Quarterly* 15.2 (1964): 45. Smith agrees with Ribner that '[t]he common assumption that Shakespeare's Shylock was created to compete with Marlowe's play, *The Jew of Malta*, in pandering to a wave of anti-Semitism greeting the arraignment and execution for treason in 1594 of Elizabeth's Jewish physician, Roderigo Lopez, becomes untenable upon examination.' Warren D. Smith, 'Shakespeare's Shylock,' *Shakespeare Quarterly* 15.3 (1964): 193.

The decision to interpolate *The Jew of Malta* did cause Marowitz ‘misgivings’ since it is

not easy to integrate styles as different as Marlowe’s and Shakespeare’s – particularly in a play as well known as *Merchant of Venice* [...] every time Shakespeare’s fluent tone-of-voice is interrupted by Marlowe’s artifice, the tone tends to drop accordingly.⁸²

Marowitz has accordingly limited the number of times that Marlovian and Shakespearean text abut directly. For example, at the start of the play following the news report of the King David Hotel bombing, Shylock and his fellow revolutionaries mourn their fallen comrades with text entirely taken from Act I of *The Jew of Malta*, with only slight changes to names et cetera to tailor it to its new context. After his comrades leave, Shylock’s direction to Jessica regarding her interaction with the Christians is likewise entirely drawn from Marlowe’s play. The stage directions from the original production indicate a black out at the end of the scene, thus creating a dramatic barrier to the text in the subsequent scene with Antonio and Bassanio, which is drawn from I.i. of Shakespeare’s *Merchant*. Later, however, when Shylock is negotiating the loan with Antonio and Bassanio, the text moves from Shakespeare’s *Merchant* to Marlow’s *Jew of Malta* with no interruption other than the exit of the latter two characters:

SHYLOCK: Pray you, tell me this –
If he should break his day, what should I gain
By the exaction of the forfeiture?
A pound of a man’s flesh, taken from a man,

⁸² Marowitz, introduction, *The Marowitz Shakespeare* 23.

Is not so estimable, profitable neither,

As flesh of muttuns, beefs, or goats. I say,

To buy his favour, I extend this friendship.

If he will take it, so – if not, adieu.

And, for my love, I pray you wrong me not.

ANTONIO: Yes, Shylock, I will seal unto this bond.

SHYLOCK: Then meet me forthwith at the notary's

Give him directions for this merry bond,

And I will go and purse the ducats straight,

And presently I will be with you.

ANTONIO: The Hebrew will turn Christian – he grows kind.

BASSANIO: I like not fair terms and a villain's mind.

ANTONIO: Come on – in this there can be no dismay,

My ships come home a month before the day.

(SHYLOCK, TUBAL and CHUS watch ANTONIO and

BASSANIO exit.)

SHYLOCK: See the simplicity of these base slaves

Who for the villains have not wit themselves

Think me to be a senseless lump of clay

That will with every water wash to dirt.

No, we are born methinks, to better chance

And fram'd of finer mould than common men

That measure naught but by the present time.

A reaching thought will search our deepest wits

And cast with cunning for the time to come.⁸³

Marowitz is absolutely accurate in his assessment of the shift in tone created by the interpolation of text following the exit of Antonio and Bassanio: after the quick, deft mind of Shakespeare's Shylock, we encounter the almost leaden declamation of Marlowe's Barabas, the former endowed with every aspect of life, and the latter as plodding as a formal epitaph. Nonetheless, the Barabas text was essential to the audience's understanding of the action, since it establishes that Marowitz's Shylock wears a mask of deception when dealing with his British adversaries. Similarly, there is the clunking sound of a human voice swallowed by machine works in the trial scene when Marlovian text directly follows that of Shakespeare:

SHYLOCK: Nay, take my life and all, pardon not that.

You take my house, when you do take the prop

That doth sustain my house; you take my life,

When you do take the means whereby I live.

DUKE: From naught at first thou cam'st to little wealth

From little unto more, from more to most.

If your first curse fall heavy on thy head

And make thee poor and scorn'd of all the world,

'Tis not our fault, but thy inherent sin.⁸⁴

A cursory glance at the Shakespearean text spoken by Shylock versus the Marlovian text delivered by the Duke reveals key differences: the Shakespearean text is simultaneously more conversational and structurally more complex than Marlowe's text that follows it.

⁸³ Charles Marowitz, 'Variations on the Merchant of Venice,' *The Marowitz Shakespeare* (New York: Marion Boyars, 1990) 241-242. All future quotations from this source will be shown as 'Marowitz, *Variations on the Merchant*' followed by the page number.

⁸⁴ Marowitz, *Variations on the Merchant* 280.

The conversational nature of Shakespeare's text is partially due to its emphasis on action: you *do* this, I *suffer* this result: *take* is the prominent verb in this passage. It is more complex in that, in four short lines, it sets up a thesis, then proves it through a two stepped ladder of circular cause and effect: you ultimately affect 'this' when you affect 'that' which is related to 'this.' In contrast, the Marlovian text is less active: the Shylock/Barabas character 'cam'st to little wealth,' creating the notion of him arriving there unexpectedly in a carriage; the curse, something from outside himself, falls 'heavy' on him because of the sin that lies 'inherent' within him, but not from an action that he takes. In terms of structure, Shylock/Barabas has climbed the ladder from poverty to some wealth, to much wealth, but his 'first curse' of Judaism slid him back down the ladder to poverty: the structure is overwhelmingly linear in terms of movement.

On a slightly more complex plane, elasticity also refers to the presence or absence of what could be called contextual anchors: is the original work based within an historical milieu that is embedded within the text itself? When adapting *Richard III* to a World War II context, for example, the famous line, 'A horse, a horse! my kingdom for a horse!'⁸⁵ is potentially anachronistic, since soldiers of the more recent period would be riding in jeeps rather than on horseback. Similarly, are the mores of the period, regarding the place of women or visible minorities, for example, so imbedded within the text as to make an adaptation that does not specifically redress these issues liable to create offence or to fail to resonate with the audience? Since Marowitz's directly confronts the social mores of the Elizabethan era regarding anti-Semitism, concerns with inelasticity *vis-à-vis Variations* lie largely within the domain of its traditional historicity, and, in Marowitz's opinion, these

⁸⁵ William Shakespeare, 'Richard III,' *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974) V.iv.7. All further quotations from this source will be shown as 'Shakespeare, *Richard III*' followed by the act, scene and line number.

anxieties display a literal mindedness not in step with the more ‘free-wheeling’⁸⁶ tendencies of artistic expression. In his review of the original production, John Peter of the *Sunday Times* peevishly queries,

Who are these people? Why are British servicemen, kaftaned
Jews and English judges discussing Venetian law in
Palestine? Where is Belmont, and why is Portia a sleek
predator from Pirandello surrounded by Art Deco furniture
and massaged by a West Indian maid?⁸⁷

In response, Marowitz quite rightly asserts that ‘every classic is automatically translated into another time and ambiance simply because it is *playing* in another time and ambiance.’⁸⁸ Peter’s inability to ‘make the imaginative leap from Venice to Palestine, from the 17th [sic] century to the 20th [sic]’ is, says Marowitz, ‘the antithesis of free-wheeling art and paradoxically, it is paramount in critics, and almost non-existent in ordinary members of the public.’⁸⁹ While one assumes that these last comments are strictly a matter of opinion, and lacking in statistical evidence, it would nonetheless be interesting to travel back in time to Elizabethan England, to discover whether the groundlings offered inquiry similar to Peter’s when they viewed *Julius Caesar* performed by the Chamberlain’s men in doublet and hose with only the merest affectation of Roman dress.⁹⁰

Generally, then, while *The Merchant of Venice* was not sufficiently elastic to accomplish the goals of the adaptation in terms of supporting new assumptions that confront those of the original work, in the final analysis, Marowitz’s pragmatic use of *The Jew of Malta* rendered this inelasticity less important.

⁸⁶ Marowitz, ‘Giving Them Hell,’ *Plays and Players* 16.

⁸⁷ John Peter, quoted in ‘Giving Them Hell,’ *Plays and Players* 16.

⁸⁸ Marowitz, ‘Giving Them Hell,’ *Plays and Players* 16.

⁸⁹ Marowitz, ‘Giving Them Hell,’ *Plays and Players* 16.

⁹⁰ Andrew Gurr, *William Shakespeare* (New York: Harper Collins, 1995) 101.

On a somewhat more conceptual note, the disparity between the world views of Marlowe and Shakespeare render their juxtaposition an unsatisfying one. In ‘Marlowe and Shakespeare,’ Irving Ribner discusses these differences in terms of the ways their kings, the politicians of the day, operate:

Shakespeare’s kings must learn to exercise their power in a world of degree and order in which the divine presence is always felt. Marlowe’s exercise theirs in an intrinsically hostile world upon which order can be imposed only by the power of the ruler himself.⁹¹

Additionally, Ribner states that it is Marlowe’s ‘very preoccupation with power in the absolute’⁹² that separates his characters from what others believe is native to humanity.

Marlowe’s striving supermen must negate all human ties [...] and in their defiance of common morality – to which, owing no allegiance to the God who is its source, they can never be subject – they often become [...] monstrous in their inhumanity.⁹³

In Shakespeare, ‘there is an awareness of human limitation and frailty’⁹⁴ that expresses itself mimetically in his characters, rendering them human and therefore believable.

Assessing the final use he makes of both Marlowe’s Barabas and Shakespeare’s Shylock in the creation of his Jewish character, Marowitz tends towards Marlowe’s paradigm in terms of his seeking victory for his Shylock through active human intervention rather than through god-like sufferance and patience. But in interpolating the text of these very

⁹¹ Ribner 44.

⁹² Ribner 44.

⁹³ Ribner 44.

⁹⁴ Ribner 43.

different playwrights, Marowitz's use of the nihilistic Marlovian drama strips from the Shakespearean original the albeit flawed humanity of its central character, substituting a Jewish warrior who possesses no humanistic compassion.

The societal trends being explored certainly may have influenced Marowitz as he fashioned his Shylock, and are therefore germane to the way in which his *Variations* invokes historicity in the pursuit of his stated desire to 'challenge, revoke or destroy the intellectual foundation which makes a classic the formidable thing it has become,' while 'forc[ing] it to bend under the power of a new polemic.' His transformation of Shylock from a victim into a warrior taking action against the persecution of his people does forcefully communicate a political truth: '[v]iolence is continued, not concluded, by repression.'⁹⁵ Sooner or later, the worm turns; the slave rebels; the oppressed rise up.

In terms of challenging the assumptions of the original work, Marowitz is successful in revoking certain of these soundly. This process begins during the first moments the adaptation, with the sounds of the King David Hotel explosion, followed by a radio newscast which informs the listener, not only of the human cost of this act, but also that it was carried out by the *Irgun*, an organization described as terrorist in nature. Through this decisive shift of location and period, Marowitz has successfully distanced his adaptation from an audience's perception of the original play: the Shylock we met in Shakespeare's play was a usurer, and a hater of Christians, but not a terrorist. While the word 'terrorist' undoubtedly has a more potent ring in the post-9/11 world than it did in 1977 when the adaptation was first staged, this historically specific and significant event would have given the audience a strong shaking, persuading them to sit up and take notice,

⁹⁵ Alan Sinfield, 'Making Space: Appropriation and Confrontation in Recent British Plays,' *The Shakespeare Myth*, ed. Graham Holderness (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1988) 137.

particularly since the first production took place in Britain shortly after the twentieth anniversary of the bombing.

Whereas he was largely a solitary creature in the original play, unsupported by other Jews, in *Variations*, Shylock is surrounded on stage by colleagues and allies. Since solitary existence for the Elizabethans traditionally suggested, rightly or wrongly, a basic unworthiness which repelled association, Marowitz's *Variations* serves to subtly and effectively erase one of the negative assumptions regarding Shylock found in Shakespeare's play. To illustrate, we first meet Shakespeare's Shylock in negotiation with Bassanio, and later Antonio, over the terms of a loan. He is ostensibly deferential to the Christians, and the only Jewish presence to be seen on stage. His brief soliloquy expresses his main concern: money. In contrast, the first sight we have of Marowitz's Shylock immediately follows the evocative opening of the adaptation, when we encounter him, along with other members of the *Irgun*, gathering around a dead comrade. According to a review of the original production, '[Shylock] – and Tubal -- are dressed in sephardic black, but his followers – including Jessica – are in guerilla green. A new Che Guevara character called Chus is introduced.'⁹⁶ The meaning seems clear: Marowitz's Shylock is not alone; he has many allies. He is, in fact, the protagonist in a decisive strike against the enemies of his people, and his main concern is something nobler than gold: the Jewish cause. Text from *The Jew of Malta* allows Shylock to express a decidedly militant approach to the conflict with his British/Christian enemies:

And here upon my knees, striking the earth,

⁹⁶ Catherine Itzin, 'The Trouble with Shylock,' *Plays and Players* 24 (July, 1977): 17. In III.ii.285, Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* makes reference to a Chus character which Jessica describes as one of her father's 'countrymen.' Confirmation by Marowitz that the Chus character was created or costumed with any reference to Che Guevara has not been found. The name, along with others in the play, supports the idea that the Old Testament was forefront in Shakespeare's mind when he wrote *Merchant*, as Chus, Tubal, Jessica (as Jesca) and Leah (the name of Shylock's dead wife) are all found in Genesis. See N. Norman Nathan, 'Shylock, Jacob, and God's Judgment,' *Shakespeare Quarterly* 1.4 (1950): 257.

I ban their souls to everlasting pains
And extreme tortures of the fiery deep
Thus thus [sic] have dealt with me in my distress.⁹⁷

Several of Marlowe's lines create a strong resonance within the context of the travails of forming a Jewish national home in Palestine, as Shylock demands: 'Why do we yield to their extortion! / We are a multitude, and they but few / That now encompasseth what is our own.'⁹⁸ Later, he extols the power of death to remove his suffering, voicing the lament of a people striving to reclaim what they believe to be rightfully theirs:

Henceforth, I'll wish but for eternal night,
That clouds of darkness may enclose my flesh,
And hide these extreme sorrows from mine eyes.
For cruelly we have toiled to inherit here
And painful nights have been appointed me,
Great injuries are not soon forgot.⁹⁹

Later, Tubal joins Marowitz's Shylock in the scene in which the terms of a possible loan with Antonio are discussed with the merchant and Bassanio, and the two Jews are so closely aligned that they literally finish each other's sentences. Shylock's position as a Jew amongst Jews, rather than as a solitary infidel amongst Christians, is thereby communicated. Similarly, while Shakespeare's character is deserted by his own daughter, Marowitz's Shylock is supported by Jessica, who participates actively in her father's military strategies. Thus, a markedly different relationship is established from the outset between Shylock and Jessica; unlike Shakespeare's Shylock, this Jewish father has the

⁹⁷ Marowitz, *Variations on the Merchant* 228. This is presumably a typo; the original text is 'That thus.'

⁹⁸ Marowitz, *Variations on the Merchant* 228.

⁹⁹ Marowitz, *Variations on the Merchant* 228.

respect and love of his daughter, even as he counsels her to abandon the precepts of compassion and pity, which are at the heart of their shared faith,¹⁰⁰ in the pursuit of their mutually held goals. As well, the small number of Jews in the original work occupy a position of lesser status in comparison to their Christian counterparts; in *Variations*, they are not only greater in number, but are also imbued with the increased status which comes from serving a higher political purpose, that of Zionism and freedom.

It seems clear that, in terms of challenging the assumptions of the original play regarding both Shylock's character and his status in society, Marowitz has successfully repositioned Shylock as a man of action fighting for what he believes to be a just cause; in contrast to Shakespeare's original, he has given his warrior an opportunity to tell at least a portion of his side of the story: a tale of 'extreme sorrows' and '[g]reat injuries.'¹⁰¹

Based on this analysis, then, Marowitz has effectively satisfied his own stated parameters for successful Shakespearean adaptation by creating a specific and original take on the play; by creating, through the interpolation of *The Jew of Malta*, a necessary elasticity in the original text; and by forcefully challenging the assumptions of Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*.

Marowitz's Stated Objectives: An Evaluation of Adherence

While he chose to address specific concerns in Shakespeare's *Merchant*, such as Shylock's forced conversion and his depiction (in the adaptor's opinion) as a poor father and villain, Marowitz's primary goal through his adaptation was to redress what he described as the lack of an appropriate moral balance in Shakespeare's play. Specifically, and while the validity of his repeated statement that 'so long as Antonio was a "good man",

¹⁰⁰ The tenets of Judaism, as they pertain to Shylock's actions, are discussed in more detail later in the chapter.

¹⁰¹ Marowitz, *Variations on the Merchant* 228.

[sic] Shylock must, perforce, be a villain'¹⁰² has been confronted earlier in this thesis, it nonetheless acts as an indicator of his most basic intention for his adaptation. If, as Marowitz believes, Shakespeare composed a world in which the Jews were villains and traitors, and the Venetians (the British in the adaptation) good men, then *Variations* reverses that dichotomy almost entirely.

Further to this, as previously discussed, Shylock is transformed from victimized usurer to worthy freedom fighter. Similarly, his daughter is moved from faithless betrayer to a child loyal, not only to her father, but also to her faith, supporting the aims of both through action and deception. An example of this occurs when Lorenzo places a crucifix around her neck: she bears it while he is in the room, but, as soon as he leaves, she rips it off 'as if it were red-hot.'¹⁰³ In general, the Jews in *Variations* occupy a place of honour in Marowitz's adaptation due to their loyalty to their shared desire of freedom and equality for the Jewish people.

On the other side of the balance, the key British figures are introduced in a less than positive light. Bassanio and Antonio are costumed as members of the British power structure that is occupying (then) Palestine. When Bassanio's commercial desire to hazard for Portia is introduced, he is portrayed less as a young cavalier in search of love, admittedly with prospects attached, and more the grifter, searching for a score. When, at the end of the scene, the stage directions note that the waiter brings the bill to the table and Bassanio stealthily slides it towards Antonio, this impression is heightened. Similarly, while Shakespeare's Portia is described by Bassanio as 'fair and, fairer than that word, / Of wondrous virtues. [...] nothing undervalu'd / To Cato's daughter, Brutus' Portia,'¹⁰⁴ in

¹⁰² Marowitz, 'Giving Them Hell,' *Plays and Players* 15.

¹⁰³ Marowitz, *Variations on the Merchant* 257. Italics in original.

¹⁰⁴ Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice* I.i.162-166.

Variations, she is portrayed as an indolent socialite, ‘lolling on [a] divan [...] with makeup pads over her eyes.’¹⁰⁵ No longer wise and resourceful, Portia is replaced in the courtroom by a new character, Balthazar.¹⁰⁶ In Marowitz’s *Variations*, it is a man and an actual barrister, not an untrained woman with a trick up her sleeve, who commands the courtroom and attempts to disenfranchise Shylock. One cannot help but see this as the long overdue correction of one of Shakespeare’s dramatically expedient but logically doubtful plot devices. As Israel Zangwill wryly suggests, Shakespeare’s *Merchant*

is calculated to give [...] as erroneous notions of Law as of the Children of Israel. [Portia,] a young lady, obviously breaking the sartorial law of sex, and armed with an untruthful introduction from an absentee judge, is allowed to officiate at once as plaintiff, pleader, preacher, arbitrator, assessor, sentencer, and Christian conversionist.¹⁰⁷

Continuing in his conversion of the Christians from ‘good’ to ‘evil,’ in a scene with text from V.i of Shakespeare’s *Merchant*, Lorenzo and Jessica are discovered to the sound of sweet music, but this romantic setting is interrupted when he attempts to importune her physically. After her exit, he turns to Gratiano with ‘a broad, lewd smile,’ to which Gratiano rejoins, ‘O what a goodly outside falsehood hath.’¹⁰⁸ The text we have just heard, ‘Such harmony is in immortal souls, / But whilst this muddy vesture of decay / Doth

¹⁰⁵ Marowitz, *Variations of the Merchant* 233. Italics in original.

¹⁰⁶ Marowitz’s barrister retains the name Portia gives herself for her court room role in Shakespeare’s *Merchant*, and the name vibrates with resonance. According to Christian mythology, Balthazar was one of the Three Wise Men who attended the birth of Christ in Jerusalem approximately 1600 years before Shakespeare wrote his play. In addition, the Balthazar Behem Codex was an important law book created in 1505 in Krakow, Poland, which complements the legal aspects of the role. Lewalski takes the exploration one step further, noting that Baltassar is ‘the name given to the prophet Daniel in the Book of Daniel,’ and that ‘Daniel [...] means in Hebrew, “The Judge of the Lord” ’ Balthazar is described by Shylock as ‘a Daniel’ in both the Shakespeare and Marowitz versions of the play. Barbara K. Lewalski, ‘Biblical Allusion and Allegory in *The Merchant of Venice*,’ *Shakespeare Quarterly*. 13. 3 (1962): 340.

¹⁰⁷ Israel Zangwill, ‘Shylock and Other Stage Jews,’ *The Voice of Jerusalem* (MacMillan, 1921) 238.

¹⁰⁸ Marowitz, *Variations on the Merchant* 237. Italics in original.

grossly close it in, we cannot hear it,¹⁰⁹ takes on new meaning. What originally spoke of a purity to come once physical dross is released now warns of the inevitability of human evil, in this case, Lorenzo's mercenary and duplicitous actions. Since we as audience are already apprised of Jessica's deception, we begin the scene with some pity for the hapless Lorenzo, only to find that his insincerity is as great as hers. Whether in the company of Marowitz's 'good' Jewish Irgun members or his 'bad' British Christians, the audience is presented by guile, hatred, machination and the threat of violence. There are clearly no white knights to be found in the Marowitz *Variations*, where 'good' and 'bad' are both clad in a dingy grey, but audience sympathies must be attracted most to Shylock and his Jewish colleagues who at least deceive in what they perceive to be the just cause of their own homeland – more evidence of success in the attainment of Marowitz's primary objective. While it is a matter of some irony that Marowitz chooses to accomplish Shylock's metamorphosis from evil to 'good' by putting the words of the truly villainous Barabas in his mouth, by the end of *Variations*, Shylock is victor rather than victim, and his enemies have suffered violent and ignominious deaths.

Marowitz found the trial scene in Shakespeare's *Merchant* 'contemptible' due to his perception of Shylock's humiliation and involuntary conversion: on the surface at least, he has been successful in eliminating these factors in his adaptation. The Christians are unable to force Shylock to convert to their faith at the end of *Variations* because they are assassinated by Shylock's Irgun colleagues. Ironically, however, by utilizing such violent means to arrive at a new conclusion, Marowitz has stripped his character of the most voraciously held tenets of his faith, and thus has achieved only a different form of conversion. 'Jewish identity is not free,' states Jewish ethicist S. Daniel Breslauer. 'An

¹⁰⁹ Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice* V.i.63-65.

individual earns the right to be called a Jew.’¹¹⁰ How, then, does one earn the right of membership in this ancient faith? ‘Membership in Jewish religion depends upon a willing acceptance of the jurisdiction of *Torah*,’ Breslauer clarifies: ‘[...] obedience to God’s ideal standard.’¹¹¹ The three ways in which a Jew earns inclusion in God’s chosen tribe are *Zedakah*, *Gemilut Hasadim* and *Tikkun Olam*. Literally translated as ‘righteousness,’ *Zedakah* refers to assistance to those who require it, whether that be monetary or physical, and whether to a fellow Jew or to a member of the larger world: it is ‘an act of justice, to which the recipient is entitled by right and by virtue of being human.’¹¹² *Gemilut Hasadim* is ‘mercy and love in action [...] that one will be merciful to all creatures, as the Creator, may He be blessed, is merciful and full of compassion.’¹¹³ *Tikkun Olam* refers to a Jew’s obligation to heal the shattered world. In general, ‘Jewish social obligation is involved with all human society. Jews fulfill their destiny when they live distinctively among the nations of the world and improve the total life of all humanity.’¹¹⁴ It is obvious from even a cursory observation that Marowitz’s Shylock reveals a lack of adherence to these principles. He is not merciful to the Christians, whom he has assassinated at the end of the play. He specifically counsels his daughter *against* pity and compassion. And, far from the inclusive healing of the world for *all* people obligated through *Tikkun Olam*, he divides the world cleanly into the Jewish nation and its enemies.

The violence his colleagues exact upon the Christians is particularly difficult to integrate into Jewish principles. According to Jewish ethicist Richard G. Hirsch, in the Jewish faith, ‘Human life is sacred, so sacred that each person is considered as important as

¹¹⁰ S. Daniel Breslauer, *A New Jewish Ethics* (New York: Edwin Mellen, 1983) 64.

¹¹¹ Breslauer 13.

¹¹² Richard G. Hirsch, *The Way of the Upright: A Jewish View of Economic Justice* (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1973) 98.

¹¹³ Byron L. Sherwin, *Jewish Ethics for the Twenty-First Century – Living in the Image of God* (Syracuse: Syracuse UP, 2000) 135.

¹¹⁴ Breslauer 49.

the entire universe.’¹¹⁵ Quoting from the Talmud, Hirsch re-iterates, ‘if one destroys a single person, it is as if he had destroyed the entire world.’¹¹⁶ War does not diminish the responsibility of a Jew to maintain the sanctity of human life, states Breslauer: ‘The humanity, even of the enemy, must be respected.’¹¹⁷ Arnold Wesker, the British playwright who adapted Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice* into a new play, *Shylock*, (also known as *The Merchant*), corroborates this in an open letter written to Trevor Nunn:

And what about this question of the Jew and revenge?
Shakespeare has him saying – very persuasively and appealingly: If a Christian wrong a Jew, what should his sufferance be by Christian example? – why revenge! [...]
But Jews are the least revengeful people in the world. The sanctity of human life – because it was created in God’s image - is at the centre of Jewish teaching. Six million gassed, and do we hear of bombs planted by Jews in Germany? Do we hear of innocent Germans gunned down in their restaurants? [...] Shakespeare got it utterly wrong. His Shylock expresses the most un-Jewish thought of all; the Jew is commanded not to behave in the inhuman way others

¹¹⁵ Hirsch 15.

¹¹⁶ *Tesefta Kiddushin* I,11, quoted in Hirsch 15.

¹¹⁷ Breslauer 79. An interesting note regarding the *Irgun*’s use of extreme violence in the Marowitz adaptation is that it considerably exceeds their real actions: although the British ignored it, phone records later provided proof that the *Irgun* had delivered a warning to the residents of the King David Hotel by telephone, alerting them to the presence of the bomb and the imminent explosion; minutes later, they also telephoned warnings to the French Consulate, and to the Palestine Post. Clearly, it was the intention of the *Irgun* to keep bloodshed to a minimum as they registered their political protest through the bombing.

behave. He doesn't always listen of course but it remains the driving force behind most Jewish thought and action.¹¹⁸

It can certainly be argued, using these parameters as a yard stick, that neither Shakespeare's Shylock nor Marlowe's Barabas were righteous Jews; this is understandable, since both Shakespeare and Marlowe lived and wrote within a Christian society in which, officially, Jews were not allowed to practice their faith, nor was there significant opportunity for writers to become acquainted with the true aspects of the faith in contrast to the prejudiced stereotypes of the time. Marowitz, however, *is* a Jew, raised by Jewish parents, and therefore ostensibly possessing the cultural knowledge required to create a Jewish hero who lives up to the tenets of their shared faith. In failing to do so, he has also failed to overcome one of his primary objections to Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*: the forced conversion of Shylock.

Marowitz also asserts that the Shakespeare's *Merchant* portrays Shylock as a 'disreputable father,'¹¹⁹ but any improvement in this regard found in *Variations* is due to Jessica's loyalty, rather than to Shylock's behaviour. In fact, it is not so much that Marowitz's Shylock is a better father than Shakespeare's character, as it is that his Jessica is a better daughter: Marowitz's Jessica is dutiful, obedient, loyal and loving; Shakespeare's is deserting, betraying and ashamed.¹²⁰ Marowitz's Shylock does not once express love or affection for Jessica, seeming to prefer the role of commander over father. He risks her safety by including her in a dangerous treason against the controlling political forces; he risks her integrity by directing her to

¹¹⁸ Arnold Wesker, 'Theatre Cheats: An Open Letter to Trevor Nunn, in Two Acts,' *Arnold Wesker, Playwright*, 15 Sept. 2009 <<http://www.arnoldwesker.com/openletters/nunn.htm>>.

¹¹⁹ Marowitz, introduction, *The Marowitz Shakespeare* 22.

¹²⁰ In this way, she mirrors Barabas' daughter Abigail, particularly in the lines Marowitz adapted from Abigail for Jessica's use: 'Not for myself, but gentle Shylock, / Father, for thee lamenteth Jessica.' See Marowitz, *Variations on the Merchant* 230.

Entertain Lorenzo as you will
With all the courtesy you can afford,
Provided that you keep your maidenhead.
Use him as if he were a Philistine.
Dissemble, swear, protest, vow to love him.
In's company canst thou intercept
Those fateful tidings which the governor's tongue
Jealously would guard from others ears.¹²¹

To gain military objectives, he counsels her against compassion and toward deception, advising her to:

First be thou void of these affections:
Compassion, love, vain hope and heartless fear.
Be mov'd at nothing, see thou pity none,
But to thyself smile when the Christians moan.¹²²

There is, however, one area in which Marowitz's adaptation lessens the accusation of heartless patriarchy so often hurled at Shakespeare's Shylock: in *Variations*, the text most likely to brand Shylock an unloving father, in which he wishes her dead if the stolen ducats were beside her – is uttered with full knowledge that Jessica is still loyal to her faith and military objective; the statements are uttered in order to mislead the Christians.

¹²¹ Marowitz, *Variations on the Merchant* 229.

¹²² Marowitz, *Variations on the Merchant* 230. Shylock's advice to Jessica absolutely contradicts Jewish teaching. Compassion as a Jewish tenet has already been discussed. Regarding deception, 'Let us examine the words of the prophet Zechariah,' advises Jewish ethicist Meir: "These are the things which you shall do: Speak truth each man to his fellow; judge with truth, justice, and peace in your gates. Don't plot against your fellow in your heart, and do not love false oaths, for all these I hate, says God.'" Asher Meir, *The Jewish Ethicist: Everyday Ethics for Business and Life* (Jerusalem: Business Ethics Centre of Jerusalem, 2005) 11. Passage quoted is from Zecharia 8:16-17.

Staying Close to the Narrative: Dilemmas, Diminutions & Deceptions

In his introduction to *The Marowitz Shakespeare*, Marowitz's describes the necessity for his adaptations of both *Measure for Measure* and *The Merchant of Venice* to adhere strongly to Shakespeare's original narrative, diverging strategically where he felt the moral imbalance would be most overturned. In pursuing this tactic, he has strayed from the actual text of Shakespeare's *Merchant*, or Marlowe's *Jew of Malta* with which it is interpolated, only a handful of times. However, this decision creates a number of problems in logic within the adaptation, as well as instances when Shakespeare's multiple meanings are diminished in scope; deception creates the new fulcrum on which the reversed moral balance is poised. In terms of dilemma, Marowitz's inclusion of Shylock's bond for a pound of Antonio's flesh raises the question as to why the usurer strives to trap Antonio in a lethal legal bond if he is planning to kill him along with the other British just before the bombing of the King David Hotel. It makes little sense when viewed in retrospect, although this conundrum may not have been obvious to the audience of the opening production. In any case, it could be argued that, despite the military action being planned which will result in Antonio's death, Shylock chooses to simply amuse himself by toying with the British officer in this way: that the fantasy of cutting off 'an equal pound/ Of [Antonio's] fair flesh'¹²³ from whatever part of the anatomy he chooses, is entertaining to him. Similarly, Bassanio being able to pass himself off as the princes of Morocco and Arragon, as well as himself, stretches believability to an uncomfortable level. Certainly, an audience in 1977, even before the microchip and the internet were integrated into such security efforts, might well have asked themselves on any of Bassanio's entrances as the other two suitors why Portia's father, as early as 1946, did not institute some method of

¹²³ Marowitz, *Variations on the Merchant* 241.

verifying the identities of those who hazarded for his daughter's hand. Again, this logical inconsistency is not dealt with in Marowitz's *Variations*, perhaps because it would require text not available in either Shakespeare's *Merchant* or Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta*.

At least one significant example exists when Marowitz includes Shakespeare's text within his adaptation, but in a manner which either diminishes its meaning or raises questions as to its necessity within the new work. As a case in point, in the hazard for Portia's hand in marriage, both Morocco and Aragon being played by Bassanio in disguise reinforces the thrust of Marowitz's objective to vary the moral balance of the play: Christians deceive as readily as Jews in this adaptation, but they deceive for wealth, not for freedom and dignity as Shylock's forces do. Certain pieces of text, such as Morocco's 'Mislike me not for my complexion,'¹²⁴ have a different resonance when we know the man uttering them is white, but a greater resonance exists for those quick enough to hear the characters speaking of issues of sight: in both the original and the adaptation, words regarding how and what can be seen with the eye dominate the first scene between the African prince and the heiress. For example, Morocco's 'complexion' is 'shadowed' like the 'burnish'd' sun; the northerners are 'fair,' but his blood is as 'red.' His 'aspect' has scared brave men, but the 'best-regarded' women of his country have been attracted to his 'hue.' Even Portia explains that she is not guided solely by a maiden's 'eye,' leading Morocco to declare that he would 'outstare the sternest eyes that look' while acknowledging that fortune is 'blind.'¹²⁵ In Shakespeare's *Merchant*, these 'visual' cues give the members of the audience early insight into Morocco's character, as will be further explored shortly, but in Marowitz's *Variations*, they may invite them into the irony that all is not as it should appear.

¹²⁴ Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice* II.i.1.

¹²⁵ All of the quoted text in this paragraph is taken from Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice* II.i.

When Bassanio as Morocco chooses the golden casket, the scene in Marowitz's *Variations* is virtually unchanged from that in Shakespeare's *Merchant* with the exception of the casting of the pivotal character. This begs the question as to what purpose the significant verbiage uttered by Morocco serves in the original play as well as in the adaptation. In both, it introduces the practicalities of the lottery for Portia's hand, in terms of the caskets and their inscriptions. But further to this, in Shakespeare's *Merchant*, the text of all three suitors is an outward manifestation of their decision-making process, and thus illuminates their character. For example, Shakespeare's Morocco, in the earlier of his two scenes with Portia, reveals himself as someone concerned with how things are seen, and this tendency continues in his choice of casket, since 'A golden mind stoops not to shows of dross.'¹²⁶ When considering the silver casket's invocation that he should, in choosing it, be delivered all which he deserves, Morocco's mind immediately defends his worth based on his noble lineage and his wealth – things which are valued largely because of how they are regarded and esteemed by others. This external locus of control is echoed in his appraisal of the gold casket, and its direction that he might be given what all men desire:

Why, that's the lady, all the world desires her.

From the four corners of the earth they come

To kiss this shrine, this mortal-breathing saint.

The Hyrcanian deserts and the vasty wilds

Of wide Arabia are as throughfares now

For princes to come view fair Portia.

The watery kingdom, whose ambitious head

¹²⁶ Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice* II.vii.20.

Spets in the face of heaven, is no bar
To stop the foreign spirits, but they come
As o'er a brook to see fair Portia.¹²⁷

Morocco appears to desire Portia, not because of her inherent worth, but because he sees others desiring her: they come to view her, to see her. When he chooses the wrong casket, he is rightly told that things cannot always be judged from what is seen, and thus is taught an important moral lesson. In *Variations*, however, Bassanio is presumably acting the part of an African prince to the best of his ability, and therefore his beliefs regarding the various metals and his own worth cannot be assumed to be his own. There is no verifiable truth in what he says, and therefore, no lesson. The scene becomes about 'show,' the very notion on which Shakespeare's Morocco was commenting.

When Bassanio hazards the lottery disguised as the Prince of Arragon,¹²⁸ and having learned on a practical rather than an intellectual level that success does not come with the gold casket, in the guise of the young man of Spain, he chooses the silver box; upon opening the casket, he encounters 'a picture of Alfred E. Newman of Mad magazine [sic].'¹²⁹ It's possible that Shakespeare created the Prince of Arragon as an allusion to Antonio Pérez, the Spanish former secretary to Phillip II, living in exile in Elizabethan London, and if so, the character's text during his choice of casket shows an arrogance which might well have raised laughter from an Elizabethan audience: when he encounters

¹²⁷ Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice* II.vii.38-47.

¹²⁸ In Shakespeare's *Merchant*, Arragon's text while perusing the three caskets reveals him as a man who thinks very highly of himself, and this may well have been a source of comedy for an Elizabethan audience. Antonio Pérez, the former secretary to Mary I's husband, Phillip II of Spain, had been banished from Spain as a traitor, and between 1593 and 1595, had been living in exile in England, during which time Elizabeth I presumably hoped to use him for her own political ends. Although born in Madrid, Pérez's loyalties lay with Arragon, where his ancestors had held power. Pérez was known to be an arrogant man, so much so that Ungerer comments on a letter written to Elizabeth by Pérez in which he employs, in Ungerer's opinion, '[a] metaphor of Mannerist quality created by the writer's distorted vision of his place in the universal order. It was inspired either by his megalomania or his servilism, the two extremes of his telescopic view [...] Pérez' lack of a sense of proportion and his blindness to reality led to ridicule and ruin in his exile.' Gustav Ungerer, *A Spaniard in Elizabeth's England: The Correspondence of Antonio Pérez's Exile Vol I* (London: Tamesis, 1974) 76.

¹²⁹ Marowitz, *Variations on the Merchant* 258.

the lead casket, he reads, ““Who chooseth me must give and hazard all he hath,”” and responds, either to the casket, or perhaps obliquely to Portia herself, ‘You shall look fairer ere I give or hazard.’¹³⁰ Turning his gaze, he asks:

What says the golden chest? Ha, let me see:

“Who chooseth me shall gain what many men desire.”

What many men desire! That ‘many’ may be meant

By the fool multitude that choose by show,

Not learning more than the fond eye doth teach,

Which pries not to th’ interior, but like the martlet

Builds in the weather on the outward wall,

Even in the force and road of casualty.

I will not choose what many men desire,

Because I will not jump with common spirits,

And rank me with the barbarous multitudes.¹³¹

Without knowing it, Portia’s second suitor is commenting on the failure of the first: the Prince of Morocco’s choice was based on external factors such as beauty, wealth and the esteem of others; Arragon directly eschews this rationale, stating his contempt for the ‘fool’ and ‘barbarous multitudes,’ as well as the teachings of the ‘fond eye’ which doesn’t see ‘interior’ worth. He is above the company of ‘common spirits,’ and thus turns his gaze once again:

Why then to thee, thou silver treasure-house,

Tell me once more what title thou dost bear:

“Who chooseth me shall get as much as he deserves.”

¹³⁰ Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice* II.ix.21-22.

¹³¹ Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice* II.ix.23-33.

And well said too; for who shall go about
To cozen fortune and be honorable
Without the stamp of merit? Let none presume
To wear an undeserved dignity.
O that estates, degrees, and offices
Were not deriv'd corruptly, and that clear honor
Were purchas'd by the merit of the wearer!¹³²

If the Prince of Arragon is an allusion to Antonio Pérez, then the irony of a traitor asserting that no-one should 'presume / to wear an undeserved dignity,' nor to possess offices which were 'derived corruptly,' is high comedy indeed. When the silver casket opens to reveal a fool's head, Pérez in the guise of Arragon is being taught a lesson in humility which the English must certainly have enjoyed. In Shakespeare's *Merchant*, then, this second casket scene is rich with allusion which may well have been a source of humour to the Elizabethan playgoers, but will not be obvious to a modern audience.

In Marowitz's *Variations*, the casting of Bassanio as all three suitors creates some comedy for those in the audience with ears quick enough to catch the entendre. Since the text of the second suitor effectively comments on the choice of the first, it is as if Bassanio, reappearing in a fresh guise after his inauspicious choice of the gold casket, is commenting with a comic irony on his ability to rectify his mistake. However, as in the other casket scenes, the post-choosing Shakespearean text seems gratuitous: any learning to be derived from the casket scrolls is rendered moot, since Bassanio is merely tricking the system. This, indeed, may have been Marowitz's intention to express, but it renders the scene lifeless and dull.

¹³² Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice* II.ix.34-43.

Marowitz's decision to create Shylock as a warrior who uses deception as a legitimate tool against his enemy necessitates certain cuts within the adaptation. For instance, Shakespeare's 'fawning publican' text, in which Shylock's announces his hatred of Antonio 'because he is a Christian,'¹³³ has been excised from this adaptation: in the original work, it is one of Shylock's few opportunities to speak directly to the audience in the Elizabethan tradition of soliloquy in which a character may open their heart before an assembly of confidantes. Since the Marowitz Shylock's strategy is, first and foremost, to deceive, it would have detracted from this dramatic aim to reveal his feelings so clearly, and the removal of the text in which Shylock expresses hatred, lack of mercy and potential injury towards Antonio removes with it the pettiness of an individual wrong, allowing the more socially minded political motives of the freedom fighter to take precedence, and in this way, to retain audience sympathy. Shylock reminds him of the ill treatment he has received at Antonio's hands in text from I.iii.106-129: 'Signior Antonio, many a time and oft / In the Rialto you have rated me / About my moneys and my usances.'¹³⁴ The audience's knowledge of Shylock's deception is heightened when he describes how he has borne this bad treatment 'with a patient shrug, / For suff'rance is the badge of all our tribe,'¹³⁵ since they *know* that he is actually proceeding, not with patience, but with active militancy.

Although these issues may have reduced the complexity of Shakespeare's writing, while creating logical inconsistencies, it is difficult to know whether they would have been discerned by audience members during a performance.

¹³³ Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice* I.iii.41-42.

¹³⁴ Marowitz, *Variations on the Merchant* 240.

¹³⁵ Marowitz, *Variations on the Merchant* 240.

COMPARATORS TO *VARIATIONS ON THE MERCHANT OF VENICE*

The following three adaptations of Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* illustrate ways in which they may have more effectively responded to the aspects Marowitz found repugnant in the original play. For example, Marowitz chose to transform the role of Shylock from powerless victim to formidable victor; therefore, a perusal of three comparators which left Shylock within his traditional role *vis-à-vis* power will suggest alternative approaches which possibly allow an audience to discern a new understanding of the character's nature, as well as that of his oppressors. Tibor Egervari's *Shakespeare's The Merchant of Venice at Auschwitz* utilizes a different kind of transposition – that of oppressor into the role of oppressed – to reveal the true nature of both. Arnold Wesker's *The Merchant* (also known as *Shylock*) inverts the hatred of Shylock and Antonio into a deep friendship, allowing the audience to view both men, as well as the society they inhabit, in a new light. Jack Winter's *The Golem of Venice* employs dark humour and the 'golem,' the non-human warrior described in Jewish folklore, to shine a bright light onto the prejudicial treatment of Jews and the poor by the ruling power structure of Venice.

Tibor Egervari's *Shakespeare's The Merchant of Venice at Auschwitz*

Tibor Egervari's¹³⁶ *Shakespeare's The Merchant of Venice in Auschwitz* was performed at The University of Ottawa in September, 1993. In this relatively unknown adaptation, an SS officer conscripts a group of inmates comprised of Jews, Gypsies and a German 'common-law' Kapo, augmented by a German Christian actress, to rehearse for a production of Shakespeare's *Merchant* in the dreaded death camp at Auschwitz. According to the officer, the production would 'unveil the true face of this enemy race which the

¹³⁶ A Hungarian Jew, Egervari escaped the Nazis at the age of six, but lost his father and brother to the death camps.

Führer has defined as a moral plague worse than the black plague of early times.¹³⁷ The SS officer casts himself as Shylock and the Christian actress as Jessica, because, as he tells her, ‘Do you honestly believe those Yids would project the image I wish to show of them? We’re the only ones who can unveil their true identity.’¹³⁸ As the leading actor, the virulently anti-Semitic SS officer constructs his evil Shylock in the manner depicted in German anti-Jewish propaganda; as the production’s ‘director,’ he maintains a reign of terror and malevolence over the entire cast, including the German actress who is a self-described Aryan, German and Christian and not incarcerated in the death camp. Since the face he shows when interacting with the cast as the German officer is no less violent and hateful than the mask he creates for his Shylock, the officer does not show the ‘true face’ of the Jewish people through his portrayal of Shylock so much as he reveals his own nature. Meanwhile, the Jewish and Gypsy inmates playing the Venetians suffer the Nazi’s tyrannical ‘direction’ with quiet albeit terrified humility, again shining a light on their own disposition as much as the characters they portray. The SS officer begins the play as a blue-eyed Aryan, but descends into a kind of madness as he enters into the evil character he chooses to create, and by the trial scene, is visually transformed through costume into the stereotype of a Hasidic Jew. At the end of the play within the play, the Jewish characters portraying the Venetians become so overwhelmed by the appalling spectacle created by the SS officer that they pick up Shylock’s prop knife, and kill him, thus murdering both the anti-Semitic Nazi and the loathsome image of the stereotypic Jew the officer created.

¹³⁷ Tibor Egervari, *Shakespeare’s The Merchant of Venice in Auschwitz*, 11 Dec. 2009 <http://www.canadianshakespeares.ca/a_auschwitz.cfm>, 31

¹³⁸ Egervari, *Shakespeare’s The Merchant of Venice in Auschwitz* 31.

Described by Egervari as not so much a play as ‘a *mise en scène* written down,’¹³⁹ *Shakespeare’s Merchant of Venice in Auschwitz* brilliantly presents double realities in which characters play actors who take on roles, and in doing so, reveal their true selves. The stereotype of a villainous Shylock who represents the nature of Jewry is replaced by the image of the hateful Nazi, whose essential character is revealed by his very hatred of the Jewish people he wishes to vilify through his theatrical venture. Not only is the cultural authority of Shakespeare’s *Merchant* as a signifier of Jewish villainy illuminated, but the audience is allowed to come to this fresh point of view freely, of their own accord.

Arnold Wesker’s *The Merchant (Shylock)*

Another adaptation worthy of consideration in counterpoint to *Variations* is Arnold Wesker’s *The Merchant*, (alternatively titled *Shylock*), first performed in 1976 in Sweden, and later on Broadway in November, 1977.¹⁴⁰ *The Merchant* and *Variations* tie themselves to the original work in differing degrees. Although he drastically altered the historical context of the action, Marowitz chose to conform closely to Shakespeare’s narrative and was therefore limited in his narrative by those intentions/events which he could either justify through text obtained from Shakespeare’s *Merchant* or Marlowe’s *Jew of Malta*, or portray through dumb show. Wesker, on the other hand, left the narrative in its original historical setting; like Marowitz, altered relationships and intentions significantly; but since he wrote entirely new text for his adaptation, he had fewer limitations in his portrayal of changed intentions and relationships. Wesker also left Shylock within his powerless

¹³⁹ Tibor Egervari, ‘An Interview with Tibor Egervari,’ *Canadian Adaptations of Shakespeare Project*, 11 Dec. 2009 <http://www.canadianshakespeares.ca/i_tegervari.cfm>.

¹⁴⁰ This production was to star Zero Mostel as Shylock, but he died after the first ‘out of town’ performance in Philadelphia. Wilcher reports that ‘a triumphant opening night in New York, punctuated “by applause after applause” (179)’ was followed by a poor review in the *New York Times*, resulting in closure of the production after only four performances. Robert Wilcher, *Understanding Arnold Wesker* (Columbia: U of South Carolina P, 1991) 124 fn 40.

position as a despised 'other' in terms of the state of Venice while simultaneously occupying the position of beloved and captivating friend to the merchant Antonio. Through the inclusion of key fragments of Shakespearean text within the narrative, Wesker allowed the audience itself to question the cultural authority of Shakespeare's play regarding Jewish character. The audience meets the passionate, intelligent and energetic Shylock Kolner, in all his charm and vivacity, cataloguing antique texts with his beloved friend, the merchant Antonio Querini. The 'pound of flesh' bond arises out of the desire to mock the Venetian laws that maintain a strict hierarchy between the Jewish moneylender and the Christian merchant – a hierarchy that makes a mockery of their loving friendship. Many of the characters remain essentially unchanged, with their germane characteristics merely brought into a fuller and less fragrant bloom. For example, Bassanio is revealed more seminally as a gold-digger, as well as an anti-Semite; the loud mouthed Gratiano, he of many words but little wisdom, becomes Graziano who is scorned by both Jews and Christians for aping the opinions of others in an often contradictory manner. Shylock's daughter Jessica still runs away from her father's household, not because she despises him for being a Jew, but out of a laudable desire for independence and self-determination. Unlike Marowitz's version, goodness isn't determined by religious background: the Jews are mostly good, but Shylock, in all his vivacity, is autocratic, while Jessica is impatient; the Christians are not all bad, as evidenced by Antonio and Portia's support of Shylock, and the Doge's immediate clemency when Shylock is sentenced to death. Although Marowitz chose to vilify Antonio with the belief that this would position Shylock in a more positive light, Wesker's master stroke lay in complete opposition to this statement, as the deep friendship between his Shylock and Antonio provides immediate and poignant counterpoint to the general prejudice against Jews in Venice. However, Wesker's *coup de grace* against the cultural authority of Shakespeare's *Merchant* comes in the trial scene when Lorenzo

attempts to explain that, while Shylock's bond is inhuman, Shylock himself is not. When the arrogant socialist poet begins to offer proof of Shylock's humanity with an only slight paraphrased version of Shakespeare's 'Hath not a Jew eyes?' Shylock interrupts in what is described as controlled outrage:

No, no, NO! I will not have it. I do not want apologies for my humanity. Plead for me no special pleas. I will not have my humanity mocked and apologized for. If I am unexceptionally like any man then I need no exceptional portraiture. I merit no special pleas, no special cautions, no special gratitudes. My humanity is my right, not your bestowed and gracious privilege.¹⁴¹

If the depth of Shakespeare's Shylock was illuminated through the 'Hath not a Jew eyes?' passage, then, for Marowitz's Shylock, it reveals only a twisted motive for hatred, as he exits Jewish morality for Christian-inspired revenge to the sound of his Irgun colleagues machine gunning all of the non-Jews present in the courtroom. Is this the 'moral impact' Marowitz sought to create? Wesker, by remaining true to his Jewish ethics which honour life above all, elevates Shylock's humanity to a level at which, as he rightly describes, it needs no apologies or pleas. These different approaches illustrate that one can be empowered through military might, or one can be empowered through a quiet acknowledgement of one's essential right to life and the forcefulness of one's central beliefs, even when confronted with the barrel of a gun. Marowitz chose the former approach; Wesker, the latter. If the cultural authority of Shakespeare's *Merchant* suggests that Jews are evil beings, filled with hatred against Christians, it seems obvious which of

¹⁴¹ Arnold Wesker, 'The Merchant,' *The Journalists; The Wedding Feast; The Merchant* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1980) 259. In later versions, *The Merchant* was re-titled *Shylock*.

these approaches is more likely to alter or reduce that authority. Wesker's triumph was born of his steadfast alliance to the faith and culture which Marowitz denies; by embracing the powerlessness of Shylock as a representative Jew in an anti-Semitic world, he delivers a solution which exemplifies the best qualities of Judaism – an ability to bear injustice and humiliation without losing his essential humanity.

Jack Winter's *The Golem of Venice*

Another fascinating adaptation of Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* is Jack Winter's¹⁴² *The Golem of Venice*, commissioned by Toronto Workshop Productions (TWP) in Toronto, Canada and produced in 1966 and 1967 in Stratford and Toronto respectively. The script was re-written and reprised at TWP in 1976,¹⁴³ it is the script of this later production, copyrighted by Playwrights Union Canada in 1985, which has been used as the basis for this discussion. The play was therefore created during the same time period as Marowitz's *Variations*, and while it was produced on a different continent, the world events of the period were common to both creators. While Mr. Winter is officially listed as the author of the text, it should be noted that Toronto Workshop Productions and its Artistic Director George Luscombe¹⁴⁴ created works collaboratively, and that Luscombe's influence on the production was undoubtedly significant.

¹⁴² Born in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan and raised in Montreal, playwright Jack Winter attended McGill University and the University of Toronto before striking out on a career as a playwright, dramaturge and university professor. Winter was Playwright-in-Residence at Toronto Workshop Productions in the 1960s and 1970s where he collaborated with Artistic Director George Luscombe and the rest of the company on 'collective creations and politicized docudramas,' the most acclaimed of which was *Ten Lost Years*, a musical created in partnership with Canadian musician Cedric Smith, based on Barry Broadfoot's depiction of the Great Depression. Winter emigrated to Britain in 1978. See 'Winter, Jack,' *Canadian Theatre Encyclopedia*, 11 Jan. 2010 <<http://www.canadiantheatre.com/dict.pl?term=Winter%2C%20Jack>>.

¹⁴³ See 'The William Ready Division of Archives & Research Collections,' *McMaster University*, 11 Jan. 2010 <<http://library.mcmaster.ca/archives/findaids/findaids/w/winter.1-4.htm>>.

¹⁴⁴ A devoted Socialist, George Luscombe's first theatrical efforts were agit-prop musical endeavours devised for the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF), which later became the New Democratic Party of Canada, in order to entertain striking workers on the picket lines. To further his theatre studies, Luscombe traveled to London, England where he became a member of Joan Littlewood's Theatre Workshop, and where he became well versed in the techniques of Stanislavsky, Laban, as well as those of Littlewood herself. Returning to Canada, he founded a company in Toronto in

*The Golem of Venice*¹⁴⁵ serves as an excellent comparator to Marowitz's *Variations on the Merchant of Venice* in that the two adaptations were created within a year of one another, and both were the creations of left-wing companies whose artistic directors held dissident views. In addition, while Marowitz's script utilizes only scraps of new dialogue, depending upon a re-purposing of text from both Shakespeare's *Merchant* and Marlowe's *Jew of Malta* to achieve its intended outcome, Winter's *Golem* employs an entirely new play text with only a few allusions to the original from which it springs: a comparison may reveal something of the efficacy of both approaches.

In Winter's adaptation of Shakespeare's play, Shylock is a loan-banker (what might today be termed a pawnbroker), who has, through no malicious intent, and as a result of the machinations of the Venetian legal system, been brought to court in a suit against Widow Antonio, a poor tailor. Widow Antonio, in her poverty and despair, had previously pawned her 'weasel' (a tailoring knife) with the loan banker so that she could purchase alcoholic solace at the local tavern. The standard clause in the loan agreements provided to Shylock as part of his licensing agreement with the state of Venice includes a pound of flesh upon forfeiture. A stoic with full understanding of his precarious position in Venetian society, Shylock is nonetheless a victim with an entrepreneurial spirit. When all seems hopeless, he escapes the strictures of the imposed legal suit by marrying his co-respondent, the Widow Antonio, and rather than escaping the imminent danger of a counter-action against him, sets the Widow up in business, thus becoming her partner in trade as well as life.

1958 based on Littlewood's theories of collaborative creation; the company was renamed Toronto Workshop Productions when it began full time operations in 1963. 'Like his mentor, Luscombe preferred to write his plays in rehearsal with group theatre techniques, using mime, actor-generated sound effects and presentational performance to renew classical texts.' 'George Luscombe,' *Canadian Encyclopedia*, 11 Jan. 2010 <<http://www.canadianencyclopedia.ca/index.cfm?PgNm=TCE&Params=A1ARTA0004812>>.

¹⁴⁵ Jack Winter, *The Golem of Venice* (Toronto: Playwrights Canada, 1985). All future quotations from this source will be shown as 'Winter, *The Golem of Venice*' followed by the page number.

Meanwhile, Shylock's two houseguests, the Rabbi Gerontus¹⁴⁶ and the Rabbi Joseph of Castile,¹⁴⁷ dabble in the Kaballah to create a 'golem,'¹⁴⁸ a creature made of clay with a gold coin at its heart; according to legend, a 'homunculus'¹⁴⁹ so created comes to life in order to smite the enemies of the Jews when the ineffable name of God is written on a slip of paper and inserted into its forehead. Gerontus then sends the golem out into the city of Venice to circumcise all Christian males, thus rendering them part of the Covenant of Abraham, and through this somewhat whimsical strategy, members of the Jewish faith. When Portia, the Prioress of the Sacred Order of the Brides of Christ, and Widow Antonio's defence attorney, assembles the Ecclesiastical Court and accuses Shylock's daughter Jessica of being the rumoured golem, Rabbi Gerontus instructs the golem to stab Jessica, thereby proving that the dying Jewess, since she is capable of bleeding, cannot be a homunculus. The golem immediately melts before the company's eyes: created to benefit the Jews, it has killed a Jew, and must therefore cease to exist. Since golems, once they have attained full power, are notoriously difficult to 'turn off,' Gerontus' directive has a dual purpose: it puts an end to the golem while simultaneously creating a martyr for the Jewish people in Shylock's dead daughter. However, the golem does not perish before achieving its objective: not a single uncircumcised male is left in all of Venice, and the

¹⁴⁶ The name of the character is likely an allusion to the 'worthy Jew' in Robert Wilson's play, *Three Ladies of London*, popular during the Elizabethan period. In the play, Gerontus 'forgives a debt rather than let Mercadorus, a contemptible Christian, effect its legal cancellation' by renouncing his faith. Alfred Harbage, 'Innocent Barabas,' *Tulane Drama Review* 8.4 (1964): 46.

¹⁴⁷ Joseph ben Abraham Gikatilla of Castile was a Spanish kabbalist who was said to have attained mystic knowledge to such a degree that he was capable of miracles. Born in 1248 at Medinaceli in Old Castile, he 'occupied himself with mystic combinations and transpositions of letters and numbers' before his death in 1305, but beyond this, his studies 'represent a progressive development of philosophical insight into mysticism.' 'Gikatilla, Joseph B. Abraham,' 15 Sept. 2010 < <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/6669-gikatilla-joseph-b-abraham>>.

¹⁴⁸ According to Jewish lore, a golem was a man made out of clay, brought to life through incantations found in the Book of Creation (*Sefer Yezirah*), an early Jewish mystical text: the letters spelling *ameth*, the Hebrew word for 'truth,' was inscribed on the creature's forehead, and a tablet or slip of paper containing the *shem hamephorash*, the name of God so precise and holy that it is never spoken, was inserted into its mouth. Golems grew in size until they became dangerous to their creators, at which time the character of *aleph* would be removed from the world on their forehead, leaving only *meth*, meaning 'dead'; the creature would then crumble into dust. For more on the legend of the Golem, see Hillel J. Kieval, 'Pursuing the Golem of Prague: Jewish Culture and the Invention of a Tradition,' *Modern Judaism* 17.1 (1997): 1-23.

¹⁴⁹ The golem is described in this manner multiple times during the play: see Winter, *The Golem of Venice* 90, 103, 104, 106, 133, 135, 136 and 139, as well as in the Glossary (under 'Golem') at the beginning of the play (n.pag.).

mercantile city of Venice itself is therefore transformed into the 'golem' that will benefit the Jews. The Widow Antonio and her husband Shylock leave together, presumably in search of a new home in the continuing Jewish Diaspora: 'I already stayed too long,'¹⁵⁰ Shylock intones as he carries the lifeless body of his daughter from the court.

The Golem of Venice deliberately confronts Christian prejudice against Jews, including the stereotypes, hatred and suspicion it engenders, by foregrounding all three in the expressed attitudes of key characters, but it does so in a decidedly 'tongue in cheek' manner. The effect of this comedy is three-fold: for those sympathetic to Jewish concerns, it robs the hatred of its validity, and therefore of its sting; for those who harbour similar prejudice towards Jews, it points out the illogic and contradiction that is inherent in those beliefs; and in terms of dramatic structure, it lightens mood and provides entertainment, allowing a forward energy to dominate.

For example, the play begins with the Magnifico (roughly equivalent to the Duke in *Merchant*) enjoining the Ecclesiastical Court to participate in a seemingly ritualized address with text adapted from John 19 and Mark 27 of the Christian bible, a text that relates a conversation between Pontius Pilate and the Jewish assembly at the time Christ was put on trial. Commencing in a ritualized 'call and response' address, the Magnifico entreats the assembly to 'Behold the man!'; 'Behold your king!'; and 'Behold the son of God!' to which the assembly responds, 'No king but Caesar!' and 'Kill him!'¹⁵¹ The Magnifico goes on to 'find no fault,' and to state that 'He is guiltless':¹⁵² the crowd demands crucifixion. 'I am innocent of this blood,' states the Magnifico; 'His blood be on us and on our children!'¹⁵³ responds the assembly. This interchange subtly grounds the trials of Shylock

¹⁵⁰ Winter, *The Golem of Venice* 145.

¹⁵¹ Winter, *The Golem of Venice* 1.

¹⁵² Winter, *The Golem of Venice* 1.

¹⁵³ Winter, *The Golem of Venice* 1.

the Jew against those of Jesus Christ, also a Jew, while asserting Christian innocence and Jewish guilt in the spilling of Christ's blood. 'O Cursed race! Your prayer will be answered,'¹⁵⁴ declaims the Magnifico:

That blood, that martyred blood will pursue you to your
remotest descendents even to the final stroke of recorded
time! [...] Why do you lack the courage to proclaim to the
world: Yes, we killed your Saviour! We would kill him now
should he rise again! Yes, we drink Christian blood for
Passover! We have always drunk it, always will!. [...]
Instead you lie on the rack in silence! As house and hearth
are tumbled on your heads, you sing! You go to the stake as
though to dance! You seek to seem martyrs to make us seem
butchers! If you are innocent, why do you not attack us with
torch and axe? Why is there not one of you with the courage
to step forward, to seize my cross and break it on my skull?
Still you await my curse? Hear it then as I pronounce it!
Only in the faggots of the stake will you find peace! We will
light the faggots more and more until you free us of
yourselves!¹⁵⁵

The Magnifico thus begins his tirade with the most common Christian stereotypes of Jews as 'Christ killers' and drinkers of Christian blood, then proceeds in a jumble of hate-filled illogic: when the Jews fail to admit guilt to their accusers, even during torture; when they sing (presumably in prayer) during pogroms; when they walk with quick dignity to their

¹⁵⁴ Winter, *The Golem of Venice* 2.

¹⁵⁵ Winter, *The Golem of Venice* 2-3.

deaths at Christian hands, this proves, not their innocence and worthiness as human beings, but their involvement in just one more conspiracy to discredit and embarrass Christians. What further proof of their guilt exists greater than their non-violence? Surely, the Magnifico states, innocent men and women would be ripping him limb from limb at the sting of these accusations and the pain of these reprisals: their pacifism therefore merely confirms their guilt. But better comedy lies just ahead. After this spewing of hatred, the Recorder, the official of Venetian law, intones ‘Amen.’¹⁵⁶ ‘So endeth the benediction,’ concludes the Magnifico, ‘text from the first epistle of St. John, chapter four, verse eight: God is love.’¹⁵⁷

Similarly, Portia, the Prioress of the Sacred Order of the Brides of Christ, renders the Magnifico her opinion on Jews during her defence of Widow Antonio:

I have nothing against the Jews, professionally. Some of my most passionate novitiates are Jews. I have always found that a polluted background lends a salutary self-contempt to devotion. Without the former Jews among us the Sisters of my Order would not merit their reputation for steadfastness in conversion and savagery in converting. I confess to a personal disinclination to converse with Jews and an urge to vomit in their presence. Perhaps it is their odour. Perhaps their cacophony. Doubtless it has something to do with the

¹⁵⁶ Winter, *The Golem of Venice* 3.

¹⁵⁷ The King James Version of the New Testament shows 1 John 4:8 as, ‘He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.’ 1 John 4:8 King James Version, *BibleGateway.com*, 3 Oct. 2011 <<http://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20John+4:8&version=KJV>>.

unpleasing dissymmetry of their skulls and their noticeable
lack of friendliness toward me.¹⁵⁸

In the logic of the powerful riding roughshod over the weak, the Prioress's extreme dislike of Jews provides no just rationale for them not to treat her as a valued friend. Portia provides additional comedy in her defence of Widow Antonio, who had, according to the Prioress, pawned her weasel in order to pay her Church Tax; the Widow herself supplies conflicting information – she required money in order to have a drink – but Portia adroitly paints a portrait of the poor, pious Christian widow, in danger of being legally savaged by the ‘blood-sucking [...] well-poisoning, child-butchering, unwashed’¹⁵⁹ Jew. The widow with her Church Tax, states Portia, ‘was hurrying to the office of the Ecclesiastical Exchequer when she was waylaid and robbed. [...] Her assailants escaped unrecognized,’ Portia informs us, but despite this lack of identification, ‘there is every reason to believe that they were semites in the employ of the Jew. [...] Staggering back to her shop,’ Portia continues, the Widow was ‘semi-conscious from the assault and reeking of the alcohol which the ruffians had poured down her throat, no doubt in demonic parody of the Holy Mass.’¹⁶⁰ Nothing unpleasant apparently occurs within the city of Venice that cannot be somehow blamed on the Jews. As Shylock ironically states when entering the court at the beginning of the play, ‘Whatever it is, I am guilty of it and await my punishment with gratitude.’¹⁶¹ Rabbi Joseph offers a telling example:

The Jews of La Guardia butchered a Christian child and used
his blood in the preparation of sacramental wine. The fact
that no child's body was found was interpreted to mean that

¹⁵⁸ Winter, *The Golem of Venice* 5.

¹⁵⁹ Winter, *The Golem of Venice* 12.

¹⁶⁰ Winter, *The Golem of Venice* 10. All quoted text within the preceding six lines is also from this source.

¹⁶¹ Winter, *The Golem of Venice* 5.

Christ had completed the parallel to himself by carrying the victim up to heaven. The fact that no child was reported missing was recorded as a divine mystery. The resultant pogrom eradicated two hundred thousand Jews. This trial of Shylock, the loan-banker, is a similar incentive to Christian fantasy since, no matter who removes the pound of flesh, a Christian will have lost it.¹⁶²

In terms of entertainment value, Winter is not afraid to include traditional humour simply to lighten mood and increase pace. For example, Rabbi Gerontus's golem severs Rabbi Joseph's head, then hides both head and body when Portia, disguised as a young Jewish male, enters the room. Throughout the scene, Joseph's still conscious head creates confusion from its hiding place within a box through unseen auditory interjection. Later, when Gerontus is about to leave the attic to accompany Portia downstairs, he reassures the boxed head: 'I'll be right back, Joseph, to continue our holy work.' 'Who are you talking to?' Portia demands. 'Why, God!' equivocates Gerontus. 'You called Him Joseph,' challenges Portia. Gerontus, improvising quickly: 'We are on intimate terms.'¹⁶³ Shortly afterwards, thinking herself alone, Portia calls upon the 'Holy Mother of God' to protect her in 'the hour of my need!' The stage directions indicate that she 'crosses herself,' then seeing a collection of Jews present for worship, 'turns it into a wave' and addresses them with 'Greetings, brothers, in the name of Moses and all the Saints!' before she 'exits bravely into the congregation.'¹⁶⁴

¹⁶² Winter, *The Golem of Venice* 40. Joseph refers to text earlier in the play declaring that Venetian law dictates the pound of flesh must be cut off by Widow Antonio herself.

¹⁶³ Winter, *The Golem of Venice* 120. All quoted text within the preceding two lines is also from this source.

¹⁶⁴ Winter, *The Golem of Venice* 121. All quoted text within the preceding four lines is also from this source.

The play also confronts other Jewish stereotypes in a more serious vein, including the avatar of the avaricious, duplicitous Jew who hides his true face, and his true wealth, from the world. Portia, the Prioress of the Sacred Order of the Brides of Christ, seems to echo the hypothesized portrayal of Shylock as the miserly Pantalone when she tells the Magnifico,

Everyone knows the Jews have gold. Watch one as he walks:
upright and graceful in imitation of a man, until he beholds a
Christian. Then, of a sudden, he assumes his natural shape.
Up go the shoulders, down the head, until he is hunched like
a snail protecting its soft underbelly. Why? Because it is
around his belly that the Jews wears his gold. [...] This Jew
has gold. Venice will have his gold. And, after his, the
rest.¹⁶⁵

But in a skillful sleight of hand by playwright Winter, the notion of ‘Jewish gold’ is transformed by Rabbi Gerontus from material to spiritual wealth through the alchemical properties of mysticism:

There is gold in the Kabbalah that none but Jews may mine, a
Secret Doctrine which is incorruptible gold and even its
shards are priceless, a hidden weapon of gold that none but
the Sons of the Doctrine may wield; for it is they and they
alone who sup the golden pomegranates of Eden.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁵ Winter, *The Golem of Venice* 59.

¹⁶⁶ Winter, *The Golem of Venice* 46.

Further, in a poetic adaptation of the concept of *Tikkun Olam*, this mystical gold of the Kabbalah, as Gerontus and Joseph are reading from a mighty tome, is not of man, but of God:

GERONTUS: Before the world was, God was alone with His gold. Who can imagine such a loneliness? It was as if

No one can imagine it. And God said ...

JOSEPH: Not only am I without a fellow creature, I also own nothing, nothing but my gold. Eternity is bad enough, but to be powerless as well!

GERONTUS: So God took His gold and arranged it as a sphere, and He rotated it backward and forward, backward for good, forward for evil. [...] Still God was not satisfied.

JOSEPH: There is nothing in this that I can hold.

GERONTUS: So God took His gold and made it flat as a sheet and laid it floating between the air and the fire.

JOSEPH: That is earth. At last there is something worth something. Now to protect it.

GERONTUS: So God drew a circle of gold around the earth in all directions.

JOSEPH: The circle is mine. Everything inside the circle is mine. If anybody on the earth looks up, he will see my gold in the sky and, if he digs, he will find my gold in the heat

below. I may loan him my gold, but my gold is mine, and he must pay me for it in praise.¹⁶⁷

And the exploration of Jewish gold then circles back, from the sacred in which God is the one true gold, to the mundane when Shylock speaks to his daughter of the wisdom of storing wealth in that precious metal, since it is easy to transport; the rich Jews of Europe and Asia take their gold with them when they move. ‘Why do they move?’ Jessica asks. ‘Because they are hated,’¹⁶⁸ Shylock answers. ‘It hurts [...] to be hated,’¹⁶⁹ Jessica ponders. Perhaps, responds her father, but even something as vicious as hatred has its benefits:

Why, without hatred --- Do you think it’s easy for a man to come to a loan-bank? It’s enough to make him despair, to curse the world, to curse himself. So I help him. I fawn. I cringe. I rant. I whimper. I wear my nose. Then he hates me and he needn’t hate himself and we can do business.

Why am I hated if not for my wealth? Who is it who hates me but he who gives me wealth? [...] I’d rather be a Jew thus hated than loved for my Christian poverty by those who brag of grace and measure the fullness of their souls by the emptiness of their bellies.¹⁷⁰

The Jewish concept of *Tikkun Olam*, that it is the work of God’s chosen people to heal the shattered world, resonates in the image of Shylock as he voluntarily humbles himself in order to take the sting out of another’s shame. But apparently this paradigm has its limits.

¹⁶⁷ Winter, *The Golem of Venice* 61.

¹⁶⁸ Winter, *The Golem of Venice* 30.

¹⁶⁹ Winter, *The Golem of Venice* 31-32.

¹⁷⁰ Winter, *The Golem of Venice* 32. The allusion to Marlowe’s *The Jew of Malta* found in portions of this text are noted later in this chapter.

‘If hatred is good,’ queries Jessica, ‘why do you want to leave Venice. You are hated.’

‘Too much hatred is not good,’ explains Shylock, ‘even for a Jew.’¹⁷¹

Perhaps the most striking feature of this version of *The Golem of Venice*, created by a left-wing Canadian theatre company at approximately the same time the Open Space Theatre was creating *Variations*, is the degree to which it resolves Marowitz’s objections to Shakespeare’s *Merchant* with greater subtlety and effectiveness than his own adaptation. Primary in this assertion is the degree to which Jack Winter’s play redresses the moral balance to which Marowitz objects in the original work: despite the foregrounding of Christian anti-Semitism, the real bipolarity in *The Golem of Venice* is not between Jews and Christians, but between the powerful and the weak, and in this way, the beliefs expressed represent those of both Artistic Director George Luscombe, and of Theatre Workshop Productions as a whole.¹⁷² Interestingly, they are also in line with the left wing convictions held by Charles Marowitz, who identifies himself as a ‘red-Pinko’¹⁷³ on the first page of his autobiography. In the trial scene that begins the play, it is evident that both Shylock and Widow Antonio are helpless pawns within a power dichotomy that positions them on one side of the great divide, and the Venetian legal system and the Catholic Church on the other. Shylock is accused by Portia both of usury, and of a bloodthirsty bond against Widow Antonio: the loan-banker responds,

The gentile comes to me. She gives me a thing. It’s a knife.

I appraise it. She agrees. She signs a contract. I give her

¹⁷¹ Winter, *The Golem of Venice* 32. The quoted text within the preceding line is also from this source.

¹⁷² George Luscombe’s early involvement with the CCF has already been mentioned. As a theatre artist, he possessed an ‘unfailing commitment to international socialism and political debate through an art rooted in experimentation’; employing ‘the subversive techniques of Marxist ideologies and dedicated to revolutionary social change [Louise Ladouceur, *Canadian Literature* #154 (Autumn 1997) p 123], Toronto Workshop Productions’ programming provided active expression for his left-wing beliefs: ‘[Luscombe’s] first international hit was *Chicago ’70*, a living newspaper about the trial of the Chicago Seven, with an Alice in Wonderland motif, developed and performed while the trial was in progress. It ran for over a year in Toronto, played for 3 months in New York, and toured to Europe.’ ‘Luscombe,’ *Canadian Encyclopedia*.

¹⁷³ Marowitz, *Burnt Bridges* 1.

money. [...] What usury? [...] I operate a loan-bank. Is that now a crime?¹⁷⁴

In other words, although Shylock's profession is sanctioned by the state, operating in this occupation nonetheless leaves him vulnerable to accusations of evil-doing by the government and by the church, as well as the legal actions which thereby ensue. And Widow Antonio is in only a slightly more enviable position: she notes that, '[b]ecause of the discovery of trade routes to the East, the price of raw materials has escalated,' and '[b]usiness is terrible,'¹⁷⁵ on top of which, she is taxed to the point of penury by the Church. Their shared position as pawns of the powerful creates an affinity between the loan-banker and the tailor: during the latter's trial, when Portia describes the bowel spasms the Widow contracted 'on the rack,' Shylock is quick to offer a remedy: 'Try black tea with sugar,' he suggests, to which the Widow queries, 'One lump or two?'¹⁷⁶ The similarity between Shylock and the Widow Antonio is further presented in scene 5, which takes place 'in front of the adjoining shops of Shylock and the Widow' and depicts 'both proprietors [...] soliciting passers-by'¹⁷⁷ in an attempt to drum up business. While the play reveals the rich and powerful living off the backs of the weak and victimized in a traditional pre-Marxist scenario, even the downtrodden Shylock eventually seeks to capitalize the labour of the poor Widow Antonio in an attempt to better his fortunes. Back at Shylock's home, both rabbis are clearly cognizant of the position their religious accreditation allows them on the Jewish side of the hierarchy: Gerontus wants his 'skull-cap starched, [his] gabardine pleated, [his] prayer shawl ironed [his] phylacteries oiled, [his] holy book

¹⁷⁴ Winter, *The Golem of Venice* 7.

¹⁷⁵ Winter, *The Golem of Venice* 8-9.

¹⁷⁶ Winter, *The Golem of Venice* 11.

¹⁷⁷ Winter, *The Golem of Venice* 50.

warmed¹⁷⁸ and Joseph wants the jew-star on his cloak mended. After ordering a dinner fit for Mohammed, Gerontus decides he will take a

second bath. In rain water. Then I will accomplish a
manicure and a pedicure in correct Talmudic finger and toe
sequence, the parings of which will be ritually burned and the
bath water bottled for free distribution among the poor.¹⁷⁹

Clearly, between the Christians and his own religious leaders, Shylock is run ragged trying to keep up with the demands of those many rungs above him on the ladder of power. It seems that the villain/hero construct which Marowitz perceived in Shakespeare's *Merchant*, and which he simply reversed in his *Variations*, has dissolved away to nothing in *The Golem of Venice*.

Second, the forced conversion of Shylock, an original feature in Shakespeare's play, has been transformed in Winter's play into a wily conversion of all Venetian Christian males into Jews, and all Venice into a golem which benefits Jews, without any of the gratuitous violence which ends *Variations* in a manner not coherent with Jewish ethics. Since Shapiro in *Shakespeare and the Jews*¹⁸⁰ offers the hypothesis that Shylock's 'pound of flesh' refers obliquely to Antonio's phallus, the 'forced conversion' of Christians to Jews

¹⁷⁸ Winter, *The Golem of Venice* 25.

¹⁷⁹ Winter, *The Golem of Venice* 26.

¹⁸⁰ James Shapiro, *Shakespeare and the Jews* (New York: Columbia UP, 1996) 121-122. Shapiro reminds the reader that text in the early part of *Merchant* speaks of 'Shylock's desire to exact "an equal pound" of Antonio's "fair flesh, to be cut off and taken" in that "part" of his body that "pleaseth" the Jew.' Only later in the trial scene in Act IV is it indicated that he will cut from near the heart. Shapiro also notes that the Elizabethan's 'identification of Jews as circumcisors and emasculators' might have led them to assume a location somewhat lower than the breast based on the description of "fair flesh," especially since, "[i]n the late sixteenth century, the world *flesh* was consistently used [...] in place of *penis*.' For other interpretations of phallic references relating to circumcision in *The Merchant of Venice*, see Clayton Koelb, 'The Bonds of Flesh and Blood: Having it Both Ways in *The Merchant of Venice*,' *Cardozo Studies in Law and Literature* 5.1 (1993): 107-113. Metzger further refers to Shapiro who uses 'Paul's letter to the Romans [which] attempts to promote a symbolic circumcision of the heart' as a rationale for the trial scene reference. See Mary Janell Metzger, "'Now by My Hood, a Gentle and No Jew': Jessica, *The Merchant of Venice*, and the Discourse of Early Modern English Identity,' *PMLA* 113.1 (1998): 52-63.

through the stealthy and painless slicing of their foreskins is a particularly clever strategy by playwright Winter.

If, in Marowitz's opinion, Shylock is revealed as a 'disreputable father' in Shakespeare's original, then Winter betters Marowitz's solution to this problem by creating Jessica as an obedient daughter devoted to a harried but loving father. Indeed, Jessica and her father comprise a well-organized and supportive family structure: in Scene 4, Shylock questions his daughter after inspecting the house in advance of the Passover Seder, and is pleased to find that the Passover dishes have been unpacked, any leavened bread has been burned, the house has been washed from top to bottom, old clothing has been delivered to the poor, the door is open to strangers but the gates are shut to those not of the Jewish faith, and the dead, including a beloved grandmother, remembered. Preparations for the sacred holiday are complete: 'A happy Passover, father,' Jessica entreats; 'And you, girl,' her father returns, 'and you.'¹⁸¹ Indeed, Jessica bestows the ultimate gift of love upon her father through her efforts to maintain a peaceful and comfortable home for him, and this gift does not go unnoticed. When Shylock contemplates leaving Venice to escape the legal troubles that await him, Jessica offers, 'You know I love our home.'¹⁸² Shylock reassures her:

Child, it has nothing to do with that. It's a beautiful house.

[...] And you keep it for me with a cleanliness that makes

even hospitality a pleasure. Your mother, God rest her,

would have been as satisfied almost as I am. [...] You are an

¹⁸¹ Winter, *The Golem of Venice* 49.

¹⁸² Winter, *The Golem of Venice* 27.

excellent housekeeper and, after this, you will keep
another.¹⁸³

Jessica's obedience to her father's will is likewise not in question. In Scene 15, she is discovered singing, seated beside her own bed on which Portia, still disguised as a young Jewish man, has been wracked with fever. Portia, in her delirium, speaks of being pursued by an uncircumcised monster (a reference to the golem), and asks how she was able to escape. Jessica's answer seems poignantly emblematic of Jewish desire through a long history of abuse and annihilation: 'As anyone. You dreamed your dream of horror, then you awoke.'¹⁸⁴ The tone of the scene is tranquil, loving and romantic; the young Jewess is revealed through the Christian's wonder as the epitome of the good woman whose worth is above rubies. Seeking to know her better, Portia questions Jessica as to her occupation: 'To serve, to protect [...] Shylock [...] with my life.'¹⁸⁵ When Portia intimates that she wishes to marry Jessica, the faithful daughter responds, 'I am Shylock's creature. He has taught me all the duties of my race and gender. It is yours to choose, mine to be chosen, his to judge if the choice be sound.'¹⁸⁶ In the last scene, when the golem kills Jessica, her death takes on the gravity of a sacrifice: when her father grieves, 'My daughter is dead,' Rabbi Gerontus continues the allusion to Jesus Christ begun in the play's first scene with his response: 'That other Jews may live.'¹⁸⁷ The sadness that pervades the conclusion of the play leaves no doubt as to the loving bond between daughter and father. Marowitz sought to redress the original Shylock's state as 'disreputable father,' but whereas Winter's Shylock expresses parental love and concern, Marowitz's displays only military leadership.

¹⁸³ Winter, *The Golem of Venice* 27.

¹⁸⁴ Winter, *The Golem of Venice* 124.

¹⁸⁵ Winter, *The Golem of Venice* 125.

¹⁸⁶ Winter, *The Golem of Venice* 127.

¹⁸⁷ Winter, *The Golem of Venice* 145.

A comparison of the ways in which the two characters assume their parental responsibility makes a choice of the more 'reputable' patriarch an easy one.

Another of Marowitz's concerns with *The Merchant of Venice* was the humiliation suffered by Shylock as the play winds to its conclusion, and to correct this, his adaptation creates Shylock as a man of power as opposed to powerlessness. Rather than attempt to transform Shylock from victim to warrior, Winter has left him in his unenviable social position so the audience may witness the full effect of the abuse of power, but he has lifted the character's despair through the addition of comedy. In the opening scene at the Ecclesiastical Court, the loan-banker and the tailor provide a chorus of wry interjections into the legal diatribes offered by Portia and the Magnifico. Later, the Magnifico denies the loan banker the option of simply returning the 'weasel' to Widow Antonio, because 'Charity is a Christian prerogative.'¹⁸⁸ However, recognizing the 'uncharacteristically generous'¹⁸⁹ offer by the Jew, the Magnifico concedes that the Widow Antonio may accept the knife back from Shylock – as long as she does not use it for its given purpose (i.e. tailoring). Shylock reacts with an outpouring of praise: 'May you live a thousand years, and every year a thousand blessings. Such learning, such wisdom. A Daniel. A second Solomon. For justice come to the court of the shining Christian.'¹⁹⁰ This flattery sufficiently paves the way for an expression of his true motive: 'May I go now?'¹⁹¹ Obviously the fawning mask worn by Jews in Venice, as described by both Portia and Shylock himself, is a necessary disguise acceded to by the 'hard done by' as they endeavour not to be 'done to' again. In this way, Winter's Shylock bears a similarity to Marowitz's, whose deception keeps the British/Venetians from learning the truth of his

¹⁸⁸ Winter, *The Golem of Venice* 23.

¹⁸⁹ Winter, *The Golem of Venice* 23.

¹⁹⁰ Winter, *The Golem of Venice* 23.

¹⁹¹ Winter, *The Golem of Venice* 24.

undercover military preparations. However, unlike Marowitz's terrorist hero, the everyman quality of Winter's Shylock assists the audience in viewing his situation with compassion and understanding; whether this compassion will be retained and may have an effect outside of the theatre is uncertain.

Despite their differences, *The Golem of Venice* bears a number of similarities to Marowitz's *Variations on the Merchant of Venice*. For example, they both utilize text from Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta*, although they diverge in the ways in which this text is employed: Marowitz has interpolated a great deal of Marlowe's play so that his characters are able to assume different intentions from Shakespeare's original, while Winter merely offers echoes of Barabas when Shylock paraphrases him, with

Why am I hated if not for my wealth? [...] I'd rather be a
Jew thus hated than loved for my Christian poverty by those
who brag of grace and measure the fullness of their souls by
the emptiness of the bellies.¹⁹²

In contrast, Marowitz's Shylock delivers a portion of Marlowe's actual text as he

([l]ooks about the court, then bursts out contemptuously[:])
Who hateth me but for my happiness?
Or who is honour'd now but for his wealth?
Rather had I a Jew be hated thus
Than pitied in a Christian poverty
For I can see no fruits in all your faith
But malice, falsehood and excessive pride.¹⁹³

¹⁹² Winter, *The Golem of Venice* 32.

¹⁹³ Marowitz, *Variations on the Merchant* 281. Italics in original.

The explosions of Irgun bombs in the street are heard just after Shylock utters these lines. What for Marowitz's creation is the prelude to a violent *coup d'état* is for Winter's loan banker the statement of an unfortunate reality founded upon twisted Christian logic.

Also, they both entertain the potential benefits of disguise in terms of a Jew achieving his or her objectives. In both cases, this involves Shylock presenting the face of the stereotypic Jew, fawning to his Christian enemies in order to hide his military intentions. Winter takes this notion of Jewish disguise a giant step further into comedy with Portia's assertion that Shylock's very nose is false: 'He puts it on for business and takes it off at home. [...] Likewise his ringlets and his jew-cloth and his star.'¹⁹⁴ The theme of Jewish disguise in *Golem* therefore has a number of strands that conjoin into a complex braid. To the Christians, exemplified by Portia, the true nature of the Jew is an avaricious creature 'hunched like a snail,' protecting his gold; he assumes this 'natural shape'¹⁹⁵ when in the presence of his Christian prey, since he has achieved his golden wealth by sucking the life blood from Christians through usury. His large nose, as well as his ringlets, star and gabardine, offers further proof of his deception, since he only wears them when preying on Christians; at home, he takes them off, and like some ambitious ape striving to sham his way up the primate ladder of evolution, walks 'upright and graceful in imitation of a man.'¹⁹⁶ However, as Shylock explains to Jessica, the stereotypic 'disguise' of the Jew – the fawning, whimpering, ranting mask with the large proboscis – is a practical strategy utilized by loan bankers to transform Christian self-loathing into hatred against Jews in a manner that aids both parties. It makes it easier for Christians to borrow money from Jews, and since Jews can only live by lending money to Christians, this makes it easier for the

¹⁹⁴ Winter, *The Golem of Venice* 15.

¹⁹⁵ Winter, *The Golem of Venice* 59.

¹⁹⁶ Winter, *The Golem of Venice* 59.

Jews to survive. The Christian illogic which this theme illustrates is that the mask worn by Jews is comprised entirely of elements either mandated by the Christian majority (such as wearing the yellow star of David and an identifiable gabardine) or part of the Christian negative stereotypic images surrounding Jews (such as the large nose, hunched physicality and the fawning behaviour): the wearing of this mask confirms the negative beliefs Christians hold in regards to Jews, but if a Jew fails to assume the elements of the mask, they leave themselves open to Christian persecution and mistrust. As the play illuminates, the Jews are clearly damned if they do and damned if they don't by this illogical Christian prejudice.

In addition, the notion of violent Jewish reprisal for Christian persecution, bellowed through machine gun fire at the conclusion of *Variations*, is an enigmatic whisper in *Golem*: when the homunculus is first created, Rabbis Joseph and Gerontus agree that it should be used to 'annihilate Christendom.'¹⁹⁷ According to Rabbi Joseph, no training in this endeavour is necessary: 'He has a knife. Let him use it.'¹⁹⁸ At the conclusion of the play, when the golem has succeeded in using his knife to annihilate Christendom, not by killing the Christians but by circumcising them, the Widow Antonio, now married to Shylock, gives the newly converted Magnifico the 'weasel' that started all the fracas of litigation. 'What am I supposed to do with it?' the Magnifico asks; 'Every new Jew should have a knife,'¹⁹⁹ the Widow intones. Her answer is pregnant with possible meaning: the knife might either be used to circumcise future generations of Jewish offspring, or to cut a literal or metaphoric pound of flesh from Christian enemies.

¹⁹⁷ Winter, *The Golem of Venice* 115.

¹⁹⁸ Winter, *The Golem of Venice* 115.

¹⁹⁹ Winter, *The Golem of Venice* 145.

By creating his adaptation around the golem, the mythological champion of the Jews, Winter takes on the concerns identified by Marowitz. By dramatizing the prejudice and hatred of the Christians, as well as the humanity of Shylock, he solves them with intelligence and biting humour in a manner subtler and less simplistic than that achieved in *Variations* – and without robbing the Jewish characters of their faith or their humanity. In addition, the complexity of the ideas explored in Winter’s play satisfy the notion of ‘added dimensions’²⁰⁰ discussed by Marowitz in regard to successful adaptation, and to a degree not achieved by his own version.

CONCLUSIONS

As has been discussed, Marowitz’s *Variations on the Merchant of Venice* succeeds in satisfying his own guidelines for successful adaptation. While the understanding of the historical issues at its core was both simplistic and at least partially incorrect, it goes a long way to achieving the author’s objective to shift the moral balance of the play by portraying the Christians as grasping and shallow, and the Jews as warriors in a holy cause.

What is problematic about Marowitz’s reversal of ‘good’ and ‘evil’ in his adaptation is that it offers merely a different opinion of what *could* or *should* have been written, without creating any real counter-resonance against the original work. He is not so much attempting to unsettle the cultural authority of Shakespeare’s *Merchant* as to forcibly install his own alternative authority in its place. The audience is left to accept this new version of reality, based upon Marowitz’s representation of Jewish character, rather than the Shakespearean view which preceded it. Marowitz’s Shylock represents the worm who has indeed turned, and turned into an aggressive warrior: while the former character is less

²⁰⁰ Marowitz, *Recycling Shakespeare* 7.

than palatable to Marowitz, one questions whether the latter truly creates a desire for acceptance and inclusiveness with Jews in the non-Jewish members of the audience. However, the salient issue is this: if one believes that *Variations on the Merchant of Venice* will survive in the popular imagination for the four centuries that Shakespeare's work has required to develop its salient cultural authority, then Marowitz's approach may prove effective, but since *Variations* is a little known and seldom produced work, it is difficult to foresee this as an eventuality.

In addition, Marowitz's adaptation, which presents a set viewpoint with little attempt to involve the audience in a dialectical discourse, has the consistency of counter-propaganda aimed against the assumptions he believes are inherent in Shakespeare's play, and this presents its own problems in terms of effectiveness. In his paper, '*The Merchant of Venice*, the Arab-Israeli Conflict, and the Perils of Shakespearean Appropriation,' Mark Bayer discusses the inherent flaw in making use of cultural assets created by others for one's own sociopolitical purpose, as Marowitz does. It is difficult at best to determine 'to what degree these tendentious adaptations [...] significantly advance [a] political cause, and influence public opinion.'²⁰¹ Speaking of Shakespeare's play as an agent of political persuasion by both the Arabs and the Israelis, Bayer states,

the use of *The Merchant of Venice* in this conflict suggests that the practice of appropriation itself is often problematic and neither necessarily nor automatically achieves the goals of those who would engage in it, something that many have

²⁰¹ Bayer 467.

felt is endemic to all efforts to construct meaning
analogically.²⁰²

The politically motivated appropriations tend to fall into one of two camps: they either reveal and make concrete the interests of the oppressor, thus exposing the self-interested root of their behaviour, or, as in the case of Marowitz's *Variations on the Merchant of Venice*, they allow the oppressed to actively confront the assumptions inherent in the Shakespearean work under adaptation; 'the Shakespearean text is actively reworked as part of a nascent counter-hegemonic discourse [... and] the goal seems to be to use Shakespeare to render certain political claims normative.'²⁰³ The use of Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* as a subject of appropriation on both sides of the Arab-Israeli conflict is representative of the thorny practice that Bayer describes. Shakespeare's *Merchant* was the first play produced at what later became the National Theatre of Israel; the anti-Semitic behaviour of the Venetians was foregrounded, since, as the production's director stated, both the play and the theatre in which it took place could 'serve [...] as a vehicle of propaganda for the *Eretz-Israeli-an* conception.'²⁰⁴ In 1945, Shakespeare's *Merchant* once again underwent appropriation in that political conflict, but this time, on the Arab side: Ali Ahmed Bakathir of Yemen, a prolific translator of Shakespeare, created *The New Shylock* in which the Zionists were the controlling party in Palestine. In this extensive re-working, the trial scene has been situated as an international tribunal, set in Jerusalem, and with the directive of determining the power structure of Palestine at the end of the British Mandate, which was to take place two years in the future (1947). The Shylock character, who is seeking ultimate power for the Jewish people in Palestine, literally invokes Shakespeare's

²⁰² Bayer 468.

²⁰³ Bayer 468.

²⁰⁴ Leopold Jessner, 'Of the Eretz-Israeli Theatre and Its Purpose,' *Bamah* (May 1934): 3. Quoted in Bayer 475. Italics in original.

Merchant within the play, setting it up as a legal precedent in the trial, and demanding that, since the British had promised the Jewish people a pound of flesh through the Balfour Declaration, it was now time for them to deliver on their promise. Allusions to Palestine being cut off from the heart of the Arab people reinforce the ties to Shakespeare's play. Although Marowitz sought to re-tell the story of Shylock through his 'variation' on Shakespeare's play, he can never have the final word on the subject as long as another playwright from an opposing cultural camp has equal opportunity to create yet *another* variation – one which tells the story in favour of his or her community. The exercise becomes one akin to propaganda, rendered ineffective through equally powerful counter-propaganda. Not only, then, is the process fruitless, but it also creates a patina of opportunism onto the Shakespearean canon without necessarily improving upon it. As Kenneth Muir remarks,

it is perfectly possible to bring out the relevance of Shakespeare to our time without any cuts or additions, and that it is better for relevance to dawn up on an audience, 'with an invisible and subtle stealth', than for them to submit to the bludgeoning of propaganda.²⁰⁵

Rather than relying on counter-propaganda, the other playwrights explored as comparisons to Marowitz's *Variations* attempt to portray the incongruousness of an anti-Semitic position, including that occupied by the Christian characters in Shakespeare's *Merchant*. For example, *The Golem of Venice* portrays Christian prejudice and mistreatment of Jews in a highly ironic manner which highlights the inappropriateness of these beliefs and actions. Similarly, *Shakespeare's The Merchant of Venice at Auschwitz*

²⁰⁵ Kenneth Muir, 'The Vancouver Congress,' *Shakespeare Quarterly* 23.2 (1972): 136. Muir is quoting Olivia from Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*: l.v.297-298 when he refers to 'invisible and subtle stealth.'

seeks to foreground the evil and malevolence inherent in the Nazi's view of Jews as evil and malevolent. Both these approaches attack the cultural authority of Shakespeare's *Merchant* by including its alleged anti-Semitism and pointing out a lack of validity in this prejudice. Arnold Wesker, like Marowitz, presents a different version of *Shylock*, one whose intelligence, wit and loyal friendship cannot help but inspire a positive audience reaction to the character, but unlike Marowitz, he does so without denying Shylock the most highly prized tenets of his faith, including compassion and a belief in the sanctity of all life.

Therefore, while Marowitz has created in *Variations on the Merchant of Venice* a dramatically interesting and evocatively imagistic renovation of Shakespeare's original play, it plays as a dogmatic directive from the author/director to the audience which offers a set opinion without giving them the opportunity to participate in the discourse of the issues of either the original play or the resulting adaptation. Since human beings, and the audiences which comprise them, often display a visceral distaste for being told what to think, the overall effectiveness of Marowitz's adaptation in delivering a powerful assault on the assumptions of the original play is therefore placed in question.

Chapter Five:

A Macbeth; The Shrew; *Marowitz's* Measure
for Measure

AN OVERVIEW

The adaptations discussed within this chapter have been grouped together and explored in less depth than the others dealt with in this thesis for several reasons. Marowitz stipulates that a successful Shakespearean adaptation must challenge what he terms the intellectual sub-structure of the original play, while communicating different ideas than those present in what he describes as the ur-text. However, his approach in *A Macbeth* was no more than an exploration of elements already present within Shakespeare's *Macbeth*; in addition, the adaptation reduces the complexity of the central characters of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth significantly by removing from them the conscious choice of evil over good without adding dimensions other than those produced stylistically by the collage genre. Although *The Shrew* challenges the paradigm of the original play, it fails to coherently dramatize the statements Marowitz ostensibly chose to communicate, as expressed in his critical writing, rendering any analysis of the success of the adaptation less fruitful. Finally, Marowitz's decision to closely follow the narrative of the original play while reducing the breadth of the society within his *Measure for Measure* accordingly limits the breadth of expression of the adaptor's unique and original statement in his adaptation, providing less interesting fodder for exploration than those adaptations such as *An Othello* and *Variations on the Merchant of Venice* in which more extensive renovations of the text were made. It should be noted that, while they are explored in less depth in this chapter for the reasons noted, there is extensive reference to the three plays contained herein within the next chapter on Marowitz's personal politics, and these references highlight the incidences when the manifestation of unconscious paradigms may have overwritten the adaptor's stated objectives for the works being discussed.

A MACBETH

A Macbeth was first presented on May 14, 1969 as part of the May Festival at the Wiesbaden Staatstheater in Germany, before returning to the Open Space Theatre in London on May 20 of that same year. The production represents the second Shakespearean collage adaptation attempted by Marowitz, after *Hamlet*, with his modification of Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus* sandwiched between the two.

Marowitz's condemnation of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* is unequivocal: the play is 'a dud [...] a horrible old blunderbuss, a horrible gangster story,'¹ and one that is 'impossible to make [...] come alive again in its original form.'² Even after reconstruction through collage, there was no escaping 'that dark-textured, relentlessly plot-laden Warner Brothers movie about the man who rubbed out Mr. Big and, perforce, had to continue to rub out all the other members of the mob.'³ Marowitz seems to be stating that the play is essentially a series of events, connected causally or temporally, without a significant examination of character or relationship, and this view finds little scholarly support. While not 'a conventional morality play,' David Bevington believes that Shakespeare's *Macbeth* nonetheless provides 'an intensely human study of the psychological effects of evil on a particular man and, to a lesser extent, on his wife.'⁴ Bernice Kliman suggests that the play's 'chief appeal arises from the struggles of the central characters with each other and with the infernal powers that inspire or govern them.'⁵ Generally viewed as a tragic hero, Macbeth fascinates an audience precisely because he is conscious that he is *choosing* evil,

¹ Charles Marowitz, interview with Ian Woodward, 'A Three-Headed Macbeth,' *Times* 15 May 1969.

² Marowitz, 'A Three-Headed Macbeth,' *Times*.

³ Marowitz, introduction, *The Marowitz Shakespeare* 15. Semantically, Marowitz's statement clashes with that of E.M. Forster, who famously declared that "'The king died and then the queen died,'" is a story. "'The king died, and then the queen died of grief'" is a plot.' E.M. Forster, *Aspects of a Novel* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1927) 130.

⁴ David Bevington, introduction, 'Macbeth,' *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, ed. David Bevington (New York: Addison Wesley Longman, 1977) 1219.

⁵ Bernice W. Kliman, *Macbeth* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1992) 1.

however much he is being persuaded toward it. ‘All Shakespeare’s great tragic characters slide from heights of decency and position to welter in a dark world of proscribed impulse;’ states Marvin Rosenberg in *The Masks of Macbeth*, ‘but only Macbeth and his Lady choose evil, and follow it headlong down.’⁶ Despite this, Macbeth is usually perceived as possessing heroic stature because he embodies human strength and weakness in almost perfect balance. He ‘commits appalling crimes and we are made to feel their full horror,’ remarks Lilian Winstanley in *Macbeth, King Lear and Contemporary History*, ‘but he always retains grandeur partly because of the dreadful courage with which he faces all things [...] and partly because of his bitter remorse of conscience which makes him human to the end.’⁷ Michael Long suggests:

In the disturbing, tragic figure of the primordial criminal there is something which draws our empathy, something which Wilbur Sanders, in his powerful, Nietzschean reading of the play, calls a ‘compelling energy of defiance.’ This elevates him above butchery, and takes him metaphysically out of range of simple verdicts.⁸

Clearly, while Marowitz may perceive little depth or interest in the characters of Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*, his is not the majority opinion. One might question why Marowitz chooses to adapt plays revered by others but which he personally condemns; this tendency, as well as a possible motivation, will be discussed in a future chapter.

Somewhat paradoxically, Marowitz describes his own previously stated analysis of *Macbeth* as a gangster film as one of misguided interpretation when held by others:

⁶ Marvin Rosenberg, *The Masks of Macbeth* (Los Angeles: U of California P, 1978) ix.

⁷ Lilian Winstanley, *Macbeth, King Lear & Contemporary History* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1922) 136.

⁸ Michael Long, *Macbeth* (Boston: Twayne, 1989) 41.

One of the great mistakes people make in relation to *Macbeth* is that they don't accept the black-magic framework in which it was written. [...] If you don't make black magic your starting point, then it becomes a gangster story, full of Micky [sic] Spillane overtones.⁹

This opinion, coupled with his admission that he had 'decided to forage about in the black magical undergrowth that lay behind the work,'¹⁰ fails to satisfy Marowitz's own stated necessity for an adaptation to possess an original message, since Orson Welles, with his 'Voodoo *Macbeth*' production staged in New York in 1936 under the auspices of the Federal Theatre Project, was certainly there before him.¹¹ Also, while Marowitz places himself antithetically to other interpretations of Shakespeare's play, this is not truly the case, since the notion of evil as a precursor to the violent action depicted in the play is an opinion frequently expressed in scholarly writing. Audiences of the Jacobean theatre would have understood that it was the inherent evil in *Macbeth* which brought him into contact with the Witches, states Bevington, since it was common belief at the time that 'evil spirits [...] appear when summoned, whether by our conscious or unconscious minds.'¹² 'Nightmare seeks *Macbeth* out,' agrees Bloom in *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human*, and,

that search, more than his violence, is the true plot of this most terrifying of Shakespeare's plays. From my childhood on, I have been puzzled by the Witches, who spur the rapt

⁹ Marowitz, 'A Three-Headed *Macbeth*,' *Times*.

¹⁰ Marowitz, introduction, *The Marowitz Shakespeare* 14.

¹¹ Marowitz notes he wrote 'a silly review of Welles' *Macbeth*' while a freelance critic at the *International Theatre Magazine*, so there is little doubt he was familiar with the themes present in the production. See Marowitz, introduction, *Confessions of a Counterfeit Critic* 5.

¹² Bevington 1219.

Macbeth on to his sublime but guilty project. They come to him because preternaturally they *know* him: he is not so much theirs as they are his. [...] They place nothing in his mind that is not already there.¹³

Kliman agrees that ‘Macbeth and his wife awaken powers of darkness to seek supremacy and sway, or those powers find in the pair ambitions ready to be awakened, or those powers corrupt what could have been considered wholesome.’¹⁴ As Kliman indicates, a range of interpretations is possible regarding the evil that overtakes the Macbeths, but the influence of the witches, which Marowitz ascribes to ‘black magic,’ is intrinsically present in Shakespeare’s play text, has been perceived as such throughout the years, and therefore cannot honestly qualify as a confrontation of the ideas contained within the ur-text, another of Marowitz’s stated features of successful adaptation. What Marowitz chose to do was to foreground the notion of diabolism and possession over that of individual character and man’s struggle against evil. To do so, he ‘placed everything in a black-magic world, where the witches become an integral part of the whole voodoo conception of the tragedy; Lady Macbeth is the central Voodoo Queen, the witches her creatures.’¹⁵ Further, he attempted ‘to dramatize the peculiar knot of trinities that winds its way through the play; three witches, three murderers, three murders; hence in the collage, three personified aspects of Macbeth, the Timorous, the Ambitious, the Nefarious.’¹⁶

It is difficult to connect Marowitz’s stated intentions for *A Macbeth* to the prevailing sociopolitical attitudes of the period, since the majority of his focus remains on the form of the original play, and his interest in exploring a reorganization of that form into

¹³ Bloom, *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human* 532.

¹⁴ Kliman 1.

¹⁵ Marowitz, ‘A Three-Headed Macbeth,’ *Times*.

¹⁶ Marowitz, introduction, *The Marowitz Shakespeare* 14-15.

a discontinuous configuration. Indeed, his penchant for contradiction comes into play when he states that '*Macbeth* is a plot; a series of inescapably chronological incidents which defy reshuffling or reduction,'¹⁷ all the while striving to disprove his own words through the reshuffling and reduction of Shakespeare's work into a collage adaptation. Whatever else it does, *A Macbeth* provides an excellent example of the characteristics of the collage genre, which was to become a primary colour in Marowitz's theatrical palette, both in his re-workings of Shakespeare and of other playwrights such as Marlowe and Ibsen. The chief effects of collage sought by Marowitz were the ability to provide maximum information in minimum time; to reveal interior meanings; and to communicate experientially and subjectively, 'thereby shifting the focus of events from an exterior to an interior reality.'¹⁸ If, as Marowitz suggests, Shakespeare's play is 'a motorway,' a 'remorseless journey from crime to retribution,'¹⁹ then the collage format is a tool which seeks to put the audience inside the car with the protagonists, rather than safely on the roadside. An examination of the overall structure of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* in contrast to Marowitz's *A Macbeth*, particularly scrutinizing the information available to the audience in each scene, supports that the collage technique does transmit the information of the play cogently and powerfully. For example, in Shakespeare's original, the sequence of the first act runs as follows. In I.i, we are introduced to the Witches and gain some sense of the world we will be visiting for the next several hours, but no sense of who is doing what to whom, or why. In I.ii, we learn of Macbeth's bravery and his subsequent investment as Cawdor. The Witches' prophecies to Macbeth (to be Cawdor and King) and to Banquo (to be the father of kings) are both delivered, and partially fulfilled in I.iii when Ross informs Macbeth that

¹⁷ Marowitz, introduction, *A Macbeth* (London: Calder and Boyars, 1971) 9.

¹⁸ Marowitz, *Recycling Shakespeare* 32.

¹⁹ Marowitz, introduction, *The Marowitz Shakespeare* 15.

he is now Cawdor as well as Glamis. Banquo notices Macbeth's 'rapt'²⁰ expression, giving some indication of the latter's state of mind, foreshadowing the violence to come. I.iv sees Macbeth and Banquo pledge loyalty to Duncan, and more of Macbeth's murderous intent is revealed in his 'Stars, hide your fires'²¹ soliloquy. In I.v, we witness Lady Macbeth as she reads Macbeth's letter, then calls upon the spirits of darkness to take from her all womanly cowardice toward the deeds she will commit; she then puts Macbeth under her instruction *vis-à-vis* their yet unspoken regicide. Duncan and his entourage arrive in I.vi; in I.vii we see Macbeth's inner turmoil through his 'If it were done when 'tis done'²² soliloquy, before he is goaded into action by his wife. The scene ends with us learning the details of their plot to murder Duncan. We are now at the end of the first act, based upon scene divisions present in the First Folio. After approximately six hundred lines and seven thousand words, Macbeth and his wife have been tempted, have opened their hearts to the possibility of regicide, but have not yet spurred the desire for power into the action of murder.

In contrast, within fourteen lines and 105 words of *A Macbeth*, we witness Lady Macbeth – in this play, the leader of a malevolent coven – surrounded by her sister Witches, purposing to 'drain him dry as hay' until he 'dwindle, peak and pine'²³ as Macbeth, in effigy, has his eyes gouged out: this version's victim and perpetrator are made clear literally within seconds. Another fifty-three lines or 318 words later, Duncan and Banquo have both arrived, been stabbed by Macbeth and his wife, and been spirited away in death by the Witches. While Marowitz intended this first portion of the play to act as a

²⁰ William Shakespeare, 'Macbeth,' *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Princeton: Houghton Mifflin, 1974) I.iii.57. All further quotations from this source will be shown as 'Shakespeare, *Macbeth*' followed by the act, scene and line number.

²¹ Shakespeare, *Macbeth* I.iv.48-53.

²² Shakespeare, *Macbeth* I.vii.1-28.

²³ Marowitz, 'A Macbeth,' *The Marowitz Shakespeare* 81. All future quotations from this source will be shown as 'Marowitz, *A Macbeth*' followed by the page number.

‘prophetic vision,’²⁴ the unexpectedness of the murders so early in the action also has the effect of shaking the audience out of their preconceived knowledge of the play into an ‘alternative universe’ *Macbeth* where they do not know what to expect, and therefore are able to see and experience freshly. According to Marowitz, this is what collage does best: ‘An effective way of retelling a story whose main strands are generally known is to skim its surface, re-angle its moving parts, and abstract it just enough to provide a new and unexpected vantage point on the original.’²⁵ However, while some approve of a faster journey into the action of the play – Wardle, for example, noted that, ‘Where everyone, from Ionesco onwards, seems to agree is that Shakespeare [...] told the story too slowly’²⁶ – it has the effect of heightening Marowitz’s initial complaint that Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* is plot-based, in that the Macbeth’s consideration of the choice between good and evil, the emotional and spiritual weighing of its costs and benefits, is eradicated in favour of the progress of plot and action.

In terms of dramatic density, the collage *Macbeth* is able to provide multiple strands of information simultaneously through its non-representational nature, which is tied neither to sequential syntax nor to any sense of naturalistic logic in terms of given circumstances. Shakespeare’s original play jumps from place to place and from time to time with little regard to Aristotle’s unities, but it always does so with a logical approach to locale and in a forward movement along the time continuum. In contrast, the collage *Macbeth* moves forward and backward in time, often in a dream-like state, rendering it impossible to discern whether actions such as the murders really took place or were a character’s wish fulfillment theatrically given life. Events, both physical and psychological, dominate the

²⁴ Marowitz, ‘The Marowitz Macbeth,’ *Theatre Quarterly* 49.

²⁵ Marowitz, *Recycling Shakespeare* 33.

²⁶ Irving Wardle, ‘Review: *Macbeth*, Bankside Globe,’ *Times* 19 July 1973.

stage without the audience ever having a firm sense of where they taking place, so that the action often seems to be unfolding within the nightmarish swamp of the human mind. This ‘stream of consciousness’ format allows Marowitz enormous freedom to present the audience with any dramatic juxtaposition or exposure to theatrical stimuli he chooses in a manner unfettered by naturalistic representation. He can bring on characters to speak as foils to Macbeth’s discourse in scenes, at times and in conversations in which the second character could not logically appear; or he could have them commit actions which would be unnatural in ‘normal’ circumstances, because ‘normal’ as an overall construct of reality is no longer in force. For example, when Macbeth returns to Dunsinane, he greets his wife and tells her of Duncan’s imminent arrival:

LADY MACBETH: And when goes hence?

MACBETH: Tomorrow, as he purposes.

LADY MACBETH: O never

Shall sun that morrow see!²⁷

Immediately, the scene cuts to Duncan, onstage simultaneously with the Macbeths, as he describes the Thane as ‘worthiest cousin,’ exclaiming ‘Only I have left to say, / ‘More is thy due than more than all can pay.’ Macbeth responds, ‘The service and the loyalty I owe, / In doing it, pays itself.’²⁸ Lady Macbeth intervenes, urging her husband to hide his true intentions, but to ‘bear welcome in your eye, / Your hand, your tongue.’²⁹ Suddenly, Banquo is present, and with him, the reminder of the evil hovering round these events, as he states: ‘I dreamt last night of the three weird sisters. / To you they have showed some truth.’ Macbeth resists being drawn into this topic, saying ‘I think not of them,’ but his wife

²⁷ Marowitz, *A Macbeth* 93.

²⁸ Marowitz, *A Macbeth* 93. All quoted text from the preceding two lines is also from this source.

²⁹ Marowitz, *A Macbeth* 94.

goads him on: 'I will acquaint you with the perfect spy o' the time / The moment on't; for it must be done tonight.' Macbeth resists her: 'We will speak further.' Banquo, in innocence, also goads him in the direction of evil: 'Yet, when we can entreat an hour to serve, / We would spend it in some words upon that business / If you grant the time.'³⁰ Using the discontinuity of the collage format, Marowitz portrays Macbeth as spinning between the kind magnanimity of Duncan, the innocent curiosity of Banquo and the determined machinations of his wife: while Shakespeare's Macbeth was, at this point in the action, a powerful but unresolved man on the precipice of a great but evil deed, Marowitz's Thane is like a bear chained to a pole, trapped between opposing forces and unable to find the peace of mind in which to come to his own conclusion.

At the same time, the free form of the collage genre can provide either practical information on the narrative, necessary due to the reshuffling of events, or metaphoric images which suggest the directorial interpretation of events of characters. For example, three actors simultaneously present three separate facets of Macbeth's personality, interacting with one another along different lines of intention. The four witches (Lady Macbeth and her fellows) cast spells and do bodily harm to effigies of the characters, providing a visual aid toward the audience's understanding of the re-arranged plot without the addition of non-Shakespearean lines. Later in the play, the three Macbeths realize that as long as Banquo is alive, their murderous deed has no long term gain:

MACBETH: A barren scepter?

DUNCAN: (*With BANQUO*) Noble Banquo

That hast no less deserv'd, nor must be known

No less to have done so, let me enfold thee

³⁰ Marowitz, *A Macbeth* 94. All quoted text within the preceding seven lines is also from this source.

And hold thee to my heart.

MACBETH: For Banquo's issue have I filed my mind.

DUNCAN: (*To MACBETH, agreeing*) True, worthy Banquo.

MACBETH: For them the gracious Duncan have I
murdered?

BANQUO: (*Holding out hand*) It will be rain tonight.

2ND MACBETH/3RD MACBETH: Then let it come down.³¹

Rain becomes as a metaphor for dark violence: at Macbeth's signal, Banquo dies and the other two 'remove the static figure of Banquo as if it were a store dummy.'³² Thought has instantaneously bloody but simultaneously bloodless consequence in this topsy-turvy world. After intense knocking, an allusion to the porter's scene in Shakespeare's original play, a door opens to the sight of dead Duncan in his bloody shroud; Macbeth is wheeled onto stage on an oversized throne which makes him look like 'a baby in a high-chair';³³ Lady Macbeth during the sleepwalking scene is clad only in a transparent nightdress, the seductive powers of her female form now frail and vulnerable as she fearfully scuttles across the stage; and sudden black-outs draw a quick and unnatural curtain on hideous scenes. Then there are the aural influences: voice-overs, such as Lady Macbeth's 'When Duncan is asleep,'³⁴ provide both atmospheric enhancement and an aid to plot comprehension during the murder of the chamberlains and the king. Sound effects, borrowed from Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty, such as knocking or the ringing of a bell, both identified as 'sepulchral'³⁵ in nature; 'ear-splitting'³⁶ cries; anachronistic buzz of electrical

³¹ Marowitz, *A Macbeth* 88.

³² Marowitz, *A Macbeth* 88.

³³ Marowitz, *A Macbeth* 105.

³⁴ Marowitz, *A Macbeth* 98.

³⁵ Marowitz, *A Macbeth* 97.

³⁶ Marowitz, *A Macbeth* 100.

static; all help to transport the audience to the centre of the nightmarish world the audience is visiting. Throughout *A Macbeth*, the surreal quality of the collage format communicates its multi-layered, highly visceral message to an audience by side-stepping the critic and censor of the intellect, and gaining direct access to the psyche through the senses.

Another way in which the collage script effectively renders material subjective and interior is through the fast-paced interpolation and juxtaposition of dialogue, often from disparate scenes, in order to provide contrasting ‘voices’ of an argument in a way which simulates ‘cognitive dissonance’³⁷ as identified by psychologist Leon Festinger. The primary conflict for Macbeth arises from the dissonance between his desire to be king, and the resultant necessity for regicide, and his belief that murder is morally wrong, and deserving of damnation. The battering of desire against the bulwark of conscience which takes place within Macbeth’s mind is made manifest dramatically through the pastiche of the dialogue; the overall effect of this ping-ponging between evidence either supporting the notion of regicide, or justifying its negation, is of hearing different voices within one’s head, and this is enhanced by the fragmented visual presented by the three Macbeths on stage.

MACBETH: He’s here in double trust.

LADY MACBETH: Was the hope drunk

Wherein you dress’d yourself. Hath it slept since?

And wakes it now to look so green and pale?

MACBETH: I am his kinsman and his subject [...]

LADY MACBETH: Wouldst thou be afear’d

³⁷ According to psychologist Leon Festinger, ‘cognitive dissonance’ occurs when an individual becomes aware that their cognitions – their attitudes, emotions, beliefs or behaviours – are incompatible, creating a compulsion to reduce the conflict by acquiring or inventing new and more harmonious cognitions, or by modifying existing ones. See Leon Festinger, *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1962).

To be the same in thine own act and valour
As thou art in desire?

MACBETH: His virtues

Will plead like angels, trumpet-tongued against
The deep damnation of his taking-off.

LADY MACBETH: Wouldst thou have that
Which thou esteems't the ornament of life,
And live a coward in thine own esteem?

[...]

(Cue to:)

DUNCAN: I have begun to plant thee and will labour
To make thee full of growing.

MACBETH: *(Kneeling)* The service and the loyalty I owe
In doing it, pays itself.

LADY MACBETH: From this time
Such I account thy love.

[...]

MACBETH: *(Back with LADY MACBETH)*

[...]

I should against his murderer shut the door
Not bear the knife myself.

LADY MACBETH: The sleeping and the dead
Are but as pictures: tis the eye of childhood
That fears a painted devil

[...]

MACBETH: (*To LADY MACBETH*) Prithee peace:

I dare do all that may become a man

Who dares do more is none.

[...]

(*Hotly, to WITCHES*) Say from whence

You owe this strange intelligence;

Speak, I charge you!

LADY MACBETH: (*Calming him; taking him round*)

Hie thee hither

That I may pour my spirits in thine ear

And chastize [sic] with the valour of my tongue

All that impedes thee from the golden round

Which fate and metaphysical aid doth seem

To have thee crowned withal.³⁸

The pattern is clear: Macbeth resists, his wife goads, Duncan praises, Macbeth pledges, Lady Macbeth employs velvet seduction and prevails. When the three Macbeths subsequently complain that Banquo's existence negates all the terrible deeds that have been committed, since the witches prophesy that Banquo will father future kings, thus rendering Macbeth's crown temporary, they build point after point in favour of killing Banquo, tumbling over one another in their agreement; the pace accelerates until a reversal of direction seems a sheer impossibility. Beyond creating an interior perspective, in this scene Marowitz suggests that Macbeth is ultimately innocent since the battering temptation of his wife, the Witches and the promise of kingship simply prove too much for him. It surely

³⁸ Marowitz, *A Macbeth* 83-86.

cannot be coincidence that the collage version completely omits the thane's admission after the Witches first speak to him:

If good, why do I yield to that suggestion
Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair
And make my seated heart knock at my ribs,
Against the use of nature? Present fears
Are less than horrible imaginings,³⁹

as well as 'The Prince of Cumberland! that is a step / On which I must fall down, or else o'erleap, / For in my way it lies.'⁴⁰ 'Stars, hide your fires'⁴¹ is used by the primary Macbeth – Macbeth the Timorous, as Marowitz describes him – as a prayer against the expressed evils of his other psychic parts, Macbeth the Ambitious and Macbeth the Nefarious: since it is impossible, due to his violent actions, to completely exonerate the thane, Marowitz portrays the conscience ridden persona as an innocent victim dragged into regicide against his will. Later, in Duncan's chamber, Macbeth murders the two chamberlains by 'blessing'⁴² them, a vampiric priest who cannot be held responsible for the blood he spills, and who sanctifies even as he slices. Carrying on with this theme, the apparitions are not of an Armed Head, a Bloody Child, and a Child crowned holding a tree: instead, it is the dead Duncan, his eyes 'cavernous-black,' who warns Macbeth of Macduff; it is the murdered Banquo who advises the thane to be 'bloody, bold, and resolute' since he will never be harmed by one 'of woman born,'⁴³ and it is Macbeth's own face, courtesy of a masked actor, that speaks of Dunsinane and Birnam Wood. It is as if the men he murdered somehow forgive Macbeth, and are returning from the dead to offer metaphysical aid.

³⁹ Shakespeare, *Macbeth* I.iii.134-138.

⁴⁰ Shakespeare, *Macbeth* I.iv.48-50.

⁴¹ Marowitz, *A Macbeth* 96.

⁴² Marowitz, *A Macbeth* 99.

⁴³ Marowitz, *A Macbeth* 114-115.

There is a certain logic to this, since, in this version, it is the Witches who ‘hoist up the sleeping KING and present him to MACBETH’⁴⁴ to murder, it is the Witches who put the knives into Macbeth’s hands. The stage directions note that ‘MACBETH *raises the daggers and then lowers them.*’⁴⁵ He

*[c]ontinues staring into DUNCAN’s terrified eyes. Raises his daggers again. At that moment, LADY MACBETH appears, takes hold of MACBETH’s hands and drives the daggers into DUNCAN’s heart. There is an ear-splitting cry from DUNCAN which is picked up by the WITCHES. All vanish immediately on the Blackout.*⁴⁶

Later, after Lady Macbeth has been exterminated by that most infamous of incantations, performed by her fellow Witches in an effective *coup d’etat*, she returns from the grave to cradle Macbeth in motherly arms – possible since the collage genre neither requires nor allows character consistency. Near frantic with guilt over what he has done, King Macbeth speaks of ‘the yellow leaf’ and ‘mortality.’

The wine of life is drawn[.]

[...]

I am in blood.

Stepped in so far, that should I wade no more

Returning were as tedious as go oe’r.

His remorse receives no real understanding: ‘Poor prattler,’ Lady Macbeth responds, ‘how thou talk’st.’⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Marowitz, *A Macbeth* 100.

⁴⁵ Marowitz, *A Macbeth* 100. Italics in original.

⁴⁶ Marowitz, *A Macbeth* 100. Italics in original.

⁴⁷ Marowitz, *A Macbeth* 128. All quoted text within the preceding seven lines is also from this source.

Following a pattern set up in *Hamlet*, the remorseful thane becomes the victim of the assembled company. Surrounded by the rest of the characters, ‘MACBETH *stands frozen and helpless. When he is completely surrounded, all begin to beat him to death with broomsticks,*’⁴⁸ an allusion both to the witchcraft which permeates the action, and to Shakespeare’s fearful omen of Birnam Wood, which ‘be come to Dunsinane.’⁴⁹ In that inevitable *coup de grace*, as Macduff cuts off Macbeth’s head, Lady Macbeth ‘*dashes off the head*’⁵⁰ of Macbeth's effigy. In *A Macbeth*, an innocent has been drawn into temptation by the insistence of the woman closest to him, and by the machinations of the powers of evil. From a psychoanalytical standpoint, this pattern points toward the dramatic representation of two of Freud’s core issues, *fear of abandonment* and *fear of betrayal*: Lady Macbeth abandons her husband physically by failing to protect and support him, and by actually participating in the attack which destroys him, but the lack of true caring she exhibits toward him amounts to emotional abandonment as well.

While not specifically discussed in his critical writing, Marowitz’s depiction of Macbeth’s betrayal by Lady Macbeth and his resulting personal demise may reflect the prevailing fear of the world’s population during the decades surrounding the play’s creation due to the uncertainty engendered by the Cold War. The Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962 brought the planet to the brink of nuclear war; while annihilation was averted, the event spawned an uneasy accord between the key powers in the global arena which threatened to overturn at any time.⁵¹ Although the adaptation is not, according to Marowitz’s stated objectives, grounded in a strong political paradigm, the ongoing anxiety of the period may

⁴⁸ Marowitz, *A Macbeth* 131. Italics in original.

⁴⁹ Shakespeare, *Macbeth* V.viii.30.

⁵⁰ Marowitz, *A Macbeth* 131. Italics in original.

⁵¹ For example, the events of the missile crisis arguably ‘convinced the Soviets to increase their investment in an arsenal of intercontinental ballistic missiles capable of reaching the U.S. from Soviet territory,’ ultimately lengthening the period of risk. ‘Cuban Missile Crisis,’ *History*, 17 Nov. 2012 <<http://www.history.com/topics/cuban-missile-crisis>>.

have influenced his interpretation of the Scottish thane as the pawn of overwhelming and unpredictable forces beyond his comprehension or control. Without doubt, this depiction would have been heightened by the discontinuity of the collage genre, and its attendant nightmare quality.

Critical reaction to the production was generally negative, with some mention of the striking visual images created, but much comment declaiming the loss of a complex and consistent characterization, particularly in the title character, imposed both by Marowitz's concept of the play, and by the discontinuity of the collage format. In addition, Marowitz's tendency to see Macbeth as a victim of his wife, as well as the externalized aspects of his own psyche, robbed the play of the inner turmoil of a powerful man's resistance and ultimate embracing of evil, which drove Shakespeare's play. Robert Cushman noted that 'as a substitute experience for the original [*A Macbeth*] leaves too much out, notably the protagonist': conceding that Macbeth 'is there, all right (in triplicate, like a conscientious civil servant),' Cushman notes that the Scottish king is 'licked from the start [...] so his mental processes cease to be interesting,' further contending that '[t]here must be subtler ways of representing a man at war with himself.'⁵² Generally an admirer of Marowitz's lack of fear of his 'sacred author' as well as his willingness to 'butcher him [Shakespeare] in a good cause,'⁵³ Wardle praises the use of the collage genre in *A Macbeth*, the effect of which 'is horrifying and relevant because it makes witchcraft as normal and banal as the charnel house routines of Auschwitz and Biafra.' However, he concurs that 'Everyone, except the hero, is in the plot' which is to be expected since 'no character development can take place in a collage text.'⁵⁴ Even Martin Esslin, a champion of the avant-garde in

⁵² Robert Cushman, Review: "*Macbeth – Open Space*", *Plays and Players* (July, 1969): 53.

⁵³ Irving Wardle, '*An Othello – Open Space*,' *Times* 9 June 1972.

⁵⁴ Irving Wardle, 'The smell of blood,' *Times* 7 June 1969. All quoted text within the preceding three lines is also from this source.

theatre, described the production as a ‘disappointment’ after Marowitz’s ‘lyrical, absurdist *Hamlet*’: acknowledging ‘a certain amount of mild Theater of Cruelty stuff,’ he perceived ‘hardly more than a somewhat radically cut version of the play [...] a rather weak summer stock performance of *Macbeth*, garnished with a few odd magical rites, screams and cruelties.’⁵⁵ Esslin also made note in his headline – ‘She Sleepwalks in a See-Through’ – of perhaps the most titillating aspect of the production: Lady Macbeth’s attire, a transparent nightgown, during the sleep walking scene. The costume itself is suggested by Shakespeare’s text, as Lady Macbeth’s gentlewoman states that she has seen the queen ‘rise from her bed, throw her night-gown upon her’⁵⁶ every night since Macbeth’s departure for the field, and she later confirms that she is in ‘her very guise’⁵⁷ during the sleepwalking scene. The text also notes that she is carrying a candle, and she is presumably barefoot. According to Gary Wills in *Witches and Jesuits: Shakespeare’s Macbeth*, the ‘taper-barefoot-sheet cluster said, to Shakespeare’s audience, “repentant sorceress,”’⁵⁸ an interesting textual clue which supports Marowitz’s conversion of Lady Macbeth to the head of a coven of witches. Marowitz, on the other hand, asserts that through Lady Macbeth’s transparent dress,

we are deliberately made aware of her femininity because her
power as sorceress has been usurped by the witches, and it is

⁵⁵ Martin Esslin, ‘She Sleepwalks in a See-Through,’ *New York Times* 1 June 1969. Lopez echoed this concern in a review of a production of *A Macbeth* created by the London-based Young Pleasance company for the Edinburgh Fringe in 2003. Noting that ‘even a seasoned reader of *Macbeth* had trouble following what Marowitz does with the plot,’ Lopez suggests that a better solution by Marowitz to the ‘overdetermined’ nature of Shakespeare’s play would have been to ‘do something completely, genuinely different.’ Jeremy Lopez, ‘Small-time Shakespeare: The Edinburgh Festival Fringe, 2003,’ *Shakespeare Quarterly* 55.2 (2004): 207.

⁵⁶ Shakespeare, *Macbeth* V.i.5-6.

⁵⁷ Shakespeare, *Macbeth* V.i.19.

⁵⁸ Gary Wills, *Witches & Jesuits: Shakespeare’s Macbeth* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1995) 87.

necessary – at that point – to reaffirm her female sexuality, a quality which has never before been displayed in the play.⁵⁹

It is interesting to note Marowitz's equation of what is feminine to a display of the naked female form, as well as his implicit belief that an audience will read 'female sexuality' from a near naked woman in a state of near mental collapse. Female sexuality, in this interpretation, does not rely on a woman's actions or behaviour, but merely on allowing masculine gaze – on being observed as a physical body, whether or not that body itself is animated by sexual desire. Nonetheless, the director's seeming inability to identify female character in any other way than sexually is recurrent through his Shakespearean adaptations, and will be discussed further in Chapter Six.⁶⁰

Howard Brenton's *Thirteenth Night* is a valid comparator to Marowitz's *A Macbeth* for a number of reasons. Both men produced work within the same milieu, that being the United Kingdom, and within a similar time frame, specifically the late 1960s to the early 1980s. They both ostensibly utilized their theatrical endeavours to communicate socio-political issues, and both employ the Shakespearean canon as raw material for a portion of these works. Moreover, Marowitz was acquainted with Brenton's work, and found it worthy of inclusion in his programming at the Open Space Theatre⁶¹ on four occasions. As well, both their adaptations of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* employ unconscious or subconscious visions within the action: Marowitz portrays the first portion of *A Macbeth* as the Scottish Thane's prophetic vision, and Brenton's play, sub-titled *A Dream Play*, consists almost entirely of a dream, possibly better described as a nightmare, in the subconscious of the

⁵⁹ Charles Marowitz, 'Salmon Out of Season,' *Wascana Review* 7.1 (1972): 7.

⁶⁰ Although space does not permit a full discussion of the topic here, interesting accounts of the role of sexual stereotyping in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* may be found in the following article: Carolyn Asp, 'Be bloody, bold and resolute: Tragic Action and Sexual Stereotyping in *Macbeth*,' *Studies in Philology* 78.2 (1981): 377-395.

⁶¹ Four of Brenton's scripts were produced at the Open Space Theatre in the Lunchtime Theatre slot; none were directed by Marowitz himself. They were: *Gum & Goo* (Feb. 1971); *A Sky Blue Life* (Nov. 1971); *How Beautiful With Badges* (May 1972); and *Christie in Love* (July 1976). Schiele 212-215.

Macbeth character, Labour MP Jack Beaty, after he is knocked unconscious during a post-meeting brawl with members of the political far-right.

In his title *Thirteenth Night*, Brenton elides the traditional mysticism associated with the number ‘thirteen’ with that surrounding Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*, and continues this trend within his adaptation. Jack Beaty is a politician in the Labour government who, when physically knocked out, has a dream precipitated by a question posed by the Labour Prime Minister, Bill Dunn: ‘If a socialist party really came t’power in Britain, not Labour Party, real Socialist Party – what would it face?’⁶² In the dream, Beaty encounters three mysterious young women in a dimly lit parking garage: they flatter Beaty, persuading him that the country is heading towards trouble, and that it may be saved only through his leadership; they then disappear into the darkness. Obviously an allusion to Macbeth’s first meeting with the three weird sisters, this trio have an equally manipulative intent: political machination. Beaty is egged on by Jenny Gaze, a political activist and Beaty’s mistress, who induces him to assassinate Dunn, and take his place. Beaty proceeds to emulate Macbeth by transforming into a bloody-minded tyrant who uses violence to maintain control by removing any who might oppose him. After the assassination, and aided by Ross, the head of the Secret Service, Beaty imprisons and then organizes the murder of his political colleague, Feast (an obvious allusion to the auditory similarity of Banquo to banquet) while another, Murgatroyd (most likely a combination of the Malcolm and Macduff characters) flees to California. As Beaty states, as he seeks safety in a bunker beneath the political district, ‘What is my experience in Government? That authority is not loved. But, you want to make history, then be prepared to be a part of history. Even if

⁶² Howard Brenton, ‘Thirteenth Night,’ *Thirteenth Night & A Short Sharp Shock!* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1981) 8. All future quotations from this source will be shown as ‘Brenton, *Thirteenth Night*’ followed by the page number.

that's a corpse in a ditch.'⁶³ At the play's epilogue, Beaty and Gaze stroll along a beach: Beaty is limping, ostensibly from the head injury sustained in the attack just before his nightmare commenced. They speak of their dream of peace, a dream to which Beaty ascribes his current physical debility. 'But then,' he muses, 'peace is not a personal matter, is it.'⁶⁴

Thirteenth Night was written and produced during a period of significant social activism against Britain's agreement to house nuclear weapons controlled by the United States on its own soil. The play portrays Britain as the pawn of its ally, leading James S. Bost of the University of Maine to declare Brenton's stance on America as 'simplistic and malevolent [...] The prevailing sentiment in *Thirteenth Night* is that America has raped Britain.'⁶⁵ Beyond this, however, the play acts as a cautionary tale against the siren song of power, and its effect, not just on the kings and nobles of past centuries, but also on modern political leaders, even if they arise from the political left. As Ruby Cohn states in *Shakespeare Left*, '[t]he nightmare has not taught them [Beaty and Gaze] that peace and politics *are* personal matters.'⁶⁶

THE SHREW

The Shrew was first produced at The Hot Theatre in The Hague, Holland in October of 1973, before being performed at Marowitz's Open Space Theatre in London; the following year, a revised production was remounted at the Open Space. The adaptation interpolates a highly edited text from Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* with scenes written by Marowitz portraying the courtship of a modern couple. Three versions of the

⁶³ Brenton, *Thirteenth Night* 39.

⁶⁴ Brenton, *Thirteenth Night* 41.

⁶⁵ James S. Bost, 'Review: *Thirteenth Night* by Howard Brenton,' *Theatre Journal* 34.4 (1982): 527.

⁶⁶ Ruby Cohn, 'Shakespeare Left,' *Theatre Journal* 40.1 (1988): 54.

play script were created between 1972 and 1975; the third was published by Calder & Boyars in 1975 and serves as the basis for this exploration.⁶⁷

Marowitz created his re-fashioning of Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* following a full century of toil in support of female emancipation. Although the first wave in the fight for women's equality arguably began in earnest in 1903 when Emmeline Pankhurst founded the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU), bringing the term 'suffragette' into common usage in Britain,⁶⁸ this action built upon gains made by the London Society for Women's Suffrage established in 1867.⁶⁹ In 1928, British women were allowed to vote at the age of twenty-one, giving them age parity on this issue with the male population. In 1956, the act of rape was defined by the Sexual Offences Act in cases of, for example, incest, lack of consent, and sex with a girl under sixteen years of age. Women joined the House of Lords in 1958, and the first female minister of state was appointed in 1965. Two years later, women were able to obtain contraception through family planning clinics, regardless of their marital status, and in 1971, the first Women's Liberation march in London drew over four thousand participants. The gains for women in their search for equality were therefore mounting slowly but steadily throughout the first seventy years of the twentieth century.

The decade previous to *The Shrew*'s inception brought with it a significant amount of published writing on women's issues. In 1963, having been unable to find a magazine willing to publish her insights as an article, Betty Friedan produced *The Feminine*

⁶⁷ In the fall of 1986, Marowitz directed a slightly revised production of *The Shrew* at the Ensemble Studio Theatre in Los Angeles with Jenny Agutter as Kate and Marowitz's partner, Jane Windsor (née Allsop) as Bea/Bianca. In previous versions, the female character in the modern scenes had been known only as She. Sylvia Drake, 'Does Shakespeare get a Fair Shake in *Shrew*?' *Los Angeles Times* 27 Oct. 1986, 4 Oct. 2011 <http://articles.latimes.com/1986-10-27/entertainment/ca-7602_1_petruchio>.

⁶⁸ 'Timeline: Equality for Women,' *Guardian.co.uk*, 2 July 2003, 17 Nov. 2012 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2003/jul/02/women.gender1>>.

⁶⁹ 'The Women's Timeline', *Manchester Metropolitan University*, 17 Nov. 2012 www.mmu.ac.uk/humanresources/equalities/doc/gender-equality-timeline.pdf.

Mystique, which grew out of a survey of her former Smith College classmates undertaken in advance of their fifteenth year reunion: the results of the sampling showed that ‘the highly educated and talented housewives in their mid-30s were dissatisfied and distraught, drugged by tranquilizers, misled by psychoanalysis and ignored by society.’⁷⁰ In the academic field, Alice S. Rossi, ‘one among only a very few social scientists who examined the inferior position of women in American society, and among an even small number who dared suggest real social and economic equality,’⁷¹ published ‘Equality between the Sexes: An Immodest Proposal’⁷² in the journal *Daedalus* in 1964. Five years later, the grassroots publication *Shrew* was created by groups working with the London Women’s Liberation Workshop ‘in an attempt to unify the female population of certain localities and combat the sense of isolation felt by many women,’⁷³ and *The Female Eunuch* and *Sexual Politics* were added to the bookshelf by Germaine Greer and Kate Millet respectively. Only a year before Marowitz’s conception of Shakespeare’s *Shrew* came to the stage, another British publication, *Spare Rib*, was established with the intention of providing the feminist population with an alternative to conventional women’s magazines: the periodical had a circulation of twenty thousand, and became ‘one of the most prominent feminist magazines that emerged at the time.’⁷⁴ In the United States, Gloria Steinem launched *Ms Magazine* the same year, indicating that feminists were actively expressing their views in print on a regular basis and on both sides of the Atlantic.

⁷⁰ Patricia Sullivan, ‘Betty Friedan, 1921-2006: Voice of Feminism’s Second Wave,’ *Washington Post*, 5 Feb. 2006, 17 Nov. 2012 <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/02/04/AR2006020401385_2.html>.

⁷¹ Joan D. Mandle, ‘Women’s Liberation: Humanizing Rather Than Polarizing,’ *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 397.7 (1971): 119.

⁷² Alice S. Rossi, ‘Equality Between the Sexes: An Immodest Proposal,’ *Daedalus* 93.2 (1964).

⁷³ ‘*Shrew*: Women’s Liberation Workshop (1969-1978),’ *Grassroots Feminism*, 11 Dec. 2009, 17 Nov. 2012 <<http://www.grassrootsfeminism.net/cms/node/520>>.

⁷⁴ ‘*Spare Rib* (Magazine, 1972-1993),’ *Grassroots Feminism*, 7 July 2009, 17 Nov. 2012 <<http://www.grassrootsfeminism.net/cms/node/234>>.

Marowitz's claim to have created *The Shrew* in response to the oppression of women he found within Shakespeare's play was therefore in alignment with the feminist political activism of the period, and supported by his statements that *The Taming of the Shrew* had always 'left a nasty taste in the mouth'⁷⁵ in that 'no matter how much irony one got into that last speech of Katherine's to the assembled wives, it always smacked of male chauvinism.'⁷⁶ However, he also admits that when creating his adaptation, 'a particularly torturous personal relationship at the time caused me to see the darker aspects of what is commonly presented as farce,'⁷⁷ placing the impetus for his creative work within a personal, rather than a political, realm. There is something unconvincing in this assertion that the 'torture' created by a romantic relationship with one woman somehow spurred him, not to retaliate against all women, but instead to highlight the oppression of the female gender by the dominant hegemony of the white heterosexual male population, of which he was (and is) a member. Nonetheless, he indicates that *The Taming of the Shrew*, 'shorn of the highjinks and slapstick which usually embroider it, is a detestable story about a woman who is brainwashed by a scheming adventurer as cruel as he is avaricious.'⁷⁸ Critical commentary on the play often divides over this bi-polar construct, with the comedy of highjinks and slapstick on one side and the tragic abuse of brainwashing and cruelty on the other. Again, when one considers that Marowitz's adaptations tend to re-interpret Shakespeare's female characters as predominantly sexual beings responding to male desire, it seems suspicious that he declares Shakespeare's play rife with male chauvinism, since the tendency to view females exclusively as sexual objects is one root of this prejudice. However, in his perception, he is aligned with Coppélia Kahn, a scholar known for her

⁷⁵ Marowitz, *Recycling Shakespeare* 21.

⁷⁶ Marowitz, *Recycling Shakespeare* 51.

⁷⁷ Marowitz, *Recycling Shakespeare* 51.

⁷⁸ Marowitz, *Recycling Shakespeare* 21-22.

research on the concept on gender within the Shakespearean canon, who sees in *The Taming of the Shrew* the portrayal of ‘the subjection of a willful woman to the will of her husband,’⁷⁹ in compliance with the patriarchal attitudes of the day that touted the supremacy of a husband’s power over his wifely chattel. However, while Paul Yachnin argues that ‘feminist Shakespearians have marked this play off as beyond redemption,’⁸⁰ feminist opinion on the play has a wider breadth than this. One of the leading advocates for women’s rights during the twentieth century, Germaine Greer, disagrees with both Marowitz and Kahn: ‘*The Taming of the Shrew* is not a knockabout farce of wife-battering, but the cunning adaptation of a folk motif to show the forging of a partnership between equals.’⁸¹ Greer goes on to say that the land-poor Petruchio is being no more than practical when he seeks out a wife who possesses both the strength of mind and body, and the financial assets, to help create a life with him on his recently inherited estate.

He chooses Kate as he would a horse, for her high mettle, and
he must use at least as much intelligence and energy in
bringing her to trust him, and to accept the bargain he offers,
as he would in breaking a horse.⁸²

In this way, Greer transfers the play from the usual male versus female gender construct into the realm of socioeconomics and a practical business relationship. Marilyn French takes a more sociological view, noting that Katherine and Petruchio are the only characters in Shakespeare’s play rebelling against the bourgeois societal patterns of the day, and that the play is as much about the taming of Petruchio, whom she describes as shrewish, as it is

⁷⁹ Coppélia Kahn, ‘*The Taming of the Shrew*: Shakespeare’s Mirror of Marriage,’ *Modern Language Studies* 5.1 (1975): 88.

⁸⁰ Paul Yachnin, ‘Personations: *The Taming of the Shrew* and the Limits of Theoretical Criticism,’ *Early Modern Literary Studies* 2.1 (1996): np - paragraph 23.

⁸¹ Germaine Greer, *Shakespeare* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1986) 111.

⁸² Greer 111.

about the taming of Kate. Further, '[w]e enjoy the play not for its delineation of ideal marriage, but for Kate's and Petruchio's defiance of accepted manners.'⁸³ A perception of the Kate/Petruchio relationship based upon attraction – a view unexpressed by the feminist scholars quoted – comes from Harold Bloom. Sometimes described as a 'male chauvinist'⁸⁴ himself, Bloom is normally embanked far from the feminist camp,⁸⁵ and it is therefore surprising to find him aligned with Greer on this issue. On the other hand, it is somewhat predictable, considering that Bloom's love of the Shakespearean canon borders on Bardolatry, that he, like Greer, finds no affront in *The Taming of the Shrew*, perceiving in Petruchio nothing more offensive than an 'amiable ruffian' who is 'an ideal' mate for Kate, in that he allows her to escape her father's house and the 'maddening' life that she has been living there.⁸⁶ Bloom also believes that what he describes as an unmistakable attraction between the pair holds a strong pay-off for the audience:

The swaggering Petruchio provokes a double reaction in [Kate]: outwardly furious, inwardly smitten. The perpetual popularity of the *Shrew* does not derive from male sadism in the audience but from the sexual excitation of women and men alike.⁸⁷

Further, asserts Bloom, theirs is a partnership 'which doubtless will maintain itself against a cowed world by a common front of formidable pugnacity' which he acknowledges is 'much more cunning in Kate than in her roaring boy of a husband.'⁸⁸ It cannot be denied,

⁸³ Marilyn French, *Shakespeare's Division of Experience* (New York: Ballantine, 1981) 78-79.

⁸⁴ David Fite, *Harold Bloom: The Rhetoric of Romantic Vision* (Amherst, MA: U of Massachusetts P, 1985) 123.

⁸⁵ Bloom wrote in *The Western Canon* that 'We are destroying all intellectual and esthetic standards in the humanities and social sciences, in the name of social justice' through concession to what he described as the 'School of Resentment,' the six branches of which include Feminism and New Historicism. Harold Bloom, *The Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1994) 35.

⁸⁶ Bloom, *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human* 29.

⁸⁷ Bloom, *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human* 29.

⁸⁸ Bloom, *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human* 29.

therefore, based on this cursory survey of scholarly opinion, that Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* has the power to evoke strong and contradictory interpretations both within and without the various schools of critical thought.

In contrast to Greer's notion of the play as based on a folk motif, Marowitz believes that once the comic patina is scraped away, 'one finds a play closer to *The Duchess of Malfi* than to *The Comedy of Errors* – a Gothic tragedy rather than an Elizabethan comedy.'⁸⁹ This opinion is largely based upon the tactics employed by Petruchio in his 'taming' of Kate, which Marowitz describes as brainwashing, the principles of which are well known from 'the Korean War, from Vietnam, from certain East European societies'⁹⁰: sleep deprivation coupled with food deprivation, intensified by events causing confusion of one's moral centre and a remolding of one's values. Since the allegation of brainwashing is one upon which Marowitz founds his adaptation, it bears further examination, and that examination itself requires explanation. Had he, as an adaptor, indicated that Kate's treatment at her husband's hands within Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* was *similar* to torture, simultaneously confirming that a difference in intensity level existed between the two actions, an analysis of this aspect of Shakespeare's play based upon a metaphorical equivalence would have been apt. However, since a direct comparison is made between Petruchio's tactics and those imposed upon prisoners of war in historical military conflicts, specifically the Korean and Vietnam wars, it is appropriate that the former be compared and contrasted to actual techniques of the latter, in order to determine whether this direct comparison is valid, or conversely another example of Marowitz's tendency to polarize contexts through exaggerated perception.

⁸⁹ Marowitz, *Recycling Shakespeare* 22.

⁹⁰ Marowitz, *Roar of the Canon* 170.

A cursory perusal of Petruchio's tactics shows that certain characteristics of Kate's 'taming' are indeed similar to those utilized by the Communists in the 'brainwashing' – also known as 'menticide' or 'coercive persuasion' – of prisoners of war during the Korean conflict. According to Farber, Harlow and West, the tactics of brainwashing utilized by the Communists against American POWs in order to obtain false confessions and participation in programs of propaganda, can be divided into three categories: debility, dependency and dread.

Deprivation of food, which Marowitz notes was suffered by Kate, was an effective tactic to increase debility, but Farber, Harlow and West describe the necessary state as 'semi-starvation.'⁹¹ Raymond A. Houk has calculated that *The Taming of the Shrew* takes place over a period of five days, which would mean that Kate's time at Petruchio's estate was no more than three days, based upon textual indications.⁹² This is consistent with her query to Grumio, 'What, did he marry me to famish me?'⁹³ since, presumably, had she been starved for an extended period of time by this point in the play, she would not have needed to ask the question: the answer would have been self-evident. Allan D. Lieberman, M.D. reports in an article in *Scientific American* on 'well-documented studies reporting survivals of other hunger strikers for 28, 36, 38 and 40 days'⁹⁴: Kate's state after three days without food cannot accurately be described as semi-starvation, since a human being is able to sustain much longer periods of food deprivation without serious implication. Also, the symptoms of semi-starvation, as described by Farber, Harlow and West, include '[c]hronic physical pain [...] loss of energy and inability to resist minor abuse [...] inanition and a

⁹¹ I. E. Farber, Harry F. Harlow & Louis Jolyon West, 'Brainwashing, Conditioning, and DDD (Debility, Dependency, and Dread),' *Sociometry* 20.4 (1957): 273.

⁹² See Raymond A. Houk, 'The Evolution of *The Taming of the Shrew*,' *PLMA* 57.4 (1942): 1009-1038.

⁹³ William Shakespeare, 'The Taming of the Shrew,' *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974) IV.iii.3. All further quotations from this source will be shown as 'Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew*' followed by the act, scene and line number.

⁹⁴ Allan D. Lieberman, 'How long can a person survive without food?,' *Scientific American* 8 Nov. 2004.

sense of terrible weariness and weakness,⁹⁵ and these are not present in Shakespeare's Kate, who does not complain of pain, and resists Petruchio's challenges with considerable energy. Debility was also produced through sleep deprivation, another tactic noted by Marowitz as present in Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*. Considering once again that Kate's stay at Petruchio's estate was approximately seventy-two hours, even if she was sleepless for *all* of that time, it fails to reach the levels of sleep deprivation implemented when detainees at military facilities in Abu Ghraib in Iraq and Guantánamo Bay were deprived of sleep for eleven days – 264 hours – under the Bush administration's "enhanced" interrogation techniques.⁹⁶ Further, the symptoms of sleep deprivation include depression, anxiety, fatigue, impaired memory, decreased reaction time, reduced vigilance and loss of dexterity,⁹⁷ and again, none of these can be proven to be present in Shakespeare's Kate based on an analysis of her text – she never mentions being tired, anxious, or depressed; she doesn't forget names or bump into the furniture.

The second of the three categories of brainwashing tactics is dependency, which is created by

the prolonged deprivation of many of the factors, such as sleep and food, needed to maintain sanity and life itself, [... and which] was made more poignant by occasional unpredictable brief respites, reminding the prisoner that it was possible for the captor to relieve the misery if he wished.⁹⁸

⁹⁵ Farber, Harlow & West 273.

⁹⁶ Maureen Stanton, 'The Hours: In Pursuit of Sleep,' *River Teeth: A Journal of Nonfiction Narrative* 12.1 (2010): 30.

⁹⁷ This information is taken from an article on the effects of ongoing sleep deprivation on medical students. See Jadon R. Webb, John W. Thomas, Mark A. Valasek, 'Contemplating Cognitive Enhancement in Medical Students and Residents,' *Perspectives in Biology and Medicine* 53.2 (2010): 201.

⁹⁸ Farber, Harlow & West 273.

Here, there is strong alignment with Kate's situation: she is dependent upon Petruchio, both legally and physically, for the necessities of life; the possibility of obtaining these necessities is often dangled in front of her – Grumio's cruel listing of available meat; the sight of a beautiful dress and cap – only to be yanked away at the last minute.

The last in the categories of brainwashing articulated by Farber, Harlow and West is 'dread,' an acute feeling of fear induced in POW's by their Communist captors:

[f]ear of death, fear of pain, fear of nonrepatriation, fear of deformity or permanent disability through neglect or inadequate medical treatment, fear of Communist violence against loved ones at home, and even fear of one's own inability to satisfy the demands of insatiable interrogators.⁹⁹

No such sense of dread, appropriate to her context, can be found in Kate's text. Towards the end of her period of 'brainwashing,' when on the road to Padua with her husband, her lack of inherent fear is easily perceived through her response to Petruchio's declaration, 'how bright and goodly shines the moon!': she immediately contradicts her 'captor,' stating, 'The moon! the sun – it is not moonlight now.'¹⁰⁰

Finally, Marowitz notes Petruchio's use of tactics which confuse Kate's moral centre and remold her values, such as the incidents involving his version of the time of day, the identification of the sun versus the moon, and the identification of Vincentio as a young woman versus an old man. Albert D. Biderman, an expert on the subject of brainwashing, states that, in order for a prisoner to undergo significant changes of attitude or belief, they

⁹⁹ Farber, Harlow & West 273.

¹⁰⁰ Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew* IV.v.2-3.

must be lead through ‘a series of cognitive steps which are reasonable and plausible.’¹⁰¹ In other words, in order to inculcate false beliefs in a victim of brainwashing, their captor begins by proposing ideas which have a certain logic to the victim, and are thus accepted; they then gradually move the victim along the continuum towards beliefs which diverge substantially from their (the victim’s) personal belief system. This is clearly not the case in Shakespeare’s *The Taming of the Shrew*: Petruchio begins in each case with an outrageous notion; Kate never integrates these notions into her personal belief system, but simply ostensibly agrees with her captor’s stated beliefs for practical purposes (i.e. actually getting to her former home in Padua). As she says, ‘And be it moon, or sun, or what you please; / An if you please to call it a rush-candle, / Henceforth I vow it shall be so for me.’¹⁰² Kate never suffers from the delusion that the sun *is* the moon, she merely agrees to *call* it the moon in order to pacify Petruchio. Her belief system has not changed, therefore no brainwashing has taken place, and this is at odds with Marowitz’s perception of Shakespeare’s play.

Shakespeare’s Petruchio articulates his taming strategy as ‘training’ in his soliloquy during scene IV.i, explaining how he will rid Kate of her ‘mad and headstrong humor’¹⁰³ just as he would train a hawk. In truth, the scenario is not so much one of brainwashing, but of behaviour modification, and the obvious question in order to support Marowitz’s perception of Petruchio as ‘cruel’ is, ‘At what point does such training cross the line into abuse?’ A definition of what constitutes CIDT (Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment) and ‘torture’ will provide a yardstick upon which to measure Petruchio’s strategy, and by which to determine whether Marowitz’s labeling is valid. According to the United Nations,

¹⁰¹ Albert D. Biderman, ‘The Image of “Brainwashing”,’ *Public Opinion Quarterly* 26.4 (1962): 560. The Schein quote is from Edgar H. Schein with Inge Schneier and Curtis H. Barker, *Coercive Persuasion: A Socio-psychological Analysis of the ‘Brainwashing’ of American Civilian Prisoners by the Chinese Communists* (New York: Norton, 1961) 238-239.

¹⁰² Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew* IV.v.13-15.

¹⁰³ Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew* IV.i.209.

treatment described as cruel, inhuman and degrading must be based upon individual actions which constitute cruelty and degradation. ‘For example, U.S. courts have found CIDT when officials beat prisoners, grab prisoners’ genitals,¹⁰⁴ or keep prisoners in filthy conditions.’¹⁰⁵ In addition, individuals associated with public government must either participate directly in the aforementioned actions, or consent to them with full knowledge of their cruelty. Torture is classified as one form of CIDT and is defined by the Convention Against Torture (CAT) as containing the ‘[i]nfliction of severe physical or mental pain or suffering; [w]ith intention; and [f]or a specific purpose, such as extracting a confession or information.’¹⁰⁶ In terms of Shakespeare’s *Shrew*, Baptista, both as a citizen of Padua and as Kate’s father, might be seen as surrogate for the post of the public official, and two the remaining three criteria are certainly indisputable: Petruchio intentionally enacts his taming tactics upon Kate for the specific purpose of obtaining her obedience to his desires, and her at least ostensible adherence to the desired characteristics of ideal femininity. The criteria which may be argued is that of the ‘infliction of severe physical or mental pain or suffering,’ with ‘severe’ being the point of contention. As described in the Bybee Memorandum, ‘the adjective “severe” means that “the pain or suffering must be of such a high level of intensity that the pain is difficult for the subject to endure.”’¹⁰⁷ Based upon

¹⁰⁴ While the ‘enhanced interrogation techniques’ utilized at Guantánamo Bay were instituted many years after Marowitz created *The Shrew*, it is interesting to note that the grabbing of genitals – specifically Petruchio grabbing Kate’s genitals – was one of the actions undertaken in his adaptation.

¹⁰⁵ Caitlin Hunter, ‘*Aldana v. Del Monte Fresh Produce: Cruel, Inhuman, and Degrading Treatment After Sosa v. Alvarez-Machain*,’ *University of California, Davis Law Review* 44.1357: 1351-1352.

¹⁰⁶ Manfred Nowak, ‘What Practices Constitute Torture?: US and UN Standards,’ *Human Rights Quarterly* 28.4 (2006): 817.

¹⁰⁷ The Bybee Memorandum, quoted in Nowak 812. Dated August 1, 2011, and written by ‘then Assistant Attorney-General for the Office of Legal Council at the US Department of Justice (DOJ) and current federal judge Jay S. Bybee, [...] to Alberto Gonzales, then Counsel to the President of the United States and now Attorney-General [...] the Bybee Memorandum provided a detailed legal analysis of the various elements included in the Section 2340 definition of torture.’ The Bybee Memorandum was replaced in December, 2004 by the Levin Memorandum, created by Daniel Levin, Acting Assistant Attorney General of the United States, and reducing the severity of pain and negating the necessity for long term mental harm in the US definition of Torture.

this, US Secretary Donald Rumsfeld instituted interrogation techniques at the Guantánamo detention facilities including

the use of stress positions for up to four hours, detention in isolation up to thirty days, interrogation for up to twenty hours, hooding, forced grooming, deprivation of light and auditory stimuli, removal of clothing and all comfort items, and the use of phobias to induce stress.¹⁰⁸

The extreme nature of the Guantánamo interrogation techniques noted contrast sharply with the Petruchian tactics with which Shakespeare's Kate is confronted. While she is clearly confused, outraged, hungry and tired, Kate's ability to endure her situation is evidenced in the grounded rhythm and rational clarity with which she petitions Grumio for food:

The more my wrong, the more his spite appears.
What, did he marry me to famish me?
Beggars that come unto my father's door
Upon entreaty have a present aims,
If not, elsewhere they meet with charity;
But I, who never knew how to entreat,
Nor never needed that I should entreat,
Am starv'd for meat, giddy for lack of sleep,
With oaths kept waking, and with brawling fed;
And that which spites me more than all these wants,
He does it under name of perfect love;
As who should say, if I should sleep or eat,

¹⁰⁸ Nowak 813.

'Twere deadly sickness, or else present death.

I prithee go, and get me some repast;

I care not what, so it be wholesome food.¹⁰⁹

Even when Kate realizes Grumio's cruel trick, and that no food is forthcoming, she has the strength to beat him with both her fists and her tongue:

Go get thee gone, thou false deluding slave,

Beats him.

That feed'st me with the very name of meat.

Sorrow on thee and all the pack of you

That triumph thus upon my misery!

Go get thee gone, I say.¹¹⁰

The strength of her communication in terms of the vocabulary and the complexity of content, as well as the regular iambic pentameter of the text, punctuated only by the occasional trochee and the odd caesura, also suggest that Kate is easily able to endure the pain and frustration of Petruchio's politic reign.

Marowitz's use of 'cruel' to describe Shakespeare's Petruchio is therefore unsupported by modern definitions and examples of either CIDT or torture. Ultimately, in Shakespeare's play's parlance, Marowitz has taken a rush candle, and made it out to be the sun. While certain of Petruchio's tactics mimic those utilized in brainwashing, they would only qualify as such if intensified greatly, based on classifications created by the United Nations' Convention Against Torture. Marowitz's own comparison of Kate's treatment at her husband's hand to the techniques utilized during the Korean and Vietnamese conflicts only serves to diminish the experience of American POWs and thus disrespect their

¹⁰⁹ Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew* IV.iii.2-16.

¹¹⁰ Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew* IV.iii.31-35. Italics in original.

suffering. Ultimately, although he expresses his dislike of *The Taming of the Shrew* for his perception of its chauvinism, ostensibly aligning himself with the Women's Liberation movement of the day, Marowitz's view of Shakespeare's Kate as a victim of brainwashing and cruel treatment merely reinforces chauvinistic beliefs that women are weak creatures who are easily broken.

A precise textual analysis of the manner in which Kate, the alleged 'docile domesticated lackey,'¹¹¹ responds while displaying obedience within Petruchio's challenges offers proof that she is not only unbeaten, but has also discovered the 'game' being played. Kate's epiphany in this regard undoubtedly occurs during IV.v on the road to Padua: she has acquiesced to her husband's ridiculous mistaking of the moon for the sun, and, for the sake of peace, has joined him in his 'madness.' When Petruchio similarly invites her into seeing Vincentio as a beautiful young maid, Kate responds with a light-hearted, laddered text¹¹² which becomes more sexual, and therefore more naughty and more comic, with each line spoken:

Young budding virgin, fair, and fresh. and sweet,
Whither away, or [where] is thy abode?
Happy the parents of so fair a child!
Happier the man whom favorable stars
Allot thee for his lovely bedfellow!¹¹³

Clearly, Kate is finding at least a little pleasure in this world of madness. When Petruchio adds yet *another* layer to the game by contradicting his own deluded vision – and her greeting – in declaring the truth of the old man's state, she quickly understands her place

¹¹¹ Marowitz, *Recycling Shakespeare* 22.

¹¹² A 'ladder' is a rhetorical device in which the energy and pitch of each successive line moves upward, increasing listener comprehension as well as a forward-moving textual dynamic.

¹¹³ Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew* IV.v.37-41.

within the game – not as the water boy, but as a star player – and leaps back onto the playing field with wit and lively aplomb: ‘Pardon, old father, my mistaking eyes, / That have been so bedazzled with the sun, / That every thing I look on seemeth green.’¹¹⁴ These volleys of verbal badinage are not consistent with the broken victim of brainwashing Marowitz describes in Kate: these are the words of a woman very much in control of herself, who has mastered the rules of scrimmage alongside her new team captain – captain, since legally during the Elizabethan era, men had more power in society than women. Moreover, they sound very much like the dueling woman who, when her opponent described himself as ‘mov’d to woo thee for my wife,’¹¹⁵ instantly retorted, ‘Mov’d! in good time! Let him that mov’d you hither / Remove you hence. I knew you at the first / You were a moveable.’¹¹⁶ Obviously, Kate’s personality has not been diminished through mental torture, but is still very much intact. In the last scene, Kate acknowledges that her actions impact her husband’s status while simultaneously getting a bit of her own back against her sister and the snide widow; she does this by outdoing them in a display of womanly virtue, the greatest of which is obedience. The first lines of this text display how thoroughly at ease she is, by observing the two women who are each exhibiting signs of their own unique displeasure, and responding to what she sees: ‘Fie, fie, unknit that threat’ning unkind brow, / And dart not scornful glances from those eyes, / To wound thy lord, thy king, thy governor.’¹¹⁷ One can easily conjecture that the first line is aimed at the widow who recently insulted her (particularly since Petruchio has directed Kate to speak first to her), and the next two toward the sister who, since marriage, has revealed her true feelings regarding the role of virtuous woman and wife through her lack of respect for her

¹¹⁴ Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew* IV.v.45-47.

¹¹⁵ Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew* II.i.194.

¹¹⁶ Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew* II.i.195-197.

¹¹⁷ Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew* V.ii.136-138.

husband, Lucentio. Reveling in this new ‘post shrew’ persona, Kate continues by hitting them where it hurts the most – their female vanity: ‘It blots thy beauty, as frosts do bite the meads, / Confounds thy fame, as whirlwinds shake fair buds, / And in no sense is meet or amiable.’¹¹⁸ From there, she buries herself in her role with abandon: obedience to her husband has become a stick with which she can beat the two women, not to mention their husbands, who had labeled her a shrew while rewarding her new partner Petruchio, who was, it must be added, the sole individual who saw in her the promise of a ‘post shrew’ existence. At last, she cannot resist rubbing salt in the wound:

I am asham’d that women are so simple
To offer war where they should kneel for peace,
Or seek for rule, supremacy and sway,
When they are bound to serve, love and obey.¹¹⁹

Kate has figured out the rules of the game, because her ‘reason’ was ‘haply more’¹²⁰ than the other two women. It is a game which is often mistaken as involving exclusively issues of feminism and gender, but which equally exists between parent and child; employer and employee; or teacher and student: the necessity within an organized society to show deference and respect to hierarchal power. Within the stricture of a patriarchal society, the rules of play as they relate to status carry all the competitiveness that any status game demands. As Holly A. Crocker illustrates in ‘Affective Resistance: Performing Passivity and Playing a Part in *The Taming of the Shrew*,’ Petruchio seeks to establish his male superiority, not only over Kate, but over the other men as well, by taking a worthy (albeit headstrong) and wealthy woman, ridding her of her more shrewish qualities, and

¹¹⁸ Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew* V.ii.139-141.

¹¹⁹ Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew* V.ii.161-164.

¹²⁰ Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew* V.ii.171.

transforming her into the male ideal of feminine behaviour. Petruchio teaches Kate – just as a parent teaches a child, just as an employer teaches an employee – that when those occupying a lower rung on the ladder of power are obedient, they are rewarded. Shakespeare’s triumph is that he ensures that Kate recognizes the game and allows her to effectively re-program it from the inside out:

[b]y accepting the model of femininity foisted on her, Katharine gains a degree of autonomy. By speaking the category of feminine virtue that masculine discourse would define, she steps outside the boundaries of subjectivity imagined by Petruchio. He cannot help but be pleased, because she makes literal his desire for absolute feminine submission. But by performing her subjection in such independent terms, she exposes the illusory nature of the power he would wield over her.¹²¹

Perversely, Kate has considerable power within this system to wound her husband, should she choose to do so, simply by acting outside of her role as virtuous wife through disobedience, and all she has to be willing to pay for this freedom of choice is the possibility of a beating or an enforced fast. But why would she do so, when her husband has given *her* a new sense of belonging by removing the stigma of ‘shrew’ from her societal role; when he has given her status as the ultimate ‘ideal woman’; and when he has endowed the unmarriageable termagant with a partner, a husband, and a lover in one fell swoop?

¹²¹ Holly A. Crocker, ‘Affective Resistance: Performing Passivity and Playing a-Part in *The Taming of the Shrew*,’ *Shakespeare Quarterly* 54.2 (2003): 155-156.

As always, Marowitz has the courage to take an oppositional stand to a prevalent interpretation of a Shakespearean classic, but his interpretation of Petruchio's 'taming' techniques as 'brainwashing' relies on nothing more than a perfunctory knowledge of the subject, and thus exaggerates minor similarities into concrete comparisons. His perception of the intellectual substructure of Shakespeare's play is therefore suspect, and it logically follows that his adaptation, which seeks to confront this polemic must therefore be likewise less than apt.

The world of Marowitz's *The Shrew* is decidedly darker and more menacing than that of Shakespeare's play: in his 'Notes on *The Shrew*,' he notes:

All comedy must be siphoned from the play. The grim implications of Petruchio's behavior against Kate must be, as it were, alienated from the body of the farce and revealed as the true and terrible subject beneath the play's conventional frivolities.¹²²

Accordingly, Kate tortures her sister Bianca in a highly realistic manner; Petruchio, Grumio and Hortensio have '*the look and manner of men involved in schemes and stratagems [... exhibiting a] certain unsentimental practicality*','¹²³ and Petruchio 'taming' soliloquy shows him '*revealing for the first time an overt psychopathic manner*.'¹²⁴ An enthusiastic adventurer in Shakespeare's play, in Marowitz's adaptation, Petruchio is no better than a gangster, seemingly devoid of any human feeling other than greed and desire for power. Stating a belief that Petruchio would torture Kate even if no money were at stake, Marowitz

¹²² Marowitz, *Prospero's Staff* 141.

¹²³ Marowitz, 'The Shrew,' *The Marowitz Shakespeare* (New York: Marion Boyars, 1990) 134. Further quotations from this source will be shown as 'Marowitz, *The Shrew*' followed by the page number. Italics in original.

¹²⁴ Marowitz, *The Shrew* 164. Italics in original.

asserts that '[t]he torturer [...] is there not for money but to indulge the innate cruelty of his nature.'¹²⁵

During the famous wooing scene, when Petruchio proclaims he will keep warm in Kate's bed, he first grabs her crotch, then holds her wrists tightly enough that the pressure is visible, presumably through her expression of pain. Hortensio and Grumio physically force Kate to kiss her new fiancé: the stage directions note that

*[s]he goes limp and lifeless as he firmly plants a kiss on her mouth. When he removes his lips, KATE's barely perceptible smile suggests that although he can take things by force, he will never get her willfully to yield. PETRUCHIO receives KATE's look, sensing the hollowness of his victory.*¹²⁶

Although the stage directions suggest that Kate's spirit will ultimately allow her to prevail, by the end of the play, the hollowness of Petruchio's victory is supplanted by the hollowness of Kate's bravado, and the audience, who may at this point still anticipate something reminiscent of a 'happy ending' for Kate, will soon find themselves gravely mistaken.

During the wedding scene, a bell '*tolls grimly in the distance*'; Kate is discovered in a white slip, '*motionless like a doll*' and is dressed into her bridal gown and veil, just as a doll would be, by Bianca, Hortensio and Grumio under the watchful eye of her father. She presents the air of one who is '*the victim of some grim, unwanted social ceremony*'¹²⁷; Petruchio arrives, '*dressed in a sumptuous female bridal gown,*'¹²⁸ his unadorned head and face providing a shocking masculine contrast to his feminine garment. When Kate re-

¹²⁵ Marowitz, *Prospero's Staff* 142.

¹²⁶ Marowitz, *The Shrew* 145. Italics in original.

¹²⁷ Marowitz, *The Shrew* 151. All quoted text within the preceding three lines is also from this source. Italics in original.

¹²⁸ Marowitz, *The Shrew* 152. Italics in original.

enters, he walks very slowly toward her; upon arrival, he performs an ostentatiously feminine curtsy, *'abruptly defus[ing] the charged atmosphere.'*¹²⁹ The sense of attraction between Katherine and Petruchio found in Shakespeare's play has been replaced by contempt and a manipulation of power in this adaptation.

In one scene, Kate is discovered onstage, her face *'white with hunger.'*¹³⁰ She begs Grumio for food only to be cruelly tricked. Petruchio proposes a journey to Kate's father's house, but it is forestalled due to her lack of agreement on his telling of the time. The stage directions note that *'PETRUCHIO deliberately sits himself down and stubbornly stares straight ahead.'*¹³¹ Hortensio does the same. Surveying the two obdurate men suddenly becomes too much for Kate, who collapses her head onto the table top. When Petruchio sees this, *'without warning, [he] jumps up gaily and begins trotting as if he were on horseback.'*¹³² Hortensio pulls Kate up and begins to trot in place in tandem with his master, signaling to Kate to do the same. *'KATE, who is confused and exhausted, makes a feeble effort to trot along with the two men'* although Kate is trotting *'painfully, heavily.'*¹³³ Grumio as Vincentio joins the group, and the three men

proceed to trot in place, facing straight out. Slowly,
PETRUCHIO turns to the trotting GRUMIO and smiles at
him; GRUMIO smiles back. PETRUCHIO then turns and
smiles to HORTENSIO, who also smiles back. [...] KATE,
on the floor, pathetically paddles her hands on the floor, as if
*accompanying them in their trot.*¹³⁴

¹²⁹ Marowitz, *The Shrew* 153. Italics in original.

¹³⁰ Marowitz, *The Shrew* 170. Italics in original.

¹³¹ Marowitz, *The Shrew* 173. Italics in original.

¹³² Marowitz, *The Shrew* 173. Italics in original.

¹³³ Marowitz, *The Shrew* 173-174. Italics in original.

¹³⁴ Marowitz, *The Shrew* 175-176. Italics in original.

Very clearly, it is the men against the woman; the men are in complete control of the woman's demise; and the men are enjoying it. Marowitz's Kate is about to crack: '*Slowly, KATE draws herself up. A high-pitched crescendo whistle is heard inside her head which the audience also hears. It builds to an impossible pitch and then something snaps. All lights go red.*'¹³⁵ Within this surreal lighting effect, a version of the Induction scene takes place, with Kate in the role of Sly the Tinker. Kate's father, her husband and her husband's servants shower her with food, drink and '*golden raiment*'¹³⁶ while the gentle sound of a harp is heard in the background. 'O how we joy to see your wit restored,' Baptista says, 'O that once more you knew but what you are': Kate is '*[t]earful in gratitude.*'¹³⁷ Petruchio '*takes her in his arms and kisses her tenderly,*' inviting her to bed; she, '*[s]uddenly fearful,*'¹³⁸ demurs, using Sly's wife's text from the original play. '*There is a pause as PETRUCHIO's kindness slowly evaporates, and everyone else follows suit. Slowly, KATE turns from one to the other seeing only grim and cruel faces on all sides.*'¹³⁹ Kate's father, '*[s]uddenly fierce,*' verbally condemns his daughter: 'O monstrous arrogance!'¹⁴⁰ Kate is pushed down face first over the table, at which point Petruchio lifts her skirts, and in what must have been a shocking and brutal surprise to the audience, begins to anally rape her. '*As he inserts, an ear-piercing, electronic whistle rises to a crescendo pitch. KATE's mouth is wild and open, and it appears as if the impossible sound is issuing from her lungs.*'¹⁴¹ The play's extreme sexual violence by a husband upon a wife ironically foreshadows the enactment of the Domestic Violence and Matrimonial Proceedings Act in

¹³⁵ Marowitz, *The Shrew* 176. Italics in original.

¹³⁶ Marowitz, *The Shrew* 176. Italics in original.

¹³⁷ Marowitz, *The Shrew* 177. Italics in original.

¹³⁸ Marowitz, *The Shrew* 177. Italics in original.

¹³⁹ Marowitz, *The Shrew* 178. Italics in original.

¹⁴⁰ Marowitz, *The Shrew* 178. Italics in original.

¹⁴¹ Marowitz, *The Shrew* 178. Italics in original.

Britain in 1976,¹⁴² only three years after *The Shrew*'s first production. The Act allowed women to legally shield themselves from an abusive spouse. Since the introduction of this legal protection for women resulted from significantly lobbying by feminist organizations in the years preceding its institution, Marowitz's decision to portray graphic violence towards a wife by her husband was timely in terms of the sociopolitical actions of the time, although whether this represents his desire to support the fight for the Act through a dramatic demonstration of need, or simply a lack of sensitivity to current issues on his part, is unclear.

The play culminates in 'a surreal tribunal-setting' presided over by Petruchio. The stage directions note that '*[i]n the background, there is the unmistakable murmur of women's voices; chatting, gossiping, conniving.*'¹⁴³ Kate enters, wearing 'a simple, shapeless institutional-like garment' giving 'the impression of being mesmerized [...] her eyes wide and blank.'¹⁴⁴ Petruchio charges her to tell the 'headstrong women,' presumably the voices in the background, the duty they owe their husbands. Kate begins to mouth the Shakespeare's famous speech which she delivers at the end of *The Taming of the Shrew*; the stage directions state that she has obviously '*learned this speech by rote and is delivering it as if the words were being spoken by another.*' She stops and halts in her delivery; her father '*shakes her back to life.*'¹⁴⁵ Kate proceeds through the speech, at times nearly hysterical, but thumped back '*to some semblance of calm*' by Petruchio, then '*[s]uddenly frantic*'¹⁴⁶ again. She is clearly emotionally and mentally unhinged.

¹⁴² 'The Women's Timeline,' *Manchester Metropolitan University*, 17 Nov. 2012 <www.mmu.ac.uk/humanresources/equalities/.../gender-equality-timeline.pdf>.

¹⁴³ Marowitz, *The Shrew* 178. 'Conniving' is a loaded word from a playwright who derided the original play as chauvinist. Since the quoted text is from the stage directions, it is providing information on the stage environment created by the director, rather than the expression of prejudice coming from a character. Italics in original.

¹⁴⁴ Marowitz, *The Shrew* 178. Italics in original.

¹⁴⁵ Marowitz, *The Shrew* 179. Italics in original. All quoted text within the preceding two lines is also from this source.

¹⁴⁶ Marowitz, *The Shrew* 178-180. Italics in original.

The re-fashioned Shakespearean scenes within *The Shrew* are counterpoised against three scenes depicting the courtship of a young modern couple, loosely mirroring Bianca and Hortensio. The scenes progress from first meeting through engagement to break-up. In the first, SHE employs her considerable intelligence and wit to derail and indirectly belittle HE, despite her obvious attraction to him; eventually HE joins in her game of subtle denigration. In the second, HE and SHE quarrel over the rules of relationship, with SHE seeking freedom within involvement – ““engaged” “betrothed” “spoken for” ... they’re words that make me wriggle inside. Like being stamped with a branding-iron,” and HE having a more traditional approach to love – ‘The way I was brought up, if you loved someone, you thought of spending at least part of your life with her.’¹⁴⁷ The argument ends with the couple agreeing that they have ‘more interesting things to do,’¹⁴⁸ their subsequent verbal foreplay leaving little doubt that what they are speaking of is sex. The relationship is thus revealed as mainly a physical one, unsuitable for a long term partnership, but pushed into that direction by HE’s traditional acceptance of societal attitudes towards marriage. In the final modern scene, HE and SHE are in the midst of another jealous argument, but their positions *vis-à-vis* relationships have reversed since last we saw them: whereas, in the last scene, HE was looking for a solid relationship and SHE for freedom, in this scene SHE wants ‘something I can hold on to. Something I can be sure of. Something I can put in the bank,’¹⁴⁹ while HE demands: ‘Get the fucking halter off my neck. If I want serfdom, I’ll go to Siberia. I’ll put my head on the block. I can see anyone I like.’¹⁵⁰ Strangely, the fact that they have now completely switched their positions *vis-à-vis* commitment within a relationship is not mentioned by either character, creating a sense of arbitrary unreality to

¹⁴⁷ Marowitz, *The Shrew* 157-158.

¹⁴⁸ Marowitz, *The Shrew* 159.

¹⁴⁹ Marowitz, *The Shrew* 166.

¹⁵⁰ Marowitz, *The Shrew* 165.

the scene. Once again, the couple resorts to physical contact without resolving the seminal issues jeopardizing their relationship, but their carnal foreplay leads to a scuffle in which HE slaps her, and she, '[i]ncongruously sensible,'¹⁵¹ suggests they take a break from each other.

At the end of *The Shrew*, the modern and Shakespearean scenes merge: as Kate reaches the final lines of her 'Fie, fie' speech, HE and SHE come forward, '*dressed in formal wedding attire*': positioned in a manner which juxtaposes them directly against the wretched Kate, the bridal couple '*incline their heads to one another and smile out to invisible photographers for a wedding picture.*'¹⁵² It is a stunningly evocative closing image, and one which immediately communicates Marowitz's personal vision of marriage as a hopeless prison of interpersonal manipulation and subtle abuse.

Marowitz notes that '*The Shrew* had a premature delivery':¹⁵³ The Open Space Theatre had been commissioned to produce a dramatic rendering of Bertolt Brecht's *The Messingkauf Dialogues*¹⁵⁴ for The Hot Theatre, but the project had to be abandoned only three weeks before the performance dates. Marowitz had been mulling over the concept of a dark, cruelty-ridden version of Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* for some months; the need to deliver a substitute production to The Hot Theatre; as well, 'the promise of a large sum of money and the theatre's desperately wobbly circumstances dislodged whatever block it was that made me insist we must cancel, and I hauled out my loosely-conceived Gothic *Shrew*.'¹⁵⁵ *The Shrew* was cast within a day, and within two, 'rehearsals began on a batch of hastily-assembled photocopied sheets scrounged out of Shakespeare's

¹⁵¹ Marowitz, *The Shrew* 168. Italics in original.

¹⁵² Marowitz, *The Shrew* 180. Italics in original.

¹⁵³ Marowitz, introduction, *The Shrew* 17.

¹⁵⁴ Bertolt Brecht, *The Messingkauf Dialogues*, trans. John Willett (London: Methuen, 1965).

¹⁵⁵ Marowitz, Introduction, *The Shrew* 17.

play the night before.’¹⁵⁶ The actors playing Hortensio and Bianca improvised material dramatizing the courtship of a young couple, from which Marowitz distilled the modern scenes that counterpoint the Shakespearean plot line. Rehearsals were organized around the actors’ performance schedules, with as little as three hours a day being available. The original version of *The Shrew* was therefore created under the pressure of time, and with less preparation than desired.

Nonetheless, the reviews of the original production were relatively favourable:

Wardle emphatically states that he has

long wished for a director with the courage to present the real content of *The Taming of the Shrew* instead of passing off its degrading brutalities as a merry game. But Charles Marowitz has far exceeded this limited aim in his 90-minute cut-up version which converts the play into a black Artaudian fable virtually identifying marriage with a police state dungeon.¹⁵⁷

Bryden suggests that ‘[w]hat Marowitz has done is strip away the ho-ho-ho crust of callous humor which protects the comedy from being taken seriously, to see how it would look if the audience did not know it was meant to be funny.’¹⁵⁸ Nicholas de Jongh was even more glowing in his praise: he wrote that the 1973 production of *The Shrew* ‘disturbs and challenges almost every single assumption about the play and does so in a way which draws focus both upon Elizabethan and contemporary versions of marriage.’¹⁵⁹ While de Jongh precisely defines the greatest attribute of Marowitz’s adaptation in his first phrase of this evaluation, the second presumes to give the production more scope than it actually

¹⁵⁶ Marowitz, Introduction, *The Shrew* 18.

¹⁵⁷ Irving Wardle, ‘*The Shrew*,’ *Times* 3 Nov. 1973.

¹⁵⁸ Ronald Bryden, ‘Burrowing out Shakespeare’s Sub-Text in *The Shrew*,’ *New York Times* 21 July 1974.

¹⁵⁹ Nicholas de Jongh, ‘*Taming of the Shrew* at the Open Space,’ *Guardian* 6 Nov. 1973.

possessed, since the ‘versions’ of marriage shown were both founded on examples of lust, both for power and sex, and no contrapuntal scenario of relationship built upon respect and love was offered. While he acknowledges Marowitz’s objective to attack the assumptions of the original play, Graham Holderness admits that *The Shrew* ‘attenuates the variety and complexity, the multiplicity of perspectives encoded in the original textual inscriptions,’ and that what was left ‘seems very much a passive vehicle of directorial domination,’ linking the new work to the ‘*causes célèbres* of the 1960s – torture, brainwashing, madness, trials, institutionalisation.’¹⁶⁰ Marowitz himself was less ecstatic, and his examination of this original version of his own creative work was, to his credit, unflinching: ‘I came to loathe the work I had done. It was no justification to explain that it had been done hastily and under great pressure. The result was intellectually contemptible.’¹⁶¹ In his own estimation, the close parallel between the modern and Shakespearean based scenes in the original production allowed for no other statement to be made than that ‘cruelty and power-play’¹⁶² still formed the bedrock of relationships in the twentieth century, just as in the sixteenth. Marowitz is perhaps a little hard on himself when he says that ‘this was a statement not worth making – and certainly not worth cutting up a Shakespearian play in order to make’:¹⁶³ however, the universal verity of his statement is questionable. Are romantic relationships necessarily founded upon cruelty and power-play? This is certainly a very cynical view of interaction between lovers, and, since corroborating evidence is not provided, one which must be seen as personal rather than documented statistically.

¹⁶⁰ Graham Holderness, *The Taming of the Shrew* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1989) 94.

¹⁶¹ Marowitz, introduction, *The Shrew* 18.

¹⁶² Marowitz, introduction, *The Shrew* 18.

¹⁶³ Marowitz, introduction, *The Shrew* 18.

Since theatres within England and on the European continent were routinely requesting *The Shrew*'s script for perusal and possible production, Marowitz decided to revise his work in an attempt to bring it into greater consistency with his original vision:

I did not intend to say that things never change, that cruelty between human beings is a constant factor which only alters its methods but not its intentions. What I wanted to say was, in fact, much more dismal and depressing; namely: that no human relationship has the stamina to withstand long periods of intimate exposure; that familiarity not only breeds contempt but dissipation and stasis; that deep within the very fabric of human relationships, relationships founded on love and togetherness, there was an insidious canker which slowly but surely gnawed away at the euphoria that infused every love affair; that there was something at the core of human nature which was irrevocably abusing and self-consuming [...] And, irony or [sic] ironies, it was at this very juncture that the diseased lovers often sought in the institution of marriage a kind of miracle drug which would transform everything.¹⁶⁴

Marowitz claims that to illustrate the dogma elucidated above, Kate and Petruchio had to 'leave the realms of farce' and enter 'a world of sinister archetypes and hopeless victims,' in which Petruchio, devoid of any feeling but the desire for power and money, brutalizes

¹⁶⁴ Marowitz, introduction, *The Shrew* 19.

Kate in a 'classic encounter of elegance and vulgarity.'¹⁶⁵ The problem is that, while the scenes with the modern couples certainly track to these beliefs regarding relationships, it is difficult to understand how the Grand Guignol versions of Kate and Petruchio could explain how 'relationships founded on love and togetherness' have a canker within which destroys them, since, in this version, there never *was* a relationship founded on love and togetherness. They never had the prospect of 'long periods of intimate exposure,' nor did Kate seek marriage as a miracle drug: she was literally married by force. In terms of the modern couple, there is greater coherence to the objective expressed. However, it can certainly be argued that their relationship was built less on 'love and togetherness' (in terms of companionship) than on a strictly physical attraction and sexual satisfaction. Ultimately, as Wardle remarked of the revised production in 1975, the link between the 'sexual conflict leading into a defeated marriage' and 'the degrading brutalities [of] a deliberate brainwashing operation' is simply not there. Further, he believes the production 'still exhibits Marowitz's best and worst qualities side by side,' marveling that 'the man who wrote those glib [modern] scenes could also have created such awesome stage pictures.'¹⁶⁶ In this, Wardle has certainly hit the mark: Marowitz's ability to create evocative stage images which act as cogent visual metaphors for his concept of a play is substantial. However, the analysis of the original Shakespearean work on which this concept, and the resultant images, is founded, seems based not on a precise evaluation of the textual evidence, but on personal biases which he brought to his reading of the play. *The Shrew* is a bold statement; the first productions were obviously interesting theatrical encounters, but the beliefs regarding relationships which Marowitz chose to communicate through his

¹⁶⁵ Marowitz, introduction, *The Shrew* 20.

¹⁶⁶ Irving Wardle, 'The taming of Shakespeare: *The Shrew* – Open Space,' *Times* 24 Dec. 1975. All quoted text within the preceding four lines is also from this source.

adaptation are intensely personal, and not ideally served by the utilization of Shakespeare's classic comedy.

Although it followed the original script without major renovations, Michael Bogdanov's *The Taming of the Shrew*, produced by the Royal Shakespeare Company in 1979, bears some similarity to *The Shrew* in that it took an ostensibly feminist view of the male domination and commercialization of women found within Shakespeare's play. Like Marowitz, an admirer of Jan Kott's theories espoused within *Shakespeare Our Contemporary*, Bogdanov foregrounded the Induction scene in order to position the play as 'a wish-fulfilment dream of a male for revenge on a female.'¹⁶⁷ Rather than a traditional depiction of Sly's opening scene, audience members were presented with the mayhem created by a drunken man who 'breaks into the stalls just before curtain time, sloughs off the restraining arms of ushers, and clambers onto the stage shouting unintelligible obscenities.'¹⁶⁸ Once on stage, he destroys the ornate set, leaving a largely bare stage on which the remainder of the production is performed. The drunk's anger has been precipitated by the efforts of a female usher to subdue him; he angrily shouts, 'I'm not having any bloody woman tell me what to do.'¹⁶⁹ It is shortly revealed that the drunk is also portraying Petruchio, and the female usher, Katherina, in the main section of the play. The opening created 'a challenge to the audience as to what is illusion, and what is reality; the transfer of what appeared to be a live event in the auditorium, to the stage and the destruction of an obviously artificial setting,'¹⁷⁰ and is also consistent with Bogdanov's desire to 'draw the audience into the experience emotionally, and then shock them.'¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁷ Michael Bogdanov, interview with Christopher J. McCullough, 'Michael Bogdanov,' *The Shakespeare Myth* 90.

¹⁶⁸ James S. Bost, 'Review: *The Taming of the Shrew* by William Shakespeare,' *Theatre Journal* 32.1 (1980): 122.

¹⁶⁹ Velvet D. Pearson, 'In Search of a Liberated Kate in *The Taming of the Shrew*,' *Rocky Mountain Review of Language and Literature* 44.4 (1990): 238.

¹⁷⁰ Bogdanov 91.

¹⁷¹ Bogdanov 91.

The violence shown by the drunken Sly character in this version's Induction is continued throughout the rest of the play: Velvet D. Pearson notes:

[Petruccio] violently kicked and slapped, threw Kate to the ground and pinned her by the wrists in the wooing scene, while Grumio covered their getaway from the wedding with a switchblade. The final scene took place in an atmosphere of cigars, brandy, and poker chips. Katherine relished her new-found servitude in a perverse, masochistic way that bothered even Petruccio. He snatched his foot away nervously before she could kiss it; the other characters were horrified and disgusted as well (Haring-Smith 120).¹⁷²

According to Holderness, Bogdanov believes Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* 'attempts an exposure of mercenary relationships and of the unjust subordination of women.'¹⁷³ Further, Bogdanov professes to be in alignment with Shakespeare's essentially feminist beliefs in his interpretation of the play: 'There is no question of it, [Shakespeare's] sympathy is with the women, and his purpose, to expose the cruelty of a society that allows these things to happen.'¹⁷⁴ However, it is hard to understand how Bogdanov's presentation of Kate in the final scene as masochistically embracing Petruccio's domination serves a feminist agenda, particularly since, as was suggested regarding Marowitz's perception of Petruccio's treatment of Kate as 'torture,' it ultimately portrays women as easily broken. Bogdanov reminds us that, in Shakespeare's play, '[t]he first image that comes to [Sly] in his dream is the huntsman who bets on the dog in exactly

¹⁷² Pearson 238.

¹⁷³ Holderness 88.

¹⁷⁴ Bogdanov 90.

the same way, and with the same amounts of money, as the women are bet on at the end of the play,¹⁷⁵ stating that this relates Shakespeare's belief that it is 'a cruel oppressive world where nothing will ever really change.'¹⁷⁶ However, in Bogdanov's production, Kate's extreme subservience in the final scene, stooping to kiss Petruchio's shoe even as he pulls away from her, smacks of nothing less than the fawning loyalty of a spaniel who, after suffering through the rough process of 'taming,' now willingly embraces the role of obedient cur. The question, then, is would this portrayal shake an audience's preconceptions of the play sufficiently for them to receive Bogdanov's ostensibly feminist message? Interestingly, Bost, who reviewed the production for *Theatre Journal*, made significant note of the play's iconoclastic opening, as well as the comedic moments, many of which were in the form of Commedia *lazzi* performed by Jonathan Pryce as Petruchio, but does not once mention the injustice of male domination of women as a theme of the production, preferring to interpret it as Bogdanov 'shocking the audience into the realization that the traditional approach to Shakespeare is to be merrily exploded into the twentieth century.'¹⁷⁷

The predominant concern with both these adaptations relates to the exploration of the subservient position women have previously held (and to some extent still do hold) within society as a whole. In this instance, the directors, both male, show us that men are a pretty nasty lot, and that women have it rough, without ever enlightening us as to 'why.' Why do men seek to dominate women? This is a subject on which they, as men, might possibly offer a valid opinion, but no such statement is forthcoming in either production. Likewise, both men portray women, as represented by Katherina, as either reduced to the

¹⁷⁵ Bogdanov 90-91.

¹⁷⁶ Bogdanov 91.

¹⁷⁷ Bost, Review: *The Taming of the Shrew* by William Shakespeare, *Theatre Journal* 122.

state of babbling lunatic or to that of obsequious toady as a result of this domination, without ever offering the broader potential for female reaction, such as outward compliance mingled with simmering hatred while awaiting the chance for revenge, or even outright defiance at the risk of injury or death. While both productions profess to arise from feminist interpretations, the concept that women have been, and continue to be, dominated by men, and that this situation is impervious to change, is an unhelpful one to the feminist movement the creators claim to support, particularly since both Marowitz and Bogdanov made these theatrical statements during the 1970s at a time when the women's rights movement was in full swing. To showcase the inevitability of male domination of women at a time when women such as Germaine Greer and Gloria Steinem were leading other women in a process of hopeful empowerment was not only unhelpful to the feminist agenda they claimed to support; it also suggests a potential desire to weaken and possibly ridicule women's struggle for self-rule, as well as possible latent anger at the feminist movement in general. In the case of Marowitz, his own statements support this theory: responding generally to comments that his radical adaptations of Shakespeare did injury to the original texts, he wrote that '[a] spliced-up *Hamlet* doesn't destroy the play forever; just as a beautiful woman who is raped isn't barred from future domestic felicity.' Not content with comparing the renovation of a classic text to sexual violation, Marowitz goes on to suggest that '[o]ne might argue she is never the same afterwards, but is that necessarily a bad thing?'¹⁷⁸ The cavalier nature of this statement cannot help but cast strong doubt on his aptness to uncover the 'overriding male chauvinist outlook' of Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* while nurturing from within its 'deepest subsoil [...] the seeds of the most

¹⁷⁸ Marowitz, introduction, *The Marowitz Hamlet & the Tragical History of Dr. Faustus* 13.

feminist play written in the seventeenth century.¹⁷⁹ As in *An Othello*, Marowitz purports to act as mouthpiece for a portion of society for which he has little knowledge, and arguably, even less empathy.

MAROWITZ'S *MEASURE FOR MEASURE*

Marowitz's adaptation of Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* was first performed at the Open Space Theatre in London on May 28, 1975, and was published in *Plays and Players* the following month; it was subsequently re-published in *The Marowitz Shakespeare* in 1978. In 2000, Marowitz directed a revised version of his adaptation at Tygres Heart Shakespeare in Portland, Oregon; while portions of this revised script are available in *The Roar of the Canon*, the entire script of this version is, as of yet, unpublished. Therefore, the earlier version of the adaptation will serve as the basis for this exploration.

Marowitz's objections to Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* spring largely from his perception that '*Measure for Measure*, like *The Merchant of Venice* is a schizoid play.'¹⁸⁰ According to Marowitz, the schism relates to the style of the work:

Although a 'comedy', [sic] it is subverted by its more sombre scenes and, no matter how ingeniously Shakespeare ties up all his loose ends, he cannot eradicate the sense of moral decay that nibbles at Angelo [and] laps at Isabella [...T]he threatened corruption of Isabella by Angelo takes the gaiety

¹⁷⁹ Marowitz, *Prospero's Staff* 146.

¹⁸⁰ Charles Marowitz, 'Measures Taken,' *Plays and Players* (June 1975) 38.

out of Angelo's forced nuptials and the Duke's own appropriation of Isabella.¹⁸¹

As well, '[t]he comedy scenes, rollicking as they may be, are painfully unfunny and, unlike other of Shakespeare's sub-plots, do not enhance the main action but attenuate it.'¹⁸²

Marowitz hypothesizes that Shakespeare was torn between writing 'a bright, commercial comedy' versus a play exploring 'the weighty moral questions posed by man's pathetic efforts to curb his destructive impulses and subdue his carnal appetite,'¹⁸³ and that the fusion of these two oppositional desires resulted in the play sitting uneasily in the comedic form. Ultimately, Marowitz suggests, it was all about pleasing the groundlings: 'at the very centre of that rich, teeming, no-holds-barred imagination, there was a "studio mentality" dictating what would sell in Pembrokeshire, just as it would at Wapping.'¹⁸⁴ The play's relatively light-hearted conclusion exists because '[t]here is in Shakespeare, as there has long been in Hollywood films, a built-in tendency to resolve moral contradictions in such a way as to create a 'feel-good' ending.'¹⁸⁵ Unfortunately, says Marowitz, while *The History of Promos & Cassandra* by George Whetstone, upon which Shakespeare drew significantly when writing *Measure for Measure*, offers 'a traditional dispensation of old-fashioned morality'¹⁸⁶ in which evil-doers are punished and the good rewarded, *Measure for Measure*'s attempt to cobble together a happy ending results in moral ambiguity since those who have done wrong, including Claudio, Angelo and Lucio, are all forgiven their criminal acts and formally lift the play into the world of comedy by marrying their respective fiancées and lovers. The moral ambiguity created by this schism in style derails the play's

¹⁸¹ Marowitz, 'Measures Taken,' *Plays and Players* 38.

¹⁸² Marowitz, *Roar of the Canon* 86-87.

¹⁸³ Marowitz, 'Measures Taken,' *Plays and Players* 38.

¹⁸⁴ Marowitz, *Recycling Shakespeare* 51.

¹⁸⁵ Marowitz, *Recycling Shakespeare* 51.

¹⁸⁶ Marowitz, *Roar of the Canon* 64.

exploration of the legal system, says Marowitz: ‘The implication that [...] the law is corrupt is strong in Shakespeare, but in *Measure for Measure*, [...] the playwright is obliged to resolve his action in accordance with the rules of The Hays Office of his day.’¹⁸⁷

Based on these comments lamenting Shakespeare’s compromise of serious subject matter in pursuit of audience approval, it is interesting to note that Marowitz’s production of *Measure for Measure* at the Centralteatret in Oslo in 1981 was described by Joan M. Tindale as ‘a particularly sexy *Measure for Measure*, designed for this theatre’s mainly youthful audience – a fast, lively production that took every opportunity to raise a laugh’ with a particular note of the Duke’s ‘low-comedy clowning.’¹⁸⁸ Did this abrupt shift in interpretation of the play spring from an ideological source upon which Marowitz fails to comment in his critical writing, or was this an instance of the usually pessimistic director himself choosing to create a ‘feel good’ production based on a particular theatre audience’s tastes? If so, the irony is obvious.

While Shakespeare’s *Measure for Measure* may be interpreted as ambiguous thematically, and while it is certainly a good deal less lighthearted than the Shakespearean comedies that precede it, most scholars ascribe this to authorial intention, rather than commercial or societal pressure. Although Northrop Frye acknowledges that it was ‘generally accepted in Shakespeare’s day that the writing of a play was a moral act, and that the cause of morality was best served by making virtue attractive and vice ugly,’¹⁸⁹ French clarifies that ‘Shakespeare is never simple, that is to say, single-minded. In each of the

¹⁸⁷ Marowitz, *Recycling Shakespeare* 51. Marowitz’s reference to The Hays Office is not particularly apt. Named for Will H. Hays, Hollywood’s chief censor during its early years, the office enforced the Motion Picture Production Code in the United States between 1930 and 1968, and was interested largely in issues of public morality, not portrayals of government corruption.

¹⁸⁸ Joan M. Tindale, ‘Review: Shakespeare in Norway,’ *Shakespeare Quarterly* 33.4 (1982): 528

¹⁸⁹ Northrop Frye, *Northrop Frye on Shakespeare* (Markham, ON: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1989) 148.

problem plays there is a countering force to the dominant value structure.¹⁹⁰

‘Shakespearean comedy is in general deeply distrustful of absolutes, [...] of rigid (and usually unexamined) ideals of conduct. *Measure for Measure* is no exception,¹⁹¹ adds Anne Barton. Similarly, Marowitz’s judgment on ‘Shakespeare’s bourgeois sensibility’¹⁹² which created an ‘Elizabethan “commercial” for Christianity’¹⁹³ in *Measure for Measure* is countered by James Westfall Thompson’s view of the ambiguity in the play as an honest and open exploration of human nature:

Shakespere [sic] was too great an artist to debase his art to the formal, conventional level of the Elizabethan school-room or pulpit. He never represented virtue as a policy. He took good and evil as they came.¹⁹⁴

Although not propagandistic in the manner of a commercial for Christianity, Greer points to the Christian themes in the play: responding to George Orwell’s comment that it would be difficult to perceive from Shakespeare’s writing whether he possessed religious belief, she suggests that

one aspect of the Christian respect for all human life [...] is to challenge all forms of human pretension and all social inequality based upon it. As Isabel warns Angelo [...] the assumption of any kind of superiority, and especially the kind of moral ascendancy he himself presumes to possess, is folly.

... man, proud man,

¹⁹⁰ French 195.

¹⁹¹ Anne Barton, introduction, ‘Measure for Measure,’ *The Riverside Shakespeare* 546.

¹⁹² Marowitz, *Recycling Shakespeare* 46.

¹⁹³ Marowitz, *Roar of the Canon* 75.

¹⁹⁴ James Westfall Thompson, ‘Shakespere and Puritanism,’ *North American Review* 212.777 (1920): 228.

Dress'd in a little brief authority,
Most ignorant of what he's most assur'd –
His glassy essence – like an angry ape
Plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven
As makes the angels weep ... (II.ii.118-23).¹⁹⁵

Noting the title's allusion to Christ's Sermon on the Mount, Frye describes this 'problem play' as being concerned with 'the contrast between justice and mercy [...] between large-minded and small-minded authority, between a justice that includes equity and a justice that's a narrow legalism.'¹⁹⁶ Complementing this, Richard A. Levin suggests '[t]he play insists that we are all a mixture of good and evil. Mariana, pleading for Angelo's life, recites proverbial wisdom: "best men are moulded out of faults, / And for the most, become much more the better / For being a little bad" (V.i.37-39).'¹⁹⁷ What emerges from this discussion is the difference in perception between Marowitz and other critics: what he perceives as a lack of black and white clarity thematically in Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* is interpreted by others as a intriguing selection of multiple hues of grey. This must, then, be added to the bulk of evidence regarding Marowitz's tendency to reduce complex issues and dilemmas to simple impressions and choices. This is particularly true in his perception of the quandary facing a chaste nun and loving sister: 'Even in the original, there is abundant justification for Isabel to allow herself to be seduced by Angelo and, for many people, she is a cruel prig prizing her chastity above her brother's life.'¹⁹⁸ Marowitz's error springs from his inability to see this dilemma from any other vantage point than his own: his perception of women as receptors of male desire, discussed further

¹⁹⁵ Greer 107-108.

¹⁹⁶ Frye 140.

¹⁹⁷ Richard A. Levin, 'Duke Vincentio and Angelo: Would "A Feather Turn the Scale"?' *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 22.2 (1982): 258.

¹⁹⁸ Marowitz, 'Measures Taken,' *Plays and Players* 38.

in Chapter Six, effectively discards any breadth within the unenviable choice Isabella must make between her spiritual salvation and her brother's life, reducing it to a clear black and white choice, with the correct action determined, of course, by Marowitz himself.

French asserts that *Measure for Measure* also conveys the author's own sense of sexual revulsion, present to a lesser degree in *All's Well*, *Hamlet* and *Troilus & Cressida* but given full expression in this later play. Far from comprising a concession to commercial concerns or the inculcation of Christian morality, *Measure for Measure* 'confronts directly Shakespeare's own most elemental fears, attractions, prejudices, and challenges directly his own ideals.'¹⁹⁹ Echoing and expanding upon Levin's statements, French believes that *Measure* is the court in which human sexuality 'has been tried and found guilty but human, and therefore unpunishable.'²⁰⁰

Frye agrees with Marowitz that the play is contradictory in style at a basic level, noting that in Act Three Scene 1, the play 'breaks in two': 'the first half is the dismal ironic tragedy,' but the second is 'a different kind of play,'²⁰¹ one in which the Duke, operating incognito, acts as author, producer, director, and casting agent. '[I]t's really a play within a play [...] a half play that eventually swallows and digests the other half.'²⁰²

Since, as Bradbrook notes, none of the minor comic characters existed in the source materials, it would seem a more worthwhile pursuit to question why they were added by the playwright, and in what ways they enhance and expand the action thematically, rather than to simply declare them the author's concession to the comic needs of the groundlings. In contrast to Marowitz, who describes the scenes containing the lower class characters as lacking in comedy and reducing the thrust of the main action, French indicates that '[t]he

¹⁹⁹ French 183.

²⁰⁰ French 183.

²⁰¹ Frye 148.

²⁰² Frye 149.

entire stratification, or hierarchy, of characters in this play is based on attitude towards sexuality,²⁰³ and the scenes involving ‘the human sediment of Vienna’²⁰⁴ – bawds, pimps and whores – therefore complement Shakespeare’s exploration of the human condition *vis-à-vis* their sexual appetites and proclivities. Moreover, while Shakespeare’s Vienna, comprised almost entirely of brothels, encompasses ‘a weak and sensual world, [it is nonetheless] a world, as Lucio says, in which “Grace is grace, despite of all controversy.”’²⁰⁵ At the end of the play, although it has been given a brush and a scrub, Vienna ‘remains its own vigorous, untidy self,’²⁰⁶ a material manifestation of Shakespeare’s perception of the energetic imperfection of the human condition.

Marowitz began work on his adaptation of *Measure for Measure* when he was asked to create a production of Shakespeare’s play for ‘a continental theatre,’²⁰⁷ and in several incidences of critical writing on the play, he relates how an event in his personal life had a significant impact on that adaptation. Its relevance to a particular special effect in his play *Sherlock’s Last Case* caused him to stop and listen for many minutes to a make-up demonstration at Selfridges, a British department store; upon leaving the premises, he was apprehended at some distance from the store by a pair of ‘burly’ policeman, who threw him into a ‘black maria’²⁰⁸ and escorted him to the local police station. There, he was charged under the Vagrancy Act of 1824, since presumably he could be up to no good – an unkempt man with long hair loitering within a group of women. Although informed by his solicitor that his innocence of any wrongdoing was ‘in some curious way, not relevant to

²⁰³ French 186.

²⁰⁴ M.C. Bradbrook, ‘Authority, Truth, and Justice in *Measure for Measure*,’ *Review of English Studies* 17.68 (1941): 397.

²⁰⁵ Ronald Berman, ‘Shakespeare and the Law,’ *Shakespeare Quarterly* 18.2 (1967): 145.

²⁰⁶ Barton, introduction, ‘Measure for Measure,’ *The Riverside Shakespeare* 547.

²⁰⁷ Marowitz, *Recycling Shakespeare* 45.

²⁰⁸ Marowitz, *Roar of the Canon* 84.

the case,²⁰⁹ and that he should be ready to be found guilty, he was acquitted at trial six weeks later. Nonetheless, the lack of apology or any expression of remorse on the part of the store detective and/or the police made a deep impression on him; he relates ‘[f]eeling distinctly like K in Kafka’s *The Trial*.’²¹⁰ When he re-read *Measure for Measure* in preparation for accepting the aforementioned engagement, he found that the play had an increased resonance for him, and accepts that ‘[t]he Selfridges experience made me see things about *Measure* I would probably not have seen without it.’²¹¹ While ‘ambivalent attitudes to the law’ were provoked by this incident, Marowitz admits that,

I had always vaguely understood that the connection between law and justice was strictly semantic; that in fact questions of right and wrong were not material to the conduct of the law, which was primarily concerned with legalities and illegalities.²¹²

Marowitz rightly acknowledges that a dichotomy exists between law and justice: law is created by man as a relatively ‘one size fits all’ methodology to maintain social order, while justice exists as a concept outside of human control. Since true justice takes all factors into account without relying on parameters or preset guidelines, it is custom made.

Unfortunately, he fails to perceive the similarity between his concept of justice versus legality and that expressed by Shakespeare in *Measure*: as was quoted previously in this chapter, Frye acknowledges the play’s focus on a large and equitable justice, and a justice that is narrowed and constrained by an emphasis on strict legality. Marowitz and Shakespeare are both expressing unhappiness with a legal system which excludes context

²⁰⁹ Marowitz, *Roar of the Canon* 85.

²¹⁰ Marowitz, *Roar of the Canon* 84.

²¹¹ Marowitz, *Recycling Shakespeare* 47.

²¹² Marowitz, *Recycling Shakespeare* 45.

and thereby negates a true justice, but rather than appreciating this parallel purpose, Marowitz chooses to place himself in opposition ideologically to Shakespeare. When Shakespeare incorporates the concept of a liberal mercy into Whetstone's morality tale as an example of what *could* and perhaps even what *should* be, Marowitz ascribes this, first to a desire to write a crowd pleasing comedy, and second, to a societally dictated religious obeisance: 'Mercy must salvage wrongdoers, as it does Angelo [...], not because it corresponds with reality but because it is in keeping with the Christian dictates of a God-fearing Elizabethan society.'²¹³ The dynamic between man-made legality on one hand, and a truer justice that lies beyond the dictates of the law exists in both Shakespeare's *Measure* and in Marowitz's critical writing describing his objectives for his adaptation. Shakespeare points to mercy as a possible solution to this opposition, and at the end of *Measure*, forgiveness is extended to all those who have broken the law: Claudio is pardoned; Isabella pleads for Angelo, even though she believes, at that point in the play, that he has had her brother executed; even the murderer Barnadine is given a second chance, allowing the play to end on a note of renewal and peace. Richard A. Levin finds this conclusion to the play apt in terms of the playwright's desire to understand rather than to judge: 'Instead of condemning others, as his characters do, Shakespeare draws attention to the ambiguity of action and the complexity of human nature.'²¹⁴ In contrast, Marowitz offers no potential solution, instead focusing a spotlight on the problem, striving to illustrate that,

in certain societies and at certain times in history, there often was unmitigated evil in the law and, when there was, its victims could not escape it through fanciful convolutions, but were ground down by its implacable power; that, in fact, a

²¹³ Marowitz, *Recycling Shakespeare* 51.

²¹⁴ Levin 270.

half –measure of malfeasance often brought down a full
measure of punishment on those gullible enough to try to
expose it.²¹⁵

At bottom, it is Shakespeare's 'happy ending' that Marowitz wishes to counter, reinforcing the notion that the adaptor's pessimistic perspective of humanity plays a key role in his interpretations of Shakespearean plays, and in this new paradigm with which he bombards the original *Measure*'s intellectual substructure.

In Marowitz's *Measure*, 'Shakespeare's bid for Christian mercy is resolutely expunged, and the cynicism which takes its place attaches itself to the hypocrisy of the law and the duplicity of the judiciary.'²¹⁶ He describes his intention to explore 'a dilemma about a bargain made and a bargain broken: a probing of the value of chastity; the value of life; the antithesis between law and justice; the practical interpretations of abstractions such as Right and Wrong.'²¹⁷ In an attempt to achieve these objectives in his 1975 adaptation, Marowitz removes what he describes as '[t]he wretched comedy scenes, with their noisome bawds, tinny whores and dinning "What was done to Elbow's wife";'²¹⁸ the other female characters, Mariana and Juliet, are likewise excised, leaving Isabel as the only female voice amongst seven male characters.²¹⁹ Like *Variations on the Merchant of Venice*, Marowitz's *Measure for Measure* largely adheres to Shakespeare's narrative and text, although there is a brief interpolation from *Two Noble Kinsmen*, ostensibly co-authored by John Fletcher and

²¹⁵ Marowitz, *Recycling Shakespeare* 51.

²¹⁶ Marowitz, *Recycling Shakespeare* 48.

²¹⁷ Marowitz, 'Measures Taken,' *Plays and Players* 38.

²¹⁸ Marowitz, *Recycling Shakespeare* 48.

²¹⁹ Marowitz, *Recycling Shakespeare* 48. Marowitz later revised his adaptation for a production in 2000 at Tygres Heart Shakespeare in Portland, Oregon: in this later version, the character of Pompey is returned to the action, and Bridget, a whore, is created based upon Lucio's line, 'Does Bridget paint still, Pompey, ha?' in III.ii of the original play. In *Roar of the Canon*, published in 2001, Marowitz notes that 'I felt it important for there to be a thoroughly immoral woman with whom to contrast Isabella, Mariana being excised from this text and Julietta being merely an innocent fiancé for whom birth-control techniques are unavailable.' Marowitz, *Roar of the Canon* 91-96.

Shakespeare through which Isabella describes her desire for death.²²⁰ Marowitz uses what he describes as ‘narrative guile’ to lull the audience into a false sense that they were ‘seeing Shakespeare’s play – more or less – as he wrote it’;²²¹ the adaptation’s action then was designed to veer from the original narrative at points most affecting the presentation of concepts of morality. This veering begins when Isabel is led by her brother, Claudio, to Angelo: in ‘a dream scene bathed in red light,’ Marowitz and his designer Robin Don achieved what de Jongh describes as ‘a magnificent visual emblem’²²² when a scrim curtain, fashioned to resemble a legal scroll and bearing the words of the execution writ,²²³ unrolls downstage of Angelo and Isabel. It is behind the scroll’s ‘gauze protection’ that Angelo strips Isabel of her habit, then leads her to his bed. De Jongh notes the effectiveness of this theatrical *mise en scène*: ‘Here, Marowitz splendidly shows, is the law corrupting itself behind the shelter of its own legality.’²²⁴ Although, in Marowitz’s adaptation, she acquiesced to Angelo’s sexual demand in order to save her brother’s life, the first thing Isabel encounters after her sexual initiation is her brother’s severed head, indicating that the execution has gone on despite their bargain. Isabel’s pleas to the newly returned Duke for justice result in his sentencing her guilty of the slander of Angelo, for which he orders her to prison. As she leaves the stage, Angelo utters a sotto voce renewal of his sexual hold upon her. At the end of the play, Angelo, Escalus and the Duke, having exchanged their ceremonial robes of office for casual clothing, joke about bawds and

²²⁰ The interpolated text is spoken by the character of the Jailer’s Daughter in III.i.29-38 of *The Two Noble Kinsmen*. William Shakespeare & John Fletcher, *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, ed. Clifford Leech (Toronto: Signet Classics, 1966) 102. Marowitz, ‘Measure for Measure,’ *The Marowitz Shakespeare* 214.

²²¹ Marowitz, introduction, *The Marowitz Shakespeare* 20.

²²² Nicholas de Jongh, ‘Measure for Measure at the Open Space,’ *Guardian* 29 May 1975.

²²³ Although de Jongh describes the scroll as bearing ‘an execution writ,’ Marowitz notes in *Directing the Action* that the scroll was painted with the words of ‘an old Latin law’ without specifying as to which law. Marowitz, *Prospero’s Staff* 46. Tindale’s review of Marowitz’s production at the Centralteatret in Oslo, Norway in 1981 describes the scroll as ‘proclaiming the death penalty for fornication.’ Tindale 528. Since the review notes both that it was ‘a fast, lively production that took every opportunity to raise a laugh’ and that ‘the mimed birth of Juliet and Claudio’s child [and] Angelo’s seduction of “Isabella”/Mariana were [...] presented in shadow-play,’ this production differed markedly from the one under exploration.

²²⁴ de Jongh, ‘Measure for Measure at the Open Space,’ *Guardian*.

whores, and begin what appears to be a drink-fest. Interestingly, the revised version of the adaptation, performed at Tygres Heart Shakespeare Company in Portland, Oregon in 2000, the ending has become even more imbued with Marowitz's penchant for sexual violence as well as his pessimistic perspective: a review of the production notes that '[t]he play ends with both the Duke and Angelo advancing on [Isabella], joined by her brother, and a fourth character of crude comic relief. They bear down on her like gang rapers.'²²⁵

The first of Marowitz's expressed parameters for Shakespearean adaptation is that 'the director-adaptor has got to have something specific to say.' Moreover,

this kind of re-interpretation has little to do with 'new slants' on traditional material [... but is] nothing more nor less than [...] an attempt to test or challenge, revoke or destroy the intellectual foundation which makes a classic the formidable thing it has become.²²⁶

Accordingly, it is appropriate to question whether Marowitz has achieved these basic criteria in his adaptation of Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*.

Marowitz's primary objective was to communicate that the working of the justice system, while always legal, is at times neither fair nor right; that corruption within the legal system results in the innocent being crushed, even more so when they attempt to expose the corruption. Further, he wished to illuminate that the 'facade of the law, its elaborate stage-management, its imposing rituals, divert us from its manifest evil.'²²⁷ While this conceptually is relatively specific, it cannot be called truly original, as much of what Marowitz is striving to communicate was expressed by Lord Acton in 1887:

²²⁵ D.K. Holm, 'Variations on *Measure for Measure* Theater Review,' *Portland Mercury* 12 Oct. 2000.

²²⁶ Marowitz, introduction, *The Marowitz Shakespeare* 24.

²²⁷ Marowitz, introduction, *The Marowitz Shakespeare* 21.

Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Great men are almost always bad men, even when they exercise influence and not authority, still more when you superadd the tendency or the certainty of corruption by authority. There is no worse heresy than that the office sanctifies the holder of it.²²⁸

Despite this, Marowitz does communicate his ‘specific and original message’²²⁹ at a basic level. In the adapted version, Angelo organizes the corruption of Isabella’s innocence by persuading her to acquiesce to fornication in order to save her brother’s life, then ensures no profit derives from this sin by executing Claudio on the same charge. When she seeks justice, the Duke incarcerates her, leaving her with nothing but the promise of more enforced fornication with Angelo when she completes her term. At the end of the play, an innocent victim has been ground down further by the law while the triumvirate of legal power in Vienna – the Duke, Angelo and Escalus – are left to wallow in alcohol and presumed debauchery. However, Marowitz’s decision to focus largely on Isabella and the coerced bargain to save her brother renders the entire dilemma less about the legal system itself, and more about sexism, explicitly the male/female power structure which exists within society in which women are often the helpless victims of male desire, and with it, male domination. Mona S. Mohamed agrees, stating that ‘Isabella’s dilemma is not an example of social injustice in the sense of class discrimination and favouritism with the law. Isabella’s predicament is that of a woman caught in the web of a male dominated legal

²²⁸ ‘Acton on Moral Judgements in History,’ *The Forum at the Online Library of Liberty*, 25 Apr. 2011 <http://oll.libertyfund.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1407&Itemid=283>. Born in 1834, Lord Acton was a British politician, historian and essayist; he died in 1902.

²²⁹ Marowitz, introduction, *The Marowitz Shakespeare* 24.

system.²³⁰ The forces acted upon Isabella by Angelo utilize the tools of the justice system, but they spring from the tacit belief, strong in previous centuries and still lingering today, that women exist to both provoke and satisfy male desire; this societal paradigm engenders male anxiety when women step outside that defined role by withholding their sexual favours, particularly through abstinence invoked by inclusion in holy orders. Commenting on Shakespeare's play, Mario Digangi suggests in 'Pleasure and Danger: Measuring Female Sexuality in *Measure for Measure*' that

the relentless definition and manipulation of female sexuality in *Measure for Measure* is the graphic symptom of male anxiety about female agency [... and an expression of a] fear of the dangers thought to ensue from a woman's control over her own body.²³¹

This underlying paradigm is present in both the original work and the adaptation, but because the multiplicity of overlapping themes in Shakespeare's *Measure* have been reduced to one major theme and narrative in Marowitz's version, it is isolated and illuminated to an extent which reduces the cogency of the condemnation of the legal system which the adaptor outwardly strives to communicate.

What advances into the foreground as a result is the example of males utilizing the full extent of the authority they possess to shackle a female through sexual dominance, and this, not surprisingly, was resonant with the legitimate grievances of the women's movement at the time. In 'Sex and Power: Sexual Bases of Radical Feminism,' Alix Kates Shulman notes that young women working in support of the New Left during the 1960s often complained of their male colleagues' expectation that they should provide unpaid

²³⁰ Mohamed 288.

²³¹ Mario Digangi, 'Pleasure and Danger: Measuring Female Sexuality in *Measure for Measure*,' *ELH* 60.3 (1993): 590.

‘service,’ both administratively and sexually. The men, ‘so-called radicals whose proclaimed purpose in life was to end oppression,’ saw no conflict in subjugating the female members of the movement, and held a single ‘demeaning attitude toward women’²³² which pervaded both the work and sexual spheres. Similarly, Marowitz’s depiction of Isabel’s sexual domination by the Duke and Angelo may represent both the viewpoint of many men of the time, despite the feminist activities of the previous two decades, and his own personal tendency to view women predominantly as providers of sexual services. It is of interest to note that his autobiographical tome *Burnt Bridges* is dedicated to a list of approximately forty women, and that there is sufficient correlation between the listed names and women specifically described in the book’s narrative to deduce that the list very likely contains (perhaps a partial) inventory of his sexual partners while residing in Britain. The name of Thelma Holt, the Open Space Theatre’s dynamic manager and lead actor, is resolutely absent from this list, possibly supporting Marowitz’s statement that he and Holt were never intimate.²³³ Ultimately, it is impossible to state with certainty whether Marowitz hoped to shine a spotlight on men’s proclivity to dominate women sexually, or, like his versions of the Duke and Angelo, actually sought to re-live and maintain that dominance. Nonetheless, it is disappointing that his depiction of this oppression not only deflects the adaptation from its stated course, but also fails to offer any other statement than that this oppression occurs, which was already manifestly known to the women’s movement of the period.

More disappointing is the lack of new understanding which Marowitz’s adaptation provides on his stated theme of corruption within the legal system, or even of his

²³² Alix Kates Shulman, ‘Sex and Power: Sexual Bases of Radical Feminism,’ *Signs* 5.4 (1980): 592.

²³³ According to Marowitz, his relationship with Holt was ‘deep and emotional, but never romantic or intimate.’ Marowitz, *Burnt Bridges* 215.

unintended theme of the sexual domination of women by men. Marowitz's *Measure* demonstrates that the abuse of authority and power occurs, but without revealing *why* or *how* in a psychological sense, and this is where the more relevant part of the question arguably lies. Do Angelo and the Duke in Marowitz's *Measure* possess the capacity for compassion and empathy which might lead them to feel pity for their victims, and if so, what are the factors which allow them to suppress it? Similarly, do they carry no moral concept of right and wrong, and if so, are they burying knowledge of the evil they are doing under self-prevarication, or have they chosen to accept their wrongdoing by jettisoning their moral code? In short, how and why do ordinary individuals undertake evil action? No answers to these questions are found within the adaptation. Marowitz has taken Shakespeare's play, plump with a full girth of ideas, and starved it down to a single 'truth': that authority is often corrupt. In doing so, he reduces both the breadth and the subtlety of the exploration. Although generally positive toward the production, de Jongh reports that '[b]y paring down the play to this raw and bare centrality Mr Marowitz loses much of its complexity and resonance: it narrows hugely.'²³⁴ Jeremy Kingston of the *Times* agrees: 'the point Marowitz makes about sins on high is smallish meat. Freshly garnished, precisely served, but less nourishing than earlier dishes.'²³⁵ As Ronald Berman states, 'Shakespeare's Vienna is [...] a place in which ideas encounter each other',²³⁶ by contrast, in Marowitz's Vienna, there is only one overwhelming idea, and it is imposed, rather than discussed. Complementing that of *A Macbeth*, an appropriate comparator for Marowitz's *Measure for Measure* is Howard Brenton's adaptation bearing the same title.²³⁷ As

²³⁴ de Jongh, 'Measure for Measure at the Open Space,' *Guardian*.

²³⁵ Jeremy Kingston, 'A smallish measure of meat,' *Times* 29 May 1975.

²³⁶ Berman 143.

²³⁷ Brenton's *Measure for Measure* was first performed at Exeter's Northcott Theatre in 1972; it was directed by Bill Gaskill. Howard Brenton, 'Measure for Measure,' *Three Plays* (Sheffield: Sheffield AP, 1989). All future quotations from this source will be shown as 'Brenton, *Measure for Measure*' followed by the page number.

previously noted, Brenton was active as a playwright during the period of Marowitz's tenure as Artistic Director of the Open Space Theatre, and had a number of his scripts produced there. His plays tend to explore socio-political themes, providing a comparison to Marowitz's intended foregrounding of legal injustice.

Brenton's *Measure for Measure* utilizes a combination of modern and original text, and follows a similar but modified version of Shakespeare's narrative. Unlike Marowitz, who excised any scenes containing the pimps and bawds of the lower classes, Brenton has expanded their role in a discourse around the nature of power, commerce, human sexuality and racial inequality. In this adaptation, Pompey is the owner of a strip club, and Jerky Joe, most likely a new version of Lucio, is a producer of 'blue' films, including those of porn stars Claudio and his girlfriend Juliet. Claudio and Isabella are stipulated as being played by Black actors, indicating that Brenton has included racial politics within his larger exploration. When Angelo is attempting to secure the Bible Sister Isabella for an assignation, he refers to her in racial terms – 'you black bitch'²³⁸ – and when Jerky Joe explains why Claudio has been sentenced to death, the racial element is also present: '[I]t's an old law they've got your brother on. But for a new reason. He's black.'²³⁹ Discussions regarding the nature of power are also present. The Duke has retired from High Office, endowing Angelo with political agency; the former leader now travels throughout London (standing in for Vienna) in disguise. Acton's precept regarding power, previously discussed in this chapter, is echoed by the Duke's psychiatrist who diagnoses the retiring autocrat's lack of emotional peace: 'You fought for power ferociously as a young man. An appalling ruthlessness. Assassinating many friends. When was it that you thought ... Now

²³⁸ Brenton, *Measure for Measure* 119.

²³⁹ Brenton, *Measure for Measure* 112.

I let all that go?’²⁴⁰ Shortly afterward, he utters a succinct opinion on power, politics and human nature: ‘You see, *as a doctor*, I can’t see how a man can have absolute power and remain sane. Nor how he can give that absolute power up, and remain alive.’²⁴¹ When the psychiatrist offers the Duke ‘a therapy for an authoritarian ruler, stripped of all power,’²⁴² he places him in a contrapuntal position to the other two groups vying for influence in the city: the Bible Sisters, led by Isabella, and the socialist agitators. Their battle for supremacy is portrayed by Brenton in a humorous light:

*JERKY is trying to speak to ISABELLA, but is interrupted
by the AGITATOR.*

JERKY: Excuse me Miss ...

AGITATOR: You bloody idiots. The bosses’ll have you all
bashing the blacks. ‘Stead of ‘emselves. They’re sitting in
the Ritz farting and laughing ‘emselves sick.

JERKY: Eh, Miss.

ISABELLA: Repent!

AGITATOR: Revolt!

SISTER: Amen!

COMRADE: Revolution!

BYSTANDER: Rubbish!²⁴³

The forces of political power become more complicated when the enforcers of the ruling faction enter the fracas in the form of the police:

1ST POL.: We told you bloody reds.

²⁴⁰ Brenton, *Measure for Measure* 104.

²⁴¹ Brenton, *Measure for Measure* 106. Italics in original.

²⁴² Brenton, *Measure for Measure* 107.

²⁴³ Brenton, *Measure for Measure* 108-109.

2ND POL.: We told you coon bible thumpers.

[...]

1ST POL.: (*to the AGITATOR*). Get back to the Kremlin.

2ND POL.: (*to ISABELLA*). Get back to the jungle.²⁴⁴

Commerce is revealed as the primary fuel which makes the oily engine of London's underbelly turn over. When Jerky Joe attempts to rescue his money-making porn star Claudio by encouraging Isabella to plead his case to Angelo, he is quick to confess his motivation in the matter:

ISABELLA: You're a good friend to my brother.

JERKY: Lady, don't get it all wrong. To me, getting your brother off is strictly business.

ISABELLA: I can see you are a man of Sodom.

JERKY: Highly perceptive. Ta very much.

ISABELLA: But God must have moved your heart.

JERKY: My accountant, actually. Shall we go?²⁴⁵

The Duke comes up with a plan to help Isabella in saving Claudio's life while simultaneously regaining his power by discrediting Angelo. He directs Isabella to agree to Angelo's demand, and arranges the time and place for their assignation. Engaging the services of Jerky Joe to film the lechery, the Duke plans to substitute a whore for Isabella in Angelo's embrace, just as Shakespeare played the substitution trick with Isabella and Marianna. Unfortunately, an administrative gaffe occurs, and Mrs Overdone must stand in for the prostitute. Again, humour is the order of the day as the less than nubile brothel owner attempts to impersonate youthful physical beauty:

²⁴⁴ Brenton, *Measure for Measure* 109.

²⁴⁵ Brenton, *Measure for Measure* 113.

DUKE: Woman! In the bathroom! She'll go in the
bathroom, you'll come out!

OVERDONE: But what am I gonna wear!

DUKE: Switch nighties with her!

OVERDONE: You know I'm oversize!²⁴⁶

The Duke's plan is progressing successfully: the film of Angelo fornicating with Mrs Overdone is made and unveiled, as the Duke divulges his strategy to take back his former power. The concept of class reveals itself as a paradigm for the players in this political game:

DUKE: Sir, we were at terrible fault, ever to encourage you.
We raised you up, against our better judgement. Now we
slap you down.

ANGELO: Who is this 'We'? The English Ruling Class.

DUKE: (*Loses his temper.*) Don't you sneer at me, you
damn little snivelling upstart. At my school you'd not have
been fit to fag for me! [...] I tell you, the real powers of this
country will have no more from you.²⁴⁷

Unfortunately for the Duke, Angelo has employed his time in office well, bolstering up his influence both with the bureaucrats and the constabulary. At his command, the police enter the bedroom and confiscate the film which might have precipitated Angelo's downfall. Angelo gives orders concerning those surrounding him: Isabella is to be deported; Pompey and Jerky to serve hard labour at Dartmoor Prison; Mrs Overdone to be disinfected of her sexual diseases at the local hospital, then locked into a convent; and the Duke, to be placed

²⁴⁶ Brenton, *Measure for Measure* 153.

²⁴⁷ Brenton, *Measure for Measure* 160-161.

in a private home for the elderly: ‘Let him decay quietly, among the other wrecks of his kind. Guard him night and day, but discreetly. Let the country see him to be honoured, but redundant.’²⁴⁸ In an aside to the audience, Angelo offers his brief manifesto:

I offer this view of history. It is a paradox. The old order,
unchecked, will bring forth a new and far harsher form of
itself. Call me cynical if you will, but I welcome that. For
the truth of the matter is, I find myself to be that new order.²⁴⁹

Claudio is beheaded in this version, just as he is in Marowitz’s – evidence of a political leader’s betrayal of his own word.

CONCLUSIONS

The use of two plays by self-proclaimed socialist writer Howard Brenton as comparators to Marowitz’s *A Macbeth* and *Measure for Measure* successfully throws into relief an important difference between the two writers. Brenton states that his plays ‘are written unreservedly in the cause of socialism,’²⁵⁰ and the themes of his *Thirteenth Night* and *Measure for Measure* accordingly relate to the political mechanisms and machinations with which society is controlled and governed. Brenton loosely quotes Luis Valdez regarding what theatre should attempt: ‘Inspire the audience to social action. Illuminate specific points about social problems. Satirize the opposition. Show or hint at a solution. Express what people are feeling.’²⁵¹ When he claims to share Valdez’s contempt for playwrights who push their ““personal visions” [...] which would obviously bring utopia if only everyone in the audience, in the government, in the world just tried hard to be a moral

²⁴⁸ Brenton, *Measure for Measure* 163.

²⁴⁹ Brenton, *Measure for Measure* 163.

²⁵⁰ Howard Brenton, interview with Malcolm Hay and Philip Roberts, ‘Howard Brenton: An Introduction and Interview,’ *Performing Arts Journal* 3.3 (1979): 135.

²⁵¹ Luis Valdez, quoted in ‘Howard Brenton: An Introduction and Interview,’ *Performing Arts Journal* 137.

genius like the author of a night's play,²⁵² his description of the playwrights in question sounds very close to Marowitz, who tends to theatricalize his opinions in his classical adaptations as incontrovertible, without any attempt at dialectical discussion. In contrast, Marowitz describes himself as a 'red -pinko-liberal-fellow traveller,'²⁵³ but places himself in this category based upon 'the spirit of Senator Joe McCarthy [which] lay heavy on the land'²⁵⁴ during the 1950s in America, thus ascribing this classification to the judgment he believes others made of him. According to his autobiography, *Burnt Bridges*, his purported membership in this category is not attributable to his dedication to an overriding system of political philosophy, such as socialism, but instead relates to his beliefs on individual issues, such as his support for U.S. recognition of communist China, his opposition to the Cold War, his approval of Judge William O. Douglas, and his lack of condemnation for Soviet Russia.²⁵⁵ Several of Marowitz's Shakespearean adaptations, including *A Macbeth*, which depicts a man literally forced into regicide and murder who is then himself executed by his wife and former allies, and *Measure for Measure*, which presents the inevitable injustice of the legal system as it pertains to one young woman, relate to individuals caught within unfriendly or unjust contexts, rather than to overriding political systems. Similarly, while Marowitz adapted *Hamlet* in order to decry what he describes as the paralyzed Liberal, this attack was not based upon the needs of an overall governing paradigm. While Brenton can, therefore, be categorized as a socialist playwright, Marowitz fits more aptly into the designation of 'dissident,' since he uses his theatrical works to object to certain aspects of society – the tyranny of prejudice, the trampling of civil liberties, the exploitation of the vulnerable – without relating it to an all-compassing model of government.

²⁵² Brenton, interview with Hay & Roberts, *Performing Arts Journal* 137.

²⁵³ Marowitz, *Burnt Bridges* 1.

²⁵⁴ Marowitz, *Burnt Bridges* 1.

²⁵⁵ See Marowitz, *Burnt Bridges* 1 for a precise quotation of Marowitz's assertions.

In terms of the three Marowitz adaptations under discussion in this chapter, an analysis of the play text, along with critical writing surrounding the production, indicates that Marowitz's collage *A Macbeth* was able to create the desired nightmarish effect intended by its creator, and possibly also achieved the objective of providing the audience with an interior vision of the play's action. However, the directorial concept of an exploration of black magic was insufficiently antithetical to the intellectual substructure of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* to satisfy either Marowitz's parameters for successful adaptation, or the demands of the critics for a truly original re-thinking of the Shakespearean classic upon which it is based. Moreover, Marowitz's objectives in this adaptation were directed almost entirely to what he perceived as numeric structures hidden within the original play: for example, he describes wishing to investigate the trinities he sees in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, including the three weird sisters, the three murders and the three murderers. This is problematic on more than one level: it offers a weak foundation on which to build in terms of Marowitz's parameter regarding the necessity to challenge the intellectual substructure of the original play; and it guarantees that the adaptation will fail to provide a unique viewpoint, since it merely explores the details of the original work.

In *The Shrew*, Marowitz alters the interpretation of the original text to present a dark vision of Shakespeare's comedy. While, at the time it was created, this was arguably a unique take on the original play, *The Shrew* was written and produced during the height of the feminist movement; the statement that male domination occurred in the past and, by implication, occurred in 1973, was hardly a new one to society, particularly the female members of society. Marowitz interprets Kate as 'brainwashed' due to a few missed meals and casual mind games: Kate was not beaten; she was not subjected to electroshock; she did not suffer the Elizabethan equivalent of waterboarding. Her involuntary sodomy is described in the stage directions as part of a dream sequence, rather than belonging to the

larger narrative, so the effect of this event on her is blurred. Despite this, she is reduced to pathetically paddling on the floor as Petruchio and his colleagues feign riding on horseback, and is broken to a near hysterical automaton at the end of the play. While he positioned the adaptation as an attack on misogyny and male domination of women, Marowitz's *The Shrew* instead depicts his perhaps unconscious belief in the weakness of the female psyche and will. The play, particularly the modern scenes, and consistent with Marowitz's statements on the subject, quoted previously within this sub-chapter, could likewise be seen as an attack on his perception of love between a man and a woman, positioning it even further from his declared objectives.

Marowitz's *Measure for Measure* does little to communicate a unique twist on Shakespeare's theme of legal might implemented without mercy or fairness, although it does provide a more pessimistic consequence of such a system. Nor does the adaptation bombard the original work with new questions, thus providing audiences with new answers or viewpoints. In contrast, using witty sarcasm and blatant irony, Brenton's *Measure for Measure* cajoles the audience into perceiving the negative aspects of society with fresh eyes: he invites them into a theme park which showcases authoritarian government, the dirty bits of human nature, and the enduring poison of racial prejudice, then proceeds to take them on a guided tour. What they learn from that tour, he leaves to them. In contrast, Marowitz's theme of the inherent injustice within the legal system is presented as a lesson being forced upon the viewer; unfortunately, an audience member may escape this enforced lesson in a hundred ways, most easily by not giving their attention to the issues being presented. Ultimately, therefore, Brenton's play is more likely to challenge the assumptions of an audience.

All three of the adaptations discussed in this chapter support the notion of a 'personal politic' resident within the adaptor which subverts the plays from their intended

course. For example, all three present scenarios in which the protagonist is betrayed, and either physically or psychologically destroyed, by those closest to them. Both *The Shrew* and *Measure for Measure* portray scenes of sexual violence in the form of rape; in the latter play, the protagonist is subtly depicted as an at least partially willing participant. In *A Macbeth*, the psychosexual portrayal of Lady Macbeth is evidenced in her state of near undress during the sleepwalking scene. These incidences will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter, but point to beliefs held by Marowitz at an unconscious level which lend no support to the objectives he expressed for the adaptations themselves.

Chapter Six:

Marowitz's Underlying Beliefs and Their Effect on His Shakespearean Adaptations

AN OVERVIEW

While discussing the talents of director Peter Brook, Marowitz expressed the opinion that Brook 'is incapable of interpreting a play except in terms of his own personal obsessions'; since it is linked by 'and' to the previous comment, 'his natural instinct for violence and stark effects seduces him into irrelevant sensationalism,'¹ it is apparent that Marowitz himself regards this as a failing rather than a positive attribute. It is interesting, therefore, to read in his autobiography *Burnt Bridges* that he had never considered his work in the theatre as a 'career,' perceiving it instead as 'just the course my obsessions happened to be taking at any given time.'² A germane question in this instance is whether one's obsessions precipitate a dramatic inquiry into the matter involved, or whether they instead direct the creation of a statement of the artist's opinion on the subject. That being said, art by its very nature is a representation of the individual(s) who created it, and just as art provides the creator with a means of expression, so that expression is inevitably shaped to some degree by the psychological make-up of that creator. Their system of beliefs, including a deeply held worldview, as well as their personality traits and areas of extreme interest, will tend to be represented to some degree in their artistic work, and to govern the manner in which that work is inspired and shaped. Marowitz himself recognizes this in the Notes section to his published adaptation of *Hedda Gabler*, titled simply *Hedda*, when he states:

A writer can no sooner prevent his deepest feelings from seeping into his work than he can prevent a cardiograph from recording the rhythm of his heartbeats. All good writing is charged with subterranean forces unconsciously discharged

¹ Marowitz, 'Notes on the Theatre of Cruelty,' *Tulane Drama Review* 170-171.

² Marowitz, *Burnt Bridges* 220.

into the work of art which is itself, at best, only semi-conscious.³

Therefore, an examination of Charles Marowitz's worldview and other personal beliefs will be helpful in understanding the manner in which he approaches the adaptation of Shakespeare. This exploration will not attempt to deliver judgment on Marowitz's personal paradigm, but will instead focus on the effect these traits have on his creative work, specifically his adaptations of Shakespeare.

Since the period in which the adaptations under inquiry were created was one characterized by a large degree of societal dissatisfaction, expressed dramatically by those theatrical creators such as Marowitz on the political left, it would be expected that these Shakespearean renovations would reflect those issues, particularly since they tended to form the basis of his stated objectives for the work. Ironically, however, this analysis will illustrate that Marowitz, whether he was consciously aware of it or not, created adaptations which were significantly driven by his unconscious desires and seminal beliefs.

MAROWITZ'S PESSIMISTIC AND MISTRUSTFUL WORLDVIEW

In the review of fellow playwright Arnold Wesker's *Chips with Everything*, published in *Confessions of a Counterfeit Critic*, Marowitz states that, despite his assessment that

most left-wing zealots were climbing onto the Wesker bandwagon, [... w]hat I loathed most in Wesker was his enthusiasm, his idealism, and his sentimentality. He seemed to me to exemplify traits which I would unhesitatingly call

³ Charles Marowitz, notes, 'Hedda,' *Sex Wars: Free Adaptations of Ibsen and Strindberg* (London: Marion Boyars, 1982) 13.

Jewish if the adjective had not become so hopelessly loaded
and misconstruable.⁴

This comment reveals a great deal about Marowitz in terms of his overall perception of human existence: ‘loathed’ is a powerful word, reflecting a strongly negative emotional response, and this response is precipitated by a fellow playwright’s ‘enthusiasm,’ ‘idealism’ and ‘sentimentality’ – strangely positive traits to inspire such a reaction. Later in this editorial note, Marowitz states that Wesker’s ‘tone (to my American ear) [was] a jumped-up, East-ended version of Clifford Odets at his wettest.’⁵ In this last comment, Marowitz acknowledges the changing trends in theatrical tastes since Odets had his first dramatic hit in 1935 with *Waiting for Lefty*. As Richard Hornby notes, while Odets was greatly admired in the 1930s, his Communist status branded him as dangerous twenty years later, while ironically by the 1960s,

he was no longer radical *enough*. Not only his politics but his plays seemed out of date, realistic and well crafted in an era when rowdy stuff like Brecht's Epic Theatre and Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty, or absurdist playwrights like Beckett, Ionesco, and Pinter, were our ideals.⁶

At the same time, in describing him as ‘wet,’ an informal synonym for ‘feeble,’ Marowitz gives no weight to the significant effect Odets’ writing had on audiences during his heyday: at the initial benefit performance of *Waiting for Lefty*, the cast took 28 curtain calls;⁷ the play was later produced by union halls and community groups across the country (with

⁴ Marowitz, *Confessions of a Counterfeit Critic* 56-57. Always prone to contradiction, in the Introduction to *Off Broadway Plays Volume 2*, on which he served as editor, Marowitz refers to Odets as one of the ‘heavyweight American playwrights of the thirties and forties.’ Charles Marowitz, introduction, *Off Broadway Plays Vol. 2* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970) 11.

⁵ Marowitz, *Confessions of a Counterfeit Critic* 57.

⁶ Richard Hornby, ‘Clifford Odets,’ *Hudson Review* 59.3 (2006): 449.

⁷ Lori Seward & David Barbour, ‘Waiting for Lefty,’ *Drama Review* 28.4 (1984): 39.

Odets offering a significantly reduced royalty for these performances); and Harold Clurman called the play “the birth cry of the thirties.”⁸ Odets’ plays, such as *Waiting for Lefty*, were shaped, not only by his socialist interests, but also by his native optimism, coupled with that of his idealistic colleagues at The Group Theater, that ordinary men and women could work together to correct the ills of society – an optimism which they carried despite the rigours of the Great Depression. For Wesker’s part, although he had ‘lost none of [his] capacity for outrage against inequality and injustice,’ by the late 1960s he had admittedly grown disillusioned with the Soviet Union’s brand of socialism ‘which often cynically confers and takes away individual liberty and feels it has the right to do so;’⁹ despite his disenchantment, he nonetheless returned to a seminal belief in a liberal humanism which places value on human agency. Thus, Wesker and Odets both possess a native optimism, as well as faith in mankind; Marowitz, who shares both their Jewish heritage and their left wing political beliefs, nonetheless finds them worthy of disdain for these very traits. To Marowitz, then, the positive trait of enthusiasm, paired with idealism (which is really just optimism in action), is a negative thing; when confronted with Wesker’s ‘oeuvre,’ Marowitz cannot help but ‘feel this impending sense of nausea.’¹⁰ This is an important indication of the cynical point of view which Marowitz inhabits, and which he integrates into his Shakespearean adaptations – a viewpoint which, based on his adaptations, indirectly and nihilistically identifies human existence as impervious to improvement. To a certain extent, this pessimism might be expected to arise from the general sense of malaise which dominated the 1960s, although in Marowitz’s case, it extended well into the 1970s,

⁸ Seward & Barbour 48.

⁹ Arnold Wesker, interview with Catherine Itzin, Glenda Leeming and Simon Trussler, ‘A Sense of What Should Follow,’ *Theatre Quarterly* 6.28: 20.

¹⁰ Marowitz, *Confessions of a Counterfeit Critic* 57.

and was present in all but one of his Shakespearean adaptations, whether the original text was a tragedy or a comedy.

Logically, if the world is impervious to improvement, then the artist need not be motivated to find solutions through his or her work, but may instead satisfy themselves in merely identifying societal ills, and this seems true of Marowitz. For example, he wrote *The Marowitz Hamlet* based on his contempt for ‘the Paralyzed Liberal,’¹¹ but there is little in the demise of Shakespeare’s popular hero in the adaptation which would inspire any members of the audience to take a hard look at their own paralysis, or to take action against this societal ill. Marowitz’s *Measure for Measure* identifies corruption within the legal system, but the end of the play fails to invite an individual audience member onto a path which might topple that corruption: it presents them with a picture of corruption almost as a *fait accompli*. *The Shrew* offers a horrific picture of the social and sexual domination experienced by women at the hands of misogynistic men, but the play declines to lead the onlooker out of this black despair by communicating a plausible notion of how to stop or prevent such domination. This is not to suggest that a play must seek to inspire action, nor end in an uplifting way: only that Marowitz not only fails to see and/or communicate a better world than those exemplified in his works, he also loathes people like Odets and Wesker who do.

In the same way, this antipathy extends to William Shakespeare, whose plays, Marowitz suggests, all end with some version of social harmony in which conflicts have been worked out and the guilty punished. While this is naturally in evidence in Shakespeare’s comedies, since it is consistent with the genre in which they are written, Marowitz believe it is also true of his tragedies, which,

¹¹ Marowitz, *Roar of the Canon* 168.

though they invariably end on a positive note, never really banish the violence and misery that has gone before. They often appear like a big red ribbon wrapped around a black-draped coffin which in no way mitigates the preceding gloom.¹²

What Marowitz finds enigmatic in Shakespeare is that he ‘always felt the need to point to a better future even when all the evidence he had so persuasively presented made such a prospect inconceivable.’¹³ Between Marowitz and Shakespeare, an insurmountable chasm exists – that enormous canyon of seminal belief which separates the pessimist from the optimist.

It is not surprising, then, that a highly cynical view of human existence is a common thread running through the majority of Marowitz’s Shakespearean adaptations – works which illustrate the belief that the world is lacking in a fairly deployed system of justice or endowed with a sense of integrity or fairness. Integral to this negative paradigm is the almost paranoid concept that the world is ultimately a dangerous place, devoid of a caring deity and possibly guided by a force or principle that actively victimizes its protagonists. In Marowitz’s Shakespearean adaptations, the inner circle of the hero/heroine’s life – those people upon whom societal norms suggest one can most depend – betray and turn upon the protagonists, eventually leading to the protagonists’ psychological and physical demise. Additionally, the protagonists are generally, at some point in the text, forced into evil actions for which they are later blamed. For example, Hamlet in *The Marowitz Hamlet* is ridiculed and humiliated throughout the action of the play, and finally psychologically destroyed by those who either profess to love him, or whose role in his life make love an

¹² Marowitz, *Roar of the Canon* 155.

¹³ Marowitz, *Roar of the Canon* 155.

expected emotion: his mother, Gertrude; his father, in the form of the ghost of Hamlet Sr.; his lover, Ophelia; and his friends, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. The ongoing destruction and victimization of Hamlet occurs because of who he is at a psychological level, as interpreted, of course, by Marowitz, but those who destroy him occupy roles in which the responsibility of protection, even for the weak and vacillating, is usual in society. During the reenactment of the poisoning of Hamlet Sr., although Gertrude is holding the vial of poison, and discussing its use with Claudius, the stage directions describe the action thusly: *'The vial is forced into HAMLET's hands. [...] KING and QUEEN force a helpless HAMLET to pour poison into the ears of his sleeping father.'*¹⁴ Not only is Hamlet ultimately destroyed, he is also forced by his mother to kill his own father – a mutated resonance of the Oedipal complex with which the character of Hamlet is often associated.

In *A Macbeth*, the central and title character is the victim of a plot by a coven of very female witches, led by his trusted partner in life: his wife. At the end of the play, he is surrounded by the other characters, including his wife, and beaten to death with broomsticks. While Macduff, Malcolm, Banquo and Duncan have some reason to implement a death sentence upon Macbeth, based upon his regicide and the murder of their loved ones, neither the witches nor Lady Macbeth have any grounds to kill the thane, other than their abeyance to an evil power which permeates the world of the play. While Duncan's murder is committed by Macbeth in *A Macbeth*, just as it is in Shakespeare's play, the scenario in Marowitz's adaptation ascribes culpability to the title character somewhat differently. As the stage directions describe:

*The WITCHES place two daggers into MACBETH's hands,
and [...] usher him over to the sleeping DUNCAN. The*

¹⁴ Marowitz, *Hamlet* 47. Italics in original.

WITCHES *then hoist up the sleeping KING and present him to MACBETH.[...] MACBETH raises the daggers and then lowers them. Raises his daggers again. At that moment, LADY MACBETH appears, takes hold of MACBETH's hands and drives the daggers into DUNCAN's heart.*¹⁵

In a manner similar to Hamlet, Macbeth is forced to do evil by someone close to him: in the collage *Hamlet*, it is Hamlet's mother; in *A Macbeth*, it is Macbeth's wife. Consistent with his tendency to excuse the actions of his protagonists, Marowitz summarizes the situation in this way: '[a]n overwhelming evil pressure is brought to bear on a simple, uncomplicated nature. [...] Macbeth is manipulated into murder and self-destruction.'¹⁶

The title character in *An Othello* is attacked throughout the adaptation by the black activist Iago, as well as being hounded by an angry father-in-law, a disapproving General, and the Duke in the guise of a member of the local government. In addition, he is battered by visions of his wife's potential infidelity, made more feasible in *An Othello* than in Shakespeare's play by the carnal attitudes expressed by Marowitz's Desdemona regarding her husband. When the distracted Moor appears unwilling to fulfill the white societal stereotype of the violent Black male by taking his own life in the last minutes of the play, it is Lodovico and the Duke who cut his throat; afterwards, when Iago has removed Othello's body from the stage, all of the remaining characters, including his friend Cassio and his wife Desdemona look to one another, '*slight smiles playing on their lips.*'¹⁷

¹⁵ Marowitz, *A Macbeth* 99-100. Italics in original.

¹⁶ Charles Marowitz, introduction, *A Macbeth* 10-11.

¹⁷ Marowitz, *An Othello* 310. Italics in original. This sense of a conspiracy in which characters, usually female, seduce and manipulate the protagonist extends beyond Marowitz's Shakespearean adaptations. According to a review by Peter Byrne, the first act of Marowitz's recent play *Silent Partners* ends with Eric Bentley being seduced by Bertolt Brecht into returning to their collaboration. When Bentley is alone on stage, he is joined by Brecht's wife, Helen Weigel and by Brecht's lover, Ruth Berlau. Byrne notes the play script's description of the women: 'Like two daughters of Dracula they slowly place their arms around Bentley forming a kind of unholy trio, and smile knowingly, conspiratorially. Bentley,

In *The Shrew*, Kate is a victim to male domination and cruelty, both sexually and in terms of a lack of justice and freedom. When Kate, just married to Petruchio, requests a deferral of their immediate exit to the conjugal bed, the world quickly mutates: suddenly she occupies the centre of a circle of anger and hostility, during which the other characters, including her father, Baptista and her servants in the form of Hortensio and Grumio, hold her down upon a table while Petruchio raises her skirts and begins to rape her anally. The stage directions state that, '*[a]s he inserts, an ear-piercing, electronic whistle rises to a crescendo pitch. KATE's mouth is wild and open, and it appears as if the impossible sound is issuing from her lungs.*'¹⁸ At the end of the play, Kate has been destroyed in everything but physical form: her spirit is crushed to the point of non-existence; when her husband demands she tell the other women what 'duty they owe to their lords and husbands,'¹⁹ she regurgitates the text like an automaton.

Similarly, Isabella in Marowitz's *Measure for Measure* is also the victim of male domination and cruelty. She begins the play as a chaste nun, but, through no fault of her own, is quickly sucked into a quagmire of lechery. Her spiritual salvation necessitates her refusal to fornicate with Angelo, but she is betrayed by her brother Claudio who literally leads her to Angelo's bed. At one point in the action, there is an indication that Claudio is complicit in the attempt to sexualize Isabella, and that he, himself, regards her sexually: after the Bishop has hurled Isabella forward, decrying her as a harlot, the stage directions note that '*CLAUDIO suddenly materialized: smirking seductively.*' Moments later he '*grabs her rudely and tries to close her in a lecherous embrace.*'²⁰ Later in the scene, it is

clearly content, returns the smile. (Page 48).' Peter Byrne, 'Raging Silence: Charles Marowitz's *Silent Partners*,' 14 July 2008, *Swans Commentary*. 29 Sept. 2011 <<http://www.swans.com/library/art14/pbyrne75.html>>.

¹⁸ Marowitz, *The Shrew* 178. Italics in original.

¹⁹ Marowitz, *The Shrew* 178.

²⁰ Marowitz, *Measure for Measure* 213. Italics in original. All quoted text in the preceding two lines is also from this source.

Claudio who ‘takes her by the hand and leads her towards the curtained-bed [where] she is presented to ANGELO.’²¹ The men clasp hands, and Claudio is unknowingly led away to his own execution. The brother Isabella might reasonably have expected to protect her in her hour of danger instead has joined with those wishing to sexually assault her, continuing Marowitz’s pattern of a protagonist’s destruction by those in their inner circle. Although Angelo has promised Claudio’s life if Isabella submits to him sexually, the execution proceeds and a loving sister, after the devastating loss of her physical virtue, flees the scene of her degradation only to encounter her brother’s severed head. At the end of the play, Isabella receives no justice from the Duke, and is in the power of the man who deflowered her: when he attempts to take her arm, she ‘*expressionlessly*’²² pushes away his hand and exits, her ability to fight his domination non-existent.

What can be discerned from this ‘broad strokes’ examination of the adaptations discussed is a pessimistic and paranoiac worldview in which a central character is isolated, betrayed by those closest to them, and finally destroyed by both their loved ones and society as a whole as it exists within the world of the play. While it is impossible to identify conclusively the source of this negative view of human life, it arises at least in part from Marowitz’s life experiences, as his critical writing proves. For example, his adaptation of *Measure for Measure* was, by his own admission, heavily influenced by an incident at Selfridges Department Store in London when he was detained by police after being seen ‘behaving suspiciously’²³ by a store detective. Marowitz’s suspicious behaviour consisted essentially of his presence as ‘a solitary male [...] in the midst of a group of women at a cosmetics display,’²⁴ a presentation from which he hoped to glean information of use in a

²¹ Marowitz, *Measure for Measure* 214. Italics in original.

²² Marowitz, *Measure for Measure* 224. Italics in original.

²³ Marowitz, *Roar of the Canon* 85.

²⁴ Marowitz, *Roar of the Canon* 84.

theatrical problem found in his new work, *Sherlock's Last Case*.²⁵ His arrest and subsequent trial were predicated not only on his presence in a setting deemed unusual for a man, but also substantively on the store detective's supposition of his criminal intent based on his being 'dressed suspiciously, viz. beat-up blue jacket, red shirt, faded jeans, [and] incriminating long hair.'²⁶ Based on information from his solicitor, Marowitz was startled to find that his innocence was not germane to the probable guilty verdict. This event had a profound effect on Marowitz, so much so that when asked to direct a production of *Measure for Measure*, he adapted Shakespeare's play based on his inherent beliefs as to the opposing legality and lack of right of the justice system, which were so recently updated by his Selfridges experience. In a similar vein, speaking of his specific agenda in *The Shrew*, Marowitz draws attention to his derisive seminal beliefs regarding romantic relationships when he states that 'familiarity not only breeds contempt but dissipation and stasis' and even more pessimistically, that there is 'something at the core of human nature which [is] irrevocably abusing and self-consuming.'²⁷

It must be noted that, while the events described would inevitably effect one's perception of the world, the consistency and seminal nature of Marowitz's negative viewpoint points to a deeper construction. In terms of a Freudian psychoanalytical examination of the pessimistic worldview within Marowitz's adaptations, as suggested in my comments on *A Macbeth* (p. 271), it displays two of the characteristics consistent with 'core issues' associated with repression: *fear of abandonment* and *fear of betrayal*. The former comprises an irrational fear that an individual's friends and closest allies will desert

²⁵ There is something in Marowitz's explanation of his presence at the scene described which fails to convince: the demonstration which he stopped to observe was for 'a new cleansing-cream that miraculously evaporated make-up' and which he allegedly hoped might be employed at the end of the play, when Sherlock Holmes' face, 'doused with acid, gradually disintegrates before our eyes.' It seems doubtful that an intelligent man such as Marowitz could think that a cleansing cream, sold for everyday use by British women, could mimic acid in terms of its effect on skin. Marowitz, *Recycling Shakespeare* 43.

²⁶ Marowitz, *Roar of the Canon* 85.

²⁷ Marowitz, introduction, *The Shrew* 19.

them either physically or emotionally, while the latter encompasses the anxiety that the individual's friends and loved ones can't be trusted to be truthful, to remain monogamous, or to refrain from laughing at them behind their back.²⁸ To reiterate, the identification of such unconscious anxiety in Marowitz is not intended as a judgment, but is germane to this thesis in that it supports the idea that, as an adaptor of the Shakespearean canon, his interpretation springs from a psychological paradigm, or 'personal politic,' which subverts his stated objective to respond antithetically to the unique intellectual substructure of the original play. Marowitz's own pessimistic view of humanity and the world operates repeatedly as underlying ingredient in his Shakespearean adaptations, despite whatever sociopolitical objective he may ostensibly be following during their creation: whether he is attempting to indict the paralyzed Liberal; to explore the occult qualities of Macbeth's world; or to depict the extent to which '[w]e are all in the gravitational tug of the law,'²⁹ it seems probable in a Marowitz adaptation of a Shakespearean play that the protagonist will be betrayed and destroyed by their closest friends and family, as well as by society as a whole. Considering the *zeitgeist* of the age, the large body of sociopolitically motivated work created by Marowitz's colleagues, and the sociopolitical objectives for the adaptations expressed by Marowitz himself, the manner in which the works under inquiry manifested themes quite different than those objectives provides support to the idea that unconscious paradigms were present in the creator which, in many cases, subverted him from his aims.

In contrast to this pattern, Shylock in *Variations on the Merchant of Venice* is eventually shown to be an anti-victim: ridiculed for his faith by the Venetian/British forces, he operates in stealth to overcome their oppression and finally eradicates them violently. Far from being isolated and destroyed at the end of the play, Shylock is

²⁸ See Tyson 16.

²⁹ Marowitz, *Roar of the Canon* 85.

surrounded by his colleagues in arms, and supported by a loyal daughter: those closest to him have supported, not betrayed him, and thus he is an anomaly within the group of characters discussed in this section. Interestingly, *Variations* is Marowitz's least sexual play: there is no nudity, nor are any of the women portrayed primarily as sexual rather than socially motivated beings. It is possible that the political nature of the play, dealing as it does with the treatment of members of a religious faith into which he was born, influenced Marowitz to approach this work in a manner which focused more on the broader political issues than on his particular sexual perceptions. If so, it could possibly indicate that the highly sexualized portrayals of women displayed in so many of his other adaptations is a more personal inclination, and so differs in his mind from the important 'large picture' material contained within *Variations*.

CULTURE AS CONTEXT: MAROWITZ'S JEWISH ROOTS AND *THE MERCHANT OF VENICE*

Although he writes little of his early life, and even less of his early family life, it is known that Marowitz was born to Jewish parents, and spent his childhood in New York's Lower East Side, an area heavily populated by members of this community. It is of interest, therefore, to investigate how Marowitz's membership in this faith may have shaped his adaptation of Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* and particularly his portrayal of Shylock; even more so because of his reticence to identify himself as a member of this community. While Bloom made an open declaration of his own Jewish roots when judging Shakespeare's *Merchant* as, in his opinion, an anti-Semitic play,³⁰ Marowitz repeatedly avoids identifying himself in this manner. That he failed to experience any

³⁰ See Bloom, introduction, *The Merchant of Venice: Modern Critical Interpretations* 2. Bloom clearly states, 'I am a Jewish critic.'

association with the character seems impossible, since, in his own words, ‘there is a cultural tendon that links all Jews with their history (even their history in Shakespearian plays).’³¹

One of the interesting points regarding Marowitz’s writings on Shakespeare’s *Merchant of Venice* is that he assiduously avoids the word most often used by other writers: anti-Semitic. Critical writing falls primarily into two camps: one denounces the play as anti-Semitic; the other protests that it is *not* anti-Semitic; a much smaller segment of scholarly writing describes the issues of the play as too complex to categorize in such definitive terms. Marowitz skirts a black and white classification the play, stating instead that, ‘I, like many Jews who know and dislike the original work, wanted to try to redress the moral balance of the play.’³² This statement merits scrutiny, in that it is one of a mere handful of occasions when Marowitz seems to be identifying himself as a Jew. However, if one looks at the language precisely, he doesn’t actually do so: he merely places himself in agreement with Jews who hold a particular stance on Shakespeare’s play. While this may seem like splitting hairs, it is in contrast to Bloom, who, when discussing Shakespeare’s *Merchant*, directly states,

I am a Jewish critic, and prefer the exuberance of Barabas to the wounded intensity of Shylock. There is nothing problematic about Barabas. We cannot imagine *him* asking: “If you prick us, do we not bleed?” anymore than we can imagine Shylock proclaiming: “As for myself, I walk abroad a-nights ... and poison wells.”³³

³¹ Marowitz, introduction, *The Marowitz Shakespeare* 22.

³² Marowitz, ‘Giving Them Hell,’ *Plays and Players* 15.

³³ Bloom, introduction, *The Merchant of Venice: Modern Critical Interpretations* 2.

In his autobiographical work *Burnt Bridges: A Souvenir of the Swinging Sixties and Beyond*, Marowitz's self-identification as a Jew is as conspicuous by its absence as his strident heterosexual appetites are by their presence. Usually witty, sometimes self-deprecatingly so, Marowitz tends to identify himself either as an American, (specifically as a New Yorker), or by attitude rather than culture. For example, when discussing his time as a student at LAMDA, he refers to himself as 'an inept and gormless young man with a goatee who could not act, was unapologetically anti-social and seemed to spend most of his time seducing the female students.'³⁴ While recounting a *ménage-a-trois* he enjoyed during his first months in London, he reports how the young woman in question favoured him sexually over his roommate, an Iranian musicologist, since she was 'more predisposed to white caucasians than "Arabic gentlemen."³⁵ In a section on working with Vanessa Redgrave, he reports her perceived desire, after reading an article he had published in *Encore*, to 'meet the surly and cerebral Yank.'³⁶ When holding a job as 'the authorized British actor'³⁷ working with the US Air Force near London, he describes how his 'dentalized lower East side, New York accent'³⁸ occasionally surfaced over his imposed Received Pronunciation, and had to be explained away, positioning himself as a New Yorker but never alluding to the historic connection between Jewish immigrant populations and the New York neighbourhood mentioned. He imagines that members of the theatre's board of directors view him as a 'New York upstart' when they thwart his efforts to portray Elizabeth II as the deadly sin of 'Sloth' in his production of Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* in Glasgow in 1965, going on to quote Duncan Macrae, 'a leading Scots actor' in his query,

³⁴ Marowitz, *Burnt Bridges* 15

³⁵ Marowitz, *Burnt Bridges* 12.

³⁶ Marowitz, *Burnt Bridges* 34.

³⁷ Marowitz, *Burnt Bridges* 50.

³⁸ Marowitz, *Burnt Bridges* 51.

‘Why should an American director come here and insult the Queen?’³⁹ Again, he consistently positions himself as a New Yorker, and an American, but not as a Jew. When discussing Lenny Bruce’s battle against hypocrisy, Marowitz states that

[t]he tone was similar to that which one finds at Jewish family get-togethers where the vagaries or vulgarities of absent relatives or finagling *goyim* are mercilessly dissected[.] Lenny’s performances were always conducted in the protected parlour of that tight-knit family circle whose shared values unmistakably divided the *chuchim* from the *putzim*.⁴⁰

In this case, Marowitz displays an almost scholarly knowledge of Judaism without ever placing himself within that milieu. Similarly, when describing the rehearsal moanings of an unhappy playwright, he makes reference to the way in which the writer would ‘roam around the back of the auditorium as if anticipating crucifixion’;⁴¹ Marowitz subsequently barred the playwright from the rehearsal hall, speculating that ‘no useful work would be done with that semi-audible Jewish drone running like a Talmudic undercurrent behind the actors’ efforts.’⁴² A knowledge of Judaism is present in what is said, but the tone of sarcasm places Marowitz outside any brotherly affiliation with the playwright being described. (This is not the only occasion when Marowitz displays a negative attitude towards the Jewish culture: in *An Othello*, as discussed previously, he chose to include a negative portrayal of a Jewish father when he transformed Brabantio into a prejudiced, joke-cracking, Yiddish-speaking opponent to miscegenation.) Closer to home, when

³⁹ Marowitz, *Burnt Bridges* 76-77.

⁴⁰ Marowitz, *Burnt Bridges* 45.

⁴¹ Marowitz, *Burnt Bridges* 21.

⁴² Marowitz, *Burnt Bridges* 21.

rhapsodizing over the lascivious pleasures of his liaison with an English vicar's daughter who had been '[b]red in the higher reaches of upper-middle-class gentility,' he describes his feelings thusly:

[w]hen I was with her, I was acutely conscious of sinning, of suborning her Church of England rectitude into nefarious perversions, but I was also aware of the devil inside her enthusiastically co-operating. There is something heady and intoxicating about the mix of a rabid, lower East side Jewish youth and the wilful abandon of a church-going *shiksa*, a fusion of Heaven and Hell to which only William Blake could do justice.⁴³

Although the reasonable deduction is that Marowitz refers to himself as the Jewish youth, and the vicar's daughter as the *shiksa*, it is nonetheless an essentially indirect and inconclusive proclamation of his own Jewish roots. Adding fuel to the fire of dis-clarity, does Marowitz use the term 'youth' to refer to his early years spent in the Jewish neighbourhood of the East side of New York City? Is it his 'youth' that is Jewish, and not himself? If he refers to himself *as* a Jewish youth, this would represent one of his few declarations of religious background, but since he hovered round the age of 35 at the time of the relationship he describes, he is arguably past the callow stage one might refer to poetically as 'youth,' making this interpretation less likely.⁴⁴

It is worth restating that the only reason that Marowitz's Jewish background is of interest dramatically is the force of context it provides to his treatment of Shakespeare's

⁴³ Marowitz, *Burnt Bridges* 213.

⁴⁴ In *Burnt Bridges*, Marowitz refers to his relationship with Rachel Stewart, the vicar's daughter in question, taking place before another lover, Gypsy Kemp 'became lodged in my gut' (page 213). According to the book, his seven year relationship with Kemp ended in 1976, placing his affair with Stewart at roughly 1969. Since Marowitz was born in 1934, he would have been approximately 35 at the time.

Merchant, and his lack of direct disclosure may act as a signpost in this regard. In *The Trotskys, Freuds and Woody Allens: Portrait of a Culture*,⁴⁵ Ivan Kalmar coins the term ‘eji,’ an acronym for ‘Embarrassed Jewish Individual.’⁴⁶ Whatever they practice in private, says Kalmar, the ‘eji’ avoid identification with their Jewish culture in public. ‘The question that bothers the eji is: “Are they thinking of me as a Jew?”’⁴⁷ Considering the centuries of anti-Semitic abuse suffered by Jews throughout Europe, this is arguably not difficult to understand. ‘The eji wish to speak for everyone,’ explains Kalmar, ‘not just for the Jews. If they appear too Jewish, they fear their concerns might be taken as reflecting the narrow interests of a despised people rather than the needs of all human beings.’⁴⁸ And the attitude most often expressed by the ‘eji’ supports the notion that ‘the Jews are not significantly different from others.’⁴⁹ This last point neatly ties into Shakespeare’s most controversial character, in what Kalmar refers to as ‘Shylock’s Defence’: ‘Hath not a Jew eyes?’ demands Shylock in Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice*;

Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections,
passions; fed with the same food, hurt with the same
weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same
means, warm’d and cool’d by the same winter and summer,
as a Christian is?⁵⁰

⁴⁵ Ivan Kalmar, *The Trotsky’s, Frauds and Woody Allen’s: Portrait of a Culture* (Toronto: Penguin Canada, 1993).

⁴⁶ An Elizabethan example of Calmar’s ‘embarrassed Jewish individual’ might be Aemilia Lanyer, a musician and poet purported by A.L. Rowse to be Shakespeare’s ‘Dark Lady’ of the sonnets. The daughter of Baptist Bassano, an Italian musician in the court of Elizabeth I, Lanyer’s accomplishments include *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*, a volume of religious poetry in which she describes ‘the Jewish wolves, that did our Saviour bite,’ echoing a similar description in Shakespeare’s *Merchant*. According to Lewalski, Lanyer was ‘probably of Jewish origin.’ Barbara Kiefer Lewalski, *Writing Women in Jacobean England* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1993) 214. If so, as Horowitz states, her ‘pointed reference to “Jewish wolves” may have been an attempt to obscure [her Jewishness].’ Elliot Horowitz, ‘Circumcised Dogs from Matthew to Marlowe,’ *Prooftexts* 27.3 (2007): 538.

⁴⁷ Kalmar 14.

⁴⁸ Kalmar 27.

⁴⁹ Kalmar 13.

⁵⁰ Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice* III.i.59-64.

We are no different from you, Shylock's Defence argues, and this, Kalmar asserts, is 'a response to a charge [...] – that of unscrupulous greed.'⁵¹ Being not different is 'eji' code for not being a rich Jew, for not being on the wrong side in the battle between 'Good and Gold.'⁵² Ever a salmon swimming home against the current, Marowitz chose to proclaim his 'difference' along socio-economic and political lines, possibly from a need to be classified by something other than his religious background:

In New York City, in the mid-Fifties, the spirit of Senator Joe McCarthy lay heavy on the land. If you advocated recognition of Red China, you were a 'red'; if you opposed the Cold War, you were a 'pinko'; if you approved of Judge William O. Douglas or the editorial sentiments of *The Nation*, you were a 'radical'; and, if you had a good word to say for Soviet culture, you were a 'fellow traveller.' Accordingly, I was considered a red-pinko-liberal-fellow-traveller.⁵³

Whatever the truthfulness of the stated beliefs, this classification has the advantage of disguise, if one considers one necessary: when an individual embraces so many communist concerns, the 'goyim' could hardly jump to the conclusion that the labels hide a 'rich Jew,' potentially positioning Marowitz's oft-stated political associations as an 'eji' disguise.

One of the final puzzle pieces relates to Marowitz's already mentioned predilection for sexual exploit, and even more, to his unfailingly publishing the details of these proclivities. The 'eji,' says Kalmar, assiduously strives to prove that 'he is not a "typical

⁵¹ Kalmar 39.

⁵² Kalmar 39. Rothblatt notes that the 'long-distance prehistory of the usurious Jew lies in the charge that Jews sold Jesus (a foe of moneylenders). Eventually the charge created the portrait of the grasping Jew living only for gain.' Sheldon Rothblatt, 'Jewish Life in the Eighteenth Century,' *Eighteenth-Century Life* 21.1 (1997): 125.

⁵³ Marowitz, *Burnt Bridges* 1.

Jewish man,” that is, a nerd and a sexual fumbler.’⁵⁴ Marowitz’s memoirs provide ample evidence of his active sexuality. When speaking of Jim Haynes, he admits that

our deepest bond was the mutual adoration of pussy and, in pursuit of this object, we frequently roamed the town together reconnoitring some of the loveliest, sexiest, most voluptuous and often most impregnable women in London. [...] When Jim and I met for meals or coffee, our most serious consultations were almost always about pussy, like two practised hunters comparing trophies and giving each other useful tips about the treacheries of the terrain and sightings of magnificent fauna in out-of-the-way places. For those feminists who immediately construe this as the insensitive objectification of women, I should explain that our erotic activities were invariably recalled with awe. [...] We reconstructed bedroom scenes like pilgrims recounting Christian miracles.⁵⁵

Marowitz’s promotion of his carnal exploits did not stop at rhapsodic chats with his friend; he chose to broadcast on a larger scale on at least one occasion. Billington noted in a short article in March of 1977 that in the latest version of *Who’s Who in the Theatre*, Marowitz had listed ‘Balling’ amongst his recreational activities; according to Billington, an American woman had written in ‘to inquire if it was some sort of game.’⁵⁶ The desire to be

⁵⁴ Kalmar 247.

⁵⁵ Marowitz, *Burnt Bridges* 132-133.

⁵⁶ Michael Billington, ‘Mr Herbert and his co-editors have given Who’s Who in The Theatre the kiss of life,’ *Guardian* 22 March 1977.

perceived as a sexual ‘player’ is part of the ‘eji’ classification, especially for a self-described ‘cerebral Yank’:⁵⁷

[i]ntellectually inclined male Jews [...] attempt to compensate for the un-macho image of the “brainer” by appealing to women’s appreciation of the intellect. Indeed, their pursuit of women can become obsessive, overshooting the simple aim of finding a partner in love, and turning the admiration of women into a badge certifying genuine masculinity.⁵⁸

It seems obvious, then, that Marowitz does fit well within Kalmar’s definition of the ‘embarrassed Jewish individual.’ The germane information is how the traits defined within this classification might have impacted his perception of Shakespeare’s *Merchant of Venice*, as well as his adaptation of that play. A likely hypothesis is that, in *Variations on the Merchant of Venice*, Marowitz avoids identifying Shylock in the stereotypic Jewish role of victim by endowing him with membership in the Irgun, and establishing him as a warrior fighting for the freedom of himself and his community. Of particular interest is Marowitz’s concern that Shakespeare’s Shylock is revealed at the end of the play as ‘an unmasked villain’:⁵⁹ a villain, by definition, is an individual whose nature is geared towards an ongoing and pre-meditated course of action that will benefit them while hurting others. A victim, on the other hand, knows much of being hurt but little of hurting. It is possible that Marowitz’s inclination to see Shakespeare’s Shylock as ‘an unmasked villain’ is a mental defence mechanism because the alternative, the role of defeated victim, is personally

⁵⁷ Marowitz, *Burnt Bridges* 34.

⁵⁸ Kalmar 247.

⁵⁹ Marowitz, introduction, *The Marowitz Shakespeare* 22.

unpalatable to him; that it was at least partly to free the character from both such classifications that he created his adaptation. Since in Marowitz's opinion, Shakespeare's Shylock is innocent of the charges that impoverish and convert him, he is therefore definitely a victim of anti-Semitic prejudice at the hands of the Venetians: he is reviled by almost every other character in the play; he is the subject of negative comments regarding both his faith and his profession, delivered to his face and behind his back.

In contrast to this, the exemplar of the 'brave Jew' who protects Israel had its roots in the conflict that preceded the creation of that country, and was manifested in the stance taken by the military *Irgun* versus the more traditionally non-violent Jewish Agency. The 'Irgun's contempt for the Jewish Agency' is depicted in two *Irgun* posters⁶⁰ of the period. One poster shows a man standing erect, his feet wide apart, holding an automatic weapon, with the title: 'I want to live' and at the bottom of the poster, 'The Fighting, Hebrew Resistance Way.' The second shows the same man on his knees, his hands clasped in front of him as if begging and an open hat beside his knees: the same title, 'I want to live' is at the top, while the bottom of the poster reads, 'The Submissive, Jewish Agency Way.' There is no doubt, based on his adaptation, where Marowitz's heart lies in this dichotomy, and in this way, he exhibits a further association with Kalmar's 'eji' classification. Despite their shared heritage, Marowitz is patently unwilling to associate himself with the victimized, humiliated Shylock, and therefore re-fashions him into the kind of Jew he would be willing to be himself. As evidenced by the posters described above, in his creation of a powerful, military Shylock, Marowitz is mirroring and expressing the

⁶⁰ Thurston Clarke, *By Blood & Fire: The Attack on the King David Hotel* (London: Hutchinson, 1981) n.pag. (left of 111).

groundswell of collective aspiration by Jewish men to shake off the stereotype of the Jewish male as less than manly.⁶¹

In terms of historicity, it is impossible to know with certainty to what degree Marowitz's reaction to Shakespeare's Shylock is grounded in the political events of the early 1970s *vis-à-vis* terrorism against Israel, including the murder of Israel Olympic athletes in 1972; the assassination of Israel's U.S. ambassador in 1973; the twenty-two children killed in a terrorist attack in Ma'alot in 1974; or the dramatic Air France hijacking and resultant military rescue mounted by the Israel Defense Forces in 1976, only a year before *Variations* was created. The Yom Kippur war, which began in 1973, may have added to the palpable awareness of a very real threat against Israel during this period.

What does seem highly possible, however, is that, while this portrayal of Shylock satisfies Marowitz's criterion that an adaptation of a classic work should challenge and revoke the intellectual substructure of the original, it does so based on a need springing from Marowitz's 'personal politics' rather than from a simple confrontation of Shakespeare's original text.

MAROWITZ'S PSYCHOSEXUAL PERCEPTIONS OF WOMEN

The previous section gives a more or less detailed account of Marowitz's sexual proclivities, as recounted in his own writing, as part of a location of Marowitz within Kalmar's classification of the 'eji' (the Embarrassed Jewish Individual). In addition to this, it is interesting to note the ways in which he uses sexual language and discussion to provoke and to shock. For example, Marowitz spoke at a luncheon held for the media in London in 1970; the other panelist was Mary Whitehouse, a British campaigner against

⁶¹ For a fuller discussion of this stereotype as identified by Kalmar, see *The Trotskys, Freuds & Woody Allens: Portrait of a Culture*.

permissive societal mores. As de Jongh describes in an article on the luncheon, when Marowitz was asked to comment on the topic of ‘permissiveness,’ he responded ‘why not a theatre of pornography, obscenity, nudity, and eroticism?’⁶² De Jongh further describes Marowitz’s discourse:

[t]he present century had seen a gradual erosion of restraints:
What we once only read we could now see. The question was no longer how far could one go on the stage, more whimsical, detailed questions were to be answered. “When should one withdraw?” How long could copulation decently last on the stage?⁶³

In terms of societal precepts governing decency in behaviour, descriptions of

“good taste” were “glittering generalities” which meant nothing if they were not judged in context. For the Archbishop of Canterbury to use the familiar four-letter expletive (Mr Marowitz used the word) would be inappropriate, but on the football field it would be different.⁶⁴

In terms of the sexuality of others, one tendency easily discerned within Marowitz’s Shakespearean adaptations is the psychosexual portrayal of women – that is to say, to see women as primarily sexual receptors and provocateurs of male desire based upon a sexual paradigm which fails to perceive the totality of their physical, spiritual and emotional selves. This tendency manifests itself in a number of ways. For example, the female form

⁶² Nicholas de Jongh, ‘An undaunted Moralist,’ *Guardian* 11 Apr. 1970.

⁶³ de Jongh, ‘An Undaunted Moralist,’ *Guardian*.

⁶⁴ de Jongh, ‘An Undaunted Moralist,’ *Guardian*. Marowitz’s assertion brings into question his own submission to the *Who’s Who in the Theatre*, described previously, in which, according to Billington, Marowitz had listed ‘Balling’ amongst his recreational activities. Using Marowitz’s example, the context of a reference book of this nature surely justifies a less explicit description. Billington, ‘Mr. Herbert and his co-editors have given Who’s Who in The Theatre the kiss of life,’ *Guardian*.

is regularly unveiled within Marowitz's recensions: Lady Macbeth sleepwalks naked beneath a see-through nightgown; Isabella is stripped onstage by Angelo in *Measure for Measure*;⁶⁵ in contrast, scenes involving male nudity, even that amount allowable by law at the time, are virtually absent based on the text's stage directions. Scenes containing sexual innuendo are rife; incidents of rape and other sexual violence occur frequently. Kate is sodomized in *The Shrew*; Isabel is raped in *Measure for Measure*; Desdemona is gangbanged by most of the cast in *An Othello*. The female victims of this sexual violence often end the play virtually devoid of spirit; they do not fight against their domination by the male characters of the play.

In addition to these sexually violent representations, the examples of Marowitz portraying women from a sexual perspective, as opposed to a manner arising from other social and/or psychological factors, are numerous. In his critical writing surrounding *The Marowitz Hamlet*, Marowitz admits that he 'cannot think of Ophelia except erotically.'⁶⁶ While he concedes it was not Shakespeare's intention to portray her as 'a court dolly, a sexual convenience passed methodically from one nobleman to the other and even turning up in Claudius's bed,' he nonetheless advances it as 'a conceivable fantasy in the mind of a man who, obsessed with images of lechery and incest, is prone to more hallucinations than Shakespeare himself might have imagined.'⁶⁷ One assumes that Marowitz is referring to Hamlet in the latter part of the quotation, although, based on his numerous tales of personal sexual proclivity in the autobiographical *Burnt Bridges*, it seems an appropriate comment regarding himself as well. The July, 1969 production of the 85 minute version at the Open

⁶⁵ In addition, in Picasso's *The Four Little Girls*, directed by Marowitz and produced by The Open Space Theatre in 1971, all four young women 'strip to the buff' during the performance. Michael Billington, 'Open Space: Four Little Girls,' *Guardian* 17 Dec. 1971.

⁶⁶ Marowitz, *Prospero's Staff* 126.

⁶⁷ Marowitz, *Prospero's Staff* 129.

Space, as described by Schiele in *Off-Centre Stages*,⁶⁸ has Ophelia costumed as something between a schoolgirl trollop and a puppet doll, with round circles of colour upon her cheeks and long black lashes painted on the skin around her eyes. A photograph of this production⁶⁹ shows her wearing a short dress and white knee socks: since the image of the seductive school girl is a popular male fantasy, it comes as little surprise when, according to the stage directions, Ophelia climbs onto Claudius's knee, from which position they embrace and kiss. Lady Macbeth is the leader of a coven who cleaves to the power of the occult more voraciously than to her husband; Marowitz asserts that

[a]fter the Witches have hexed their mistress and engendered the madness which ushers in her death, the original woman – freed of diabolical influence – is restored. That is, Lady Macbeth as woman and wife returns. To assert the frailty of that woman as opposed to the hauteur of the voodooienne, she appears in a costume which emphasizes her femininity; that is her human characteristics as opposed to her malevolent attributes.⁷⁰

As Martin Esslin relates, in comparison to the high-necked full-length gown she wore in the other scenes of the play, Lady Macbeth 'very fetchingly sleepwalks clad in nothing but a see-through nightgown.'⁷¹ Eric Salmon rather more specifically describes her garb and hypothesizes its impact: 'Lady Macbeth played the sleep-walking scene in [...] a transparent green peignoir with nothing underneath it,' adding that this was 'a device which effectively diverted attention from what is conventionally supposed to be the main focus of

⁶⁸ Schiele 24.

⁶⁹ A photograph of this 1969 production may be found at: *Getty Images*, 6 Feb. 2012 <<http://www.gettyimages.ca/detail/news-photo/natasha-pyne-as-ophelia-nikolas-simmonds-as-hamlet-and-news-photo/2642532>>.

⁷⁰ Marowitz, introduction, *A Macbeth* 14.

⁷¹ Esslin, 'She Sleepwalks in a See-Through,' *New York Times*.

that scene – certainly most of the audience were not looking at the lady's *hands*.⁷²

Salmon's point is a cogent one, and one which potentially overwhelms Marowitz's explanation, permitting the possibility of a more salacious but possibly unconscious intention on the director's part: if the objective was to reveal the re-emergence of the womanly and wifely parts of Lady Macbeth's character, and Marowitz chooses to do this by presenting her in the attire most usually associated with sexual liaison, then it is not entirely unreasonable to assume that this is how Marowitz views women generally.

Following another tributary of this exploration, if one were anxious to promote the view of women as beings who both unwittingly and deliberately arouse male ardour while secretly desiring to be dominated sexually by men, they might look no further than Marowitz's adaptation of *Measure for Measure* for an exemplar. Isabella, the virginal nun, dedicated to a life of chastity, is not only seen by Angelo and the rest of Vienna as a sexual creature, but also acts in a manner uncharacteristic of her habit. In what the stage directions describe as '*a kind of surreal dream-sequence*'⁷³ the Duke brings a pardon for Claudio, then, when comforting Isabella, morphs into Angelo who declares his love for her. Responding to him, and specifically referring to the act of love, she replies '*[p]layfully[,] My brother did love Juliet. / And you tell me he shall die for't.*'⁷⁴ After a short exchange, '*[t]hey kiss fondly.*'⁷⁵ A short time later, Isabella's brother asks her to save his life by fornicating with Angelo: the stage directions describe that '*[t]here is momentary tension between them, then CLAUDIO grabs her rudely and tries to close her in a lecherous*

⁷² Eric Salmon, 'Why Mr. Marowitz is Wrong,' *Wascana Review* 6.2 (1972): 19. Italics in original.

⁷³ Marowitz, *Measure for Measure* 210. Italics in original.

⁷⁴ Marowitz, *Measure for Measure* 211. Italics in original.

⁷⁵ Marowitz, *Measure for Measure* 212. Italics in original.

*embrace. ISABELLA pushes him off. He laughs obscenely through her next speech.*⁷⁶

Later, Claudio leads Isabella to a curtain bed, where *'she is presented to ANGELO:*⁷⁷

*ANGELO approaches her and tenderly undoes her nun's headpiece. ISABELLA's short, cropped hair is revealed underneath. Then he undoes her nun's habit until she stands naked before him. She remains still and devoid of emotion. Then, ANGELO bends down, places his arms around her waist and his head in the pit of her stomach. Instinctively, ISABELLA makes a move as if to embrace ANGELO's head, but the gesture is cut short, and she then resumes her neutral position. ANGELO lifts her into his arms, draws open the surrounding curtains, and disappears behind them with ISABELLA.*⁷⁸

There are a number of ways in which Marowitz indicates Isabella's tacit acceptance of the sexual act into which she is proceeding: the playful manner of her exchange with Angelo regarding the sexual act and its illegality; her 'fond' kiss with her potential sexual partner; her complete lack of expression, indicating acquiescence, when Angelo disrobes her; and her 'instinctive' move to lovingly embrace the head of her potential sexual partner, an act which surely would not spring from the unconscious towards a rapist. According to Marowitz, he chose to incorporate an actual sexual liaison between Angelo and Isabella because 'it was necessary that a *real* sin be committed. Once that was accomplished, Angelo's guilt was established, and so was Isabella's.'⁷⁹ Marowitz does not explain the

⁷⁶ Marowitz, *Measure for Measure* 213. Italics in original.

⁷⁷ Marowitz, *Measure for Measure* 214. Italics in original.

⁷⁸ Marowitz, *Measure for Measure* 215. Italics in original.

⁷⁹ Marowitz, 'Measures Taken,' *Plays and Players* 38. Italics in original.

necessity for establishing Isabella's 'guilt,' nor the basis for this guilt in the first place. What has Isabella done in Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* that would attract Marowitz's guilty verdict in this manner? Is her guilt simply her reluctance to sacrifice her immortal soul for her brother's life through the act of fornication? Or is it her audacity in not entering into the sexual arena and satisfying the desire of a man who wishes to possess her carnally? In Marowitz's mind, is it the inclination of Shakespeare's Isabella to maintain control over her own body which should constitute the stimulus for guilt? If so, his beliefs align with the mainstream culture of the period in which his adaptation was created, a time in which 'the images of the potent, virile male and the responsive, passive female were increasingly promoted.'⁸⁰ During the 1960s and 1970s, despite the efforts of the feminist movement, 'the issue between men and women [was] one of power – the control by men over women in [a] patriarchal society' in which men attempted 'to make women willing accomplices in the maintenance of that control.'⁸¹ Shulman notes that, during the late 1960s, the women's movement began to organize 'speak-outs' on rape at which women publicly testified to the 'brutality and hatred in the act': despite their efforts, the male dominated society of the day ensured that 'women's sexuality was held responsible for rape – as reflected in laws, police procedures, and relevance of the victim's sexual history.'⁸² Although he purports to acknowledge, and presumably to disdain, the chauvinism he perceives within Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*, Marowitz's portrayal of the rape and/or sexual commandeering of the female characters within *The Shrew*, *An Othello* and *Measure for Measure* fails to support this expressed belief. It is possible that Marowitz, along with many men of the period, were reacting either

⁸⁰ Mireia Aragay I Sastre, 'Exploring Gender Roles in the 60s: Ann Jellicoe's "The Knack" and Harold Pinter's "The Homecoming,"' *Atlantis* 16.1/2 (1994) 6.

⁸¹ Sadja Goldsmith, 'Birth Control and the New Woman,' *Family Planning Perspectives*, 3.2 (1971) 64. Goldsmith is summarizing comments by Kate Millett. See Kate Millett, *Sexual Politics* (New York: Doubleday, 1970).

⁸² Shulman 595.

consciously or unconsciously to the nascent women's movement of the 1960s and 1970s, which revealed 'the mechanisms of patriarchal power, offering both an explicit and implicit critique of patriarchy (or hegemonic masculinity).'⁸³ What became known as a 'crisis of masculinity' was the inevitable result of the shifting balance of power between the sexes, and the subsequent threat to male domination within society: as Rosi Braidotti suggests in 'Envy: Or, With Your Brains and My Looks,' a man of the period was left with 'no option other than being the empirical referent of the historical oppressor of women, and being asked to account for his atrocities.'⁸⁴ Male violence toward women during the period may have stemmed from a man's 'perhaps precarious sense of masculinity [which] became one and the same as their expression of fear and contempt for "femininity."⁸⁵ It seems natural, then, that a male desire to 'coerce and degrade women,' as Marowitz's adaptations do through passive acceptance of rape, may express 'not a confident assumption of dominance but a desire to retaliate for feelings of rejection, humiliation, and impotence' providing evidence of 'men's irrational fears [...] that their choice is to [...] embrace the role of oppressor or be degraded to the status of victim.'⁸⁶ When one considers Marowitz's tacit rejection of the role of victim for himself as a Jewish male, exemplified by his portrayal of Shylock as an avenging warrior, his need to perceive women as acquiescent sexual vessels becomes more likely.

Nonetheless, it is impossible to state with certainty whether Marowitz's psychosexual portrayal of women constitutes a male reaction to the shifting power between the sexes, or springs from a more deeply held paradigm which predates the period. In a

⁸³ Jennifer Lemon, 'Masculinity in Crisis?' *Agenda* 24 (1995): 61.

⁸⁴ Rosi Braidotti, 'Envy: Or, With Your Brains and My Looks,' quoted in Lemon 68.

⁸⁵ Lynne Segal, 'Slow Change or No Change?: Feminism, Socialism and the Problem of Men,' *Feminist Review* 31 (1989): 13.

⁸⁶ Ellen Willis, 'Toward a Feminist Sexual Revolution,' *Social Text* 6 (1982): 11.

recent Swans Commentary⁸⁷ article, Marowitz makes an interesting comment regarding Asta Nielsen's portrayal of Hamlet that reveals both his view towards women and his penchant for contradiction. Speaking of Hamlet as a character who 'moves from one extreme to another, and simply cannot seem to make up his mind,' Marowitz muses: 'Now, these are personality traits that some misogynist might clinically associate with the hormonal feminine temperament. Is it any wonder then that female actresses would identify with Hamlet and want to undertake the role?'⁸⁸ Notwithstanding the redundant term 'female' – actresses are always female – this statement is notable for its lack of simple logic. It is akin to saying that racists identify black men as being sexually voracious, so it is no wonder that black actors identify with satyrs in Greek mythology and wish to play them onstage. Since he admits that the perception of Hamlet's personality traits as the 'hormonal feminine' springs from a misogynistic mindset, then tacitly declares these beliefs to be true by assuming that the feminine psyche would identify with them, Marowitz unwittingly reveals that he holds these misogynistic beliefs personally.

That being said, Marowitz's indications of his own status as a misogynist is germane to an understanding of Marowitz's oeuvre only to the extent that this predilection toward a psychosexual view of women, which manifests itself in female nudity, sexual violence toward women, and male control of female characters through sexual domination, is necessitated by the objectives of the adaptation, or whether it merely represents a latent paradigm on Marowitz's part which, due to its social unacceptability, remains directly unexpressed. Since this misogynistic view of women is present in five of the six adaptations under investigation, it seems clear that this psychosexual representation of

⁸⁷ *Swans Commentary* is an online collection of essays, largely on political topics. It may be found at www.swans.com.

⁸⁸ Charles Marowitz, 'Asta Nielsen & Hamlet's Gender-Benders,' *Swans Commentary*, 28 Dec. 2009, 2 Feb. 2011 <<http://www.swans.com/library/art15/cmarow155.html>>.

female characters is not a specific and original response to a particular text by Shakespeare, but an underlying paradigm resident in the psyche of the adaptor and integrated into the works in question, either knowingly or unconsciously.

MAROWITZ'S REACTION TO CRITICAL COMMENT

A study of Marowitz's actions and reactions reveals him to be a man who has a need to judge the work and abilities of others but reacts violently when his work or his abilities are put under the same evaluative microscope. Since he began his career as a freelance reviewer at the age of 16, having previously directed only one play,⁸⁹ the need to hold authority over the artistic works of others may be central to his personality. For example, Marowitz often chooses to assume the role of adjudicator over his artistic colleagues, issuing stern and emphatic critiques of their abilities. In his *Notes on the Theatre of Cruelty*, published in 1966, a relatively short time after his collaboration with Peter Brook, Marowitz includes a section on Brook's work as director in which even the compliments seem to contain barbs: 'Brook is cunning in his use of praise or admonishment,' asserts Marowitz, 'cold-bloodedly applying one or the other depending on what effects he thinks he may achieve.'⁹⁰ Describing the acclaimed director's greatest asset as the ability to elicit contributions from actors through 'personal charm and acknowledged past achievement,' Marowitz also applauds his 'deep-seated distrust for any [...] of his rehearsal achievements' and his 'dogged' pursuit of 'better ways to do a thing' which persuade him to 'postpone [...] final decisions until he is sure he has explored every possibility.'⁹¹ The majority of these comments relate to traits which exist outside the

⁸⁹ Marowitz directed Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* at New York's Labor Temple Theatre in 1948. See Forsythe 371.

⁹⁰ Marowitz, 'Notes on the Theatre of Cruelty,' *Tulane Drama Review* 170.

⁹¹ Marowitz, 'Notes on the Theatre of Cruelty,' *Tulane Drama Review* 171.

rehearsal hall: none of them specifically addresses theatrical acumen or directorial skill. Marowitz does, however, praise Brook's 'strong visual sense' as well as his 'uncanny instinct for the structural needs of a production.'⁹²

In contrast, Brook's faults are unequivocally discussed in theatrical terms:

Perhaps he distrusts the methodology of Method work
because he has never grasped the technique of building beats
and organizing systems to produce internal results, but
because of this he is too often hoodwinked by flashy external
choices. [...] his natural instinct for violence and stark effects
seduces him into irrelevant sensationalism.⁹³

To posit that one of Britain's most acclaimed directors has not sufficiently acquainted himself with an acting system which derives directly from Stanislavsky, whose methodology is the basis for most modern acting technique, is nothing less than a slap in the face, but the chastisement of a perceived predilection in Brook for 'violence and stark effects,' not to mention 'irrelevant sensationalism,' is a strange comment coming from a man who puts Lady Macbeth in a see-through nightie; stages Desdemona being gangbanged by the rest of the cast; shows Katherine being anally raped by Petruchio; and portrays the Venetians being machine gunned by Shylock's comrades. It is important to note that the article in which these comments are found was ostensibly a journal-like log of the methodological implementation of the Theatre of Cruelty season, as well as some evaluative comments on the results of same. These judgments on Peter Brook are therefore not germane to the content of the article, but a deliberate and somewhat immaterial sidebar to the writing. Since Brook was, at the time of the Theatre of Cruelty season, an acclaimed

⁹² Marowitz, 'Notes on the Theatre of Cruelty,' *Tulane Drama Review* 170.

⁹³ Marowitz, 'Notes on the Theatre of Cruelty,' *Tulane Drama Review* 170.

and successful director, and Marowitz a relatively obscure one, the former's offer of the status of 'equal partner'⁹⁴ to the latter on the project was an act of professional generosity, rendering Marowitz's negative comments even less warranted and more impolitic.

Interestingly, when reviewing Brook's production of *The Ik* in London in 1976, Marowitz seemingly contradicts at least one of his previous judgments:

Were this not the work of Peter Brook and his International Center of Theatre Research, one might leave the performance with rather more empathy than one does. But from the start, we are anticipating astounding bursts of theatrical invention – [...] Instead, we find only [...] a rather subdued documentary-tract about a disappearing tribe of Africans. No doubt, it is our own frivolous expectations that account for our frustration. We want thrills, action and consciousness-expansion but we get an austere lesson in survival-tactics.⁹⁵

Whether he is acting from his 'natural instinct' for 'irrelevant sensationalism' or eschewing this tendency in favour of a 'subdued documentary' style performance, Brook cannot escape Marowitz's criticism, and one cannot help but hypothesize that the latter's shifting point of view may spring from the pleasure of criticizing the former, due to his public acclaim and the professional jealousy it engenders.

But Brook is not singled out for this type of comment. In an article written for the *Times* in 1967, after speaking at the Grotowski Seminar being taught by Grotowski and two other teachers, Marowitz gauges the renowned teacher's system to be

⁹⁴ Marowitz, *Alterati*.

⁹⁵ Charles Marowitz, 'Is Peter Brook Beyond Theater?' *New York Times* 8 Feb. 1976.

vexing to more experienced theatre people who perceive the contradictions and arbitrariness of his approach. It would seem that Poland is the last refuge of “*le grand maître*” approach to acting where the magnitude of an individual personality is an unchallenged substitute for finely-reasoned, critically tempered theatre-training. Grotowski works too hard at manufacturing awe, and not hard enough at openly testing his own premises.⁹⁶

Again, it seems an oddly self-damning comment from a theatre practitioner with as large a personality as Marowitz himself, especially since his own critical writing on acting technique, while prolific, never truly meets the stated necessity of ‘finely-reasoned, critically tempered theatre-training’: in his most recent book on acting technique, *The Other Way*, published in 1999, Marowitz suggests that ‘[t]his book should be viewed [...] as the confidential musings of an intimate friend.’⁹⁷ After two chapters of largely intellectual background on the nature of the human condition as it relates to acting, the third chapter, titled ‘The Actor’s Problem’ comprises an informal dialogue ostensibly between an actor and an acting coach; another chapter, ‘The Infernal Café,’ a dramatic dialogue between Stanislavsky, Brecht, Artaud and Marowitz himself, is sixteen pages of generalized debate on methodology, in which Marowitz, not surprisingly given the ‘magnitude’ of his personality, trumps the other practitioners. Twenty-one pages follow comprising Marowitz’s opinion of ‘Strasberg and the Method Fallacy.’ Scant leaves ahead lie eleven pages of ‘Aphorisms for the Young (and Not So Young) Actor,’ which contains dictums such as ‘Inspiration is what happens when you temporarily loosen the grip on all

⁹⁶ Charles Marowitz, ‘Danish actors take to Swedish exercises,’ *Times* 29 July 1967. Italics in original.

⁹⁷ Marowitz, *The Other Way* 4.

your most firmly-held convictions.’⁹⁸ ‘The Classical Stretch’ is another fourteen pages of informal and generalized dialogue between an actor and teacher. It should be noted that the entire book is only 241 pages including preface, and the described chapters comprise 112 of those pages. This is not meant to imply that there is no value in the book, which is representative of his other acting tomes such as *Directing the Action* or *Stanislavsky & the Method*, but that his own writing on acting shows little sign of the ‘finely-reasoned critically tempered theatre-training’ which he demands from Grotowski. This is particularly evident when his texts are compared to those of Uta Hagen (*Respect for Acting*⁹⁹ or *A Challenge for the Actor*¹⁰⁰) or more recently, Declan Donnellan (*The Actor and the Target*¹⁰¹), whose books are divided into sections and chapters dealing practically with very specific acting training and techniques. What is surprising in a man as intelligent as Marowitz is the lack of an ongoing awareness that he is criticizing another for lacking an ability in which he is himself deficient.

But it is American director Joseph Papp who experiences some of Marowitz’s most vitriolic criticism. According to Marowitz, Papp is ‘lamentably lacking in judgment’ and his many theatrical hits are ‘easily explained by the law of averages’¹⁰² based on the large number of his dramatic gambles.

The fact is that Mr. Papp’s ideas are the addled brainstormings of the old-fashioned commercial impresario. [...] To decide blithely that the Beaumont will now turn to classics, without realizing the degree of expertise needed to produce such

⁹⁸ Marowitz, *The Other Way* 151. Most of Marowitz’s books contain a similar chapter: a hodge-podge of what Marowitz espouses as the psychological beliefs and techniques regarding acting.

⁹⁹ Uta Hagen & Haskel Frankel, *Respect for Acting* (New York: Macmillan, 1973).

¹⁰⁰ Uta Hagen, *A Challenge for the Actor* (New York: Macmillan, 1991).

¹⁰¹ Declan Donnellan, *The Actor and the Target* (London: Nick Hern, 2002).

¹⁰² Charles Marowitz, ‘The Trouble with Papp,’ *New York Times* 21 Sept. 1975.

classics, bespeaks a deplorable ignorance of the theater's basic needs. One cannot simply *turn* to Ibsen or Shaw, Chekhov or Shakespeare. One has to develop a collective mechanism capable of dealing with the intricacies and nuances contained in these plays: those fathomable and unfathomable virtues which make them "classics" in the first place.¹⁰³

Marowitz shows considerable temerity in decrying Papp on these grounds, since he was himself attempting 'the classics' in London without such a 'collective mechanism' in place and while expressing, through his critical writing as well as his adaptations, a disdain for the 'virtues' which have crowned certain works 'classics.' Response in the form of multiple letters to the editor shows a general support for Papp and suspicion regarding both Marowitz's fitness to judge his colleague, and his motives. 'The trouble with Charles Marowitz is that he lacks credentials,'¹⁰⁴ retorts Bernard Gersten, then Associate Producer of the New York Shakespeare Festival – a comment not without basis considering that Marowitz's training consists of what he admits was a short period of study with Blair Cutting¹⁰⁵ as a young man in New York, and one year at LAMDA during which he purports to spending more time in social pursuits than in study. Omar Shapli, then Chairman of the Acting Department of New York University queries, 'Why this perverse concentration on chopping down what's *there*? Would Mr. Marowitz rather have a desert again just because the tree yields pears instead of apples?'¹⁰⁶ But it is Paul Libin, then Managing Director of Circle in the Square theatre in New York City, who comes closest to a plausible motivation

¹⁰³ Marowitz, 'The Trouble with Papp,' *New York Times*. Italics in original.

¹⁰⁴ Bernard Gersten, letter, *New York Times* 5 Oct. 1975.

¹⁰⁵ According to Marowitz, Cutting was a disciple of Michael Chekhov. See Forsythe 375.

¹⁰⁶ Omar Shapli, letter, *New York Times* 5 Oct. 1975.

for Marowitz's indictment of his fellow American director, suggesting that 'one has to dismiss Mr. Marowitz's fishy comments as pure carp from an outrageously envious expatriate.'¹⁰⁷

Marowitz himself sheds a glimmer of light on his tendency to sit in harsh judgment of colleagues in the editorial notes attached to particular reviews within *Confessions of a Counterfeit Critic: A London Theatre Notebook 1958-1971*, published in 1975. Marowitz notes that when he saw Brook's production of *Titus Andronicus*, '[i]t was like confronting a total stranger and knowing instinctively that in time, he would change the course of one's life.'¹⁰⁸ He further explains that '[f]or me, [Brook] has never been simply an English director, but a constant psychic preoccupation; an exemplar of what was best in the English theatre and in some ways, worst.'¹⁰⁹ Regarding his decision to leave the ongoing collaboration with Brook established through the Theatre of Cruelty season before it culminated in a production of *Marat/Sade*, he asserts that 'to have stayed would have meant setting up shop in Brook's shadow, and my arrogance and independence were such that I couldn't bear the idea of spinning outside my own, albeit short-range, orbit.'¹¹⁰ In an editorial note attached to a review of Brook's famous 1971 production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Marowitz states that during an interview with Brook written for *The New York Times*,

I found myself silently atoning for sins of envy which had nothing to do with the subject of our talk. I realized then that what I had to acknowledge, if some tinge of hypocrisy was not to set in, was that I envied Brook's wherewithal. His

¹⁰⁷ Paul Libin, letter, *New York Times* 5 Oct. 1975.

¹⁰⁸ Marowitz, *Confessions of a Counterfeit Critic* 102.

¹⁰⁹ Marowitz, *Confessions of a Counterfeit Critic* 188.

¹¹⁰ Marowitz, *Confessions of a Counterfeit Critic* 102.

power, earned through many years of successful work in the theatre, to call his own tune; decide on a production, raise the finance, and do it on his own terms. This was the kind of ease I had never known and the opposite of the struggles for survival I was waging at The Open Space theatre.¹¹¹

In the same editorial note, Marowitz describes Brook as ‘always working very effectively in other people’s styles trying, through such exposure, to arrive at a point which he can truly call his own.’¹¹² With admirable self-examination, Marowitz goes on to admit that

even as I dispense this down-putting judgement, I am aware of similarities in my own work which would earn even harsher condemnation, and so the syndrome persists; the nagging sense of unworthiness which possibly nullifies everything one thinks and says [...] . The cannon-blasting, unanswered question: do I criticize Peter Brook because I am not Peter Brook?¹¹³

If Marowitz’s envy of Brooks success, given the relationship they enjoyed, could result in the expression of harsh critical judgment, it is a logical hypothesis that similar success in colleagues lacking that close relationship and mutual admiration might precipitate even more severe envy and criticism, as is the case with Grotowski and Papp. For the hyper intelligent, articulate American who struggled to simply keep his theatre alive, the greater success of other directors would inevitably be a source of anger and frustration, and

¹¹¹ Marowitz, *Confessions of a Counterfeit Critic* 192.

¹¹² Marowitz, *Confessions of a Counterfeit Critic* 193.

¹¹³ Marowitz, *Confessions of a Counterfeit Critic* 193.

Marowitz had a ready outlet for the expression of these feelings as a critic and arts journalist.

Given Marowitz's self-expressed left wing political status, and the political climate of the 1960s which championed individuality and a break from old traditions, it is not a large jump in reasoning to speculate that a similar frustration, envy or resentment might exist in the adaptor's mind towards the work of William Shakespeare, whose status as a literary genius in the popular mindset creates him as a bulwark against theatrical adaptation and innovation. Just as Marowitz submits the 'cannon-blasting' question as to whether he criticizes Peter Brook, a director with whom he has been 'haunted' for some years, because he is *not* that successful director, it is reasonable to ask whether Marowitz derides the plays of Shakespeare precisely because he is *not* Shakespeare.¹¹⁴ Support for this theory may be found in 'Shakespeare and Marlowe: An Author's Note,' located in the published play script of Marowitz's *Murdering Marlowe*. In this fictional account, William Shakespeare, a struggling and unsuccessful playwright, murders the shining dramatist of the Elizabethan age and stage, Christopher Marlowe, because, suggests Marowitz, '[a] nationally recognized, monumental talent can be a terrible burden to a generation of writers trying to find their own voice and peculiar subject matter.'¹¹⁵ As if supplying a justification for his own bitter judgments of the Shakespearean canon, Marowitz affirms that '[e]very creative artist, whether he admits it or not, is to some degree touched by envy'; being confronted with colleagues' successes can be 'an excruciating experience [...] and, by implication, a condemnation of one's own lowly status and obscurity.'¹¹⁶ Marowitz provides a reasonable

¹¹⁴ For a discussion of how the reputation and practice of the great poets affected their successors, see Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (New York: Oxford UP US, 1997). Although the book originally excluded the Elizabethan poets from this influence, later printings included a preface expressing Bloom's belief that Shakespeare was disconcerted in his early writing life by the influence of Christopher Marlowe.

¹¹⁵ Marowitz, 'Shakespeare and Marlowe: An Author's Note,' *Murdering Marlowe* 6.

¹¹⁶ Marowitz, 'Shakespeare and Marlowe: An Author's Note,' *Murdering Marlowe* 6.

rationale for Shakespeare's fictional murder of Marlowe, a man who 'might have loomed like a Jungian "shadow," an insurmountable peak and a niggling thorn in the side' over the Bard's life, just as William Shakespeare, whose characters Marowitz actually compares to Jungian archetypes, looms over the work of Marowitz himself: '[i]f a writer's envy grows to unbearable proportions, is it conceivable he could plot the removal of his chiefest rival?'¹¹⁷ If this is so, is it not also plausible that Marowitz, goaded on by the world's adoration of Shakespeare as a cultural icon, chooses to 'murder' his rival in the only way circumstances allow? Marowitz notes his malice towards the Danish prince, and that, 'unable to take a knife and cut up Hamlet himself [, ... he] cut up the play in which he had been enshrined.'¹¹⁸ Extrapolating from this, Marowitz's 'cut up' adaptations of the Shakespearean canon may be seen, at root, as his attempts to murder the reputation of the man he perceives as his nemesis: William Shakespeare.

This falls in line with Marowitz's tendency to admire an artist greatly, then to express contempt for the objection of that admiration, particularly when, as in the case of Peter Brook, a close relationship had developed between them. This closeness and admiration had definitely been planted between Marowitz and Shakespeare, not only as interpreter, but in at least two cases, as collaborator and impersonator. Regarding a review written in 1965 of Peter Hall's production of *Hamlet* at the Royal Shakespeare Company, Marowitz notes that his creation of *The Marowitz Hamlet* 'had given me the stimulating though deceptive impression of collaborating on a play with a fellow-writer named William Shakespeare, and forever after, I felt some irrational sense of possession in relation to the work.'¹¹⁹ In regard to his use of 'Shakespearean-styled blank verse and Elizabethan prose'

¹¹⁷ Marowitz, 'Shakespeare and Marlowe: An Author's Note,' *Murdering Marlowe* 6-7.

¹¹⁸ Marowitz, *Roar of the Canon* 168-169.

¹¹⁹ Marowitz, *Confessions of a Counterfeit Critic* 107.

in his play *Murdering Marlowe*, Marowitz felt a sense of ‘sheer effrontery’: ‘It is one thing adapting, editing or revising Shakespeare but quite another adopting his diction and assuming his literary persona.’¹²⁰ Although he claims to be flattering Shakespeare through this imitation, Marowitz’s sense of his own inadequacy in relation to the dead playwright is palpable: ‘I have written what I have openly called “pseudo-Shakespearean” blank verse and would wither into a thousand tiny flaking molecules if anyone believed I was trying to out-bardify the Bard.’¹²¹ Still, the niggling suspicion as to motive remains: in his play, Shakespeare murders Marlowe, but *Murdering Marlowe* reads substantively as one more attempt by Marowitz to murder Shakespeare, or, as the Bard is long dead, his reputation and cultural authority.

An interesting sidebar to this discussion is the manner in which Marowitz reacts to the type of criticism he doles out so regularly: far from responding with openness, Marowitz’s tendency is to lash out angrily in retaliation, often in a public setting, and this is particularly true if the criticism comes from inside academia. For example, when Salmon published an article in the *Wascana Review* titled ‘Why Mr. Marowitz Is Wrong: A comment on the Marowitz version of *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*,’ Marowitz replied in a tone far beyond a respectful skepticism. Discussing Marowitz’s critical writing on *A Macbeth*, particularly the comment that ‘in terms of spells and hexes, I have found a diabolical centre to the play which nothing will ever make me relinquish,’¹²² Salmon states that the question of demonic powers, along with Macbeth’s ‘moral responsibility’ and ‘power of choice’ in their interference in his fate, has ‘engaged every major critic’s attention since the play was written.’¹²³ Therefore, ‘it is a little naïve of Mr. Marowitz to present his theory, as it seems

¹²⁰ Marowitz, ‘Shakespeare and Marlowe: An Author’s Note,’ *Murdering Marlowe* 5.

¹²¹ Marowitz, ‘Shakespeare and Marlowe: An Author’s Note,’ *Murdering Marlowe* 8.

¹²² Marowitz, ‘The Marowitz Macbeth,’ *Theatre Quarterly* 49.

¹²³ Salmon, ‘Why Mr. Marowitz is Wrong,’ *Wascana Review* 17.

to me apparent that he does, as something startling and new and previously unconsidered.’¹²⁴ In ‘Salmon Out of Season,’ Marowitz responds to this comment by nothing that his adaptation ‘is wedged into a specific context of black magic,’¹²⁵ the ‘newness’ of which is the voodoo milieu which it occupies. Marowitz then moves from a specific response to Salmon’s criticism to a generalized attack on the academic’s fitness to offer such criticism: ‘Mr. Salmon spreads an effluvium of hazy pedantry over the subjects, he obviously has very little experience either of witchcraft or psychopathology. Although God knows he certainly dispenses enough fantasy to qualify as an analyst.’¹²⁶ Elsewhere in his response, Marowitz refers to Salmon’s article as not only a ‘torrent of reactionary bilge’ but also

one of the most explicit expressions of reactionary sentiment I have ever read, and I fear for the intellectual welfare of the students who fall under such a fetid influence. Mr. Salmon and the intellectual posture he assumes justify the most flagrant and outrageous university rebellions of the past eight years. If this is the kind of hoary thinking that prevails in the universities, full-scale revolt is only the mildest form of self defence.¹²⁷

He goes on to suggest that ‘Mr. Salmon’s ignorance of theatrical process deranges his literary judgement’;¹²⁸ that what he, Marowitz, had written regarding directorial concept is

¹²⁴ Salmon, ‘Why Mr. Marowitz is Wrong,’ *Wascana Review* 18.

¹²⁵ Marowitz, ‘Salmon Out of Season,’ *Wascana Review* 6. Marowitz acknowledges that ‘even that is not wholly new, as Orson Welles’ all-black version in the thirties started from a similar standpoint.’

¹²⁶ Marowitz, ‘Salmon Out of Season,’ *Wascana Review* 6.

¹²⁷ Marowitz, ‘Salmon Out of Season,’ *Wascana Review* 8-9.

¹²⁸ Marowitz, ‘Salmon Out of Season,’ *Wascana Review* 5.

so self-evident that he feels as if he is ‘teaching Mr. Salmon how to suck eggs in stating it’;¹²⁹ and that

it is probably asking too much to expect a university professor to tune in new implications about a play when he comes to the theatre with a built-in crystal set determined to receive the same messages he has been sending himself for decades.¹³⁰

Further, ‘even in the non-intellectual wastes of Saskatchewan,’¹³¹ Salmon should be more aware of changes in human existence which justify the collage technique, but Salmon is

a man whose rebellion against change is so compulsive and steadfast that he marshalls every weapon in his rusty armory to maintain the cultural status quo he feels disintegrating under his feet. There is a tell-tale desperation underlying his intellectual hostility which makes one feel the professor doth protest too much for reasons he himself will not acknowledge.¹³²

In a follow-up article titled ‘Marowitz v. Salmon (Round 3),’ Salmon refutes many of the beliefs and biases for which Marowitz censures him, and denies having ever expressed them in his original article. He therefore rightly queries, ‘Why then does Mr. Marowitz seek to pin on me an attitude – and even actual words – for which I have given no warrant?’¹³³ Just as innocence was no guarantee of justice in his Selfridges incident, so guilt through expressed belief is not necessary to condemn an academic without even a

¹²⁹ Marowitz, ‘Salmon Out of Season,’ *Wascana Review* 6.

¹³⁰ Marowitz, ‘Salmon Out of Season,’ *Wascana Review* 7.

¹³¹ Marowitz, ‘Salmon Out of Season,’ *Wascana Review* 11.

¹³² Marowitz, ‘Salmon Out of Season,’ *Wascana Review* 11.

¹³³ Eric Salmon, ‘Marowitz v. Salmon,’ *Wascana Review* 7 (1972): 3.

trial; in the same way that the store detective assumed Marowitz's guilt based on his dress and general demeanour, so Marowitz assumes and berates conservative beliefs regarding Shakespeare in Salmon for little reason other than his being a university professor who expresses a critical judgment of Marowitz's creative work.

Marowitz's hatred of academic criticism is perhaps even more evident in his article 'A Defense of Collage Productions of Shakespeare,' published in *The Shakespeare Newsletter* in 1978. Marowitz met editor Louis Marder at a convention at Northwestern University in January, 1975, and only afterwards came upon the review Marder had written¹³⁴ of the collage *Hamlet* which he had seen in Chicago the previous year. Although Marowitz claims to have liked Marder when he met him, 'despite the fact that he looked like Woody Allen, [and] came from New York,' he nonetheless wrote a strongly worded retort to Marder's comments in *The Shakespeare Newsletter* in February, 1976, describing Marder as 'one of the hoarier members of the Shakespeare Establishment in America [... and] about as 'in touch' with contemporary theatre trends as I am with the outbacks of Australia.'¹³⁵ Referring to 'that stodgy schoolmasterly attitude which, I fear, is second nature to my critic,' Marowitz concludes that Marder

resents someone coming into his home and pouring nescafe into his jar of expensive Brazilian coffee-beans [...] but when he assumes that an influx of instant-coffee threatens the purity of his imported bean, he is reacting in a thoroughly conservative manner.¹³⁶

¹³⁴ Louis Marder, 'Shakespeare in the Theatre of Theatrical Discontinuity,' *Shakespeare Newsletter* 20. 1/2/3 (1970): 2.

¹³⁵ Charles Marowitz, 'A Defense of Collage Productions of Shakespeare,' *Shakespeare Newsletter* 26.1 (1976): 8

¹³⁶ Marowitz, 'A Defense of Collage Productions of Shakespeare,' *Shakespeare Newsletter* 8.

Since 'nescafe,' as an 'instant' version of the beverage, exists largely due to the triumph of expedience over quality, it is an odd and possibly revealing metaphor: if Marowitz compares his Shakespearean adaptations to instant coffee, it may indicate that this is his own, possibly subconscious, evaluation of his own work.

Based on the rationale that Marowitz attempts to figuratively murder the individuals and institutions to which he feels inferior, his vitriolic intercourse with the academic community is understandable. Membership in academia requires intelligence, perception and ideas, and these Marowitz possesses, but academic research also relies on a scholarly rigour, a need to uncover all the necessary stones in order to get things right. It has been demonstrated in this thesis that, on several occasions, Marowitz has elected to proceed with creative work on the basis of a gut feeling, which has led to him being, quite simply, wrong.¹³⁷ The doors of academia, that institution which upholds the cultural authority of his other nemesis, William Shakespeare, are unlikely to open to Marowitz based on his tendency to favour gut inspiration over methodical research.

In terms of his strong reaction to criticism, it is notable that Marowitz on occasion borrows a strategy from Lord Capulet in Shakespeare's *Romeo & Juliet* by criticizing himself and his work, presumably as a way of heading incoming rebuke off at the pass. The last page of his *Confessions of a Counterfeit Critic* includes four mock newspaper clippings purporting to be reviews of the book itself; the clippings are signed only 'C.M.' Under 'The Underground Put-down,' Marowitz reports,

[h]aving bored the pants off us as a director, Charles

Marowitz now turns up as a hell-for-leather drama-critic [...]

¹³⁷ See Chapter Four, page 136 fn 2 regarding Shylock as the first sympathetic dramatic portrayal of a Jew; Chapter Four, pages 153-154 regarding Attlee and Bevin's control of immigration to Israel during WWII; and Chapter Two, pages 50-51 regarding the Elizabethan mores surrounding revenge.

It's hard to say in which guise he is the most boring. [He is p]retending he is part of the 'new thing' instead of the hoary old Establishment to which he really belongs [...] Nothing published by this stinking, corrupted, totalitarian power-structure can mean anything unless it's wrapped in a rag soaked with petrol and used to ignite a Molotov cocktail. [...] Wake up, Chuck, get off your high-horse and come on down to where the real action is!¹³⁸

While his rebuke of his own inaction is written in a satirical format, it nonetheless raises the question as to whether this self-criticism is, at a deep level, truthful and in earnest. In another of the clippings, titled 'The Academic Brush-off,' the author suggests that, '[w]ithout being rude to the author (who, it must be said, has no qualms about being rude to everyone else), one must point out that a series of commissions from various newspapers does not automatically confer intellectual resources.'¹³⁹ The first of the reviews (that is to say, the one on the far left hand side of the two page spread) is titled 'The Sophisticated Disapproval': it declares that 'this is the sort of book you should give to a friend you would never like to see again.'¹⁴⁰ Considering the book's title, this section reads very much as Marowitz confessing his own sins: sins of personal inaction, the very thing for which he despises Hamlet; the sin of a lack of real credentials in terms of education; and the sin of devoting considerable energy and years to a theatrical occupation which he simultaneously loves and despises.

¹³⁸ Marowitz, *Confessions of a Counterfeit Critic* n.pag (last printed page).

¹³⁹ Marowitz, *Confessions of a Counterfeit Critic* n.pag (last printed page).

¹⁴⁰ Marowitz, *Confessions of a Counterfeit Critic* n.pag (last printed page).

In conclusion, the matter explored in this chapter renders it less likely that Marowitz, when creating his Shakespearean adaptations, was actually responding to the intellectual substructure of each work on an individual basis, since these theatrical renovations exhibit trends, such as the pessimistic and paranoiac view of the world described, a psychosexual portrayal of women, and an attack on the value and authority of the plays themselves, which are present in all but one of Marowitz's works under exploration. This would only be possible if all six original plays, including Shakespeare's comedy *The Taming of the Shrew*; his problematic comedy, *Measure for Measure*; his revenge tragedy, *Hamlet*; his tragedy based on a *crime passionel* and issues of race, *Othello*; and his tragedy of ambition, *Macbeth*, all share a common intellectual substructure which might be challenged in a similar way. The diversity of the original plays makes this unlikely.

Chapter Seven:

Conclusions

Based on this exploration of the Shakespearean adaptations of Charles Marowitz, interrogating them against his own parameters for successful adaptation, it is apparent that Marowitz himself adhered to his stated guidelines a relatively small proportion of the time. To a certain extent, this may be attributed to practical causes. For example, Marowitz's Open Space Theatre was perpetually operating on a meager budget and within pressing time constraints: *The Shrew* was created and rehearsed within a period of two weeks, largely to fulfill a commission from The Hot Theatre in Holland, and receive the agreed upon fee, when the promised production proved impossible; *An Othello* was likewise created in a relatively short time due to the use of actors for concurrent rehearsals and the simultaneous performance of another production. A lack of financial resources, as well as a dearth of human resources in terms of a lack of sufficient preparatory and rehearsal time, may have impacted severely on Marowitz's efforts at adaptation, particularly on his compliance with his own guidelines.

It is also important to note the first parameter expressed was that the adaptation should communicate a unique and original 'message' which does not simply duplicate that of the original, and since Marowitz's perceptions of the original texts was sometimes based on erroneous assumptions, or ran counter to the majority of scholarly opinion, the task of determining whether the objective was achieved becomes more complex. In general, however, Marowitz's perceptions have been used as the basis for evaluation during this exploration, with inaccuracies of his analysis of Shakespeare's original duly noted and discussed.

Given the tumultuous sociopolitical context in which Britain and the rest of the world was operating, it comes as little surprise that 'theatre culture in the late 1960s/early

1970s was unavoidably political.’¹ From the largely didactic productions inspired by Marxist beliefs to agit-prop works which sought to shock, confront and provoke, theatre creators wrestled mightily with the issues of the age. It is therefore not surprising that Marowitz, working within this milieu, identified sociopolitical objectives for the majority of his Shakespearean adaptations. This being the case, the manner in which the unconscious beliefs of his ‘personal politic’ diverted him from attaining these goals is thrown into sharp relief.

For example, while Marowitz’s collage *Hamlet* was ostensibly created with the objective to decry the paralyzed Liberal, potentially providing a unique viewpoint which stands in opposition to that of the ur-text, it does so by reducing the complexity of the original play to such an extent that it exists essentially as a cartoon facsimile, which may appeal to the public taste largely in the way it comically or tangentially bounces off Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*. Despite his expressed political intention with the adaptation, the majority of Marowitz’s energy seems focused on ridiculing Shakespeare’s most famous character and play, with the likely, and possibly unconscious, aim to reduce the cultural authority of the playwright. In addition, Marowitz’s negative opinion of Hamlet, which he states acts as an impetus to reveal him as an actionless coward, is based largely upon the reluctance of the character to avenge his father’s death; this reluctance is, however, grounded in a strong Christian paradigm of the Elizabethan period to which Marowitz gives insufficient weight even as he attempts to repudiate it.

A Macbeth provides an entertaining discontinuous ride through Shakespeare’s play, but does little to either create a new and original discourse, or challenge the assumptions upon which the original was based; it therefore fails to satisfy the most basic of Marowitz’s

¹ Robin Nelson, *Stephen Poliakoff on Stage and Screen* (London: Methuen, 2011) 58.

parameters. While Marowitz describes his collage as an interior view into the unraveling of Macbeth's psychological state, this descent into madness on the part of both Macbeth and his wife is a central theme in the original play, thus the collage cannot be deemed to be adding an original statement to the ur-text. The adaptation is notable both for its sexualized interpretation of Lady Macbeth, and for the manner in which Macbeth is tacitly declared innocent of the crime of regicide. Since Macbeth's decision-making process whereby he resolves to murder Duncan is inherent to the psychological dynamic of Shakespeare's play, and a strong basis into the nature of humanity which has drawn attention over the past four hundred years, relieving Macbeth of his guilt serves to eviscerate the main psychological conflict of the piece. Although Marowitz describes Shakespeare's *Macbeth* as plot-driven, ironically his adaptation, robbed of this psychological depth, is very much a series of discontinuous incidents which follow a topsy-turvy path to a similar ending. Since Macbeth's conflict over good and evil has been significantly reduced in complexity, the collage format has less to explore and communicate through the provision of an 'interior' view.

While *An Othello* outwardly addresses the 'Uncle Tom' syndrome which affects men of colour who achieve prominence within the white power structure, the *crime passionnel* of the original text provides a weak canvas for a discourse on the Civil Rights movement. Both Marowitz's psychosexual portrayal of Desdemona and his negative representation of a Jewish father in the role of Brabantio also detract from the statement purportedly being made. Although *An Othello* resonates with the civil rights actions of the time, Marowitz's appropriation of the voice of another culture exhibits a lack of sensitivity, particularly in the radicalization and inarticulation comprising his translation of the writings of respected Black civil rights leaders to a ghettoized idiom.

Marowitz interprets Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* as a study in male domination of women; he seemingly aligns himself with the aims of the women's movement of the period by foregrounding what he describes as the 'torture' perpetrated by Petruchio upon Kate. However, his depiction of Kate's precipitate descent from strong woman to shattered automaton only serves to perpetuate the image of women as the weak victims of a dominant male power structure. Also, his stated objective to illuminate the cankered truth of human love, portrayed in the modern scenes, is derailed in the edited scenes from Shakespeare's play, since love was never present between the leading characters of Petruchio and Katherine in this version. While Marowitz is fond of describing Shakespeare's plays as 'schizoid,' this adjective is aptly applied to *The Shrew*, since the contemporary scenes fail to interact with the Shakespearean scenes in a meaningful way.

In a similar vein, *Measure for Measure* was the professed vehicle for Marowitz's exploration of the legal system, and particularly the disparity between legality and 'right.' However, the characterization of Isabel as an at least partially complicit partner in a carnal relationship with Angelo and the prospect of her enforced sexual slavery with which the play ends are not only both at odds with the feminist doctrine of the period, but also subvert the adaptation from the expressed objective into a study of male dominance over female sexual agency.

It is in *Variations on the Merchant of Venice*, the adaptation least manifesting his pessimistic worldview, which does not foreground a psychosexual portrayal of women, and in which there is little attack on the work of Shakespeare as a cultural icon, that Marowitz best satisfies his parameters for successful Shakespearean adaptation. The intellectual substructure of Shakespeare's play, manifested in the portrayal of Shylock as a solitary and unsupported victim who cares for nothing but money, is completely overturned in the

adaptation in which Shylock is an allied leader of a band of freedom fighters whose aims are political rather than pecuniary. Marowitz counters the lack of necessary elasticity in the original play by interpolating text from *The Jew of Malta* with mixed results, and the portrayal of Shylock as an avenging freedom fighter who takes life rather than preserving it marks a betrayal of fundamental Jewish ethics, representing simply a different type of forced conversion than that found in Shakespeare's play.

Most interesting are the times when Marowitz fails to achieve the objectives of his stated parameters through either his substitution of an unstated objective –that of attacking the cultural authority of the Shakespearean canon, as well as superimposing his own psychological and societal paradigms on the original works, either consciously or unconsciously. In *The Marowitz Hamlet*, for example, the stated objective of decrying the paralyzed Liberal as exemplified in the play's title character is based on counterpointing the vacillating Dane against the more active Fortinbras, but also involves Hamlet parroting the majority of the most familiar quotations from Shakespeare's *Hamlet* in a manner that renders them ridiculous. While Hamlet dies at the end of both the original and the adapted works, Shakespeare's Hamlet has a noble end, Marowitz's an ignominious one. This is rendered more significant when one notes that Marowitz's entire career was built upon denigrating cultural icons to which he previously or concurrently had a strong attachment. Marowitz admits to having little training in New York before attending LAMDA, and in acquiring little information while there. Yet, without any real credentials, he set up the In-Stage workshop for actors and established himself as a Method acting expert in London. Approximately five years later, he complained in a public forum that 'Method in England had been a journalistic fad, not a practical influence and in America, it had declined into "a

way of getting psychoanalysis on the cheap.’² Yet, about the same time, writing in *Stanislavsky and The Method*, he emphatically stated that ‘[t]he shattering fact is that the Stanislavsky System is the very “system” of all acting. It is as impossible to be opposed to the precepts of Stanislavsky as it is to be opposed to the natural law of gravity.’³ Later, he asserted a belief that ‘[a]ctor-training in the English-speaking world is mesmerized by the Method Two-Step – the lilt of text and sub-text,’⁴ abandoning Stanislavsky in favour of the buried primal drives encountered through Artaud’s aesthetic. While it is natural for artists to develop and evolve, leaving the familiar territory of one technique for another, Marowitz tends to practice a ‘scorched earth’ strategy, destroying the territory being exited; this is true of individuals, as well as of philosophies and systems of belief.

As discussed in the previous chapter, Marowitz voices the connection he felt to director Peter Brook before ever meeting him. After they came into contact, Brook brought him into both the *King Lear* production and the Theatre of Cruelty season – a magnanimous gesture from an established director to a less experienced one. Almost immediately after the Theatre of Cruelty season was past, Marowitz not only developed decidedly negative opinions regarding Brook’s work, but published them in a respected theatre journal. Later reviews of Brook’s productions showed a similar criticism of Brook’s directorial abilities. While admitting that his criticism of Brook quite possibly stems from his own sense of inadequacy in relation to the revered director, Marowitz nevertheless emphasizes his association with Brook by featuring their collaborations prominently in the short biographies of himself published on his website, and on many of his books and journal

² Charles Marowitz, ‘Four Speakers in Search of True Acting,’ *Times* 25 Feb. 1963.

³ Charles Marowitz, *Stanislavsky and The Method* (New York: Citadel, 1964) 36. It should be noted that, on page 37, Marowitz clarifies that ‘[a]lthough the Method and Stanislavsky System are used interchangeably in modern parlance, there is a distinction drawn between them.’ Nonetheless, the terms used in his denigration of The Method, such as subtext, were derived from Stanislavsky’s work, as was The Method itself.

⁴ Marowitz, *The Other Way* 5.

articles. He is simultaneously increasing his own cultural authority by foregrounding an association with an individual he continues to publicly judge negatively.

Similarly, much of Marowitz's notoriety was created by his radical renovations of the Shakespeare canon, the creation of which were based upon his argument that he was paying respect to the playwright by re-working his plays so that they might remain meaningful to modern audiences. The 'love-hate' relationship which Marowitz often describes between himself and Shakespeare's works is inherent in his adaptations: he is inexorably drawn to the works of this world renowned playwright, but during the creative work involved in forcing these classic works to, as he describes, offer new answers by bombarding them with new questions, Marowitz positions himself, not as Shakespeare's collaborator, but as his improver, as well as his judge and jury. In critical writing, he establishes his contempt for the plays: as previously quoted, *Macbeth* is 'a dud [...] a horrible old blunderbuss, a horrible gangster story';⁵ *Othello* is not a great tragedy, but merely 'an eloquent melodrama concerning a *crime passionel*';⁶ *The Taming of the Shrew* is 'a Gothic tragedy rather than an Elizabethan comedy';⁷ *The Merchant of Venice* is 'a boring old play with a fascinating fringe-character';⁸ and *Measure for Measure* 'is a schizoid play' which, 'although a "comedy" [...] is subverted by its more sombre scenes.'⁹ 'Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is a play intended for square blocks,'¹⁰ states Marowitz, discussing how collage theatre, created from more flexible material, more realistically portrays modern life. He goes on to damn the play with faint praise: 'I am not disparaging it. It has

⁵ Marowitz, 'A Three-Headed Macbeth,' *Times*.

⁶ Marowitz, introduction, *The Shrew* 15.

⁷ Marowitz, *Recycling Shakespeare* 22.

⁸ Marowitz, 'The Merchant of Venice,' *Confessions of a Counterfeit Critic* 176.

⁹ Marowitz, 'Measures Taken,' *Plays and Players* 38.

¹⁰ Marowitz, *Prospero's Staff* 140.

been a very good play, and has operated successfully within those blocks.’¹¹ Yet when one compares Marowitz’s expressed opinions regarding other classic works he has adapted, no such vehemence is present: Ibsen’s *Hedda Gabler* is ‘a subtle character study whose ambiguities have long made it a favorite of leading actresses’; *Enemy of the People* by the same playwright is ‘a kind of dramatized editorial written (one might almost say overwritten) in a fit of pique’; while August Strindberg’s *The Father* ‘is a private hallucination disguised as a naturalistic drama and a work which shows Strindberg in his most obsessive and anti-feminist temper.’¹² While Marowitz’s comments regarding the plays of the Ibsen and Strindberg are not uniformly positive, they lack the emphatic denunciation common in his comments regarding Shakespeare’s plays, perhaps because, while playwrights of note, neither is culturally iconic.

It is surprising, if Marowitz’s judgments of Shakespeare’s plays are valid, that the works have not only survived the four hundred years since their creation, but have earned a central role in cultural history world-wide. The simple truth is that literally millions of readers and theatre-goers have found, not only good entertainment value, but depth and resonance to their own lives within the Shakespearean canon. Marowitz himself admits, ‘What I love best in Shakespeare are the facets of myself and my world that I find there.’¹³ The fundamental question, then, is this: if Marowitz perceives Shakespeare’s plays as deserving of such harsh criticism on the grounds of quality, why does he find them worthy of the efforts of adaptation in order to render them meaningful to modern audiences? Since his adaptations so often direct ridicule at the plays themselves, such as when Hamlet recites Shakespeare’s most famous quotations to the derisive laughter of the remainder of the cast;

¹¹ Marowitz, *Prospero’s Staff* 140.

¹² Marowitz, introduction, *Sex Wars* n.pag.

¹³ Marowitz, preface, *Recycling Shakespeare* ix

or provide interpretations and dramatic action which seem intended to shock and possibly outrage audiences, such as when Desdemona is gangbanged or Kate sodomized, the most likely conclusion is that Marowitz is denigrating the works of Shakespeare in order to reduce the cultural authority of a writer whose influence he finds personally irksome. It is not surprising that, when one examines the recipients of Marowitz's most virulent criticism, as evidenced in previous chapters, they include William Shakespeare, a cultural icon; Peter Brook and Joseph Papp, both successful and acclaimed directors; Stanislavsky, revered as the father of modern acting technique; and academia.

Marowitz's strategy to increase his own notoriety through the denigration of cultural icons is found in his work outside the Shakespearean genre, as well as within it: his portrayal of Sherlock Holmes in *Sherlock's Last Case* raised similar comment. Leah D. Frank, reviewing a production of the play in *The New York Times*, states: '[t]he playwright, Charles Marowitz, has decided that all the stories about the tall, thin, invincible human bloodhound are excessive. So he sets out, in *Sherlock's Last Case*, to knock an icon off its pedestal.'¹⁴ Mel Gussow, also writing in *The New York Times*, but of the original production with Frank Langella in the title role, states that 'Charles Marowitz's assault on Conan Doyle [is] clearly a case of character assassination [...] The disdain of Mr. Marowitz (a critic!) for his hero was obvious.'¹⁵

There is a pattern within Marowitz's artistic life which begins with his high regard for an artistic system, leader or icon; he is drawn into a collaboration of sorts with that philosophy or individual, but after a certain amount of time, he begins to publicly or theatrically denigrate the object of his former regard. It is interesting to note that, if we make the slight shift from the adoration and love of another human being to that of a

¹⁴ Leah D. Frank, 'The Dark Side of Holmes,' *New York Times* 19 Mar. 1989.

¹⁵ Mel Gussow, 'Stage View: Plays Considered During a Needed Intermission,' *New York Times* 20 Sept. 1987.

cultural product, Marowitz himself describes this process as inevitable: speaking of his concept for *The Shrew*, he relates his belief that

familiarity not only breeds contempt but dissipation and stasis; that deep within the very fabric of human relationships, relationships founded on love and togetherness, there was an insidious canker which slowly but surely gnawed away at the euphoria that infused every love affair.¹⁶

While he intended this description of human nature's inevitable demolition of loving relationships to pertain to those between loving partners, it appears to be equally true of Marowitz's early love affair with Stanislavsky; his adoration of Peter Brook, and his 'love/hate' relationship with Shakespeare.

At the end of this exploration, Marowitz is revealed as a man who knew his true self but little, and often too late. Writing in his autobiography *Burnt Bridges* of the strong opinions he expressed as a critical reviewer as well as in his other critical writings, he displays an almost child-like naiveté regarding the effect his pronouncements would produce in others:

Although brimful of prejudices, it never struck me that people actually took them personally or could possibly respond with genuine loathing. In a wholly irrational way, I assumed they would see that, despite my strong critical judgements, I never intended personal malice and it was genuinely shocking to discover that they should believe I

¹⁶ Marowitz, introduction, *The Shrew* 19.

disliked them *personally* for the ideas they espoused or the shortcomings they revealed.¹⁷

It is surprising, based on an assumption that a theatre director must understand human nature in order to work with actors effectively, to hear these sentiments expressed, particularly in light of a sampling of the comments to which Marowitz refers. For example, it is difficult to understand how Ian McKellen might not consider it malicious when Marowitz writes, in a review of the actor's performance in the National Theatre's production of *Richard III*, 'Ian McKellen is probably not the worst actor on the English stage, but he is certainly among the worst,'¹⁸ or, that Annette Bening in the role of Queen Elizabeth in the film version of that production might not feel resentment at Marowitz's baldly expressed opinion that 'one would say she was out of her depth except that her inherent shallowness makes the mention of "depth" sound like a non sequitur.'¹⁹ Despite his alleged naiveté regarding the reception of his comments, Marowitz has always set himself up as final arbiter of artists and their works, and the higher status the artist holds, the more critical he is likely to be in his judgment. Ever the radical, the burr under the saddle of any sector of society smelling even slightly of 'establishment,' the man who blared his opinions from newspaper reviews, journal articles, critical writing, and of course, from the lighted performance space in a darkened theatre, Marowitz notes: 'I secretly prided myself on the fact that unadorned honesty was a kind of personal trademark without realizing that for others it was a sign of crude, rude and insolent behaviour.'²⁰ Thanks to his intelligence, his knowledge of theatre history, and his perspicacious wit, as much as to the content of his opinions, his writings were read with interest, which offered a continuing

¹⁷ Marowitz, *Burnt Bridges* 220. Italics in original.

¹⁸ Marowitz, *Alarums & Excursions* 72.

¹⁹ Marowitz, *Alarums & Excursions* 221.

²⁰ Marowitz, *Burnt Bridges* 220.

soap box for the delivery of further manifestos. Whether one was attending one of Marowitz's Shakespearean adaptations; reading a review of a popular production; or perusing his tomes on acting history and technique, one thing was certain: it would not be boring. There would inevitably be much to discuss with colleagues and one's self after the artistic interaction had taken place.

Despite his assertion to the contrary, it is difficult to understand how Marowitz failed to observe the way in which his strongly stated negative opinions alienated him from other members of the acting profession. As displayed in the Shakespearean adaptations under exploration, Marowitz has a preoccupation with a protagonist who finds themselves inescapably alienated, and who is ultimately destroyed by those around them. The vulnerability of the loner is alluded to in 'Counter-Polemics,' an ersatz introduction to Marowitz's published adaptation of Henrik Ibsen's *Enemy of the People*:

In the nineteenth century, the notion of a man being 'strongest when he stands alone' could be accepted as a stirring Romantic notion. In our contemporary world of factionalism and power politics, this sentiment is more than suspect, it is demonstrably untrue. [...] Indeed, it is only when a man with a radical or nonconformist view begins to acquire supporters that his ideas acquire enough power to combat the received ideas which gave them birth.²¹

And further, '[in] "the real world" [...] the "man who stands alone" is usually isolated by society in order for him to be drained of influence and eventually silenced. Isolation is a

²¹ Marowitz, 'Counter-Polemics,' *Sex Wars* 100.

traditional method by which dangerous men are rendered impotent.’²² Despite this, Marowitz deliberately chose to set himself apart through his attacks on the social establishment, on the theatrical ruling classes, and on the status quo; the man who created adaptations which featured a hero isolated and destroyed found himself in the same position, as he notes in *Burnt Bridges*: following the collapse of the Open Space, he discovered that ‘there was a vast horde of people out there who wanted nothing to do with me and would never for a moment consider my directing a play for them or engaging in a collaborative project.’²³

Ultimately, the man who hoped to make his mark on the world of theatre and beyond found only marginal support for his ideas, partly due, no doubt, to the virulence of his opinions. Speaking of Kenneth Tynan’s death, Marowitz notes that:

I had constructed a rather massive identification with Tynan and the most distressing part of that psychological mirroring was the fact that, in the final analysis, Tynan had not really changed very much and his influence had been minimal. He had left a zealous cult behind him which would always rhapsodize his talents and dramatize his personality, but, ultimately, the Establishment against which he raged so eloquently had closed ranks and retained all its smug, impenetrable affluence and power. Part of the distress occasioned by that realization was the suspicion that my own life, poised as it was against so many of the same enemies, would be likewise impotent, a few reams of hot copy for the

²² Marowitz, ‘Counter-Polemics,’ *Sex Wars* 100.

²³ Marowitz, *Burnt Bridges* 222.

delectation of radicals and Left-wingers, but, when all the final audits were in, of no real consequence in the crucial power struggles.²⁴

This revelation is rendered more poignant when considered against the backdrop of *Losers*, a play penned by Marowitz in the leeward side of his life and career. Matt, an unsuccessful playwright, novelist and screenwriter in his late thirties, is '[c]rushed by a series of devastating personal defeats.'²⁵ He parts ways with his supportive girlfriend, alienates his mentor and closest friends, until, '[s]urrounded by losers, he is forced to seek solace in the company of a mindless, (previously discarded) old girlfriend.'²⁶ Marowitz alleges that the play was written to illustrate his belief that ambition for a creative artist is a disease which allows them to hide from the paucity of their own talent; to shore up this argument, he quotes G.K. Chesterton, who famously said that 'The artistic temperament is a disease that afflicts amateurs.' Nonetheless, and particularly in conjunction with the comments he made in regards to Kenneth Tynan, it is difficult not to see the work as at least partially autobiographical. The characters themselves sound strong resonances to Marowitz's personal life. Matt is an abrasive, straight-talking writer who has a girlfriend, but cheats on the side – Marowitz's own pattern as recounted in his autobiography. His first action in the play involves him 'dumping' his 'on the side' fling, Jesse, on the grounds that she isn't sufficiently intellectual, and all they have in common is sex; ironically, in the next scene, Matt's literary agent dumps him as a client with no more empathy than Matt showed to his lover. In the last moments of the play, alone, isolated, having expended all opportunities of a writing career, his supportive girlfriend a casualty of his depression and

²⁴ Marowitz, *Burnt Bridges* 32-33.

²⁵ Charles Marowitz, 'Losers,' *Marowitz Theatre*, 8 Feb. 2010 < <http://www.marowitztheater.com/plays.html> > 2.

²⁶ Marowitz, *Losers* 2.

foul moods, Matt renews his relationship with Jesse. The stage directions note that she quickly removes her outer clothing, and, in her underwear, begins to undress him as well. Like Marowitz's Hamlet when he is constrained by his mother and uncle to kill his own father, or Macbeth when the witches force him to kill Duncan, Marowitz's Matt is seemingly powerless to act: '*distant and tortured and, like someone trapped in a dream, just watching things take their course.*'²⁷ Then, like so many of the female characters in his Shakespearean adaptations, Marowitz's Matt is stripped naked by someone interested primarily in using them sexually; the author notes that '*JESSE, anticipating pleasure, is oblivious to MATT's overpowering sense of anguish – as she has always been – but we [the audience] are painfully aware of it.*'²⁸ Marowitz states that Matt's return to a relationship with Jesse 'confirms his failure both as a writer and a human being.'²⁹ It is obviously tempting to view the play as a sort of *roman à clef*: to see Matt as Marowitz; Jesse as his former lover, Gypsy Kemp;³⁰ and the older mentor Isaac as Jan Kott. If this is true, and considering the unhappy situation in which Matt finds himself at the end of the play, Marowitz's disappointment in the significance of his theatrical career is palpable.

However, whether or not he considers it sufficient, Marowitz does indeed leave behind a legacy, a wealth of critical writing as well as a number of radical and often shocking Shakespearean adaptations, all of which encourage others to see Shakespeare differently: not as a bastion to be protected, but as living matter to be reinvented. As Wardle states,

²⁷ Marowitz, *Losers* 81. Italics in original.

²⁸ Marowitz, *Losers* 81-82. Italics in original.

²⁹ Marowitz, *Losers* 2.

³⁰ In his autobiography, Marowitz notes that '[t]he drives and potentialities [Gypsy] awoke in me caused me to emit banshee howls of delight and sent me into stupors of exhaustion. [...] The intellectual gap between us was unbridgeable, but didn't in any way matter. I would have sacrificed a dozen intellectual soul-mates for the intensity of those highs.' Marowitz, *Burnt Bridges* 209. This was written in 1990; *Losers* was written approximately a decade later, possibly showing a change in priority.

Marowitz's raids on the classics generally supply fodder for debate on experimental theatre; but, in fact, their main business is with content. They are critical works, setting out to reevaluate and demystify classical heroes in the court of modern experience. The result may sometimes be vulgar, but their great virtue is that they take nothing on trust.³¹

It is tempting in this regard to compare Marowitz's work to that of another theatre innovator he admired: Antonin Artaud. Artaud espoused theories which would return theatre to the realm of the sacred, to the pre-linguistic; 'Artaud considered it essential to locate a textual space that was capable of eluding the literalness of conventional language [... he] employed a language dense in metaphor and cataclysmic imagery.'³²

Despite this, his play *The Cenci* 'was fatally textual and bound to the conventional theatre.'³³ Further, 'the Theatre of Cruelty has often been called an impossible theatre – vital for the purity of inspiration which is generated, but hopelessly vague and metaphorical in its concrete detail.'³⁴ But, however impractical Artaud's theories were, and despite his failure to implement them in his own theatrical endeavours, the Theatre of Cruelty has had an enormous influence on theatre generally, particularly in terms of the ways that directors use Artaud's favoured tools of vivid lighting, cataclysmic sound ('ear-piercing sounds, pounding drums, rhythmic cries, hypnotic drones') as well as 'spectacular effects' in an attempt to 'reconnect [the viewer] with their own primitive inner self.'³⁵

Similarly, while Marowitz's Shakespearean adaptations failed in large part to fulfil his own parameters for the successful adaptation of classical texts, his work in this area

³¹ Irving Wardle, 'Woyzeck – Open Space,' *Times* 20 Feb. 1973.

³² Lee Jamieson, *Antonin Artaud* (London: Greenwich Exchange, 2007) 14.

³³ Stephen Barber, *Antonin Artaud: Blows & Bombs* (London: Faber & Faber, 1993) 70.

³⁴ Barber 44.

³⁵ Jamieson 8-9.

exists as an exemplar to those who desire to re-create the Shakespearean canon through performance in a way which perpetuates its relevance to modern society, rather than relegating it to the status of the cultural artifact. As Holderness affirms:

What Marowitz succeeded in doing was to arrest the smooth process of reinterpretation and appropriation which makes a classic text appear independent of the culture in which it is being remade, and to demand, in the spirit of a radical inventiveness possible only in the conditions of alternative and fringe theatre, that the assumptions underlying cultural monuments like Shakespeare plays need from time to time to be subjected to radical interrogation.³⁶

Despite his deep-seated personal paradigms, described within this thesis as his ‘personal politics,’ and despite the manner in which these personal and possibly unconscious beliefs subverted him from his consciously stated objectives for his Shakespearean adaptations, Marowitz successfully challenged the theatrical status quo *vis-à-vis* the manner in which Shakespeare can be made relevant to modern day audiences, and his example has the potential to inspire other playwrights and directors to do the same, possibly in a more subtle and effective manner. It is Marowitz’s courageous audacity – a courage of creative spirit which allowed him to shake the mortar in the stone walls of public adoration for the works of William Shakespeare – which is his most lasting legacy through his work.

³⁶ Holderness 94.

Appendix One:

Synopses: Marowitz's Hamlet; An Othello; Variations on the Merchant of Venice; A Macbeth; The Shrew; Marowitz's Measure for Measure

SYNOPSIS: MAROWITZ'S *HAMLET*

The play opens with the image of Hamlet and Fortinbras, standing facing one another; when Fortinbras moves towards his Captain to give him an order, Hamlet steps in behind the latter as if a soldier in Fortinbras' army. With text from IV.iv of Shakespeare's play, Fortinbras directs the Captain to take greetings to the King of Denmark, and by questioning the Captain, Hamlet learns the name of the young leader.

Moving downstage into a spotlight, Fortinbras '*standing strongly behind him,*' Hamlet remarks on what he has seen:

HAMLET. How all occasions do inform against me,
And spur my dull revenge. What is a man
If his chief good and market of his time
Be but to sleep and feed? A beast, no more:
Sure that he made us with such large discourse
Looking before and after, gave us not
That capability and god-like reason ,

Fortinbras '*[a]ccusingly*' finishes his sentence: 'To rust in us unus'd.'¹

The stage directions note that there is a cut into a new collage scene in which Hamlet is besieged all round by the interjections of a number of characters: his father's Ghost declares himself murdered while his mother, '*[e]ntering placating*' offers to wipe her son's face, and Ophelia notes that Hamlet is 'keen.' The King, his uncle, asks why 'the clouds still hang' on him, and his mother comments on the nature of death. The King and the Ghost then speak in a contrapuntal chorus, the King more prominent than his brother's spirit: the former reminds Hamlet that 'your father lost a father, / That father lost, lost

¹ Marowitz, *Hamlet* 30 From this point forward in this synopsis, quotations will be footnoted only when the page number changes. All italics are found in the original.

his,² while the latter details the event of his murder. Suddenly, the Clown appears, offering a riddle, to which Hamlet responds:

CLOWN. (*Suddenly appearing*) What is he that builds
stronger than either the mason, the shipwright or the
carpenter?

HAMLET. (*Soberly to the KING*) The gallows-maker, for
that frame outlives a thousand tenants.

A montage follows in which ‘*all lines are chanted and overlap*’: Claudius, Fortinbras and the Clown all suggest that Hamlet think of them ‘as of a father.’³ The scene continues as a cacophony of conflicting voices pummel Hamlet, ending with his father’s ghost, lamenting his own murder.

There is a quick cut to a new scene in which the King and Laertes seem oblivious to Hamlet’s presence. Hearing of his father’s death, Laertes exclaims: ‘I’ll not be juggled with. / To hell allegiance; vows to the blackest devil.’⁴ As the scene continues, Hamlet is ‘*[w]eakly trying to match LAERTES’ passion*’; he demands that Claudius return Hamlet Senior to him, but the King ignores him, promising Laertes the kingdom and all his wealth if he, the King, is found to have been complicit in Polonius’ murder. As Hamlet continues to badger him, Claudius turns on him ‘*tauntingly*’:⁵ ‘Was your father dear to you? / Or are you like a painting of a sorrow, / A face without a heart?’

Hamlet begins ‘*swinging on[a] rope which has suddenly appeared from above,*’ and the action cuts into a renovated version of the Closet Scene. Gertrude attempts to

² Marowitz, *Hamlet* 31.

³ Marowitz, *Hamlet* 32.

⁴ Marowitz, *Hamlet* 33.

⁵ Marowitz, *Hamlet* 34.

persuade Hamlet, who is still swinging on the rope, that he is suffering from madness, but Hamlet urges her to

Lay not a flattering unction to your soul
That not your trespass but my madness speaks.
Confess yourself to Heaven,
Repent what's past, avoid what is to come,
And do not spread the compost on the weeds
To make them ranker.

Dismounting from the rope, and turning to Ophelia, Hamlet confesses, 'I did love you once.' In a slightly edited text from III.i, Hamlet and Ophelia proceed from his love through the remembrances she wishes to return, to his demand that she 'Get thee to a nunnery,'⁶ while Gertrude and Ophelia, sharing text from III.iv, reveal the pain they are experiencing at Hamlet's hands. Suddenly, Polonius is present, requesting Hamlet's attendance on the Queen; when Hamlet manipulates him into an obsequious agreement on the shape of the cloud above them, the prince scoffs, '*(Facetiously, of POLONIUS)* O what a noble mind is here o'erthrown.'⁷ Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, '*as [a] vaudeville team*' and linked together by a long rope, dance onto the stage. They sing Ophelia's 'Hey nonny, nonny' song, before launching with Hamlet into the text from II.ii in which they declare themselves 'the indifferent children of the earth.' When Hamlet suggests that they 'live about her [Fortune's] waist, or in the middle of her favour,' they respond, grabbing their testicles, 'Her privates we,' at which point the stage directions note that '*[a]ll yoke it up.*'

A simultaneous scene begins on the opposite side of the stage between Claudius and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern: the King requests that they help Hamlet, specifically to

⁶ Marowitz, *Hamlet* 35.

⁷ Marowitz, *Hamlet* 36. This text is from III.ii in the original play.

‘gather / So much as from occasions you may glean / That open’d lies within our remedy.’

The Clown acts as referee, assigning points, as Hamlet and his friends present salient quotes from Shakespeare’s play:

HAMLET. (*In former scene*)

What have you, my good friend deserv’d at the hands of
Fortune that she sends you to prison hither?

ROSENCRANTZ. Prison, my Lord?

HAMLET: Denmark’s a prison.

[...]

ROSENCRANTZ. We think not so, my Lord.

HAMLET. Why then ‘tis none to you, for there is nothing
either good or bad but thinking makes it so.

(*All laugh.*)

CLOWN. (*As referee.*) A hit, a hit, a palpable hit!⁸

Hamlet, holding both his friends by the neck, asks them directly if they were sent for by the King. When they gurgle in the positive, ‘HAMLET *shoves them both away, towards the KING, but still keeps a tight rein on them – literally, holds the rope to which both are attached.*’⁹ Yanking them in again, Hamlet unties them, then once again pushes them away, giving Guildenstern a substantial kick on the rear. Groans Guildenstern, ‘(*Rubbing backside*) / Now cracks a noble heart.’¹⁰ The action cuts into a new scene.

⁸ Marowitz, *Hamlet* 37.

⁹ Marowitz, *Hamlet* 38.

¹⁰ Marowitz, *Hamlet* 39.

Gertrude attempts to counsel her son, who snaps, ‘Do not come your tardy son to chide.’ There is a cut ‘*into [a]school flashback,*’ and the Queen, taking the role of teacher, beckons:

Come, come and sit you down,
And these few precepts in thy memory
See thou character.

(LAERTES, OPHELIA, and the CLOWN sit down in a line in front of HAMLET. Teacher and class start beating out the iambic rhythm with their fingers against their palms, and the next is chanted out in a strictly scanned sing-song.)

Give thy thoughts ... *(points to OPHELIA.)*

OPEHLIA. No tongue.

QUEEN. Nor any unproportion’d thought his ... *(to HAMLET.)*

HAMLET. Act.

Working their way through Polonius’ advice to his son from I.iii in this manner, the assembled characters begin ‘*[s]kipping in a circle*’;¹¹ finally,

[a]ll stand formally in a line and recite in a childish sing-song.

ALL. To thine own self be true,

¹¹ Marowitz, *Hamlet* 40.

And it must follow as the night the day

Thou canst not then be false to any man.

The 'students' run offstage as if the bell has rung at the end of a class; Fortinbras catches Hamlet, and, with the Danish prince's text from the Closet Scene in the original play, forces him to make comparison between his father and his uncle:

(On rostrum, KING and GHOST stand back to back as if discovered in a picture frame.)

FORTINBRAS. Look here upon this picture and on this –

The counterfeit presentment of two brothers.¹²

As both the Ghost and the King describe themselves with Hamlet's text from III.i, the Queen, '*[f]rom the side, as a starstruck teenager,*' exclaims of Hamlet Senior, 'He was a man, take him for all in all / I shall not look upon his like again.' When Claudius comes down from the picture frame and begins to make love to Gertrude, disrobing her, the ghost of Hamlet Senior registers disapproval, and Hamlet hides his eyes, exclaiming:

I have of late, but wherefore I know not, lost all my mirth,
foregone all custom of exercise; and indeed it goes so heavily
with my disposition, that this goodly frame the earth seems to
me a sterile promontory.¹³

The Ghost and Fortinbras exit, '*disgusted with HAMLET.*' Ophelia attempts to seduce Hamlet with her 'By Gis, and by Saint Charity' song. Suddenly, the ghost of Hamlet Senior appears with his arm around Fortinbras '*as if he were his son,*' requesting: 'If thou didst ever thy dear father love / Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder.' Hamlet,

¹² Marowitz, *Hamlet* 41.

¹³ Marowitz, *Hamlet* 42.

‘[s]eeing his place usurped,’ plays the ‘fist over fist’¹⁴ game with Fortinbras, winning a toy sword in the process. The Danish prince begins spouting ‘Rightly to be great / Is not to stir without great argument’ as the Clown, ‘like [an] exasperated director,’ urges him to ‘Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounced it to you, trippingly on the tongue.’ When Hamlet collapses exhausted, Ophelia, ‘with [m]ock concern’ describes him as ‘The glass of fashion and the mould of form, / The observed of all observers, quite, quite down.’ A new theatrical device follows in which the ‘scene is played out against [a] flicker-wheel effect – like an old time silent film. HAMLET sits on the floor, entranced by all he sees.’ In the action that follows, the King and Ophelia, using largely text from I.iii, conduct an interview which begins with an embrace and ends with a kiss. The ‘film’ cuts out; when it re-commences, Gertrude has taken Ophelia’s place in Claudius’ arms. They kiss, and she commits herself to him with text spoken by Hamlet to Horatio in the original play: ‘Since my dear soul was mistress of my choice / And could of men distinguish, her election / Hath seal’d thee for herself.’¹⁵ The film fades once more. When the lights come up, it reveals the ghost of Hamlet Senior in Gertrude’s arms: they deliver text belonging to the Player King and Queen in III.ii of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*:

GHOST. (*Wearily*)

My operant powers their functions leave to do:

And thou shalt live in this fair world behind,

Honour’d belov’d and haply, one as kind

For husband shalt thou ...

QUEEN. O confound the rest:

Such love must needs be treason in my breast.

¹⁴ Marowitz, *Hamlet* 43.

¹⁵ Marowitz, *Hamlet* 45. This text is found in III.ii of the original play.

In second husband let me accurst,
None wed the second, but who kill'd the first.¹⁶

The Ghost lies down and sleeps; Claudius appears beside Gertrude, who now bears the aspect of an accomplice. The queen takes a vial of poison in her hands, and the pair force the poison into Hamlet's hands. Then, 'KING and QUEEN force a helpless HAMLET to pour poison into the ears of his sleeping father.'¹⁷ The Ghost awakes, shrieking, and the shrill sound causes the scene to fade. The characters flee the stage, leaving Hamlet alone with the Clown and Fortinbras, who prompt him into thoughts of his own inaction:

HAMLET. I do not know
Why yet I live to say, 'This thing's to do'
Sith I have cause ...
FORTINBRAS. (*Urging*)
... and will and strength and means ...
HAMLET. (*Limply*) To do it.

An 'eighteenth-century elaborately ornamented theatre box'¹⁸ appears on stage, peopled by the cast members. The ghost of Hamlet Senior, 'as [*the*] Player-King,' begins to '[h]istrionically' perform Gonzago: 'Brief let me be: sleeping within my orchard, / My custom always in the afternoon, / Upon my secure hour' At this, Hamlet contemplates murder: 'Now he is praying, / And now I'll do it. / And so he goes to Heaven, / And so I am revenged.' Suddenly Claudius is discovered in the Ghost's place. The King is '[h]amming' as he asks, 'What if this cursed hand / Were thicker than itself with brother's blood, / Is there not rain enough in the sweet heavens / To wash it white as snow?' The

¹⁶ Marowitz, *Hamlet* 45-46.

¹⁷ Marowitz, *Hamlet* 47.

¹⁸ Marowitz, *Hamlet* 48.

stage directions note that there is applause at the King's performance by the members of the Court, who come forward to congratulate him. The King, (*as [the] Player-King, apologizing for [his] performance*): 'Forgive me my foul murder.'¹⁹ Hamlet stabs the King. The stage directions read: '*Blackout as his sword enters. Lights up. The KING still praying, unhurt. Repeated twice. On third stab, POLONIUS falls forward.*'²⁰ All except Hamlet, the Queen and Polonius' corpse run out, '*crying like banshees.*'

The stage directions note that there is a sharp cut into a new scene in which Hamlet both explains his bloody actions to his mother, and taunts Ophelia with a request to lie in her lap. The repartee continues with text from III.ii involving Hamlet's naming of 'country matters.' Hamlet kisses Ophelia '*roughly,*'²¹ then exits. Ophelia sings her 'He is dead and gone, Lady' song, which brings on the Gravedigger. Ophelia wanders offstage while her dead father, from the ground, continues her song. Hamlet and Laertes enter and commence the warm-ups required for their upcoming duel: they both clutch wooden toy swords. The duel that follows is one of words as well as swords. Laertes scores the first hit: 'Too much of water has thou, poor Ophelia, / And therefore I forbid my tears.'²² This meets with wild applause from the Court. The two men begin their sword duel once more, and, pausing, Hamlet attempts to match Laertes' success:

Doubt thou, the stars are fire,

Doubt that the Sun doth move,

Doubt truth to be a liar

But never doubt, I love.

¹⁹ Marowitz, *Hamlet* 49.

²⁰ Marowitz, *Hamlet* 50.

²¹ Marowitz, *Hamlet* 51.

²² Marowitz, *Hamlet* 52.

The stage directions note that the Court boos '*his paltry effort.*' The success of Laertes and the ongoing failure of Hamlet in this duel of words continue until Hamlet makes a last ditch attempt:

HAMLET. (Desperately rattling them off)

O what a rogue and peasant slave am I

O that this too too solid flesh would melt

There's a divinity that shapes our ends,

Frailty thy name is woman – the rest is silence.

He asks for a judgment, to which the Clown '*[g]rudgingly*'²³ awards 'A hit, a very palpable hit.' Rosencrantz and Guildenstern question Hamlet regarding the whereabouts of Polonius' corpse. He offers his toy sword as if it is a recorder, and when they admit they lack the skills to play, '*he grabs them both and threatens them with the toy, which has now become lethal.*'²⁴ He declares that 'though you can fret me, you cannot play upon me,' and stabs them both. '*After being stabbed, they consult each other, and decide to die, which they do, quite falsely.*'

The scene cuts to the graveyard where all are clustered around Ophelia's tomb. Laertes launches into a '*flashback*' scene with his sister, '*who sits miming sewing.*' He cautions Ophelia against the '*trifling*'²⁵ of Hamlet's attentions with text from I.iii of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, then returns to the previous scene. Leaping into the open grave, he climbs out carrying his sister's dead body. Hamlet comes forward and, prompted and coached by the Clown, uses lines assigned to Laertes in the original play to outdo a brother's grief: 'Dost thou come here to whine, / To outface me with leaping in her grave?

²³ Marowitz, *Hamlet* 53.

²⁴ Marowitz, *Hamlet* 54.

²⁵ Marowitz, *Hamlet* 55.

/ Be buried quick with her, and so will I.’²⁶ The assembled funeral guests suddenly freeze in tableau as the Queen asks her son why he looks upon nothing and ‘with the incorporal air do hold discourse?’²⁷ It becomes clear that the Queen cannot see the funeral in front of her. Hamlet collapses in her lap: ‘Your noble son is mad.’ The tableau disperses. Cradled by his mother, Hamlet enjoins her to no longer inhabit ‘the rank sweat’²⁸ of his uncle’s bed. The King enters, agreeing that Hamlet is ‘far gone.’ He and his queen exit. Turning to the audience, Hamlet announces that his is ‘mad but north-north-west.’ The assembled court shouts for a judgment. ‘*A trial is swiftly arranged: HAMLET placed in the dock by FORTINBRAS, who acts as counsel. The KING acts as Judge.*’²⁹ Ophelia gives testimony that Hamlet

took me by the wrist and held me hard;

Then goes he to the length of all his arm,

And with his other hand thus o-er his brow,

He falls to such perusal of my face

As he would draw it.

[...]

He rais’d a sigh so piteous and profound

As it did seem to shatter all his bulk

And end his being.

Ophelia, ‘*[s]lowly turning mad,*’³⁰ exits as if ‘*in the seat of a coach and six.*’ Hamlet’s trial continues with the Queen’s testimony regarding the murder of Polonius. Hamlet attempts to explain his behaviour, noting that he is ‘very proud, revengeful, ambitious, with more

²⁶ Marowitz, *Hamlet* 56.

²⁷ Marowitz, *Hamlet* 57.

²⁸ Marowitz, *Hamlet* 58.

²⁹ Marowitz, *Hamlet* 59.

³⁰ Marowitz, *Hamlet* 60.

offences at my beck that I have thoughts to put them in.³¹ The ghost of Hamlet's father appears, and begs his son to 'Let ... not... the royal bed ... of Denmark ... be ... a Couch ... for luxury and damned ... incest.'³² Hamlet swears to take action on his father's plea, promising the Court, 'So shall you hear / Of carnal, bloody and unnatural acts, / Of accidental judgements, casual slaughters.'

The Court has disappeared from the stage, and Hamlet is left alone with Fortinbras, who counsels of 'some vicious mole of nature' found 'in particular men.' When Hamlet fails to understand the implication, Fortinbras is '[p]atronizing,'³³ but continues his attempts to stir the Danish prince into action. Hamlet backpedals: 'The spirit that I have seen / May be the devil ... the devil hath power / To assume a pleasing shape.'³⁴ Fortinbras eventually exits, '[w]ashing his hands of [Hamlet] completely.' Hamlet turns to the audience, making reference to the difference between Fortinbras and himself:

Had *he* the motive and the cue for passion
That I have, he would drown the stage with tears
And cleave the general ear with horrid speech[.]

The rest of the cast reassembles in a circle around Hamlet, the Ghost carrying Hamlet's wooden sword. 'Mock frightened,'³⁵ Hamlet Senior taunts his son:

Angels and ministers of grace defend us:
Be thou a spirit of health, or a goblin damn'd,
Bring with thee airs from Heaven or blasts from Hell?
Be thy intents wicked or charitable,
Thou comest in such a questionable shape

³¹ Marowitz, *Hamlet* 61.

³² Marowitz, *Hamlet* 63.

³³ Marowitz, *Hamlet* 64.

³⁴ Marowitz, *Hamlet* 64-65.

³⁵ Marowitz, *Hamlet* 66.

That I will speak to thee. I'll call thee Hamlet.

He inserts the toy sword under Hamlet's arm, in the manner of a crutch; the company 'expresses its delight over the GHOST's send-up.' Hamlet '[w]eakly' begins to utter the most famous quotations from the original play – 'To be or not to be that is the question,' 'There is something rotten in the state of Denmark' – and the assembled company mock him with laughter. Finally, Hamlet collapses to his knees in a 'powerful, stark silence.' Fortinbras steps forward, 'sarcastically'³⁶ declaring, 'What a piece of work is man.' The company begins to chant his words as he continues in this text from II.ii. Finally Hamlet struggles to his feet, and is carried 'like a dead soldier'³⁷ onto a circular pedestal. With a last flourish of energy, he

[t]hrusts his toy sword into [a] host of imaginary victims.

After each thrust, a character falls to the ground, truly slain,

until the corpses of all the characters lie strewn around

*HAMLET like a set of downed ninepins.*³⁸

As Hamlet proclaims that from this point onward, 'My thoughts be bloody or be nothing worth,' the bodies of the fallen characters begin to laugh 'hysterically.' They mock him with 'jeers, whistles, stamping and catcalls' as the lights fade to black.

³⁶ Marowitz, *Hamlet* 67.

³⁷ Marowitz, *Hamlet* 68.

³⁸ Marowitz, *Hamlet* 69.

SYNOPSIS: *AN OTHELLO*

The cast has been reduced to seven: Desdemona is now the only female character; the male characters include Othello, Iago, Cassio, Brabantio, The Duke and Lodovico. The action of the play follows essentially that of the original play, except that, in this adaptation, Iago is a black man who often employs the dialect of the Black American ghetto, and Brabantio is, for part of the play, a Jewish American father.

As the lights rise, Desdemona – blonde, fair-skinned and dressed entirely in white – stands statue-like; from the darkness behind, a pair of black arms slowly encircles her. The stage directions note that ‘*[sh]e yields to them,*’ after which there is a sudden cacophony of angry human voices, during which she is ‘*spirited away.*’¹ The lights snap to black.

When the lights rise, Iago provides commentary which seems to be heard only by the audience: ‘Hey stud, massa’s come to spank yo’ black ass. You caint go chasin’ white poontang all night. Mr Charlie wants you on that front-line where allt he action is. You better hustle daddy-o before you get what-for.’ Cassio relates that the Senate has called for Othello’s presence in a matter relating to Cyprus. When Othello expresses the need for delay, Iago responds: ‘Man you ain’t got no time to get your rocks off. The Man is callin’ you – he wants you *now*, mother-fucker, double-A quick!’ Iago informs Cassio that Othello has married ‘Snow White. Cinderella. Marilyn Monroe. Miss World.’²

In the next scene, Brabantio accuses Othello of enchanting his daughter to his ‘sooty bosom’ and orders him to prison. Othello demurs, due to his requested presence at the Senate. When Brabantio declares that, should the Senate not uphold his cause, ‘Bondslaves and pagans shall our statesmen be,’ Iago states:

¹ Marowitz, *An Othello* 259. From this point forward in this synopsis, quotations will be footnoted only when the page number changes. All italics are found in the original.

² Marowitz, *An Othello* 260.

You better believe it, Uncle. Bondslaves and pagans ...
chocolate-coloured coons and blackjack spades and the
baddest, blackest mother-fuckers in the land ... shall your
statesmen be. (*Smiles to audience.*) But not our ever-lovin'
ofay General ... Him? Shit, no. He got other fish to fry.³

The lights rise on the Senate, where the Duke and Lodovico are discussing the Turkish fleet and its imminent arrival in Cyprus. Iago, in his role of chorus, describes the Turks as 'mean, dark-skinned devils' who may 'start messin' with all that wide-open Greek pussy' if 'our ever-lovin' ofay General' doesn't subdue them. The scene is reasonably true to I.iii in Shakespeare's play, other than the addition of Iago's interjections. The Duke asks Othello to use his military powers against 'the general enemy Ottomon,'⁴ after which Iago asserts, 'General enemy, dig, General? And if'n he got a little of yer own complexion, don't let that bug you.' Brabantio raises his accusations against Othello for marrying Desdemona, who has been 'abused, stolen from [him] and corrupted';⁵ at the Duke's query, Othello explains his marriage to Desdemona with the text beginning 'Most potent, grave and reverend signoris [sic]' found in I.iii of the original play. Iago interjects several times with mention of Othello's value to the Venetian state as a soldier, particularly in this time of crisis. Desdemona is sent for. Othello delivers his description of how Brabantio had

lov'd me, oft invited me,
Still questioned me the story of my life
From year to year – the battles, sieges, fortunes
That I have passed.⁶

³ Marowitz, *An Othello* 261.

⁴ Marowitz, *An Othello* 262.

⁵ Marowitz, *An Othello* 263.

⁶ Marowitz, *An Othello* 265.

the stage directions note that *'all stand frozen in tableau as IAGO moves freely among them,'* saying,

Yes, you did, you sweet-talkin' big, black buck. All that shit about 'hair-breath 'scapes' and 'Anthropophagi' and even how they chained your black ass, and how you was hip enough to leave all those cotton-pickin' coons behind you cause you knew where all that gravy lay, and it weren't in the cotton fields or the hold of slave-ships. And it weren't with those Stephen Fetchit watermelon-munchin' duskies. No, you bet your sweet little ass, it weren't. It was in Mr Charlie's army, ey black-boy? With all that lick'n polish, and two pairs of suits, and plenty of fried chicken, and chitlin's once a week; and brown-nosin' it up the ranks and steppin' on your kinky-haired brethren to do it, but shit man, they just shoeshine-boys or field-hands, and you was that special kind of something; that up-and-at 'em, I'm shootin'-for-the-moon House Nigger who knows when to nod and when to keep mum; [...] toatin' your hardware up to them front-lines and soldierin' hard for Uncle Charlie cause he's got his eye on you, [...] and not givin' a fiddler's fuck who you killin' and for what, cause the gravy's pourin' in.

Desdemona arrives at the Senate, and professes her loyalty to Othello. Her husband agrees to go to war against the Turks, and is congratulated by all present, with the exception of Brabantio, who '*stands apart.*'⁷

The sounds of a storm at sea arise; the cast utter text relating to the operation of a ship in that predicament. Othello stands centre stage on the deck of the imaginary ship, surrounded closely by Brabantio, Lodovico, Cassio and the Duke. They hold ropes which are tied onto various parts of Othello's body – his wrists, shoulder and waist. The stage directions note that the other cast members scatter into a circle, with Macbeth at its centre as the storm '*segués immediately into his epilepsy,*' the ropes taut, Othello firm but being pulled to or held from many directions. He begins to speak disjointedly:

Lie with her? Lie on her? We say lie on her when they lie
her. Lie with her! Zounds, that's fulsome! Handkerchief –
confession – handkerchief! To confess and be hanged for his
labour. First to be hanged and then to confess! I tremble at
it. It is not wods that shakes me thus. Noses, ears, and lips!
Is't possible? - Confess? Handkerchief! O devil.⁸

During the epileptic seizure, Othello experiences a number of 'visions,' the first of which is the infidelity of his wife. Desdemona appears: first speaking lovingly to her husband; then petitioning for Cassio; then rebuking Iago with lines appropriated from Iago's wife Emilia in the original play, which speak of a practical approach to sexuality:

Let husbands know
That wives have sense like them
They see and smell

⁷ Marowitz, *An Othello* 268.

⁸ Marowitz, *An Othello* 268-269.

And have their palates both for sweet and sour
As husbands have.⁹

Later in the vision, Desdemona ‘*sexily*,’ according to the stage directions, propositions Cassio: ‘I have a thing for you,’¹⁰ she teases, and later, again to Cassio, ‘Will you come to bed, my lord?’¹¹ Further in the scene, she tells Cassio, ‘I hate the Moor. If thou canst cuckold him,/ Thou dost thyself a pleasure, me a sport.’¹² Iago encourages Cassio in his lust for the general’s wife while simultaneously provoking Othello to doubt and jealousy regarding Desdemona’s alleged infidelity, the ocular proof of which was present within the earlier ‘visions.’

At this point, Othello’s handkerchief, reconstructed in Brobdingnagian proportions, flutters to the stage floor from the flies, engulfing Desdemona. On it, she is ‘*gangbanged*’ by Cassio, the Duke and Lodovico while Othello watches ‘*horrified*’ and her father Brabantio collects a fee for her services.

Desdemona rises from this sexual activity to strangle Othello with the handkerchief as the others on stage ‘*shriek horribly*.’¹³ Othello, not dead, is taken up by the Duke and Lodovico, who press him to begin his military conquest of the Turks; he instead demands the handkerchief of Desdemona, using a version of the text from III.vi of Shakespeare’s *Othello*. When she is unable to comply, he threatens to kill her, and the others on stage raise the large handkerchief around her, obliterating her from sight. At this point, the stage directions note: ‘*Blackout. Storm sound, and momentary return of ship tableau, to establish last scene has been in OTHELLO’s mind.*’¹⁴

⁹ Marowitz, *An Othello* 271.

¹⁰ This text was spoken in the original play by Emilia to Iago when she gives him Desdemona’s handkerchief.

¹¹ Marowitz, *An Othello* 273. This text was spoken in the original play by Desdemona to her husband.

¹² Marowitz, *An Othello* 276. This text was spoken in the original play by Iago to Roderigo.

¹³ Marowitz, *An Othello* 277.

¹⁴ Marowitz, *An Othello* 281.

When the lights rise, Cassio castigates himself for his drunkenness, after which the Duke, speaking now in a Southern accent, spews racial hatred toward Othello on the basis of his miscegenation:

IT'S A FUCKING SHAME! A FUCKING DISGRACE!

Every regiment in the country's laughin' up their sleeve.

Coon General and his White Pussy. Goddammit, men

ought'a be able to bridle their appetites; ought to have some

regard for their reputation; the reputation of their comrades!¹⁵

Employing the concept of skin colour as 'the outward face of the inner soul,' the Duke elides the Elizabethan notion of the 'Chain of Being' with the modern military concept of the 'Chain of Command' in order to bludgeon Cassio into denigrating Othello as a 'BLACK-HEARTED MOTHER-FUCKER.'¹⁶ He then orders Cassio to take over Othello's posting, since '[w]e don't want a bloody coon General trottin' around these islands with a white pussy in tow, and subvertin' the authority of our rule.'¹⁷

A scene follows employing text from IV.i of the original play in which Iago and Othello discuss Desdemona's 'infidelity' and the appropriate action to be taken. After Othello exits, Iago speaks directly to the audience:

Who, me? A double-dealin' son-of-a-bitch? Shit, man,
that's the kettle callin' the pot black. Now I ask you, did I
twist his arm? Put a gun to his haid? Hell no. I just gave
him a tiny little nudge and he done belted off like a bat out'a
hell. [...] No man, he ready to chop her into little pieces

¹⁵ Marowitz, *An Othello* 282.

¹⁶ Marowitz, *An Othello* 285.

¹⁷ Marowitz, *An Othello* 286.

without so much as a howd'ye-do. Oooh-oooh, he achin' to
whip her ass so bad, I think I just wastin' my time plantin'
little black seeds.¹⁸

Iago continues:

I do declare, I ain't never know'd a black man shack up with
a white woman without it bringin' him heartache and misery.
But he like to show off his pretty white poontang to the
neighbours. 'See heah, what this black buck done gone and
got hisself! Ain't she a beauty![']

Lodovico, Othello and Desdemona return to the scene as it ran before Iago's
soliloquy, continuing with text from IV.i of Shakespeare's *Othello*: Othello slaps his wife;
when Lodovico remarks that he has been mistaken in Othello, Iago retorts: 'What can you
expect from an uppity-nigrah.'¹⁹

After the men leave the stage, Desdemona turns to the audience, and coolly speaks
of her sexual desire for Othello:

Wouldn't you have, if you'd had the chance? Not just big,
and not just black, but holy and black, strong and black,
elegant and black. From a world so warm and sweet, so bred
to pleasures and to craft that its smallest pot is a priceless
relic, and its simplest peasant, a prince in miniature. A
culture we can never hope to understand – except by loving
those representatives of it who walk through our trashy white
streets like ambassadors from an enchanted land.

¹⁸ Marowitz, *An Othello* 288.

¹⁹ Marowitz, *An Othello* 291.

A scene follows, utilizing largely text from IV.ii of the original play, in which Othello denounces Desdemona as a strumpet, after which she pleads with Iago to help her win back her husband's good opinion.

Brabantio enters, and in what the stage directions describe as a '*Yiddish accent*',²⁰ begins a lengthy discussion with the audience as to his dislike of Othello as a son-in-law:

Would you like your daughter to marry one? Some joke. My daughter *did* marry one and I can tell you, I wouldn't like my daughter to marry one. [...] Oy Got [...] what am I supposed to do – show how broad minded I am? No, it's nothin.' You want to marry a schvarza, go 'head. Blessings on you. You want to make me a laughing-stock of the whole neighbourhood, I should die from shame, why not?

He goes onto to detail his argument against miscegenation:

We are all equal in the eyes of God. [...] Equal Shmequal. Look, you don't breed a bitch with a canary; a duck with a horse; a mouse with an elephant. [...] If God had wanted us to get together, don't you think he's have given us a little sign? You know, maybe give us white faces and black arms, or white noses and black toes – some little clue that it was all supposed to mix in.

At another point in his monologue, Brabantio perpetuates the longstanding image of Black Americans as recently descended from jungle dwellers: 'And it ain't just in the colours. There's the background; the upbringing; the history. My father, whatever he was, he

²⁰ Marowitz, *An Othello* 295.

wasn't climbing trees in the jungle with a grass *shmata* between his legs.' Later, he describes a hierarchal system in which the world is divided into servants and masters, each with their own 'clubs':

We have nothing against nobody. Live and let live. You want to be black, wear polka-dot underwear, ride around in a car three blocks long, good luck to you! [...] But look, there's always been classes [*Pronounced 'cless-iss.'*] [...] Does that mean the servants got to hate the masters?²¹ So they don't belong to the same clubs as us. Maybe they don't want to. They got their own clubs.

During the last moments of Brabantio's monologue,²² the lights reveal Iago casually watching as a brooding Othello begins the 'It is the cause' text from scene V.ii of Shakespeare's *Othello*. As Othello describes Desdemona's skin as 'white' and 'smooth,' and speaks of how he must 'put out the light,' Iago goads him with taunting remarks until Othello ostensibly breaks character and begins to speak in what the stage directions describe as a '*broad black accent*': 'What you want, boy?' 'Only what's mine brother. – Your black soul,' responds Iago. In scant moments of dialogue, Lodovico and Desdemona appear on stage in a liminal space in which they ostensibly portray the characters both within and outside of the plays action: Lodovico attempts to eject Iago from the theatre, while Desdemona hurls racial epithets at him: 'Stupid black bastard.'²³ When Iago retaliates verbally, she appeals to her stage husband to protect her: 'Are you going to stand there and let him insult me.' The play that is being performed, the actor/Lodovico suggests,

²¹ Marowitz, *An Othello* 296.

²² Marowitz, *An Othello* 297.

²³ Marowitz, *An Othello* 298.

'is a *traditional* piece. We're not really concerned with your kind of problems. Green-eyed monsters, jealous passions, Anthropophagi – fine. But not your kind of problems.' Iago assails Othello with pleas to pride in his cultural heritage: 'What you doin' in that honky camp, man? Don't you ever look in the mirror when you shave? Don't you know where you at? [...] You got a duty to me, man. To me and mine.' Othello responds emphatically:

I know what you want, but you ain't getting' it here. Not from me. I've worked for what I've got. It's cost me plenty. Don't tell me about pain and sufferin'. I've eaten shit in whitey's world for four hundred years to get where I am. You make your fuss; write your pamphlets, drop your bombs, and where does it get you? You end your days in jail, or swinging' alongside the apples on the trees. No time, you say. Now, we want it *now*. But what do you get *now*. An inch's lead, a patch'a sod, and a lot of dead heroes. Don't you see boy, it's theirs. It belongs to The Man. Ain't nothing gonna change that. There ain't no You; there's only Them.²⁴

Desdemona taunts Iago: 'You'd give anything to get into my pants, wouldn't you?' Iago turns on Othello: 'We're goin'a scorch you out- -- not talk you down. We're gonna blacken your face, General; gonna remind you who you are.' Iago describes the murder of Desdemona as a fitting revenge for the evils done to African Americans by White society in the past, but that suicide would just be 'doin' whitey's work. [...] Because he wants you weak and guilty and remindin' him of what you owe him.'²⁵ Lodovico expresses the white ruling classes part in the creation of what Malcolm X describes as the modern 'Uncle

²⁴ Marowitz, *An Othello* 299.

²⁵ Marowitz, *An Othello* 300.

Toms': 'Don't you realize, you don't make a Noble Moor overnight. He's honed and made sharp and bright by centuries of industrious labour.' Desdemona continues the meta-theatrical pretense of this portion of the production being 'real' by making reference to the actors' union -- in real time, the working actor's last defence against workplace concerns: 'Black bastard; how did he get past the stage-door? I'm going to write Equity about this, don't think I'm not ...' Ostensibly as a result of Iago's successful awakening of Othello's understanding of his situation, the Duke, Lodovico and Brabantio attempt to restore the status quo by re-engaging the General in his work and the 'role' he fulfills in their power structure: 'We have been led to believe that certain 'other' obligations – namely to yourself – might be in jeopardy because of these aforementioned pressures.'²⁶ The Duke takes the explanation further:

What happens to [Desdemona], if you'll pardon my being blunt, means nothing one way or the other. She's a woman, and she doesn't stand for anything. I'm not being disrespectful, I'm just stating facts. But you are a man, and you *represent* something, and when you fulfill your obligations to yourself you are fulfilling them for everyone else as well. Need I be any more specific than that?

The Duke, Lodovico and Brabantio all attempt to convince Othello to fulfill his obligations by playing his traditional 'role,' as established in Shakespeare's *Othello* by murdering his white wife.

²⁶ Marowitz, *An Othello* 304.

In the next scene, the lights come up on Desdemona in her bed, and Othello is found ‘*downstage, hesitant, not acting his role properly.*’²⁷ ‘Othello’ attempts to play the final scene V.ii of Shakespeare’s *Othello*, but is troubled, misses his cues, and is prompted by Desdemona. After Desdemona suggests, ‘That death’s unnatural that kills for loving,’ the stage directions note that Othello is ‘*entering his role for the first time*’;²⁸ he asks again for the handkerchief, accuses Desdemona of adultery, and when she begs him to ask Cassio, tells her that ‘honest Iago’ has killed him. At this point, the stage directions note that ‘*OTHELLO halts. Looks out to audience. DESDEMONA slowly turns and looks out as well.*’²⁹ After some prompting from Desdemona, Othello finishes the scene and smothers his wife. Iago appears beside him:

Do you feel it, General – that crazy little shiver in the blood – a little like speed – a little like cum – a warm, spikey, liquid glow lightin’ through all the backalleys of the body? That’s what a black man feels when he scourges the whiteness in him; when he says in act and deed: the redness of my blood and the blackness of my body is one, and the devil that would separate them is banished from my soul. That small, dark, keen tinglin’ in the blood that you feel is nigger-joy, brother.

Iago points Othello’s attention to the audience, whom he says are ‘quietly pantin’ for what they know’s already theirs – your rich-red, routine-and-predictable blood.’ He counsels him *not* to fulfill their expectations by killing himself.

²⁷ Marowitz, *An Othello* 305.

²⁸ Marowitz, *An Othello* 306.

²⁹ Marowitz, *An Othello* 307.

Lodovico , Othello, Cassio and Iago return to *'playing Shakespeare's play'*; after Othello learns that Iago, whom he has just wounded, gave him the handkerchief in order to persuade her husband of Desdemona's adultery, the stage directions note that *'OTHELLO, out of character, suddenly throws a defiant look to LODOVICO.'* Moments later, when Othello fails to obey Lodovico's summons, *'CASSIO and DUKE go to take hold of OTHELLO but he tosses them off. They stand frightened and perplexed by the actor's behaviour.'* Iago, *'no longer hurt, rises suddenly and looks at OTHELLO. OTHELLO the actor pauses to receive the look and its intent.'* He utters what are Othello's last words in Shakespeare's play, punctuated with pauses, and there is a long *'awkward pause during which the characters uneasily share looks.* When it becomes clear that Othello will not *'fulfill his obligation'* by committing suicide, Lodovico and the Duke rush in as Cassio restrains Iago, and they cut Othello's throat.

At the end of the play,

*DESDEMONA rises slowly and takes her place beside the DUKE, LODOVICO and CASSIO. They look for a moment at OTHELLO then towards IAGO who is hard and steely-eyed beside the bed. Slowly, IAGO approaches OTHELLO's body, bends down and cradles him in his arms. Slowly, heavily and with a curious kind of love, he drags out OTHELLO's body. When he is gone, the others, slight smiles playing on their lips, look from one to the other*³⁰

before a blackout ends the action.

³⁰ Marowitz, *An Othello* 310.

SYNOPSIS: *VARIATIONS ON THE MERCHANT OF VENICE*

Variations on the Merchant of Venice begins in black with a Brechtian device: the sound of an explosion, then a series of slides and an accompanying voiceover which replicates a newscast covering the bombing of the King David Hotel. The ‘newscast’ describes the bombing in some detail: 91 are known dead, 47 injured and 43 ‘including senior government officials’¹ are missing. The voiceover notes that the ‘Jewish Underground Terrorist organisation, Irgun, has claimed responsibility for the atrocity which has been widely condemned by, among others, the executive of the Jewish Agency, Dr. Chaim Weitzman and President Harry S. Truman.’ Lights come up on Shylock and other members of the *Irgun* gathering around a dead comrade. A new character called Chus is introduced. Employing text from *The Jew of Malta*, Shylock addresses his assembled comrades:

[... H]ere upon my knees, striking the earth,
I ban their souls to everlasting pains
And extreme tortures of the fiery deep
Thus² [sic] thus have dealt with me in my distress.
[...]
Why do we yield to their extortion!
We are a multitude, and they but few
That now encompasseth what is our own.

Later, he extols the power of death to remove his suffering:

Henceforth, I'll wish but for eternal night,

¹ Marowitz, *Variations on the Merchant* 227. From this point forward in this synopsis, quotations will be footnoted only when the page number changes. All italics in original.

² Marowitz, *Variations on the Merchant* 228.

That clouds of darkness may enclose my flesh,
And hide these extreme sorrows from mine eyes.
For cruelly we have toiled to inherit here
And painful nights have been appointed me,
Great injuries are not soon forgot.

There is a general exit, after which Shylock discusses with his daughter Jessica, again using text from *The Jew of Malta*, how she is to deceive Lorenzo:

Entertain Lorenzo as you will
With all the courtesy you can afford,
Provided that you keep your maidenhead.
Use him as if he were a Philistine.
Dissemble, swear, protest, vow to love him.
In's company canst thou intercept
Those fateful tidings which the governor's tongue
Jealously would guard from others ears.³

When Jessica asks, 'Shall we thus debase our ancient faith,/ And violate our vows?'

Shylock responds, also with Marlowe's text:

We serve our god
When, with our guile we strike his enemies
And like the holy warriors of old
We must test our faith upon the field.

Shylock goes on to render his daughter this instruction:

First be thou void of these affections:

³ Marowitz, *Variations on the Merchant* 229.

Compassion, love, vain hope and heartless fear.
Be mov'd at nothing, see thou pity none,
But to thyself smile when the Christians moan.
This is the life we Jews are us'd to lead
And reason too, for Christians do the like.⁴

Bassanio and Antonio are introduced as members of the British power structure that is occupying (then) Palestine: Bassanio is 'in the uniform of an English Lieutenant' and Antonio is in '40's English attire suggestive of the Foreign office.'⁵ Over drinks in an outdoor café, Antonio's state of mind, as well as the state of his finances, is introduced using Shakespearean text:

In sooth, I know now why I am so sad.
It wearies me, you say it wearies you
But how I caught it, found it or came by it,
What stuff 'tis made of, whereof it is born,
I am to learn:
And such a want-wit sadness makes of me
That I have much ado to know myself.⁶

Bassanio responds with Salanio/Salerio's text regarding his friend's commercial endeavours:

Your mind is tossing on the ocean,
There, where your argosies with portly sail,
Like Signiors or rich Burghers on the flood,

⁴ Marowitz, *Variations on the Merchant* 230.

⁵ Marowitz, *Variations on the Merchant* 230-231.

⁶ Marowitz, *Variations on the Merchant* 231.

Or as it were the pageants of the sea –
Do overpeer the petty traffickers,
That curtsy to them, do them reverence.
As they fly by with them with their woven wings.
Believe me sir, had I such venture forth,
The better part of my affections would
Be with my hopes abroad.

Antonio enigmatically delivers Portia's 'O these monstrous times / Put bars between the owners and their rights, / And so, though yours, not yours,' after which, according to the stage directions, he broods. Bassanio lightens the mood with Gratiano's text: 'You have too much respect on the world / They do lose it who buy it with much care.' When the conversation moves to Bassanio's suit, the young man describes Portia as 'fair, and fairer than that word, / Of wondrous virtues,'⁷ and 'nothing undervalued / To Cato's daughter,'⁸ after which the lady herself is slowly revealed in a position of idleness:

*(Half lights up on PORTIA in peignoir, attended by
NERISSA, lolling on divan [and moments later, full lights
up. PORTIA recumbent on divan with makeup pads over her
eyes, NERISSA, her black companion massaging her neck.)*

By my troth, Nerissa, my little body is aweary of this great
world,

⁷ Marowitz, *Variations on the Merchant* 232.

⁸ Marowitz, *Variations on the Merchant* 233.

she sighs. The conversation turns to the men currently hazarding for her, and Bassanio's photograph is retrieved from the filing system Portia keeps to catalogue suitors and men of interest.

The action returns to the café, and to Antonio's directive that Bassanio borrow money to accomplish his task of winning Portia. The stage directions note that when the waiter brings the bill to the table, Bassanio stealthily slides it towards Antonio. Antonio exits and Gratiano appears, with his request to accompany Bassanio to Belmont.

Lorenzo and Jessica are discovered to the sound of sweet music and Shakespeare's text from scene V.i: their scene begins with 'How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank!'⁹ and ends with his attempting to importune her physically. In complete opposition to his demeanour in the scene just ending, when Jessica exits, Lorenzo reveals his true intentions towards her to Gratiano with 'a broad, lewd smile.'¹⁰ 'O what a goodly outside falsehood hath,' rejoins Gratiano.

Tubal joins Shylock in discussing terms of a possible loan with Bassanio; the two Jews are so closely allied that they literally finish each other's sentences. Antonio enters. Shakespeare's 'fawning publican' text, in which Shylock's announces his hatred of Antonio 'because he is a Christian,' has been excised from this adaptation. Shylock reminds Antonio of the ill treatment he has received at his hands in text from I.iii.106-129: 'Signior Antonio, many a time and oft / In the Rialto you have rated me / About my moneys and my usances.'¹¹ Shylock's dissembles, asserting that he has borne this ill treatment 'with a patient shrug, / For suff'rance is the badge of all our tribe.' The bond for

⁹ Marowitz, *Variations on the Merchant* 236.

¹⁰ Marowitz, *Variations on the Merchant* 237.

¹¹ Marowitz, *Variations on the Merchant* 240.

a pound of flesh is arranged. After the Christians exit, Shylock confides to his comrades, Tubal and Chus, using Barabas' text from Act I of *The Jew of Malta*:

See the simplicity of these base slaves
Who for the villains have not wit themselves
Think me to be a senseless lump of clay
That will with every water wash to dirt.¹²

Lorenzo receives Jessica's letter, the contents of which are taken from Marlowe's text; the letter is filled with the deception her father requested of her, alluding to her desire to become Christian. We arrive at Shylock's house as he frets about whether or not to go to Bassanio's for dinner. Salerio replaces Gobbo in this exchange; he attempts to hurry Shylock out the door so that Jessica may escape with Lorenzo. A 'knowing look'¹³ is exchanged between Shylock and his daughter; after his exit with Salerio, Chus appears and aids Jessica with her preparation, including the loading of the casket of jewels. Jessica descends to Lorenzo under Chus' attentive protection.

Back at Belmont, Portia greets the Prince of Morocco, who is about to hazard for her hand in marriage: Morocco and Aragon after him are both played by Bassanio in disguise. The text is almost straight from Shakespeare's II.vii with the removal of only six lines, when Portia interrupts Morocco before he finishes his oration regarding Hercules, Lichas and the randomness of fortune. At the end of the scene, Gratiano, disguised as Morocco's servant, '*salaams*' the exiting Portia and Nerissa; when he attempts it a third time, '*BASSANIO kicks him in the backside.*'¹⁴

¹² Marowitz, *Variations on the Merchant* 242.

¹³ Marowitz, *Variations on the Merchant* 244.

¹⁴ Marowitz, *Variations on the Merchant* 248.

Tubal and Shylock are joined by Chus in a scene which employs Salanio and Salerio's text regarding Jessica's escape with Lorenzo: Tubal declares,

Thou has not heard a passion so confused
So strange, outrageous and so variable
As those that mock thy cries upon the street.
"My daughter! O my ducats! O my daughter!
Fled with a Christian! O my Christian ducats!
Justice! The law! My ducats and my daughter!"¹⁵

Shylock promises to 'feed fat the ancient grudge' he bears against Antonio, if he can.

Back in Belmont, Bassanio as Morocco chooses the golden casket and departs. The scene is virtually unchanged with the exception of the casting of the pivotal character.

Tubal, Chus and Shylock further deceive Salerio and Solanio regarding Jessica's disappearance: Shylock acts the part of the deceived father when he rages, 'I would my daughter were dead at my foot, and the jewels in her ear! Would she were hearsed at my foot, and the ducats in her coffin.'¹⁶

In Belmont, Gratiano (standing in for Launcelot in the scene) infers that the Jewess Jessica's salvation lies in the hope that she is not her father's daughter; the stage directions reveal that Jessica '*suddenly withdraws her hand from GRATIANO and then immediately begins to cover up.*'¹⁷ Later, Lorenzo places a crucifix around her neck, which she rips off as soon as he leaves 'as if it were red-hot.'¹⁸

¹⁵ Marowitz, *Variations on the Merchant* 249.

¹⁶ Marowitz, *Variations on the Merchant* 253.

¹⁷ Marowitz, *Variations on the Merchant* 255.

¹⁸ Marowitz, *Variations on the Merchant* 257.

Bassanio once again comes to hazard the lottery, this time disguised as the Prince of Arragon. He chooses the silver box; upon opening the casket, he encounters ‘*a picture of Alfred E. Newman of Mad magazine.*’¹⁹

Shylock encounters Antonio, who has forfeited the bond.

Balthasar, a barrister, dons his robes while listening to a radio broadcast of Bassanio’s text from III.ii regarding the world being deceived by corruption.

Portia asks Bassanio to delay making his choice of casket in text taken from Shakespeare’s III.ii. Bassanio, without any need of rhyming song or deliberation, chooses the only casket he did not select when disguised as Morocco or Arragon, and finds her portrait within. The entirety of his text from ‘What find I here? / Fair Portia’s counterfeit!’ down to ‘A gentle scroll’²⁰ is left in verbatim. The giving of the ring is omitted. Gratiano and Nerissa reveal their desire to wed. A letter arrives from Venice outlining Antonio’s peril; Jessica’s text from the Shakespeare’s original regarding her father (III.ii.284-290) is omitted. On Portia’s urging, Bassanio leaves for Venice to rescue Antonio.

A scene in dumb show follows in which Tubal and Chus study a diagram and synchronize their watches, obviously deep into their plans for the bombing of the King David Hotel.

The lights come up on a British Court of Justice: the British/Christians (including Jessica) are separated physically from the Jewish characters. The scene moves forward along much the same lines of action, and utilizing the same lines of text, as the Shakespearean original. After Shylock is legally denied his forfeit, and further is sentenced to lose his fortune and face mandatory conversion to Christianity, both the Duke and Shylock seem to abruptly change character, moving from a relatively fair equanimity to a

¹⁹ Marowitz, *Variations on the Merchant* 258.

²⁰ Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice* III.ii.114-139.

savage attack; the change corresponds with the shift to text from *The Jew of Malta*. ‘If your first curse fall heavy on thy head / And make thee poor and scorn’d of all the world, / ‘Tis not our fault, but thy inherent sin,’²¹ sneers the Duke. ‘Some Jews are wicked, as all Christians are,’ responds Shylock. ‘If yet thou holdeth wealth then let it buy/ Some balm to cure the rancour of thy soul,’²² spits the Duke. In what amounts to a dramatic *coup d’etat*, Shylock contemptuously reasons,

Who hateth me but for my happiness?
Or who is honour’d now but for his wealth?
Rather had I a Jew be hated thus
Than pitied in a Christian poverty
For I can see no fruits in all your faith
But malice, falsehood and excessive pride.

An explosion outside disrupts the action; the British flag falls to the ground. The *Irgun* members reveal their weapons and disarm the British/Christians. Chus, using *The Jew of Malta* text, states that a bomb has been laid that will ‘batter all the stones about your ears / Whence none can possibly escape alive.’²³ (The courtroom is obviously located in the British wing of the King David Hotel.) Shylock takes centre stage in the court and, using the ‘Hath not a Jew eyes?’ text, offers a final word of explanation for what is about to occur: ‘The villainy you have taught me I will execute, and it shall go hard but I will better the instruction.’ He strides from the room, after which the *Irgun* members gather the British/Christians into a group, and raising their weapons, begin a mass execution as the

²¹ Marowitz, *Variations on the Merchant* 280.

²² Marowitz, *Variations on the Merchant* 281.

²³ Marowitz, *Variations on the Merchant* 282.

lights fall. The play ends with a continuation of the newscast voiceover and slides depicting the King David Hotel bombing, just as it began.

SYNOPSIS: *A MACBETH*

As the play opens Lady Macbeth – in this play, the leader of a malevolent coven – is surrounded by her sister Witches, purposing to ‘drain him dry as hay’¹ until he ‘dwindle, peak and pine’ as Macbeth, in effigy, has his eyes gouged out.

Duncan and Banquo arrive as the stage is transformed ‘*with a pleasant summery glow. Birds are chirping in the background.*’ ‘This castle hath a pleasant seat,’ the king comments: Banquo proffers his portrait of the martlet from I.vi of Shakespeare’s play. Lady Macbeth enters, receives Duncan’s thanks, and responding, describes her hospitality as a ‘poor and single business.’² The king pays respect to his absent host; he is about to exit when Macbeth suddenly appears and stabs him. His wife stabs Banquo, and the corpses are spirited away in death by the Witches, accompanied by Lady Macbeth. The lights snap to black.

The lights rise to reveal Macbeth on stage, accompanied by two other versions of himself: Macbeth 1 and 2. They whisper to Macbeth as he ‘*[b]reathlessly*’ speaks his soliloquy from I.vii: ‘If it were done when ‘tis done, then ‘twere well / It were done quickly.’³ He turns to his wife, who has returned onstage, and argues with her as to the appropriateness of regicide:

MACBETH. He’s here in double trust.

[...]

LADY MACBETH. Wouldst thou be afear’d

To be the same in thine own act and valour

As thou art in desire?

¹ Marowitz, *A Macbeth* 81. From this point forward in this synopsis, quotations will be footnoted only when the page number changes. All italics in original.

² Marowitz, *A Macbeth* 82.

³ Marowitz, *A Macbeth* 82-83.

MACBETH. His virtues
Will plead like angels, trumpet-tongued against
The deep damnation of his taking-off.

LADY MACBETH. Wouldst thou have that
Which thou esteem'st the ornament of life,
And live a coward in thine own esteem?⁴

The scene cuts to Duncan who delivers words of praise and reward to Macbeth: 'I have begun to plant thee and will labour / To make thee full of growing.' Macbeth, kneeling before his regent, responds: 'The service and the loyalty I owe / In doing it, pays itself.' Lady Macbeth chastises her husband: 'From this time / Such I account thy love.' A collage of text is interpolated, with Duncan pronouncing death on Cawdor, Macbeth arguing against the murder of Duncan and Lady Macbeth offering justification as to the viability of the regicide proposed in the original play but not yet articulated in this adaptation. The action cuts to Banquo, who reminds Macbeth of the witches' prophecy: they begin to fulfill their augury using Duncan's text from I.ii:

MACBETH. (*To WITCH*) The Thane of Cawdor lives; a
prosperous gentleman.

1ST WITCH. Go pronounce his present death.

2ND WITCH. And with his former title greet Macbeth.

MACBETH. Why do you dress me in borrowed robes?

WITCHES. Hail to thee, Thane of Glamis

Thane of Cawdor,

All hail Macbeth.

⁴ Marowitz, *A Macbeth* 83.

LADY MACBETH. That shalt be king hereafter.⁵

In counterpoint to Duncan's continued expression of support for Macbeth, Lady Macbeth and 2nd Macbeth employ text from I.vii to persuade the thane to regicide. The Witches proclaim that he shall be 'Glamis – Cawdor – King – All,'⁶ causing the thane to contemplate the 'supernatural soliciting'⁷ which could be neither 'ill' nor 'good.' When Macbeth '[h]otly' questions the Witches, his wife calms him with a promise that she will 'pour my spirits in thine ear / And chastize with the valour of my tongue / All that impedes thee from the golden round.' Macbeth is led by the Witches and his wife into a circle: the 3rd Witch, taking the thane's thumb in her hand, states, 'Here I have a pilot's thumb / Wracked as homeward he did come.' She places Macbeth's hand upon his sword as all three witches chant, 'A drum! A drum! / Macbeth doth come.' They beat a tattoo with their hands on their sides as the thane '*is crowned in a mock-coronation ceremony.*'⁸ The witches shift their attention to Banquo, performing a similar crowning ceremony on him:

WITCHES. Hail, hail, hail.

Lesser than Macbeth, yet much happier.

1ST WITCH. Thou shalt get kings, though thou be none.

Macbeth interjects as they salute Banquo, but receives no response:

MACBETH. No son of mine succeeding?

WITCHES. All hail, Banquo.

MACBETH. The seeds of Banquo, kings?

2ND WITCH. Lesser than Macbeth ...

MACBETH. A fruitless crown ...

⁵ Marowitz, *A Macbeth* 84.

⁶ Marowitz, *A Macbeth* 85.

⁷ Marowitz, *A Macbeth* 86.

⁸ Marowitz, *A Macbeth* 87.

3RD WITCH. Yet much happier ...

When Banquo comments that there will be rain that night, 2nd and 3rd Macbeth proclaim, 'Then let it come down.'⁹ On Macbeth's signal, Banquo dies and 'MACBETHS 2 and 3 remove [his] static figure [...] as if it were a store-dummy.' The Witches indirectly urge Macbeth on to murder Banquo: when he questions whether Banquo's progeny will ever be king, they respond 'Be bloody,' 'bold,' 'and resolute'; 'Laugh to scorn the power of man / For none of woman born / Shall harm Macbeth' and 'Macbeth shall never vanquished be until / Great Birnam Wood to High Dunsinane Hill / Shall come against him.' Malcolm enters and begins to verbally attack Macbeth, proclaiming him 'False, deceitful, sudden, malicious';¹⁰ he vows that 'God above deal between thee and me / When I shall tread upon this tyrant's head / Or wear it in my sword.' Macduff, exclaims to the 2nd and 3rd Macbeth: 'Wife?'; 'Children?'¹¹ 'Servants, all?' to which they reply in the affirmative. He turns on Macbeth, as do Banquo, Malcolm and Duncan; the thane '*backs away towards [the] WITCHES*' who proclaim, 'By the pricking of my thumbs / Something wicked this way comes.' The men, joined by Lady Macbeth holding the effigy of Macbeth from the first scene, and accompanied by the Witches, all circle Macbeth. The thane is '*subdued*';¹² there is a cry, followed by a black-out.

The action jumps to the dialogue between Macbeth and Banquo following their first visitation by the Witches, found in I.iii of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*: when the thane strides out, 1st and 2nd Macbeth '*superciliously confront a startled BANQUO*.'¹³ Lady Macbeth enters, striding between them after which they vanish. With the three witches whispering along with her, Lady Macbeth proceeds to speak, '*formally, as invocation*':

⁹ Marowitz, *A Macbeth* 88.

¹⁰ Marowitz, *A Macbeth* 89.

¹¹ Marowitz, *A Macbeth* 90.

¹² Marowitz, *A Macbeth* 91.

¹³ Marowitz, *A Macbeth* 92.

Come, you spirits
That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here
And fill me from the crown to the toe top-full
Of direst cruelty.

As the witches move to a supporting position behind her, she greets her husband:

Great Glamis, worthy Cawdor!
Greater than both by the all-hail hereafter!
Thy letters have transported me beyond
This ignorant present and I feel now
The future in the instant.¹⁴

Macbeth informs his wife of Duncan's imminent arrival:

LADY MACBETH. And when goes hence?
MACBETH. Tomorrow, as he purposes.
LADY MACBETH. O never
Shall sun that morrow see!

Immediately, the scene cuts to Duncan, onstage simultaneously with the Macbeths, as he describes the Thane as 'worthiest cousin,' exclaiming 'Only I have left to say, / "More is thy due than more than all can pay."' Macbeth responds, 'The service and the loyalty I owe, / In doing it, pays itself.' Lady Macbeth intervenes, urging her husband to hide his true intentions, but to 'bear welcome in your eye, / Your hand, your tongue.'¹⁵ Suddenly, Banquo is present, and with him, the reminder of the evil hovering round these events: 'I dreamt last night of the three weird sisters. / To you they have showed some truth.'

Macbeth resists being drawn into this topic, saying 'I think not of them,' but his wife goads

¹⁴ Marowitz, *A Macbeth* 93.

¹⁵ Marowitz, *A Macbeth* 94.

him on: 'I will acquaint you with the perfect spy o' the time / The moment on't; for it must be done tonight.' Macbeth resists her: 'We will speak further.' Banquo, in innocence, also goads him in the direction of evil: 'Yet, when we can entreat an hour to serve, / We would spend it in some words upon that business / If you grant the time.' Banquo and Lady Macbeth repeat their text in unison, then exit. 1st and 2nd Macbeth enter and confront Macbeth; they debate Duncan's murder. Macbeth reasons that he should 'against his murderer shut the door, / Not bear the knife myself'¹⁶ while 2nd Macbeth, in a manner described as '[f]acetious,' speaks of Duncan's virtues and 3rd Macbeth describes how pity would 'blow the horrid deed in every eye': Macbeth is '*petrified*.' Upping the ante, 2nd Macbeth borrows Malcolm's text from IV.iii:

Were I king,
I should cut off the Nobles for their lands,
Desire his jewels, and this other's house,
And my more-having would be as a sauce
To make me hunger more.

3rd Macbeth follows suit until Macbeth, '*[t]rying to blot out the thoughts of MACBETHS 2 and 3,*'¹⁷ begs the stars to dim so that his 'black and deep desires' might not be seen.

Macbeth's alter egos continue to persuade him, finally placing daggers into his hands:

MACBETH. (*Quietly*) Thou marshall'st me the way I was
going
And such an instrument I was to use ...
[...]
I am settled; and bend up

¹⁶ Marowitz, *A Macbeth* 95.

¹⁷ Marowitz, *A Macbeth* 96.

Each corporal agent to this terrible feat.¹⁸

A ‘*sepulchral*’ bell begins to toll as Lady Macbeth and the three witches surround Macbeth as he stands ‘*transfixed*’ by the daggers. As the knell continues, he speaks:

Now o’er the one half-world
Nature seems dead, and wicked dreams abuse
The curtained sleep. Witchcraft celebrates
Pale Hecate’s offerings; and withered murder,
Alarumed by his sentinel the wolf,
Whose howl’s his watch, thus with his stealthy pace,
[...]
Moves like a ghost.¹⁹

Macbeth exits to murder Duncan.

The lights rise on Duncan’s chamber; the witches persuade the grooms, portrayed by 1st and 2nd Macbeth, to drink as the voice of Lady Macbeth intones,

When Duncan is asleep,
Whereto the rather shall his hard day’s journey
Soundly invite him – his two chamberlains
Will I with wine and wassail so convince
That memory, the warder of the brain
Shall be a’fume, and the receipt of reason a limbeck only.

The witches begin to chant a prayer for the dead while Macbeth, his hands stained with bloody, enters, and after a moment’s hesitation, moves to the bed. One of the grooms awakes from a nightmare with a cry; both grooms not awake, they fall to their knees and

¹⁸ Marowitz, *A Macbeth* 97.

¹⁹ Marowitz, *A Macbeth* 98.

begin to pray. Macbeth offers them a blessing, which causes them to fall dead. The Witches

place two daggers into MACBETH's hands, and, still praying, usher him over to the sleeping DUNCAN. The WITCHES then hoist up the sleeping KING and present him to MACBETH. DUNCAN, now roused from sleep, confronts MACBETH, his eyes wild and frightened. MACBETH raises the daggers and then lowers them. Continues staring into DUNCAN's terrified eyes. Raises his daggers again. At that moment, LADY MACBETH appears, takes hold of MACBETH's hands and dries the daggers into DUNCAN's heart. There is an ear-splitting cry from DUNCAN which is picked up by the WITCHES. All vanish immediately on the Blackout.²⁰

When the lights come up, Macduff wakes the castle with 'O horror, horror, horror!'²¹ Lady Macbeth enters to the sound of '*[s]epulchral knocking*.'²² Macbeth approaches the door from which the sound is emanating; he opens it to '*a bloody DUNCAN – in shroud [...] the WITCHES emit a fearful but exaggerated cry of fright.*'

2ND WITCH. (*of DUNCAN*) What bloody man is that?

(*All laugh.*)

3RD WITCH. Who would have thought the old man had so much blood in him.

²⁰ Marowitz, *A Macbeth* 99-100.

²¹ Marowitz, *A Macbeth* 100.

²² Marowitz, *A Macbeth* 103.

(All laugh.)

3RD WITCH. *(Parodying MACBETH)* I have done the deed.

*(2ND WITCH blows raspberry.)*²³

The witches begin to re-enact the portion of II.ii in the original play in which Lady Macbeth calms her husband after he has committed the murder of Duncan, but they do so with '[g]iggles',²⁴ and with actions performed 'mock-tragically' and 'melodramatically.'

Macbeth, perched on a larger than life throne, is pushed forward by his two alter egos: 'His feet dangle without touching the floor. He looks like a baby in a high chair.'²⁵ Speaking text from III.i in Shakespeare's play, the three Macbeths contemplate the witches' augury for Banquo – to be the father of a line of kings – and how it negates Macbeth's murderous action in removing Duncan so he might ascend the throne. They freeze as Banquo speaks: 'Thou hast it now: King, Cawdor, Glamis, all / As the weird woman promised; and I fear / Thou playd'st most foully for't.'²⁶ Using the murderers' text from III.i, 2nd and 3rd Macbeth agree to assassinate Banquo. As Banquo exits, they walk behind him on either side as a bed containing Lady Macbeth, with the witches beside her, rolls downstage. The witches reveal their first hesitation in obeying Lady Macbeth, and Macbeth enters to speak to his wife. The three witches murmur into Macbeth's ear as he proclaims, 'We have scorched the snake, not killed it.'²⁷ His wife comforts him, and he exits. The witches take up positions around Lady Macbeth, and whisper her words as she utters Macbeth's invocation from III.ii beginning,

Come, seeling night

²³ Marowitz, *A Macbeth* 103-104.

²⁴ Marowitz, *A Macbeth* 104.

²⁵ Marowitz, *A Macbeth* 105.

²⁶ Marowitz, *A Macbeth* 106.

²⁷ Marowitz, *A Macbeth* 109.

Scarf up the tender eye of pitiful day,
And with thy bloody and invisible hand
Cancel and tear to pieces that great bond
Which keeps me pale.²⁸

1st and 2nd Macbeth, in the role of the two murderers, set upon Banquo: ‘A net is dropped onto BANQUO who is suddenly hoisted up and swung in space. While MACBETHS stab their prey in the trap, WITCHES, at side, tear strips off BANQUO’s effigy revealing bright red colouring underneath.’²⁹ A banquet table is brought onstage, and the guests enter and dance around it. When the dance ends ‘drunkenly and breathless,’³⁰ only Macbeth and the witches are seated. Macbeth discovers Banquo’s ghost, ‘[w]ith twenty trenched gashes in his head,’ and begins to panic; his wife attempts to comfort him. When Banquo’s ghost takes Macbeth’s seat at the table, ‘[a]ll at [the] table become strangely still, smiling knowingly at each other.’ When Macbeth tries to ignore the apparition he sees, ‘BANQUO empties his blood into [a] goblet and proffers it to MACBETH.’³¹ The banquet freezes in tableau as Macbeth commands Banquo to ‘Avaunt, and quit my sight! Let the earth hide thee!’ He turns the table over, creating a hubbub in which the cast exits the stage.

As the action cuts to a new scene, Macbeth conjures the three witches to show him the apparitions which will provide certainty regarding his doubts. The first is the dead Duncan, his eyes ‘*cavernous-black*,’³² who acts as a puppet for the 1st Witch, saying, ‘Macbeth, Macbeth, Macbeth, beware Macduff! / Beware the Thane of Fife! Dismiss me. Enough.’ The second apparition appears to the sound of thunder; it is dead Banquo, who

²⁸ Marowitz, *A Macbeth* 109-110.

²⁹ Marowitz, *A Macbeth* 110.

³⁰ Marowitz, *A Macbeth* 111.

³¹ Marowitz, *A Macbeth* 113.

³² Marowitz, *A Macbeth* 114.

counsels: 'Be bloody, bold and resolute; laugh to scorn / The power of man; for none of woman born / Shall harm Macbeth.'³³ The third apparition wears a mask bearing

Macbeth's own face:

Be lion-mettled, proud, and take no care
Who chafes, who frets, or where conspirers are;
Macbeth shall never vanquished be, until
Great Birnam Wood to high Dunsinane Hill
Shall come against him.

To the sound of a 'WITCH-chord',³⁴ the three sisters '*in a queue behind MACBETH take turns putting hands over his eyes*': they speak of the kings which will follow, ending with the corpse of Banquo, wearing a crown. Macbeth, understanding the significance of what he has been shown, decides to murder Macduff's family: 'WITCHES, *taking masks, assume [the] characters of LADY MACDUFF and CHILD. [... The s]cene is played out like an old-fashioned Morality play – in a crude, artificial style.*'³⁵ The scene between Lady Macduff and her son is followed by the entrance of the murderers; the two innocents are cornered. '*Then, daggers are thrust into MACBETH's hands and he is forced to stab LADY MACDUFF and SON.*'³⁶ As Macbeth's knife enters his child, Macduff, in a new scene, cries out: 'Ahh! / My children too!' Malcolm counsels him to 'Let grief convert to anger. Blunt not the heart. / Enrage it.'³⁷

Lady Macbeth encounters the Witches disrobing from their portrayal of the Macduffs and, with Hecate's text from III.v, chastises them: 'Beldams, / Saucy and over-

³³ Marowitz, *A Macbeth* 115.

³⁴ Marowitz, *A Macbeth* 116.

³⁵ Marowitz, *A Macbeth* 117.

³⁶ Marowitz, *A Macbeth* 119.

³⁷ Marowitz, *A Macbeth* 120.

bold?’ She exits. Quickly, the witches draw a magical ring on the ground, standing an effigy of Lady Macbeth in the middle of it. They chant an incantation in unison: ‘*Double, double, toil, trouble / Fire burn, cauldron bubble.*’³⁸ They poke the head of the effigy with knitting needles, then begin to tear strips off it, revealing red colouring underneath. As the effigy sways, 1st Witch inclines her ear: ‘By the pricking of my thumbs, / Something wicked this way comes.’ The Doctor and the Gentlewoman enter, speaking of Lady Macbeth’s nightly agitation. Lady Macbeth sleepwalks on: she is wearing a see-through nightgown and carrying a taper. As she mutters the contents of her heated sub-conscious – ‘Out, damned spot! Out I say’³⁹ – the witches continue their malevolent attentions to the effigy, whispering the words of their cauldron incantation: ‘Adder’s fork and blind-worm’s sting / Lizard’s leg and howlet’s wing.’⁴⁰ The witches shroud Lady Macbeth with their costumes and, extinguishing her candle, carry her offstage. Macbeth and the witches re-enter in Lady Macbeth’s funeral procession, her body in a coffin. A priest comes forward, intoning, *Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow / Creeps in this petty pace from day to day / To the last syllable of recorded time.*⁴¹ When Macbeth and the priest exit, the witches fight over Lady Macbeth’s crown; the lights fade to black.

At lights up, Macbeth is revealed at centre on his throne: ‘*He looks straight out, fear in his eyes.*’ The throne is surrounded by ‘*a fresco of heads – all characters of the play*’ who ‘*intone a dull, smouldering sound*’ as the scene progresses. On raised platforms situated on either side of the throne, Malcolm and Macduff state:

MACDUFF. O Scotland, Scotland!

O nation miserable.

³⁸ Marowitz, *A Macbeth* 121.

³⁹ Marowitz, *A Macbeth* 122.

⁴⁰ Marowitz, *A Macbeth* 123.

⁴¹ Marowitz, *A Macbeth* 124.

With an untitled tyrant, bloody-sceptred,
When shalt thou see thy wholesome days again?
MALCOLM. Our country sinks beneath the yoke.
It weeps, it bleeds, and each new day a gash
Is added to her wounds.

The murmuring from the characters surrounding the throne intensifies until, on Macduff's last line, '*it bursts into a wild, chaotic clamour. Blackout.*'⁴²

When the lights come up, the assembled cast is in a circle around the edge of the stage, faced outward, '*like [the] pillars of a human fortress,*' with Macbeth, holding his sword, in the centre. The cast are holding '*witches' brooms as if they were spears.*' Various cast members speak of '[l]amentings,' '[f]oul whisperings' and '[s]trange screams of death'; the cast strike the stage floor with their brooms. Three knocks are heard: 'Who's there?'⁴³ asks Macbeth. 'A farmer that hanged himself on the expectation of plenty,' responds 2nd Macbeth. The king's battle orders are interspersed by two repetitions of the three knocks. It is reported that Old Seyward and an army of ten thousand men are at the gates. Lady Macbeth returns from the grave to cradle the '*shaken*' Macbeth in motherly arms. '*Holding her desperately,*' Macbeth speaks of 'the yellow leaf'⁴⁴ and 'mortality.'

The wine of life is drawn.

[...]

I am in blood.

Stepped in so far, that should I wade no more

Returning were as tedious as go oe'r.'

⁴² Marowitz, *A Macbeth* 126.

⁴³ Marowitz, *A Macbeth* 127.

⁴⁴ Marowitz, *A Macbeth* 128.

‘Poor prattler,’ Lady Macbeth chuckles, ‘how thou talk’st.’ She counsels her husband to refrain from thinking on his deeds: ‘But fear not, / Yet shalt thou take upon you what is yours.’ Macbeth, fortified by her remarks, addresses her as ‘My dearest partner of greatness,’⁴⁵ but when he attempts to kiss her, she resists:

he looks at her quizzically wondering why her tenderness has vanished. LADY MACBETH looks him squarely in the eyes.

Transforms.)

LADY MACBETH. The queen, my lord, is dead.

The rest of the characters surround Macbeth and Macduff as they duel, until the circle closes around the king menacingly: ‘MACBETH *stands frozen and helpless. When he is completely surrounded, all begin to beat him to death with broomsticks.*’⁴⁶ As Macduff cuts off Macbeth’s head, Lady Macbeth simultaneously decapitates the effigy seen at the opening of the play. When the circle opens, Macbeth is discovered ‘*laying in a heap, a black-sack over his head.*’ There is a general exit, leaving only the three Witches on stage.

‘*Simply, conversationally,*’ the witches strategize:

1ST WITCH. When shall we three meet again?

In thunder, lightning or in rain?

2ND WITCH. When the hurly-burly’s done,

When the battle’s lost and won.

3RD WITCH. That will be ‘ere the set of sun.

They stand frozen as the lights rise to full, then fade to black.

⁴⁵ Marowitz, *A Macbeth* 129.

⁴⁶ Marowitz, *A Macbeth* 131.

SYNOPSIS: *THE SHREW*

Marowitz's *The Shrew* intersperses an edited and rearranged text from Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* with new text concerning the courtship of a modern couple, written by Marowitz himself. The cast is reduced to eight characters: Bianca, Katherine, Baptista, Hortensio, Grumio, Petruchio, and the modern day Boy and Girl, (also called He and She). A number of versions of the script were created: this synopsis is of that published in *The Marowitz Shakespeare*.

The play opens with '[a] cry in the darkness';¹ the lights come up to reveal Bianca tied to a stanchion, being persecuted by Kate, who holds the rope with which her sister is bound and '*slowly applies pressure by drawing it taut.*' Kate questions her: 'Of all thy suitors, here I charge thee, tell / Whom thou lov'st best.'² Baptista arrives, frees Bianca and chastises Kate. His gaze upon the rope with which Kate had bound her sister, he declares: 'Was ever gentleman thus grieved as I?'³

The lighting (out and up) signals a new scene. Petruchio with Grumio enter from one side of the stage, Hortensio from the other. The stage directions note that '*[a]ll have the look and manner of men involved in schemes and stratagems. A certain unsentimental practicality is common to all.*' Petruchio reveals to Hortensio that his father has died: 'PETRUCHIO *pauses for a moment as if recalling his loss.* GRUMIO *sympathises;* HORTENSIO *feels obliged to join in the mood then abruptly* PETRUCHIO *shatters it with a mocking laugh which GRUMIO shares.*'⁴ Petruchio reveals his intention to 'wive it wealthily in Padua,' however unattractive the woman. Hortensio ponders the suitability of

¹ Marowitz, *The Shrew* 133. From this point forward in this synopsis, quotations will be footnoted only when the page number changes. All italics in original.

² This text, and the majority of the text in the scene, is Shakespeare's with only slight edits and re-arrangements. Ssee Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew* II.i.

³ Marowitz, *The Shrew* 134.

⁴ Marowitz, *The Shrew* 135.

Kate, but decides that, while an heiress, she is not suitable for recommendation to a friend.

Grumio interjects, '*[c]lose, threatening*':⁵

Nay, look you, sir, he tells you flatly what his mind is. Why,
give him gold enough and marry him to a puppet [...] or an
old trot with ne'er a tooth in her head, though she has as
many diseases as two-and-fifty horses.

Hortensio, reconsidering, tells of Kate's wealth, as well as her shrewish nature. Petruchio dismisses any notion of shrewishness in a wife with, 'Thou know'st not gold's effect. / [...] Tell me her father's name and 'tis enough,' at which point 'PETRUCHIO *and* GRUMIO, *[are] now threateningly close to* HORTENSIO.' Hortensio reveals Kate's name, as well as her father's. The scene snaps to black.

Baptista is revealed in a meeting with Petruchio, Hortensio and Grumio. Petruchio declares an intention to acquaint himself with Kate, first praising 'her beauty and her wit, / Her affability and bashful modesty, / Her wondrous qualities and mild behaviour,'⁶ then presenting Hortensio as a scholar of music and mathematics named Licio of Mantua. Baptista declares Kate 'not for [Petruchio's] turn, the more my grief,' at which point the stage directions note: '*A threatening silence ensues. Gradually, BAPTISTA becomes aware of it, and turns to find a grim, dead-eyed PETRUCHIO, who begins to speak slowly and menacingly.*' Petruchio questions Baptista's welcome; based on the implicit danger he perceives in Petruchio's mien, Baptista declares that his entrance to the house is agreeable. At this, 'PETRUCHIO *suddenly restores an air of bonhomie.* HORTENSIO *and* GRUMIO *place BAPTISTA on a stool alongside PETRUCHIO then gather round the two men –*

⁵ Marowitz, *The Shrew* 136.

⁶ Marowitz, *The Shrew* 137.

*rather too closely to BAPTISTA.*⁷ Baptista describes the wealth he will bequeath to Kate upon his death, then offers to send his daughter to Petruchio. He exits. Petruchio, Grumio and Hortensio laugh, *'feeling they have successfully jumped the first hurdle,'*⁸ Hortensio and Grumio begin to question Petruchio, *'clearly testing his grasp of previously learnt information':*

HORTENSIO. Say that she rail?

PETRUCHIO. Why then I'll tell her plain
She sings as sweetly as a nightingale.

GRUMIO. Say that she frown?

PETRUCHIO. I'll say she looks as clear
As morning roses nearly washed with dew.

Kate enters, *'very regal, very composed.'*⁹ Petruchio begins to court her:¹⁰ a skirmish of words ensues. When Kate rejoins cleverly that 'Asses are made to bear and so are you,' Petruchio responds in a manner described as *'[h]ard, offensive'*: 'Women are made to bear and so are you.' When Petruchio speaks *'[v]ulgarly'* of a wasp's sting being in its tail, Kate strikes him:

The slap dissolves all banter. PETRUCHIO looks KATE coldly in the eye and begins to speak quietly, in dead earnest.)

PETRUCHIO. I swear I'll cuff you if you strike again.¹¹

⁷ Marowitz, *The Shrew* 138.

⁸ Marowitz, *The Shrew* 139.

⁹ Marowitz, *The Shrew* 140.

¹⁰ The text in this courting scene is an only slightly modified version of II.i in Shakespeare's play. The light feel of the text in the original play has been darkened considerably by the interpretation, as indicated in the stage directions.

¹¹ Marowitz, *The Shrew* 141.

The game continues with Petruchio working hard to ‘banish his enmity and impose gaiety,’ but when Kate alludes to his face as a crab, he reacts ‘[s]lowly, menacingly, [with the] first threat of physical violence.’¹² He blocks her way when she attempts to leave the room, and with text from II.i, describes her as ‘passing gentle’ and ‘sweet as springtime flowers.’ Shortly, he declares his intention to keep warm in Katherine’s bed: then, ‘PETRUCHIO grabs KATE’s crotch. She is momentarily stunned by the suddennes [sic] of this brutish move. Slowly, PETRUCHIO takes firm hold of her wrists. There is visible pressure.’¹³ He declares his intention to marry Kate, ‘will you, nill you’; when Baptista enters, Katherine rails at her father after which Petruchio declares her ‘temperate as the morn.’¹⁴ When Petruchio asks Katherine to give him her hand, Grumio forcibly places it into that of his master. Hortensio provides a similar service by forcing Baptista to take Petruchio’s other hand. Petruchio sets the wedding for Sunday, after which,

PETRUCHIO moves to kiss KATE. She draws back instinctively. GRUMIO takes hold of her arms which prevents her from moving any further back. PETRUCHIO moves forward, takes KATE’s face in his hands. She goes limp and lifeless as he firmly plants a kiss on her mouth. When he removes his lips, KATE’s barely perceptible smile suggests that although he can take things by force, he will never get her willingly to yield. PETRUCHIO receives KATE’s look, sensing the hollowness of his victory.¹⁵

The lights fade to black.

¹² Marowitz, *The Shrew* 142.

¹³ Marowitz, *The Shrew* 143.

¹⁴ Marowitz, *The Shrew* 144.

¹⁵ Marowitz, *The Shrew* 145.

The first of the contemporary scenes begins, with She playing an elaborate cat-and-mouse conversational gambit with He. The two characters are played by the actors who portray Bianca and Hortensio, now in modern dress. He is pursuing She, but she refuses to give him any ground. After a round of elusive badinage, She touches He's face, but when he moves to kiss her, she retreats. After more verbal fencing, she yields to his kiss.

SHE. (*Holding him slightly off. Quietly*) Do you expect sex
as a matter of course?

HE. (*Surprised*) Were we talking about sex?

SHE. Weren't you?

HE. (*Admitting it*) I suppose I was.

SHE. Do you?

HE. As a matter of course. No. Of course not. It never is a
matter of course.

SHE. It isn't with me. I thought it would be fairer to let you
know.

HE. (*Dryly*) Thanks.

SHE. You're welcome. (*SHE kisses him hard. HE reels
slightly recovering from the clinch*) You're very nice. Even
if you are a bit of a clot.¹⁶

Grandiosely dramatic, SHE offers her foot to be kissed; HE complies. Then, to HE's surprise, SHE prepares to leave. He asks for her number, but she evades his request and exits.

¹⁶ Marowitz, *The Shrew* 149.

In the darkness, '[a] bell tolls grimly in the distance.'¹⁷ The lights come up on Kate, 'standing motionless like a doll, wearing a simple white shift; eyes straight ahead; a vague sense of being the victim of some grim, unwanted social ceremony.' She is dressed in her wedding apparel like 'a mechanical doll' by Baptista, Hortensio and Bianca, but she exits when Petruchio fails to arrive for their wedding. Immediately after this, he enters, '*dressed in a sumptuous female bridal gown, similar to KATE's. No female wig; no hat; masculine head on female form.*'¹⁸ He asks for his bride; Hortensio, in mock outrage, comments on Petruchio's strange garb, while Grumio bids him don other clothes. Kate re-enters with Bianca as bridesmaid.

She stops as she sees PETRUCHIO in [the] dress. [...]
PETRUCHIO slowly turns and confronts KATE. Then,
making no attempt to conceal the male within the female
attire, [he] walks very slowly towards KATE. When he
arrives before her, he suddenly performs an unexpected
female curtsy, abruptly defuses the charged atmosphere and
places himself beside his bride.¹⁹

Petruchio reveals his intention to leave that night, and is entreated to change his plans by all, including Kate. When he refuses, she declares that she will not leave with him. He advises that he must have her with him, and as he declares her his goods and chattel, removes his female attire, revealing male clothing underneath. He forcibly takes her arm and pulls her out of the scene. Baptista moves to aid her, but is rebuffed by Grumio. Bianca pronounces her sister 'madly mated,'²⁰ and the lights snap to black.

¹⁷ Marowitz, *The Shrew* 151.

¹⁸ Marowitz, *The Shrew* 152.

¹⁹ Marowitz, *The Shrew* 153.

²⁰ Marowitz, *The Shrew* 155.

The lights come up on the contemporary couple, as HE accuses SHE of ‘snuggling’²¹ in a corner at a party with another man; SHE retaliates by noting that, at the same time, he was showing interest in a ‘bleached blonde.’ In answer to HE’s accusation, SHE expresses her disdain for an implied ownership of a romantic partner: ‘I mean “engaged” “betrothed” “spoken for” [sic] ... they’re words that make me wriggle inside. Like being stamped with a branding iron.’²² Their disagreement ends with a segue into a childish intimacy.

SHE: Look, I’m sorry if I offended you tonight. I didn’t mean to. I got involved in a conversation that interested me, and, well, I suppose I neglected you. I’m sorry about that. Really.

HE: (*Contrite, back in her arms*) I’m just being a grouch – as usual.

SHE: (*Baby-talking*) Big bad grouch.²³

They kiss, and retire after HE asks SHE to spend the night. The lights fade.

At Petruchio’s Gothic style house, Grumio and Hortensio are disguised as servants. Petruchio’s machinations from IV.i of Shakespeare’s *The Taming of the Shrew*, including the beating of his servants for their poor removal of his boots; his refusal of the dress and cap created for Kate by the tailor; and the destruction of the proffered food on the grounds of it being burnt, are played out. When Kate retires to the bridal bedroom, Petruchio ‘turns to the audience and, revealing for the first time an overt psychopathic manner,’²⁴ delivers the monologue found in IV.i, beginning ‘Thus have I politically begun my reign.’

²¹ Marowitz, *The Shrew* 156.

²² Marowitz, *The Shrew* 157.

²³ Marowitz, *The Shrew* 158.

²⁴ Marowitz, *The Shrew* 164.

The third and last contemporary scene begins with a shouting match between HE and SHE. She is taunting him for his working class connections while accusing him of being unfaithful, and he is demanding: ‘Get the fucking halter off my neck. If I want serfdom, I’ll go to Siberia.’²⁵ She is looking for ‘something I can hold on to. Something I can be sure of. Something I can put in the bank,’²⁶ but to HE, this is just ‘That bloody rack winching away!’²⁷ Despite his infidelity, HE professes to love SHE; he initiates passion between them, but will not fulfill her request to stop his liaison with the other woman. As she pulls out of his embrace, he slaps her with a sudden violence. She, ‘*[i]ncongruously sensible*,’²⁸ suggests they should ‘give it a rest.’²⁹ She exits, and the lights fade.

Kate is revealed with her head in her arms, collapsed on the table top. ‘*Her face is white with hunger. Her wedding dress, in tatters.*’³⁰ The scene in which she demands food of Grumio, found in IV.iii, ends with a realization that ‘*she has been cruelly toyed with.*’³¹ Petruchio and Hortensio enter with a platter of meat, which the latter eats up while the former distracts Kate. Petruchio declares they will leave at once for Baptista’s, but Kate contradicts his estimation of both the current time of day, and their time of arrival at her father’s, causing him to sit down in a rage.

PETRUCHIO *deliberately sits himself down and stubbornly stares straight ahead.* HORTENSIO, *realizing his master must be humoured, does likewise.* KATE *regards the two immobile men sitting stock still and facing outward. It all becomes too much for her. She slumps onto her stool, her*

²⁵ Marowitz, *The Shrew* 165.

²⁶ Marowitz, *The Shrew* 166.

²⁷ Marowitz, *The Shrew* 167.

²⁸ Marowitz, *The Shrew* 168.

²⁹ Marowitz, *The Shrew* 169.

³⁰ Marowitz, *The Shrew* 170.

³¹ Marowitz, *The Shrew* 171.

*head falling onto her arm on the table. PETRUCHIO, retaining his posture, darts a look at her from the corner of his eye, then returns to his obdurate pose. Then, without warning, [he] jumps up gaily and begins trotting as if he were on horseback.*³²

Hortensio forces Kate to join in the illusion that they are traveling by horseback to her father's house. Petruchio notes the shining of the moon, which Kate contradicts, causing her husband to cease his equestrian activities and walk off angrily. Kate acquiesces, and they return to their imaginary horses. Petruchio denounces Kate's agreement that the sun is the moon, and '*[t]he three continue to trot in place; KATE, painfully, heavily.*'³³ Grumio enters in the role of Petruchio's father (a substitution for Lucentio in the original play), and Petruchio's perception of him as a young maiden, Kate's agreement, and her husband's contradiction, cause her to weep. Petruchio invites 'his father' to ride with them:

*PETRUCHIO, HORTENSIO and GRUMIO proceed to trot in place, facing straight out. Slowly, PETRUCHIO turns to the trotting GRUMIO and smiles at him; GRUMIO smiles back. PETRUCHIO then turns and smiles to HORTENSIO, who also smiles back. The three continue trotting in place and then trot out. KATE, on the floor, pathetically paddles her hands on the floor, as if accompanying them in their trot.*³⁴

³² Marowitz, *The Shrew* 173.

³³ Marowitz, *The Shrew* 174.

³⁴ Marowitz, *The Shrew* 175-176.

The scene shifts quickly as a blaring whistle builds in pitch, then quickly ceases to be heard. The lights shift to red. Baptista, Grumio and Hortensio become servants to Kate's Sly in an edited version of part of Shakespeare's Prologue. When Petruchio enters, requesting Kate's presence in the marital bed; Kate, '[s]uddenly fearful,'³⁵ begs to be spared from this intimacy. The faces of Petruchio and the assembled company transform from kindness to a grim cruelty. Kate is suddenly thrown over the table and held in place by her father and the other servants while Petruchio lifts her dress and begins to sodomize her. The stage directions note: '*As he inserts, an ear-piercing, electronic whistle rises to a crescendo pitch. KATE's mouth is wild and open, and it appears as if the impossible sound is issuing from her lungs.*'³⁶ The lights snap to black.

The lights rise on 'a surreal tribunal-setting' over which Petruchio presides. '*In the background, there is the unmistakable [sic] murmur of women's voices; chatting, gossiping, conniving.*'

Kate enters, clad in a shapeless garment reminiscent of an institution, and with the look of one in a trance. '*Her face is white; her hair drawn back, her eyes wide and blank.*' When her husband demands that she tell the chatting women heard previously the duty owed to their husbands, she attempts to speak, mouthing soundless words. Finally, she mechanically delivers Kate's famous speech beginning, 'Fie, fie, unknit that threatening unkind brow.'³⁷ The stage directions note that '*[o]bviously, she has learned this speech by rote and is delivering it as if the words were being spoken by another*';³⁸ halfway through it, she falters, her head falling forward. Her father comes to her, shaking her into action once again. Further hesitations are dealt with by Petruchio, who prompts her, then thumps

³⁵ Marowitz, *The Shrew* 177.

³⁶ Marowitz, *The Shrew* 178.

³⁷ Marowitz, *The Shrew* 179.

³⁸ Marowitz, *The Shrew* 178.

the table loudly, causing her to conclude the text in near hysteria. The Boy and Girl (HE and SHE) enter in wedding clothes, and, taking their place between Kate and Petruchio, adopt a formal wedding pose, as the lights snap to black.

SYNOPSIS: MAROWITZ'S *MEASURE FOR MEASURE*

In his adaptation of Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*, Marowitz utilizes almost exclusively text from Shakespeare's original, but with significant cuts and small substitutions as well as some re-assignment of lines to different characters. In addition, Isabella has been given a short soliloquy from Fletcher and Shakespeare's *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, communicating a desire for death not available in Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* text, and there is another small amount of additional unidentified text. Marowitz reduces the number of characters to eight: the Duke; the Bishop; Escalus; Claudio; Angelo; Lucio; the Provost; and Isabella as the lone female voice in the play. All of the bawdy characters, as well as the overwhelming majority of their text, have been excised from the adaptation.

The play opens to the Duke's ceremonial trumpets, and lights come up on Escalus, who is eyeing the ducal medallion-of-state: discovered in this attitude by the Bishop, they exchange a glance which, according to the stage directions, suggests the Bishop '*knows, as does ESCALUS, this authority will soon be vested on him.*'¹ the former believes he will soon be invested with its power. The Duke arrives and with text little changed from I.i² in the Shakespeare's original, transfers his powers to Angelo, rather than Escalus:

we have with special soul
Elected him our absence to supply,
Lent him our terror, dressed him with our love,
And given his deputation all the organs

¹ Marowitz, *Measure for Measure* 182. From this point forward in this synopsis, quotations will be footnoted only when the page number changes. All italics in original.

² See Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure* I.i.

Of our own power.³

In this adaptation, the Bishop and the Duke borrow text from scene I.iii between the Duke and Friar Thomas to discuss the latter's strategy to have Angelo cleanse Vienna of vice with an implementation of strict punishment, without slander to the Duke in terms of his public reputation:

Sith 'twas my fault to give the people scope,
'Twould be my tyranny to strike and gall them
For what I bid them do[.]
[...]

Therefore, bethinking this
I have on Angelo imposed the office,
Who may, in th'ambush of my name, strike home,
And yet my nature never in the sight
To do it slander.⁴

The Provost enters with Lucio and a bound Claudio. Scene I.ii from Shakespeare's *Measure*, in which Claudio lays out his relationship with the pregnant Juliet, as well as the reason for the delay of their marriage, is then played with almost no amendment. Claudio is taken to prison, under judgment for lechery.

Angelo and Escalus join the Provost on stage, and with text from II.i, Angelo's desire not to 'make a scarecrow of the law'⁵ is counterpointed against Escalus' description of Claudio's worth. Angelo gives the Provost the order for Claudio's execution the next day. The stage directions note that, after Claudio utters his judgment on Claudio, the

³ Marowitz, *Measure for Measure* 183.

⁴ Marowitz, *Measure for Measure* 185-186.

⁵ Marowitz, *Measure for Measure* 188.

Provost is ‘*looking darkly*’⁶ at Escalus; the atmosphere between the two men is ‘*smouldering*,’ presumably with disapproval of the manner in which Angelo is implementing his legal power.

Lucio asks Isabella to help her brother escape execution by pleading with Angelo for his life; the text is as written in I.iv:

All hope is gone,
Unless you have the grace by your fair prayer
To soften Angelo. And that’s my pith of business
‘Twixt you and your poor brother.’⁷

The Provost questions Angelo, ostensibly seeking confirmation of Claudio’s execution order, but actually looking for it to be rescinded. Isabella enters and pleads for her brother’s life; she argues for mercy, suggesting that if Angelo examine his own heart, he would find there the same impulse and/or action for which her brother is condemned. Angelo asks her to return tomorrow. Isabella leaves, and Angelo in soliloquy wrestles with his out-of-character sexual desire for the nun:

What’s this? What’s this? Is this her fault or mine
The tempter, or the tempted, who sins most?
Ha?
Not she, nor doth she tempt; but it is I
That, lying by the violet in the sun,
Do as the carrion does, not as the flower,
Corrupt with virtuous season.’⁸

⁶ Marowitz, *Measure for Measure* 189.

⁷ Marowitz, *Measure for Measure* 191.

⁸ Marowitz, *Measure for Measure* 197.

The scene is virtually unchanged from II.ii, except that Lucio and the Provost and their lines, have been removed.

In Claudio's cell, the condemned man explains to the Provost that '[t]he miserable have no other medicine / But only hope'; but pronounces himself prepared for death. Lucio in soliloquy then uses his text from III.ii to argue Angelo's lack of humanity and cold blood; he longs for the return of the Duke.

Isabella returns to Angelo's chamber, as arranged the day before. He asks her whether she would exchange her virginity for her brother's life:

Admit no other way to save his life –
As I subscribe not that, nor any other,
But in the loss of question – that you, his sister
Finding yourself desired of such a person
Whose credit with the judge, or own great place,
Could fetch your brother from the manacles
Of the all-binding law; and that there were
No earthy mean to save him, but that either
You must lay down the treasures of your body,
To this supposed, or else to let him suffer,
What would you do?⁹

Angelo reveals himself to be the 'supposed' in this potential bargain, then exits. Isabella, in soliloquy, understanding that she would not be believed should she report his proposed abuse of power, decides to place the situation in front of her brother, since she believes he

⁹ Marowitz, *Measure for Measure* 200-201.

would rather lose his head than allow her to be defiled. The text is almost entirely unchanged from II.iv.

The action moves immediately to Claudio's cell where, employing text from III.i, Claudio unexpectedly begs his sister to save his life by yielding up her virginity to Angelo:

Sweet sister, let me live.
What sin you do to save a brother's life,
Nature dispenses with the deed so far
That it becomes a virtue.¹⁰

In the next scene, Angelo bids the Provost to execute Claudio '[w]hatsoever you may hear to the contrary.'¹¹ When the Provost exits, Angelo attempts without success to pray; using text from II.iv, he reflects on the 'strong and swelling evil' in his heart.

The Provost and Escalus, with Lucio eavesdropping, acknowledge that Angelo 'will not be altered'¹² and that therefore Claudio must die that day. Isabel enters, and '*[w]ith a curious, self-deluding smile*,¹³ suggests that a stay of execution is yet to come, but the Provost contradicts this, causing her to burst into tears. A '*cacophony of indistinct voices; echoes from CLAUDIO, ANGELO, LUCIO and the PROVOST*' are heard on tape, uttering the various viewpoints of the play *vis-à-vis* Claudio's alleged sin, Angelo's sexual proposition, and Isabella's pleas to and denunciation of Angelo. The lighting abruptly turns red, and according to the stage directions, '*we are clearly in a kind of surreal dream-sequence*.'¹⁴ Isabella provides Claudio's pardon to the Provost; it is confirmed by the Duke. Claudio is freed from his manacles, and Isabella bows before the Duke in gratitude. The Duke suddenly transforms into Angelo, who tells Isabella, 'Plainly conceive, I love

¹⁰ Marowitz, *Measure for Measure* 206.

¹¹ Marowitz, *Measure for Measure* 207. The text is from IV.ii of Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*.

¹² Marowitz, *Measure for Measure* 208.

¹³ Marowitz, *Measure for Measure* 209.

¹⁴ Marowitz, *Measure for Measure* 210.

you.’ Isabella responds ‘*[p]layfully*’: ‘My brother did love Juliet. / And you tell me he shall die for’t.’ Although she initially challenges Angelo, Isabella soon enters into a fond kiss with him, at which point, he vanishes and is replaced by the Bishop, who desires her to repent of ‘the sin’¹⁵ she carries. The Bishop soon hurls her away from him, decrying her as a harlot. He disappears, at which point, Claudio materializes, ‘*smirking seductively*.’¹⁶ He once again persuades his sister that the surrender of her virginity is the least of sins; he begs her to save his life. The stage directions note: ‘*There is momentary tension between them, then CLAUDIO grabs her rudely and tries to close her in a lecherous embrace. ISABELLA pushes him off. He laughs obscenely through her next speech.*’ Isabella castigates him as a coward and a wretch. Another cacophony of voices on tape is heard, again presenting the various viewpoints on Isabella’s potential sexual bargain with Angelo. Suddenly, ‘*[a]ll visions and sound disappear suddenly. ISABELLA[,] now alone in a single spot,*’ employs lines from Fletcher and Shakespeare’s *The Two Noble Kinsmen*:

Dissolve my life, let not my sense unsettle
 Lest I should drown, or stab, or hang myself.
 O state of Nature, fail together in me
 Since the best props are warpt. So which way now?
 The best way is the next way to a grave.¹⁷

The lights ‘*blend surreally*’ and Claudio appears. He and his sister embrace, after which he leads her towards a curtained bed, where he presents her to Angelo. Claudio exits with the Provost. Isabella ‘*stands mute and still*’¹⁸ as Angelo comes to her and ‘*tenderly*’ undoes her nun’s headpiece, revealing her cropped hair. He continues to undress her until she is

¹⁵ Marowitz, *Measure for Measure* 212. In the original play, these lines are delivered to Juliet.

¹⁶ Marowitz, *Measure for Measure* 213.

¹⁷ Marowitz, *Measure for Measure* 214.

¹⁸ Marowitz, *Measure for Measure* 215.

naked. *'She remains still and devoid of emotion.'* Angelo kneels with his arms around her waist, his head against her stomach. *'Instinctively, ISABELLA makes a move as if to embrace ANGELO's head,'* but does not complete the gesture, remaining still and emotionless. Angelo carries her beyond the curtained area towards the bed.

In a light downstage, the Bishop intones a *'prayer'* to Claudio, who kneels before him. The text is taken from the Duke in III.i, beginning: *'Be absolute for death: either death or life / Shall thereby be the sweeter.'*

The lights cross-fade, and Isabella is seen upstage, struggling out of the bed through the curtains: she trips on the desk, and removing a cover on an object it contains, reveals her brother's severed head. *'There is an ear-splitting scream.'*¹⁹

After the lights cross-fade, the Bishop is found downstage, hearing Angelo's confession:

O my dread Lord,
I should be guiltier than my guiltiness
To think I can be undiscernible
When I perceive your grace, like power divine,
Hath looked upon my passes.

The Bishop harshly berates him, but soon after, gazing into his face, looks upon him kindly, offering him a benediction before he exits. Lucio, *'[w]ho has watched ANGELO's confession with mock contempt,'*²⁰ declares that Angelo should be imprisoned: *'Hark how the villain would close now, after his treasonable abuses. Such a fellow is not to be talked about withal. Away with him to prison.'* Isabella enters, *'fierce and resolute':*²¹ *'O, I will*

¹⁹ Marowitz, *Measure for Measure* 216.

²⁰ Marowitz, *Measure for Measure* 217.

²¹ Marowitz, *Measure for Measure* 218.

to him and pluck out his eyes!’ Lucio counsels her to appeal to the Duke, who returns the next day, for justice. ‘ISABELLA *stops crying, and grimly tears the crucifix from around her neck*’ before the lights snap to black.

The Provost enters, and with text appropriated from Pompey and Mistress Overdone in Shakespeare’s *Measure for Measure*, he reflects upon the ‘merry world’ in which, ‘of two crimes, the merrier was put down and the worse allowed.’

The sound of the Duke’s trumpet signals his return to Vienna. He enters, and is greeted by Angelo, Escalus and the Bishop. Isabella appears, and supplicates the Duke for justice regarding her brother’s execution. After hearing her suit, the Duke declares her mad and her accusation of Angelo either ignorance or ‘hateful practice.’²² Isabella is ‘*dumbstruck*’²³ and, turning towards Escalus, Angelo and the Bishop, sees them ‘*anew*.’ The Duke states that her ‘slanders now shall by our laws be weighed / And by their Justice priz’d.’ He sentences her to prison, then signals that the audience is over. He and his officers remove their formal robes, revealing casual clothing underneath. As Isabella exits, Angelo takes her arm, and with the Duke’s text from V.i, implies that his lecherous inclination towards her will be resumed within the prison walls. Isabella ‘*expressionlessly shoves away ANGELO’s hand*.’²⁴ Tables having been readied, food and drink are brought in, and, in a radical divergence from Shakespeare’s narrative, the Duke, Escalus and Angelo enter into dialogue which is ‘*permeated with a gaiety and crudity that belies all we know of these characters*.’ Angelo, ‘*[m]ock guiltily, also with [a] put-on voice*,’ states that he has been an unlawful bawd; the Duke responds that he shall be ‘whipped first’²⁵ and ‘hanged after,’ but reconsidering, declares that he shall marry the woman that he has

²² Marowitz, *Measure for Measure* 222.

²³ Marowitz, *Measure for Measure* 223.

²⁴ Marowitz, *Measure for Measure* 224.

²⁵ Marowitz, *Measure for Measure* 225.

wronged and made with child. Angelo, *'[a]cting craven,'* beseeches the Duke not to 'marry me to a whore.' The Duke, *'[p]ouring wine over ANGELO's head,'* joins the others in laughing *'uproariously.'* They *'carry on clowning, eating and drinking'* as the lights fade to black.

Appendix Two:
*Marowitz's Other Shakespearean
Adaptations*

MAROWITZ'S UNPUBLISHED SHAKESPEAREAN ADAPTATIONS

Information on the following adaptations has been obtained largely from Charles Marowitz's website, www.marowitztheater.com, as well as through searches of newspapers, journals, websites, as noted. Information on WorldCat .org, as well as online booksellers such as Amazon, Abebooks and Allbookstores, indicate that a second version of *The Marowitz Shakespeare*, containing *Timon*, an otherwise unlisted adaptation of *The Tempest*, and *Caesar*, was published in either 1999 or 2000 by Marion Boyars, but that no copies are currently available. Considering that a number of copies of the original *Marowitz Shakespeare* were available, this raised suspicion, particularly since no such edition is available through Marowitz website, and that the Available Backlist at Marion Boyars, posted on their website, showed no listing for this publication. A request for clarification to the company on September 20, 2011 received a reply stating that the book in question had not, indeed, been published.

Death of Ophelia

Marowitz's website notes that this adaptation had its premiere in 2006 in Danish at the Statens Teaterskole in Copenhagen, but confirmation was not present on the school's website, and an inquiry to the school by email yielded no results. According to Marowitz's website, the adaptation utilizes only Shakespearean dialogue, although significant portions of it is re-assigned to the title character, and focuses on Ophelia's relationships to both Hamlet and Laertes. Employing a cast of three actors and with a running time of approximately forty-five minutes, the play explores 'the brutalities imposed upon the hapless character which drives her both to distraction and to death.'¹

¹ 'Death of Ophelia,' *Marowitz Theatre*, 20 Sept. 2011 <<http://www.marowitztheater.com/plays.html>>.

Timon

Set first in the ‘Roaring Twenties’ and in the Depression era of the Thirties, Marowitz’s *Timon* is described by Marowitz’s website as a ‘large-scale’ music which integrates ‘Broadway-styled production numbers’ based on the music and dance of that period with scenes from Shakespeare’s *Timon of Athens*. Marowitz states that the piece was ‘twice optioned and almost presented on Broadway with Richard Burton as Timon,’² but unfortunately the musical was never staged.

Shakespeare’s Lovers & Shakespeare’s Villains

From Marowitz’s description, this piece links together a number of scenes for two characters from Shakespeare’s most popular plays, including *Romeo & Juliet*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Othello*, *Richard III*, *Much Ado About Nothing* and *Macbeth*. The compilation is divided into two parts, with scenes involving ‘lovers’ in one part, and ‘villains’ in the other. Marowitz notes that the scenes in question are those ‘frequently used for scene-presentations in theatre-schools, class-work, auditions, etc.’³

MAROWITZ’S PUBLISHED SHAKESPEAREAN ADAPTATIONS NOT COVERED IN THIS THESIS

Julius Caesar

An early version of this adaptation, titled *Julius Caesar*, was published in *Recycling Shakespeare* in 1991, and will be used as the basis for the synopsis and analysis which

² ‘Timon,’ *Marowitz Theatre*, 20 Sept. 2011 <<http://www.marowitztheater.com/plays.html>>.

³ ‘Shakespeare’s Lovers & Shakespeare’s Villains,’ *Marowitz Theatre*, 20 Sept. 2011 <<http://www.marowitztheater.com/plays.html>>.

follows. According to Marowitz's website, the final version was a collage comprising edited and re-assembled text from Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* and 'drenched in the superstition and mystical undertones that run beneath the political tragedy,' producing 'a chilling psychological effect.'⁴ Marowitz also indicates that the final version had its premiere production at the Humboldt Arts Festival, and *The Other Way*, published in 1999, contains a photograph purporting to be of this production.⁵ However, a query to the current Humboldt Arts Festival, held in Arcana, California, requesting information on the production produced a negative reply: the contact for the festival indicated that no such production had taken place during the two year history of the Arcana based festival, and that possibly another Humboldt festival had taken place in previous years in another area of Humboldt County, California.

In 'Privatizing Julius Caesar,' a chapter accompanying the play text of *Julius Caesar* contained in *The Other Way*, Marowitz makes a number of comments on the play which bear closer examination: in particular, these relate to the oeuvre of the play as originally conceived and produced by Shakespeare. For example, Marowitz states that while

Julius Caesar was conceived as an epic for the great outdoors, [...] the grandiose approach to this tragedy runs counter to the temperament of the piece, for despite its Capitol settings and its sense of crowds-in-motion, it has the makings of an intimate drama, almost a chamber play.⁶

⁴ 'Julius Caesar,' *Marowitz Theatre*, 20 Sept. 2011 <<http://www.marowitztheater.com/plays.html>>.

⁵ See Chapter One, note 2 for further information.

⁶ Marowitz, 'Privatising *Julius Caesar*,' *Recycling Shakespeare* 130.

Marowitz's basic perception of Shakespeare's play shows a want of knowledge of Elizabethan performance practice, including the intimacy of the theatres of the day: although the performance spaces were open to the air, the design ensured that every spectator was close enough to the stage to negate a need for vocal size in performance. Further, the 'grandiose approach' to the scenes involving crowds of plebeians in a commercially based Elizabethan theatre company would have meant the addition of a small number of actors, hired on a daily basis, so crowd scenes would have been less than full populated. Shakespeare himself refers to this in the opening prologue of *Henry V*, when he requests that the audience

let us, ciphers to this great accompt,
On your imaginary forces work.
Suppose within the girdle of these walls
Are now confin'd two mighty monarchies,
Whose high, upreared and abutting fronts
The perilous narrow ocean parts asunder.
Piece out our imperfections with your thoughts;
Into a thousand parts divide one man,
And make imaginary puissance;
Think, when we talk of horses, that you see them
Printing their proud hoofs i' th' receiving earth;
For 'tis your thoughts that now must deck our kings,
Carry them here and there.⁷

⁷ William Shakespeare, 'Henry V,' *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974) Pro.17-28.

An audience's ability to believe that a single actor represented a multitude of characters was central to the Elizabethan dramatic tradition, and Marowitz's discussion of an 'epic' played in the 'great outdoors' calls his understanding of this tradition into question. Since his immediate thoughts of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* were of the gangster film *Joe Macbeth*,⁸ it is possible that his perceptions of *Julius Caesar* were in some way founded on the 1953 film of Shakespeare's play, directed by Joseph L. Mankiewicz, and starring Marlon Brando, James Mason and John Gielgud, described as 'lavish' or possessing 'scene grandeur'⁹ by a number of key critics, and involving a suitable number of extras as plebeians in the large scenes at the Capitol. Marowitz acknowledges that many of the vital scenes in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* are 'played out in intimate surroundings' and that 'more significantly, the expression of many of its crucial ideas happen between two or three characters in pressured interpersonal exchanges, away from the thunder of battle or the sweep of the Senate,'¹⁰ but this can hardly be regarded as a new insight. Further, Marowitz's description of the 'historical grandeur' of a play which, in Shakespeare's time, would almost certainly have been played in modern dress – a suggestion of togas worn over doublet and hose – the adaptor's credibility as a scholar of Shakespeare is lessened.

Further, he notes

I do not contend that a large stage and a cast of thousands cannot make *Julius Caesar* an exciting spectacle, but without giving those telling private moments their full value, the play can easily become a windy simulacrum of an overblown

⁸ See Chapter Three, note 1 of this thesis for further explanation.

⁹ For three such reviews, see Bosley Crowther, 'Julius Caesar and Two Other Arrivals, Shakespeare Tragedy, Filmed by M-G-M with a Notable Cast, Unfolds at Booth,' *New York Times* 5 June 1953, 8 Oct. 2011 <<http://movies.nytimes.com/movie/review?res=9405E3DB143EE53BBC4D53DFB0668388649EDE&partner=Rotten%20Tomatoes>>; 'Cinema: New Picture, June 1, 1953,' *Time*, 8 Oct. 2011 <<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,860005,00.html>>; and 'Julius Caesar,' *Variety*, 8 Oct. 2011 <<http://www.variety.com/review/VE1117792220?refcatid=31>>.

¹⁰ Marowitz, 'Privatising *Julius Caesar*,' *Recycling Shakespeare* 130.

historical event and blur what lies at its centre – that is, the exploration of tangled, contradictory motives and the unravelling of moral ambiguities.¹¹

The original production, thought by Frank Kermode to have been one of the first staged by the Lord Chamberlain's Men in the Globe Theatre in 1599,¹² had neither a large stage by modern standards, nor a cast of thousands, yet the response was sufficiently positive to secure the play's position within the Shakespearean canon, and the many productions over the four hundred years between its first production and modern day attest to its ability to provide sufficient entertainment.

In an article titled 'Learning From the Classics,' posted on *Swans Commentary* website on February 28, 2005, Marowitz notes that Shakespeare's play 'speaks to us about our current national crises';¹³ this is not so much, asserts Marowitz, 'because of its preoccupation with assassination but because one of the questions it raises is: What is the appropriate response to political terror?'¹⁴ He reiterates this in *Recycling Shakespeare*, indicating that '[i]n *Caesar*, more perhaps than in any other work, Shakespeare has dramatised the choice of evils and the agonies involved in making such choices.'¹⁵

The play text of Marowitz's adaptation of *Julius Caesar* notes that a series of percussion instruments, including thunder-sheets, gongs and bells, hang 'like old battle relics'¹⁶ from above. Caesar is found in the centre of a semi-circle formed by the other cast members. When he calls for the soothsayer, it is Brutus who comes forward and is pronounced 'a dreamer.' Shortly afterward, the scene cuts to Portia, who is asking her

¹¹ Marowitz, 'Privatising *Julius Caesar*,' *Recycling Shakespeare* 130-131.

¹² See Frank Kermode, introduction, 'Julius Caesar,' *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare* 1100.

¹³ Charles Marowitz, 'Learning From the Classics,' 28 Feb. 2005, *Swans Commentary*, 8 Oct. 2011 <<http://www.swans.com/library/art11/cmarow10.html>>.

¹⁴ Marowitz, 'Learning From the Classics,' *Swans Commentary*.

¹⁵ Marowitz, 'Privatising *Julius Caesar*,' *Recycling Shakespeare* 131.

¹⁶ Marowitz, 'Julius Caesar,' *Recycling Shakespeare* 143. All future quotations from this source will be shown as 'Marowitz, *Julius Caesar*' followed by the page number. All italics in original.

husband to reveal to her what is troubling him, using text from scene II.i. of Shakespeare's play. Interspersed with this is text from scene I.ii of Shakespeare's play in which Cassius begins to acquaint Brutus with the high regard in which the patricians hold him, at which point, Brutus reacts to both his wife and his friend: 'Into what dangers would you lead me, / That you would have me seek into myself / For that which is not in me?'¹⁷ The scene juxtaposing Brutus, Portia and Cassius manifests Marowitz's notion that '[t]he tenderest sentiments towards Brutus are expressed not by Portia but by Cassius';¹⁸ Portia's text from Shakespeare's original has been edited so that only the formal portion, in which she offers observations or demands the access to information granted a wife, are present.

The scene again cuts to a juxtaposition of Cassius and Caesar, in which they offer judgments of one another's mettle: Cassius dwells on Caesar's infirmities, and Caesar voices his lack of trust of the 'lean and hungry'¹⁹ Cassius. Casca joins Cassius in declaring himself as well endowed as Caesar.

A new scene begins in which Calpurnia strives to convince Caesar not to visit the Capitol; the stage directions note that Caesar responds in the manner of '*[t]he henpecked husband.*'²⁰ Portia enters the scene, joining Calpurnia in convincing Caesar to stay home, while Casca, Cassius and the Soothwyer goad him to leave his house. When Caesar agrees to leave, the stage directions note that '*BRUTUS steps behind him, about to place his mantle around CAESAR's shoulders. FREEZE.*'²¹ This is followed by Brutus's soliloquy, 'It must be by his death,' taken from II.i. of Shakespeare's play. At the end of the text, Caesar becomes aware of Brutus's presence, and with the text from the same

¹⁷ Marowitz, *Julius Caesar* 146.

¹⁸ Marowitz, 'Privatising *Julius Caesar*,' *Recycling Shakespeare* 135.

¹⁹ Marowitz, *Julius Caesar* 146.

²⁰ Marowitz, *Julius Caesar* 148.

²¹ Marowitz, *Julius Caesar* 150.

scene, replies with Brutus's text: 'Between the acting of a dreadful thing / And the first motion, all the interim is / Like a phantasma or a hideous dream.'²²

The scene cuts again to the Capitol where Antony, who to this point has been conspicuous by his absence, provides Brutus with a foreshadowing of what is to come with his portions of his funeral speech in III.ii. of Shakespeare's play. Caesar is held by Portia and Calpurnia, surrounded by the rest of the cast and stabbed. This action by the two wives in the play is consistent with situations in other Marowitz adaptations, when the women closest to the central characters participate in their downfall. After the dipping of the conspiratorial hands in Caesar's blood, Calpurnia, in a manner described in the stage directions as '[p]rivately',²³ utters Mark Antony's 'O, pardon me, thou bleeding piece of earth' monologue. There is no indication of why Caesar's wife would participate in his assassination, then privately decry his death, bring down curses upon society and figuratively releasing 'the dogs of war.'

The scene cuts to Caesar's funeral, where Brutus and Antony intersperse text from the same scene in Shakespeare's play: the former attempts to persuade the populace of the danger of Caesar's power; the latter reacquaints them with Caesar's love of the people. At the conclusion of Antony's revelation of the contents of Caesar's will, the cast is '*shaken by a wave of pandemonium*':²⁴ the men pound the thunder sheets, the women wail.

Next, Brutus takes the text of Cinna the poet from III.iii of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*: like Cinna, he is surrounded by the Plebeians, who gather round him and, brandishing firebrands supplied to them somewhat nonsensically by Calpurnia, they threaten, then run out quickly.

²² Marowitz, *Julius Caesar* 151.

²³ Marowitz, *Julius Caesar* 153.

²⁴ Marowitz, *Julius Caesar* 156.

Later, ‘*the conflict between CAESAR’s forces and those of BRUTUS and CASSIUS begin [sic] to take shape,*’²⁵ dramatized by the playing of the percussion instruments by cast members. The action moves quickly into the portion of the original play which falls after Act III, the point at which Marowitz asserts Shakespeare had ‘shot his bolt.’²⁶ At the appropriate time, it is Portia who holds the sword upon which her husband throws himself; it is she who ‘*[t]enderly, taking the body*’ from the resurrected Caesar, states: ‘His life was gentle, and the elements / So mixed in him that Nature might stand up / And say to all the world, “This was a man!”’²⁷ Brutus is ceremonially carried offstage, at which point Caesar gives a signal, and the percussion instruments hanging overhead are raised out of site. A ‘*young, contemporary schoolboy – maybe twelve or thirteen*’²⁸ enters, haltingly reading the ‘Wherefore rejoice? What conquest brings he home?’ text from scene I.i. of the original play, as if he is memorizing it.

It is difficult to perceive what unique message Marowitz is communicating with this adaptation, particularly since the dichotomy between public and private lives, and the effect they wreak on one another, is very much present in Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*. While he finds resonance between Shakespeare’s play and the modern political scenario, little new is conveyed which was not already present: the play is not being bombarded with new questions, and so delivers no new answers. Beyond this, the intimate scenes of which Marowitz speaks so eloquently in ‘Privatising *Julius Caesar*’ are essentially eviscerated through the discontinuity of the collage genre, rendering the times when the characters, ‘in unburdening themselves in moments of poignant, psychological revelation, deliver the

²⁵ Marowitz, *Julius Caesar* 159.

²⁶ Marowitz, ‘Privatising *Julius Caesar*,’ *Recycling Shakespeare* 131.

²⁷ Marowitz, *Julius Caesar* 170.

²⁸ Marowitz, *Julius Caesar* 170.

essence of the piece,²⁹ are robbed of their power. The ending, which attempts to bring the play from the Rome of 44 B.C. to the present day adds little to the concept of ‘the tangled, contradictory motives and the unravelling of moral ambiguities’³⁰ ostensibly being explored in the adaptation. The entrance of the school boy during the final moments of the play, while linking the original work to the present day, makes no meaningful contribution to Marowitz’s stated objections for his renovation of Shakespeare’s work.

²⁹ Marowitz, ‘Privatising *Julius Caesar*,’ *Recycling Shakespeare* 130.

³⁰ Marowitz, ‘Privatising *Julius Caesar*,’ *Recycling Shakespeare* 131.

Appendix Three:

*A Narrative of the Political Events Leading
to Marowitz's Historical Context in
Variations on the Merchant of Venice*

The complex pattern of political events which led to the bombing of the King David Hotel in Jerusalem, which Marowitz employed as the historical background for his adaptation of Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, began many years before when Britain publicly sanctioned the creation of the State of Israel. On November 2, 1917, Lord Arthur James Balfour, Britain's Foreign Secretary, in a letter to Lord Rothschild which later became known as the 'Balfour Declaration,' declared the British government's intention to 'view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people.'¹ At the end of World War I, and as a result of the Treaty of Versailles (1919-1920), the League of Nations was formed as an inter-governmental organization with a mandate to uphold human rights and prevent war through a policy of active negotiation and the collective security of ongoing alliance. In light of the Balfour Declaration, as well as the unstable environment resulting from the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in the Middle East during the war, the League of Nations authorized the British Mandate for Palestine, which gave the British government the legal power to occupy and administrate Palestine from 1918 through 1948, with the objective of

the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, it being clearly understood that nothing should be done which might prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.²

At the end of the mandate, it was hoped that the area would be capable of self-government.

It should be noted that not all Jews supported the creation of a Jewish nation. Particularly

¹ 'The Balfour Declaration: November 2, 1917,' *Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, 16 Dec. 2009 <<http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Peace+Process/Guide+to+the+Peace+Process/The+Balfour+Declaration.htm>>.

² 'The Palestine Mandate,' *Jewish Virtual Library*, 15 Dec. 2009 <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/Palestine_Mandate.html>.

interesting is the opposition of Edwin Samuel Montagu,³ the MP for Chesterton, and only the second Jew to enter British Parliament. The Secretary of State for India between 1917 and 1922, and a vehement anti-Zionist, Montagu opposed the Balfour Declaration as being inherently anti-Semitic on the grounds that adherence to British aims and values, as exhibited by himself and others, qualified British Jews to be regarded as Jewish Britons (i.e. as British first and Jewish second), whereas the Balfour Declaration would render them aliens in their own British homeland.

British policy was to allow Jewish immigration to Palestine at a rate slow enough to allow acceptance by and assimilation with the Arab peoples who would be co-habiting the area. This relatively low rate caused few concerns, since, during the early 1920s, the United States was the destination preferred by Jewish European émigrés. Both these factors worked as a limiter on Jewish immigration to Palestine. However, during the early 1930s, due primarily to Hitler's expressed anti-Jewish policy, the British government was obliged to increase the rate of immigration, trebling their former quotas between 1932 and 1933.⁴ Adding to the difficulties of Jews wishing to escape persecution at the hands of the Nazis, the Reich Citizenship Law was amended in November of 1935 in a way that precluded German citizenship to Jews; this rendered German Jews refugees, and created obstacles to emigration to safety in the United States, Britain and Canada.⁵ Accordingly, Palestine became a preferred destination for Jewish émigrés. The increased flow of Jews into Palestine resulted in a revolt by the Arab inhabitants between 1936 and 1939; an organized non-payment of taxes gave way to more violent opposition by the Palestinians

³ The text of a memo written by Montagu on this subject and submitted to the British Cabinet in 1917 may be found online: 'Montague Memorandum on the Anti-Semitism of the British Government: August 23, 1917,' *Jewish Virtual Library*, 14 Dec. 2009 < www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/Montagumemo.html >.

⁴ See Elizabeth Munroe, *Britain's Moment in the Middle East 1914-1956* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1964) 85.

⁵ 'The Plight of the Refugees (June 1939),' *The Jew in the Modern World: A Documentary History*, eds. Paul Mendes-Flohr & Jehuda Reinharz (New York: Oxford UP, 1995) 659.

against both the Jewish immigrants and their British occupiers, such as attacks on villages and particularly on railways. British response to the revolt was harsh: '[a]fter 1936 in Palestine, the British established a systematic, systemic, officially sanctioned policy of destruction, punishment, reprisal and brutality that fractured and impoverished the Palestinian population.'⁶ Entire villages were razed, the contents of homes polluted or destroyed. During this period, according to military historian Matthew Hughes, British soldiers felt equal dislike for both Arabs and Jews in Palestine.⁷

In subduing the Arab revolt, the British received aid from the Jewish population, specifically from the approximately ten thousand members of *Haganah* ('defense' in Hebrew), a para-military organization which the British government did not officially recognize. In 1931, the *Irgun Zeva'I Le'umi*, a group of more militant members who favoured active retaliation against Arab attacks on Jews, had splintered off from the main body of the *Haganah*, and they increased their policy of vengeance during the period of the Arab Revolt.

Between the years of 1922 and 1939, the percentage of Jews in Palestine in ratio to the total population had risen from 11 per cent to 29 per cent; the Arab's opposition to the level of Jewish immigration was based on their fear that this increase would continue into the future to the point that the Jews would hold a majority.⁸ The Peel Commission of 1936 (named for its chairman, Earl Peel) suggested a partition of Palestine into two separate states (one Arab and one Jewish) as a potential solution to the conflict; the proposal was a first accepted by the British government, but in 1938, it was declared unworkable and jettisoned. Instead, the British government imposed sanctions to reduce the level of Jewish

⁶ Matthew Hughes, 'The Banality of Brutality: British Armed Forces and the Repression of the Arab Revolt in Palestine 1936-39,' *English Historical Review* (2009): 41.

⁷ See Hughes *Banality* 40.

⁸ See Munroe 86.

immigration and thus appease the Palestinian Arabs. This action was intended to subdue Palestinian fears of Jewish majority, thus shoring up Britain's military alliance with the Arab nations against the threat of Hitler's aggression, which was becoming increasingly difficult to ignore. The Palestinian White Paper,⁹ issued May 17, 1939, capped Jewish immigration at ten thousand persons per year for the following five years, with an additional twenty-five thousand allotment to accommodate potential refugees. Coming as it did at a period when European Jewry were most desperate for a safe oasis, the 1939 White Paper was, nonetheless,

the first official British attempt to come to an honest and definitive decision about reconciling the two halves of the Balfour Declaration – the half which gave British blessing to a Jewish National home, and the half that said “it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine.”¹⁰

That being said, and whatever the motivations of the British government, the Palestinian White Paper of 1939 did effectively force thousands of Jewish refugees to remain in Europe, most often to subsequent death in the camps, rather than escaping to safety in what would, relatively shortly, become the nation of Israel. Marowitz includes British imposed closing of a safe escape for European Jews as a key factor in his deliberation surrounding adaptation Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*.

⁹ A copy of this document may be perused online: ‘British White Paper of 1939,’ *Jewish Virtual Library*, 6 Dec. 2009 <<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsourc/History/paper39.html>>.

¹⁰ Munroe 88.

Following the war, the League of Nations established the Anglo-American Committee, consisting of six British and six American members; the committee's task was to consult both Jews and Arabs in order to create an effective policy of Jewish immigration to Palestine, one that would be acceptable to both parties. The Committee reported their findings in April of 1946, proposing that one hundred thousand Jewish refugees be immediately admitted to Palestine; that the British mandate remain in place; and that the 1940 Land Act, which had restricted the purchase of Arab land by Jews, be rescinded. Fears that another Arab uprising would result from the admission of one hundred thousand Jews to Palestine persuaded the League of Nations to create a new committee that essentially negated the majority of the former committee's proposals. A much smaller number of Jewish refugees – fifteen hundred per month, beginning in October of 1946 – were allowed admission to Palestine; most of the refugees came from a community in Cyprus, where the increased Jewish population threatened to create political instability. The promise of a Jewish national home, made so long ago, must have seemed terribly far away – a disappointment which would have been particularly harsh to a people so recently and so extensively persecuted.

The Jewish Nationalists, of which the *Irgun* was the most militant member, had restricted their opposition to the British during World War II in order to offer a combined resistance to their common enemy, but following the war, they resumed their activities in pursuit of their promised home in Palestine. On June 29, 1946, the British military raided the offices of the Jewish Agency,¹¹ confiscating documents, including those relating to agency intelligence operations in the Middle East. The documents were taken to the King

¹¹ The Jewish Agency was an organization representing the needs and wishes of the Jewish people during the period of the British Mandate, and leading up to the formation of Israel.

David Hotel in Jerusalem, which held the offices of the British military, and of the British Criminal Investigation Division. The situation was further exacerbated a week later when news reached Jerusalem of a pogrom in Poland which resulted in the massacre of 40 Jews: Jews who might have lived had Britain's restrictive immigration policies not kept them from emigrating to Palestine. The *Irgun* retaliated against the British by bombing the King David Hotel, specifically the wing in which the British mandatory forces were located, on July 22, 1946, killing 91 persons (including 15 Jews) and injuring 45 others. The casualties were much higher than the *Irgun* had anticipated or sought.¹² Several evacuation warnings were issued by telephone: to the hotel itself (in both English and Hebrew); to the French consulate (which was located in a building adjacent to the hotel) and to the offices of the Palestine Post newspaper. However, the British carried out no evacuation, later denying they had received any warning,¹³ and the bombing resulted in the significant loss of life previously stated.

¹² One of the chief participants in the bombing was Menachem Begin, who had an expressed policy of minimizing loss of civilian life as a result of *Irgun* activities. Begin went on to become Israeli Prime Minister in 1977.

¹³ See Clarke 228. Calls to the hotel, the French Consulate and the Palestine Post were made by a woman identified as 'Adina.' The British chose not to evacuate, possibly because "[b]y the summer of 1946, so many bomb warnings had turned out to be hoaxes that many British considered them threats meant to terrorize and intimidate rather than genuine warnings given to minimize casualties.' Clarke 231.

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