

**History in the hands of the Contemporary Playwright
2000-2015: a feminist critique of normative historiography in
British theatre.**

Submitted by Rebecca Amy Fraser to the University of Exeter
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Abstract

Between 2000 and 2015 twelve of the UK's leading producing theatres premiered twenty three plays by British playwrights where the action was set between 1882-1928. This historical period is significant; in 1882 the Married Women's Property Act was passed and in 1928 equal enfranchisement for men and women was granted in the United Kingdom, hence, the historical period traces a shift in women's rights from property ownership to the vote. This thesis investigates narratives within these plays and explores the development of a normative historiography that is drawn on, but predominantly left unquestioned, by playwrights as Britain's past is reimagined. It is this normative historiography, operating in a theatrical context, which the thesis problematises and interrogates through the lens of contemporary British playwriting. This lens facilitates an exploration of the manner in which the representation of the past mirrors and/or challenges current feminist discourse and considers the cultural implications of the structures and techniques employed to retell women their history through this medium.

Scholarship from the fields of academic and popular feminism, theatre studies, history and historiography shape the analytical framework of the thesis. Drawing on literature from these fields, this study conducts historically informed performance analysis that seeks to discover the sociocultural work done by contemporary plays that engage with the past.

Archives of thirty British theatres have been surveyed to produce a database of plays that fall within the project boundaries; working with this data, trends and recurring themes have been identified, and subsequently chapters have been shaped to investigate dramaturgical questions in response to the field research. The dramaturgical questions explore: recurring modes of representation in plays that reimagine World War One; the representation of opposition in depictions of historical conflict; the retelling of specific historical narratives in relation to the challenge of staging ideas; and the recurrence of the heteronormative romantic plot.

Abstract

This thesis argues that when the playwright interrogates the normative dramaturgies and tropes they have inherited for historical representation, they assumes the role of historiographer and from this self-reflexive position recurring theatrical conventions for retelling the past are challenged. This perspective shifts attention beyond central patriarchal narratives of the past and facilitates engagement with the multiple avenues of enquiry regarding a historical moment. Engagement with the work of playwrights who foreground a historiographic awareness in their process, further illuminates the dialogue between representations of women in a historical context and contemporary feminist debate.

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Contents

Abstract	3
Acknowledgments	5
List of Figures	11
Introductory Chapter	13
Introduction.....	13
<i>Dual Timeframes</i>	14
<i>Initial Premise and Research Questions</i>	17
<i>Methodology</i>	18
<i>Development of the Argument</i>	22
Literature Review	26
<i>Theatre Studies</i>	26
<i>Audience Studies</i>	31
<i>Feminism</i>	35
<i>History and Theatre Studies</i>	43
<i>The Heritage Debate</i>	46
<i>Authenticity at Shakespeare’s Globe Theatre</i>	48
<i>Historiography and Historical Representation</i>	52
<i>History of the Period</i>	56
Chapter One The Wartime Woman: the impact of the centenary year on theatrical representations of World War One.	59
Introduction.....	59
Recurring Modes of Representation in Centenary Plays	67
Dramaturgy of the Female Narrative	70
<i>The Mother Figure</i>	71
<i>The Young Woman</i>	75
Subverting Patriarchal Dramaturgy in <i>An August Bank Holiday Lark</i>	81
<i>Plot Synopsis and Text in Performance</i>	82
<i>The Dramaturgy of Paying Tribute to the Women</i>	86
<i>Symbols of Remembrance</i>	90
Conclusion	93
Chapter Two The Political Woman: reimagining the suffrage movement.	97
Introduction.....	97

Contents

Cultural Activity in Response to Suffrage History	100
An Individualist or Collective Focus	104
Dreadnought's Pilgrimage.....	109
<i>Her Naked Skin</i>	114
<i>Plot Synopsis</i>	114
<i>Rebecca Lenkiewicz</i>	116
<i>The Dramaturgy of Militancy and Torture in Her Naked Skin</i>	120
<i>Emily Wilding Davison on Stage and Screen</i>	126
Conclusion	133
Chapter Three The Victorian Woman: identity politics in Neo-Victorian performance.....	137
Introduction.....	137
<i>Scuttlers</i>	142
<i>Plot Synopsis</i>	142
<i>Mise-en-scène</i>	144
<i>Neo-Victorian Aesthetics and Dramaturgy</i>	147
<i>Narratives of Social Mobility</i>	150
The Riot.....	153
<i>Female Narratives in Scuttlers</i>	155
<i>The Empress</i>	160
<i>Plot Synopsis</i>	160
<i>An Intersectional Perspective</i>	162
<i>Use of the Term 'Race'</i>	167
<i>Staging a Political Campaign</i>	168
<i>The Queen and Abdul Karim</i>	174
Conclusion	177
Chapter Four The Educated Woman: <i>Blue Stockings</i> and the love/education dichotomy.	181
Introduction.....	181
<i>Blue Stockings</i>	184
<i>Plot Synopsis</i>	184
<i>Social Context and Feminist Debate</i>	186
<i>Historical Narratives Paralleled to Contemporary Pressure</i>	191
<i>Romance</i>	196

<i>Representing Opposition</i>	199
Normative Historiography and Shakespeare's Globe Theatre	203
<i>Nell Gwynn</i>	207
<i>Plot Synopsis</i>	208
<i>Representing Nell Gwynn in Scholarship, Literature and Performance</i>	210
<i>Representing a Historical Theatre Industry</i>	212
Conclusion	217
Conclusion	221
Overview	221
Findings and Original Contribution	224
Contemporary Relevance.....	228
Further Research	229
Concluding Remarks	231
Appendix One – Surveyed Theatre Archives	233
Appendix Two – Archive Data	235
Bibliography	243

List of Figures

Figure 1.1	‘Northern Broadsides production of <i>An August Bank Holiday Lark</i> – Rushcart’ (2014)	84
Figure 1.2	‘Northern Broadsides production of <i>An August Bank Holiday Lark</i> – Rushcart Festival’ (2014) – Nobby Clark	85
Figure 1.3	‘Northern Broadsides production of <i>An August Bank Holiday Lark</i> – Cast’ (2014)	85
Figure 2.1	‘ <i>Her Naked Skin</i> Forcible Feeding Scene’ (2008) – Catherine Ashmore	123
Figure 3.1	‘Manchester Royal Exchange <i>Scuttlers</i> Set – Loom’ (2015) – Rebecca Fraser	145
Figure 3.2	‘Manchester Royal Exchange <i>Scuttlers</i> Set – Loom Raised’ (2015) – Rebecca Fraser	146

Introductory Chapter

Introduction

The year 2003 marked 100 years since the foundation of the Suffragette movement; 2004 saw the international football association FIFA celebrate its 100th anniversary; 2005 was exalted as 100 years since Cardiff was granted status as a city; 2008 was 100 years since the foundation of the Territorial Army; and 2010 marked the 100th birthday of Girl Guiding. We are in an age consumed by centenaries. Each of these anniversaries, affiliated with British culture, was marked, noted, celebrated, or on occasion commemorated, and in doing so events of the past were reimagined and retold, through a variety of media, by the contemporary collective which held association to the thing being remembered. As Jill Liddington remarks, ‘What did the Edwardians ever do for us? Well, for one thing, they provided us with multiple centenaries’ (2005: 195). In sharp contrast, we are a culture driven by new technology and social media, which has cultivated a desire for immediacy and a social pressure to be up to date. This indicates a tension in contemporary culture between nostalgia and remembrance, and a focus on being current, cutting edge and forward thinking.

This paradox is reflected in new playwriting produced by the British theatre industry. The Royal Court, a flagship venue for new writing in Britain, states in its submission guidelines: ‘we will not read historical and biographical plays unless these resonate strongly with contemporary life’ (RC, 2016: n.p.). As a result, plays produced at The Royal Court predominantly feature modern or futuristic settings and themes. For example, *NSFW* by Lucy Kirkwood (2012), which satirizes the phenomenon of the ‘lad mag’ and privacy invasion, and *The Nether* by Jennifer Haley (2014), which imagines a future where individuals are able to crossover into a virtual reality. But, this strand of new writing sits alongside a landscape of events which are celebrating and memorialising the past, which are brought into clear focus by the post millennium influx of centenaries. Counter to The Royal Court’s specification, this focus is reflected in new writing, as playwrights represent and retell history on the contemporary stage.

The prominence of feminist discourse in contemporary culture is similarly explicit in new writing. This focus is particularly distinct in plays with a contemporary

setting which forefront neoliberal values and hypersexualised culture, such as *Fleabag* by Phoebe Waller-Bridge (2013), *The One* by Vicky Jones (2014) and *How to Date a Feminist* by Samantha Ellis (2016). There has been a resurgence in feminist debate since the 1990s lull, which currently sits alongside the cultural preoccupation with history; this conjunction indicates a complicated social tension between a modern day focus on gender equality and commemoration of a past distinguished by gender oppression. This tension manifests in contemporary plays set in the past. It is a past where women's rights, position in society and social beliefs regarding gender roles are fundamentally different from the present. How then do playwrights, existing in contemporary culture, represent women in this social context? Are their narratives romanticised, marginalised, glossed over, or used as a platform to challenge current debate? These initial questions and concerns have driven the journey of this thesis, which interrogates how the representation of history through new playwriting resembles or challenges gender politics in the contemporary moment. Through exploration of contemporary plays that reimagine the past, I argue that modes of normative historiography operate in the process of playwriting and perpetuate recurring devices for retelling the past in a theatrical context. However, when the playwright adopts a critical response to the normative dramaturgies for historical representation that are established within the dramatic forms they employ, questions of historiography become active in their process and these normative structures can be subsequently challenged.

Dual Timeframes

In this thesis I examine contemporary plays that are set in the past; more specifically plays which premiered between 2000 and 2015 where the action is set between 1882 and 1928¹. In this regard, the 'contemporary moment' is referred to as the twenty-first century. The timeframe is positioned as such, in order to cover a significant enough period that cultural debates will have developed and changed, but not so vast that the wider cultural landscape would become unrecognisable. The span

¹ There is one play addressed that falls outside of this timeframe: *Nell Gwynn* by Jessica Swale (2016). The justification for the inclusion of this play, and subsequent analysis, is discussed in Chapter Four.

of fifteen years enables trends to be recognised within the data collected that would perhaps be unidentifiable in a shorter study. The historical period 1882-1928 is significant in Britain; in 1882 the Married Women's property act was passed, "which secures the women subjects of Her Majesty henceforward and for ever indefeasible legal right to their own property, irrespective of and independent of any husband to whom they may be married", [and] was hailed as 'the Magna Carta for women' (Caine, 1997: 119). Forty six years later, women were granted equal enfranchisement and from the 2nd of July 1928 'women and men who had reached the age of 21 could vote on equal terms' (Purvis and Holton, 2000: 4). This historical period shows a progression in women's rights, from property ownership to the vote, and thus traces growth in the feminist movement and the development of social and political change. Considering this cultural progression, this period of history is a rich moment to reflect on in reference to the evolution of current feminist debate particularly how these historical social structures are retold in the contemporary moment.

In order to explore the implication of such gender analysis in a wider cultural context, I address a variety of plays within this project, not just works which explicitly represent feminist moments in history. This perspective enables consideration of how female narratives are represented amongst a broader reimagining of this historical period. Engagement with this landscape of new writing within the British theatre industry has illuminated normative dramaturgical and theatrical devices for representing history on stage. It is these normative methods which are problematised in this thesis. This central locale provides a springboard from which to identify and explore the work of those playwrights and directors who challenge these established modes of historical representation.

Thomas Postlewait warns against the passive acceptance of periodization, in reference to theatre history:

Not only do we impose schemes onto history that produce and sanction our conclusions, as [Louis O.] Mink points out, but we fail to appreciate how the concept of periodization acts as a controlling generalization, an unconscious or unarticulated presupposition. The first problem comes from having a strong idea of periodization and imposing it wilfully on events. The second problem, by contrast, comes from not having a critical idea of systems, taxonomies, and general principles. (1988: 317)

Notwithstanding the perils Postlewait points out, I use boundaries as a means to encompass strands of development within historical feminism and to guide and concentrate the collection of data. Postlewait proposes no alternative to periodization, but goes on to acknowledge that ‘though a period has a singular idea, no era, however long or short, has a singular identity’ (1988: 318). This serves as a distinct reminder that both the period of history the works considered here retell, and the post 2000 cultural moment addressed, hold a complexity of ideologies beyond the periodization imposed. This resonates with theatre scholar Diana Taylor’s articulation of the breadth of a historical moment:

The past might be conceived not only as a timeline—accessed as a leap backwards, and forward to the present again—but also as a multilayered sedimentation, a form of vertical density rather than a horizontal sweep—not an either/or but a both/and. (2006: 83)

This perspective illuminates the multiple narratives operating within the chosen historical moment. Yet, normative modes for representing history in performance deny this complexity in favour of a dominant narrative. Hence, problematising these recurring modes of representation in theatrical performance moves towards an awareness of the multiple narratives available for representation and a shift beyond the notion of a central cultural norm.

Taylor explores performance and history in reference to an annual fiesta in the Mexican town Tepoztlán and directs her attention ‘not [to] the historical “fact” [...] but the restaging, the remaking’ (2006: 74). This focus shifts analysis beyond the past event being reimagined, onto the mode of performance in the present moment. Taylor’s concentration on the representation of history in the present moment, rather than the history being retold, resonates with my research methodology. Yet, in response to this perspective Postlewait criticises that ‘theatre historians too often depend upon a few standard analogies about art “mirroring” or “reflecting” society, as if these metaphors provided aesthetic and social explanations’ (1988: 308). However, if the act of ‘mirroring’ is made active this moves beyond the two-dimensional response critiqued by Postlewait. Rather, in positioning historical representation as an active process the concept of doubleness emerges, whereby theatrical performance both shapes and is shaped by the cultural context in which it

is produced. Therefore, addressing the restaging of history as a mode of cultural production moves beyond a passive reflection of the context in which it is performed. Instead, if a performance is foregrounded as an active and responsive entity then its dialogue with contemporary concerns becomes prominent and proactive.

Initial Premise and Research Questions

The initial premise, from which this thesis has developed, was that: the representation of women in historical periods can challenge and/or mirror contemporary views and understandings of gender identity. In response to this proposition, and working with the dual timeframes identified above, the following research questions have been at the forefront of my enquiry:

- What are the historical narratives, styles and structures that are created, repeated and retold within contemporary performances? How do these narratives work in conjunction with feminist discourse, are they productive or debilitating? In light of this, what is the outcome if these narratives are revised?
- How might representations of the politicised collective and individual, within retellings of 1882-1928 in current British playwriting, effect contemporary interpretations of feminist discourse?
- How is historical opposition to women's rights represented? And are dramatic techniques employed to distance elements of our cultural past?

Through exploration of these research questions recurring modes of representation have emerged which indicate a normative historiography within contemporary British playwriting. The concept of normative historiography builds through the following chapters and enables interrogation, not only of recurring theatrical and dramaturgical devices in the reimagining of the past on stage, but consideration of the subsequent cultural implications of these representations of women within a historical context.

Theatre scholars Elaine Aston and Geraldine Harris recognise that, 'for some time theatre studies, feminist or otherwise, has tended to overlook the mainstream,' but they go on to identify 'more recently, there have been some signs of a turn to the mainstream in feminist theatre and performance scholarship' (2013: 2-3). This thesis is positioned within this turn and addresses playwriting in performance within the

mainstream British theatre industry. As a platform for cultural practice, the mainstream theatre industry in Britain reaches a large number of audience members, with many venues exercising cultural authority, and consequently their representation of women forms a notable aspect of the contemporary zeitgeist. In line with Aston and Harris, Jill Dolan makes a case for addressing popular culture:

I think it's especially important to intervene in mass entertainment from a feminist perspective. When I'm writing about mainstream films or television shows, my goal is to refocus the lens, to see from the side, as it were, where all the holes in the narrative are suddenly clear, and where all its presumptions and exclusions are most transparent. (2013: 9)

Responding to Dolan's call, I intervene in the mainstream British theatre industry and contribute to this discourse by focusing the lens to address the representation of history and problematise the subsequent gender politics and theatrical norms from a feminist perspective.

Guided by the research questions, I explore the intersection between the fields of new writing, feminism, and history and historiography. This intersection forms the foundation of my engagement with scholarship in the rest of this chapter, which positions this study and research contribution accordingly. Contemporary British new writing is the subject of this thesis within which historical representation is interrogated through a feminist lens. The connection between new writing, playwrights and theatre institutions, within the theatre industry, is reflected in this thesis' projects boundaries, which are discussed in the following section. Once I had surveyed the data from my fieldwork, I identified centenaries as a prominent source of material for new writing. The theme of centenaries forms the basis for performance analysis in Chapters One and Two where literature regarding the intersection between centenary events, new writing and history and historiography facilitates analysis.

Methodology

In pursuit of investigating contemporary playwriting, the fieldwork for this project took on the form of exploring current work and past productions at thirty large producing houses in Britain. Working with the 2000-2015 timeframe, I researched theatre archives in search of plays which were set between 1882 and 1928. See Appendix One for an outline of the theatre archives researched and specifics of

what years were able to be accounted for from each individual theatre. In order to focus the investigation, the following boundaries were established and looked at plays which:

- Were first produced in Britain (England, Scotland, and Wales).
- Were performed at a large producing house – either on tour or as an in house production.
- Have a published playtext.
- Include more than one character.
- Have at least one female character.
- Are a new piece of writing, not an adaptation.
- Are set between 1882-1928.

The action of the play did not have to be set in Britain, rather Britain forms the cultural context in which the pieces were first produced. Although analysis is from a feminist perspective, I have not only considered plays which are framed as feminist works; rather the full landscape of contemporary plays that reimagine this historical period have been mapped. This wide focus has enabled identification of normative modes of representation and consideration of the patriarchal social structures which shape current playwriting. Notions of the patriarchy form an important facet of this cultural analysis as it enables consideration of the social structures which generate gender discrimination. In this vein, sociologist Robert Connell (1987) addresses the concept of patriarchy in reference to power relations and social order. Connell's understanding of patriarchy as 'sustaining hegemonic definitions of masculinity,' which subsequently enforce inequalities of power between the sexes and generates a male controlled social order forms the basis for the use of this term (1987: 107-108).

I have focused primarily on professional productions performed at large scale producing houses in Britain and have not extensively considered small scale professional performances or amateur work. Amateur theatre is relevant given this research topic as local histories, especially centenaries, are frequently the subject of performances within an amateur or community theatre setting and this trope signifies an avenue for further research. Similarly, work responding to a centenary is favourable in the eyes of funding bodies and consequently shapes the work of small scale theatre

companies. I have noted works of this nature in a broad sense within this project, where the professional productions addressed sit within a vast landscape of performance and cultural activity discussing the same subject matter. In focusing on large scale professional work, I have been able to interrogate performances in light of current feminist debate on a wider scale; as pieces reached a broader audience and cultural commentary is more readily available from journalists and audience members, building a picture of how the piece was received on a larger scale.

The data collected, from thirty producing houses, is catalogued in a scatter diagram (see Appendix Two) which plots the year a play premiered alongside the historical year in which the action is set. Of the thirty theatres researched, twelve had produced at least one play in the fifteen year period which was set between 1882 and 1928, with twenty three plays in total falling within these project boundaries. This diagram enabled my consideration of emerging patterns and highlighted a correlation between plays produced in 2014 which were set in 1914, marking the centenary of WWI. The quantitative data indicated this trend which then required qualitative methods for further interrogation, this took on the form of playwright interviews, close performance reading and contextual analysis, discussed in Chapter One. Amongst the data the majority of plays were set in the Edwardian, rather than the Victorian, period, with a greater number produced in the second half of the period of study, breaking down roughly as a third pre 2008 and two thirds after. The diagram indicates a cluster of work set in the latter part of the historical period addressed and the later section of the contemporary moment. It is this increase in new writing, with a historical setting, which emphasises the rise in cultural engagement with history.

Working with this collection of twenty three plays I have sourced playtexts, archive recordings, reviews and where possible seen live performances. Exploration of the plays led to the shaping of the chapters, topics for consideration and dramaturgical questions explored within each chapter. These twenty three plays form the historical sweep, to use Taylor's term, but her corresponding notion of the vertical calls for a concentrated focus within this landscape and as a result nine plays have been selected in reference to prominent historical topics within the period, this is discussed further in the outline of chapters below. Within each chapter, when discussing a play I specify whether I have seen a performance live, am working from

an archive recording or have not had access to the text in performance. Reviews, interviews and sources relating to a production work to build an idea of a text in performance, especially those that have not been available for live viewing. Playwrights Deborah McAndrew and Jessica Swale generously participated in an interview for this project. Interviews were recorded and conducted one-on-one and then used in conjunction with accompanying sources relating to the production in question. These interviews have provided insight into the playwright's engagement with history, which has then been interpreted in reference to theories of historiography.

Harris's (2008) approach to performance analysis has been foundational for the methodology of this thesis. Harris considers her personal viewing experience in relation to her performance analysis and explores how different factors may influence her reading of a play. This proactively positions the scholar in their role of audience member, rather than assuming academics are privy to an objective viewing. For example, in Harris' exploration of authenticity, in relation to *Susan and Darren*, she notes the 'various factors' that cause her to be polite in her engagement with the performance (2008: 5). Harris acknowledges how a viewer can read themes into a performance they wish to find:

I do think there are issues of class and other classifications systems in circulation around *Susan and Darren*. At the same time I have to admit the possibility of my reading these things onto it, at least partly on the basis of Susan's and Darren's 'appearance'. In short, not only ignoring that fact that they are performing but potentially re-naturalizing the very systems of visibility and categorization. (2008: 6)

Influenced by Harris, I consider the specific focus on modes of historical representation and gender politics I bring when viewing a piece, as well as the contemporary British cultural backdrop in which I conduct analysis. I explore the notion of a researcher's position further, in my engagement with scholarship in the latter part of this chapter, in reference to historian Mary Fulbrook (2002) and theatre scholar Susan Bennett (1997).

Development of the Argument

An exploration and theorisation of the notion of normative historiography develops through the four chapters of this thesis. This concept is explored through four dramaturgical questions that shape the structure of the chapters, they address: recurring modes of representation; the representation of opposition in historical debate in reference to dramatic form; the challenge of staging ideas-based narratives; and the heteronormative romantic plot. Each chapter is self-contained in terms of historical and performance focus, while simultaneously part of the feminist exploration into the politics of historiography in contemporary playwriting at the centre of this thesis.

Chapter One, *The Wartime Woman*, considers 2014's World War One (WWI) centenary and explores the landscape of new writing that emerged in response. Analysis of four plays which premiered during the centenary year demonstrate recurring modes of representation in the reimagining of WWI on stage. These recurring theatrical elements and modes of representation go seemingly unquestioned by playwrights; it is from this central locale that I develop the concept of normative historiography and the centenary plays are a fruitful case study through which to test and cultivate this notion. Amongst the four centenary plays, *An August Bank Holiday Lark* by Deborah McAndrew (2014b) (2014a) contrasts the other three pieces in its focus on narratives of the female characters. In my interview with McAndrew (2015) about the play she stated her aim to challenge symbols of remembrance and tell the story of the women left behind. Consequently, *An August Bank Holiday Lark* provides a productive case study through which to explore both the dramaturgical and ideological outcomes when a playwright consciously challenges the patriarchal focus at the centre of historical representation. Through engagement with McAndrew's work, I investigate how a playwright can take on the role of historiographer through their conscious interrogation of normative historical narratives and their subsequent representation of the past. Additionally, this case study highlights the confining patriarchal structures that shape a playwright's work and its place in the wider theatre industry.

Chapter Two, *The Political Woman*, narrows the historical focus to centenaries relating to feminist history, in the form of the suffrage movement, while broadening

the performance lens to explore different dramatic forms that are employed to reimagine suffrage history, including: Dreadnought Theatre Company's re-enacted pilgrimage (2016a), *Her Naked Skin* by Rebecca Lenkiewicz (2008a) (2008b) produced at the National Theatre, and the film *Suffragette* (Gavron, 2015). This chapter explores how performance style shapes the image of feminism presented in the reimagining of history, with a particular focus on how such representations position the individual or collective and how this relates to current feminist discourse. The method of organised walking, employed by Dreadnought in their 2013 pilgrimage from Land's End to Hyde Park, promotes a collectivist focus in reflection on feminist history. In contrast, the narrative structure of *Her Naked Skin* cultivates an individualist perspective on feminist discourse. *Her Naked Skin* is a pertinent case study as the play was the first piece by a living female playwright to premier on the Olivier stage at the National Theatre. Hence, the rhetoric surrounding the production, and Lenkiewicz as a playwright, provides a fruitful example through which to interrogate the patriarchal structures that influence and constrain women within the theatre industry. This chapter develops the central exploration of normative historiography specifically in relation to feminist discourse, both in reference to dramatic form and historical subject matter.

Building on the exploration of centenaries, the following chapter, *The Victorian Woman*, considers a broader representation of Victorian everyday life in new writing. Engagement with theories from the field of neo-Victorian studies further develops the notion of normative historiography by articulating recurring devices employed to reimagine this period. Neo-Victorian discourse specifies the potential for a self-conscious engagement with representations of the past. This is identified in work that moves beyond historical re-enactment and foregrounds an awareness on the mode of reflection and retelling. I develop this theory in a theatrical context with a focus on gender politics. Recognising the complexity of identity politics, in this chapter I use an intersectional approach for feminist performance analysis, in order to expand consideration of gender politics, and negotiate the representation of diversity in class and race within *Scuttlers* by Rona Munro (2015b) (2015a) and *The Empress* by Tanika Gupta (2013b) (2013a). *Scuttlers* is a key case study for this chapter as the play stands out from the collected data as a piece which focuses wholly on the Victorian working

class. The play demonstrates the use of recurring modes for representing Victorian culture within performance, while Munro paradoxically subverts patriarchal narrative structures. Consequently, this case study develops the notion of the playwright as a historiography, first explored in Chapter One in reference to McAndrew, and explores how recurring modes of representation can be drawn on as a springboard from which a playwright can offer an alternative historical reimagining. Analysis of *The Empress* builds on the exploration of identity politics in *Scuttlers* to foreground a focus on class and racial diversity in the representation of the British Empire in the play. *The Empress* is significant as the play reimagines two historical narratives, that of Queen Victoria and her relationship with her Indian teacher, or munshi, Abdul Karim, and the political account of Dadabhai Naoroji, the first Indian MP in Great Britain. Exploration of the reimagining of these two narratives illuminates the prioritising of one historical narrative over the other in terms of critic and audience response, while simultaneously highlighting the challenge of dramatising ideas based historical narratives. Through exploration of the challenge of staging ideas the recurrence of the heteronormative romantic plot is discussed in reference to the broader notion of normative historiography. This chapter progresses the central debate by recognising the complexity of identity politics within feminist discourse and as a result employs an intersectional perspective to interrogate the limited diversity represented in the retelling of the past on the British stage.

Having developed the notion of normative historiography through the first three chapters, Chapter Four, *The Educated Woman*, is a case study of playwright Jessica Swale. Swale's work is significant in this debate as, like McAndrew, she consciously foregrounds questions of historiography in her method of playwriting. This chapter explores *Blue Stockings* by Swale and the dichotomy, posed by the play, of choosing between a university education and marriage. This historical narrative resonates strongly with contemporary pressures experienced by women to have a career and raise a family. However, when explored in relation to the notion of choice, in contemporary feminist debate, Swale's representation of history has both ideological and dramaturgical implications that problematically perpetuate contemporary pressure placed on women. This interrogation progresses analysis regarding the recurrence of the heteronormative romantic plot discussed in Chapter

Three. Although outside of my project boundaries, exploration of the dramaturgy and narrative content of Swale's later play *Nell Gwynn*, set in the Restoration period, indicates the development of Swale's response to the feminist debate raised in *Blue Stockings*. This highlights historical narratives as a means through which a playwright can grapple with and develop both modes for retelling the past and the connection to current feminist discourse. In this case, the reimagining of history becomes the means through which Swale intervenes into contemporary feminist debate.

Swale's two plays discussed in the final chapter both premiered at Shakespeare's Globe theatre in London. As a replica Elizabethan theatre, this theatrical setting for Swale's new writing is significant, as the existing space is already prominent in debate concerning historical representation and carries its own recurring theatrical conventions, thus further complicating the reimagining of the past on this stage. Consequently, I employ the Globe productions of *Blue Stockings* and *Nell Gwynn* as examples through which to explore the notion of normative historiography in reference to a theatre space. This illuminates and progresses both my engagement with the plays and Swale's role as a historiographer, while subsequently further developing the concept of normative historiography.

The case study of Swale in Chapter Four draws together the overarching theoretical exploration of the thesis. The notion of normative historiography is explored and developed through this project in relation to: narrative content (Chapter One); dramaturgical structure and form (Chapter Two); historical subject matter and identity politics (Chapter Three); and theatrical space (Chapter Four). The final chapter theorises how an active engagement, on the part of the playwright, with historiographic analysis cultivates the means to challenge and interrogate the normative structures within contemporary British new writing that represents history. This shift in approach, on the part of the scholar and the playwright, works to identify the multitude of perspectives, and subsequent politics, from which a playwright can approach and reimagine history on the contemporary stage. I have developed this thesis as a response to, and an extension of, existing scholarship and the remainder of this chapter charts the relevant fields of literature and my interaction with and contribution to this theoretical landscape.

Literature Review

This project begins with the theatre, so, the following scholarly engagement starts with literature from the field of theatre studies and expands from this central locale. I build on this to map the successive fields that have shaped performance analysis and enabled further exploration of the relationship between a culture, its history and the representation of that history through contemporary theatrical performance. This relationship has refined through the course of my project to more specifically address the intersection between new writing in British theatre, feminist discourse and history and historiography. It is this dynamic which is addressed, in the subsequent chapters, in order to explore how contemporary theatrical reconstructions of history mirror and influence current feminist debate.

Theatre Studies

My interaction with the field of theatre studies divides into three areas. The first, concerns the theatre industry in which the performances analysed occurred and how scholarship has responded to British theatre since the turn of the century. The second explores feminist performance analysis and the third historical representation and how plays relate to the context in which they are performed. The combination of these three avenues facilitates feminist performance analysis in the exploration of the relationship between a historical representation in performance and both the industry and wider cultural context in which it is framed and interacts.

In *Drama/Theatre/Performance* Simon Shepherd and Mick Wallis provide an overview of the field of performance and theatre studies; beginning with Aristotle through to contemporary scholarship. They track the development of universities teaching drama and theatre in both the United Kingdom and the United States. Shepherd and Wallis engage with the connection between history and drama, outlining that:

The relationship between drama, theatre and history mainly takes two forms: an 'internal' history of the theatre and its practices or an 'external' account of theatre's - or more often drama's - engagement with a larger cultural history. (2004: 35)

The notion of ‘external’ history identifies the genre of performance this research addresses and counter to the term facilitates a focus on the contents of a performance and how this relates to history. However, this definition does not encompass the historical layers that may be at work within one production, for example, the difference between the staging of a historical text and new writing set in a historical period. Yet, while broad in its definition, this concept provides a preliminary exposition from which to engage with the wider field of history and historiography in relation to theatrical performance.

Shepherd and Wallis narrate the development of cultural studies in relation to the study of drama and forefront Raymond Williams as a prominent figure in this field. They explore Williams’ scholarship, primarily his theory ‘structure of feeling’ (1977: 128-135), to address the relationship between a performance and the cultural context in which it is created, stating:

Williams feels able to map cultural and social change through the particular shapes and embodiments of the drama. [...] Just as drama seems to be positioned as a tool for doing social analysis, he [Williams] qualifies the method by adding that the social analysis leads in turn to a new appraisal of the specificities of the drama. (Shepherd and Wallis, 2004: 33)

This method is significant for this project, whereby I use performance analysis to discuss wider feminist issues and feed this back into consideration of the performance, with particular attention to dramaturgy, structure and contribution to the feminist debate in question. Thus, a loop is created between reflection on a performance and social debate, each being used as a lens through which to analyse and inform the other. This resonates with the notion of an active, rather than passive, sense of doubleness identified at the beginning of this chapter. The concept of social analysis, or more specifically performance context, is returned to in reference to scholarship concerning history and historiography.

The plays addressed in this project are part of the contemporary British theatre industry; more specifically they sit within the landscape of new writing staged since the turn of the twenty-first century. While each scholar’s boundaries for the contemporary moment differ with regards to the British theatre industry, engagement with this literature enables consideration of the industry in which the theatrical productions analysed were produced. In *Contemporary British Drama* (2010) David Lane

explores the changing role of the playwright in British theatre and notes the rise of ensemble companies, such as Kneehigh, and the auteur-director, which he describes as ‘embodied’ by the work of Katie Mitchell (2010: 16). Through this book Lane investigates the ‘dialogue between text and context,’ and prioritises the analysis of performance over playtext, stating:

As forms of playwriting and writer-led performance evolve, the play text becomes an increasingly poor substitute for recording a performance. This has always been true of play texts, which as Rebellato noted rely on the imagination of the reader to fill in the gaps. (2010: 15)

This implies a hierarchy in performance analysis. In contrast, transparency on the part of the researcher in the mode of engagement with the play under consideration combats this hierarchy and rather positions analysis as from a different perspective, not necessarily a better one. For example, where I have been unable to see a production I refer to the playtext, reviews, production photos, and online material such as interviews and trailers, and acknowledge that I approach the production from a different perspective than if I had experienced a live performance. This creates an approach that responds to the resources available in each case study, treating each production as a unique cultural object, rather than forming a hierarchy for methods of analysis, as implied by Lane.

While this project primarily focuses on the playwright, Lane’s writing serves as a reminder that the current landscape of British theatre is varied and that plays with a single author may be considered the tradition, sitting alongside a multitude of other forms, operating within the mainstream industry. Yet within this landscape, Vicky Angelaki’s edited collection *Contemporary British Theatre*, foregrounds a focus on the playwright. This book addresses tension for the twenty-first century theatre industry operating as ‘a cultural medium that thrives on topicality,’ yet constrained by the inevitable time delay of the production process, in contrast to the immediacy of new media (Angelaki, 2013: 2) . In response, the chapters in this collection explore how this challenge ‘has been dealt with in the context of author-produced plays, which push the boundaries of visual representation, conceptual understanding and verbal exchange’ (Angelaki, 2013: 3). Angelaki characterises the plays under consideration as pieces ‘that have redefined dramatic representation, breaking new ground through

form, content and the ways these interact with one another' (2013: 3). In this regard, this collection offers theoretical reflection on a diverse range of contemporary works and reconsiders notions of representation in response to the changing landscape of British theatre. Angelaki makes a case for a focus on the playwright in response to a 'flux' of contemporary writing, in conjunction to rising debate regarding the 'role of the author' (2013: 2-3). Like Angelaki, Penny Farfan and Lesly Ferris (2013a), also foreground the playwright and narrow their focus to consider women in this role; while simultaneously extending it to explore playwriting since 1990 on an international scale. They provide a broad overview of women working within this industry and consider how these writers' work links 'to the larger conditions and experiences of women's lives' (2013b: 2).

A significant contribution to scholarship concerned with British theatre is the series *Decades of Modern British Playwriting* edited by Richard Boon and Philip Roberts, consisting of six volumes each covering a decade from the 1950s to 2009. Each volume begins with a cultural overview of the decade in question and addresses topics such as, sport, technology, popular culture, politics and slang. The theatre industry of the period is then situated in relation to this cultural landscape and specific playwrights and productions from the decade are addressed by leading scholars. The 1970s volume, edited by Chris Megson (2012), includes a chapter by Boon (2012) on Howard Brenton, who's 2014 play *Doctor Scroggy's War* is a key contribution to the WWI plays explored in Chapter One. Boon's reflection on Brenton's earlier work, personal politics and methods of working, illustrates the broader catalogue of work in which *Doctor Scroggy's War* is situated and facilitates consideration of how his previous plays may have shaped audiences' encounters with this production. *Modern British Playwriting 2000-2009* (2013), edited by Dan Rebellato, is significant for this project as it builds a detailed image of the cultural and theatrical landscape of Britain post 2000. The volume covers, 'Living in the 2000s,' 'Theatre in the 2000s' and provides chapters on the following playwrights: Simon Stephens, Tim Crouch, Roy Williams, David Greig and debbie tucker green. However, problematically the increase in work produced written by women does not appear to be reflected in this selection of playwrights. Rhetoric surrounding the cultural positioning of the female

playwright as a rarity is interrogated further in Chapter Two in reference to playwright Rebecca Lenkiewicz.

In this volume Andrew Haydon writes on 'Theatre in the 2000s' (2013) and begins by noting the complexity of surveying history:

'What's so great about history? It's just one fucking thing after another.' Contrary to this popular quotation, adapted to great comic effect in Alan Bennett's *The History Boys* (2004), history is also quite a lot of things all happening at the same time in different places, with often difficult-to-measure impacts on other things. (2013: 40)

This alludes to the multifaceted structure in which the theatre industry occurs and develops, rather than a dominant linear narrative, and the challenge to the scholar in addressing it retrospectively. Haydon discusses 'New Writing', which he distinguishes from 'New Work' that refers to Visual, Devised and Physical theatre (2013: 61). He suggests that, 'the creation of the 'New writing Industry' [...] played a key role in the way Britain's theatre ecology developed in the 2000s,' (2013: 72) and explores Aleks Sierz's study of new writing in his book *Rewriting the Nation* (2011). Haydon criticises this work noting, 'Sierz had already dismissed all plays with a historical setting,' (2013: 72) because he claims, 'more often they are costume dramas with little relevance to today' (Sierz, 2011: 64). Sierz's observation is problematic; as this limited perspective on what constitutes new writing eliminates the active relationship between the reimagining of history, through the medium of playwriting, and the culture in which it is created. Disregarding all plays with a historical setting denies the cultural structure of feeling, to use Williams' term (1977), behind the current obsession with history and the subsequent implications which can be explored by shining a light on cultural production. This position also exposes an ideological perception towards plays with a historical setting that confines the representation of history to a 'costume drama' trope. It is these repeated modes for representing the past on stage that I problematise in this thesis and in direct opposition to Sierz, argue are in fact inextricably linked to contemporary culture and of greater complexity than his categorisation.

Haydon suggests that the capitalisation of the term 'New Writing' refers to a very specific trope of playwriting where a play would typically be 'naturalistic, contemporary and set in a very specific (usually underprivileged and urban) social milieu' (2013: 72). In response, the term 'new writing' is consciously used as lower

case throughout this project and employed from a more general perspective to address plays with one writer that were published and first performed between 2000 and 2015. In stark contrast to Sierz, I research new writing which *is* set in a historical period (1882-1928) and subsequently contribute a unique collection of data to the landscape of scholarship which addresses new writing in Britain. From a similar perspective, Alexander Feldman (2013) employs historiography to investigate plays with a historical setting produced since the 1960s. I return to consider Feldman's contribution to the field in reference to scholarship concerned with historical representation. My project develops literature concerned with new writing by applying a feminist lens to this genre of performance. This field has previously primarily focused on nostalgia and national identity while negating interrogation of the representation of gender politics within reimaginings of the past.

Audience Studies

A fundamental element of theatrical performance is the presence of an audience and Susan Bennett charts this field in her foundational text *Theatre Audiences* (1997), which is instrumental to my understanding of this dynamic. The role of the audience is significant to my research, as I consider how such representations of the past on stage may have been interpreted and the subsequent feminist implications of these readings. Audience responses, primarily in the form of reviews and blogs, contribute to the mapping of this dialogue. Bennett is, 'concerned with the diversity of theatres which operate in contemporary culture and the different audiences they attract' (1997: 1). She goes on to theorise the 'outer' and 'inner' frames of performance, whereby the outer frame addresses, 'theatre as a cultural construct through the idea of the theatrical event, the selection of material for production, and the audience's definitions and expectations of a performance' (1997: 1-2). While the inner frame, 'contains the event itself and, in particular, the spectator's experience of a fictional stage world' (1997: 2). Bennett's theory considers the intersection between these two frames and argues this interaction, 'forms the spectator's cultural understanding and experience of theatre' (1997: 2). This acknowledgment of the relationship between the cultural position of a theatre and the theatrical event itself, while also addressing the spectator, has been foundational to this thesis as it facilitates exploration of the dynamic between

representation in theatrical performance and the contemporary feminist discourse of the moment in which it was created. Bennett identifies a two way relationship whereby, 'cultural assumptions affect performances, and performances rewrite cultural assumptions' (1997: 2). It is this infinite loop of influence and development that highlights the dialogue between interpretations and representations of the past and the culture in which it is created, it is this dynamic that I interrogate through performance analysis, with a specific focus on gender identity.

In *Theatre Audiences* Bennett addresses reader-response theory, prominent in the 1960s and 70s, which considers 'the relationship between text and reader' in relation to the development of drama theorists exploring 'the role of the audience' (1997: 34). Bennett calls for performance analysis to move beyond a focus on text, while simultaneously criticising theories of semiotics, drawing on critique by Erika Fischer-Lichte (1982: 52), to argue that sign systems should be read in relation to the cultural structures in which they exist (Bennett, 1997: 211). In light of this, Bennett considers the role of the spectator, clarifying her theory does not directly address 'an individual spectator's response to seeing a play and prefers to concentrate on the cultural conditions that make theatre and an audience member's experience of it possible' (1997: vii). Crucially, Bennett does not claim that scholars can know the specifics of an individual's experience, rather she effectively provides the tools to consider what elements play a role in a spectator's encounter with a theatrical production and how this relates to the broader cultural moment.

Bennett engages with Hans Robert Jauss' (1982) scholarship regarding 'horizon of expectations,' through which he works towards 'an aesthetics of reception' (Bennett, 1997: 48). Bennett outlines that:

By recovering the horizon of expectations of a given period, Jauss suggests, we can understand the hermeneutic difference between the understanding of a work then and now. This brings to light the history of a text's reception and dispels the notion of objective and timeless meaning contained independently within a text. (1997: 49)

This acknowledges the influential relationship between a performance and the cultural moment in which it occurs. However, Bennett goes on to draw on Susan Suleiman (Suleiman and Crosman, 1980) who criticises Jauss for disregarding the prospect of multiple horizons of expectations operating within one society. Through this analysis

Bennett develops the notion of horizon of expectations in relations to the fluidity of culture, she states, ‘culture cannot be held as a fixed entity, a set of constant rules, but instead it must be seen as in a position of inevitable flux’ (1997: 94). She builds on this to conclude that:

Theatre audiences bring to any performance a horizon of cultural and ideological expectations. That horizon of expectation is never fixed and is always tested by, among other things, the range of theatre available, the play, and the particular production. (1997: 98)

Bennett’s theory serves as a reminder that these dynamics are fluid and that an audience’s relationship with the past is ever changing and developing, inevitably in relation to the broader cultural framework. When initially researching performances that reconstruct the past, I continually returned to the notion that audience members would have had prior knowledge of the period being represented, but this knowledge and experience would have been different for individual audience members. Bennett’s theorisation of horizon of expectations provides a lens through which to explore this dynamic without claiming to speak on behalf of the individual spectator; rather normative cultural narratives are interrogated as influential aspects towards a spectator’s engagement with a reconstruction of the past on stage.

Writing twelve years after Bennett, Helen Freshwater’s book *Theatre and Audience* (2009) maps the development of scholarship concerned with theatre audiences within the field of theatre studies. Freshwater draws heavily on Bennett, claiming *Theatre Audiences* (1997) provides, ‘one of the most cherished orthodoxies in theatre studies: the belief in a connection between audience participation and political empowerment’ (2009: 3). Through this book Freshwater interrogates the audience dynamics identified by Bennett and traces developments in the field since Bennett’s seminal text. Freshwater acknowledges the difference between the academy and the theatre industry, observing that, ‘academic theatre studies continues to engage with hypothetical models of spectatorship, statistical analysis of historical audiences, or the writer’s personal experience,’ in contrast to the theatre industry which seeks audience opinions and targets marketing accordingly (2009: 29-30). However, while critical of the difference between the academy and theatre industry Freshwater does not appear to bridge this gap any further.

Freshwater critiques scholars for treating their own response to a performance as 'normal' and rather distinguishes academics and critics from 'average' audience members (2009: 4). In reference to critics, Freshwater suggests, 'perhaps it is inevitable that the experience of the theatre critic differs vastly from that of the rest of the audience. [...] And although their expertise qualifies them for the job, it ensures that they have little in common with the majority of theatre-goers' (2009: 35). While a scholar or theatre critic's response to a performance will inevitably be shaped by their previous encounters and knowledge of theatre, in positioning these two types of audience members as deviations from the norm, Freshwater problematically implies that there is a model for the 'normal' theatre-goer. Rather, as scholars one needs to acknowledge their cultural position and recognise that their interpretation of a performance sits within that framework. I return to discuss this notion further in reference to historical theory. Instead of discrediting the work of critics, horizon of expectations helps address their experience, for example, a critic may reflect on a play in relation to the wider landscape of theatre in that season. In noting the position of a critic's work, or my own position from which I approach a performance, I move away from the notion that there is a model 'normal' audience member and rather work to consider a performance from a variety of angles and reflect on the wider cultural structures that may shape an individual's interpretation.

Since Bennett's formative text, the field of audience studies has developed with a move in current scholarship to conduct ethnographic audience research. For example, Kirsty Sedgman (2016) undertakes research of this nature in her study concerning how audiences found value in performances by National Theatre Wales. Sedgman's methodologies include conducting questionnaires and interviews with audience members following National Theatre Wales performances; from this data she explores how different audience members engaged with the new theatre company. Ethnographic audience research has not been undertaken for this thesis; rather I draw on my reading and viewing of playtexts and performances, theatre reviews and interviews with playwrights. These resources help build an idea of how a play could have been interpreted, but in this sense, my reference to audiences' responses remain speculative.

Feminism

Central to this project, the term ‘feminism’ encompasses a vast body of thought, with the meaning of the word continually under discussion. While there are many facets to feminist theory, scholars appear to agree that feminism is not a fixed concept but a continually evolving debate; as Sandra Kemp and Judith Squires observe, ‘there is no unchanging feminist orthodoxy, no settled feminist conventions, no static feminist analyses. Feminism is diverse and it is dynamic’ (1997a: 12). With the definition under constant consideration, the concept of feminism generates fundamental questions concerning whether or not a single theory can speak for all women and if a universal definition of feminism can be reached. Following on from this, questions of identity are raised as theorists highlight other characteristics that contribute to an individual’s identity as well as their gender; these questions have developed into theories of intersectionality that work to acknowledge the complexity of characteristics that contribute to an individual’s identity, and thus calls for feminism to move beyond the notion of universality.

Regarding methodology, my performance analysis focuses on the dramaturgy of the plays in question and employs theories from feminist scholars, theatre practitioners and populist writers to explore gender politics in the construction of character and narrative within a playtext, and modes of representation in a performance text. For this method, feminist literature from academics and theatre practitioners, regarding performance analysis, enables exploration of dramaturgy, while popular feminist discourse facilitates consideration of the broader themes and contents of a play as well as the theatrical representation. In conjunction with this literature, sociocultural feminist scholarship enables exploration of issues raised in a performance and playtext beyond the context of the theatre. My discussion of feminist literature will mirror this structure, moving between theories from: feminist theatre studies, theatre practitioners, popular feminist debate and academic feminist theory.

In *An Introduction to Feminism and Theatre* (1995), Elaine Aston traces the development of feminist analysis within the field of theatre studies; recognising Sue- Ellen Case as a foundational scholar in this area and noting that ‘the field has been predominantly (although not exclusively) pioneered by American feminist theatre

scholarship' (1995: 7). Aston conducts 'a transatlantic surveying of American feminist theatre scholarship, in conjunction with a high profiling of feminist practitioners and playwrights in a British context' (1995: 8). This transatlantic dialogue has continued to develop within the field and the feminist literature addressed below is predominantly positioned within this landscape.

An engagement with popular and academic feminist discourse, for the purpose of feminist performance analysis, is demonstrated by Aston and Harris in both their individual and collaborative literature. Harris identifies that, 'issues can arise with women's studies and particularly feminism, where 'theory' often seems loftily divorced from everyday struggles of women outside and even sometimes inside academia' (1999: 1). In response, Aston and Harris negotiate between feminist discourse "inside' and 'outside' the academy', addressing both theoretical developments and the material 'things' which affect women's lives (2013: 8). Through this engagement they establish a progressive approach to bridging the gap between developments in theory, popular culture and social action taken to challenge injustice to women. This three pronged approach resonates strongly with the central perspective and methods that I develop in this thesis. This outlook is demonstrated as they address mainstream performances, which reach a large audience, and establish methods for developing a dialogue between academic debate and popular culture. By acknowledging second and third-wave feminist theory, Aston and Harris produce a discourse aware of the developments of political activism from the collective, alongside neoliberal individualist attitudes, and the subsequent implications for the academy and society as a whole (2013).

In *A Good Night Out For The Girls* (2013), Aston and Harris analyse the cultural work of contemporary feminist performance and further explore the relationship between 'popular feminisms' and the mainstream theatre industry (2013: 10). This method of performance analysis and negotiation between second and third wave feminist discourse maps onto specific themes within this project regarding current feminist debate. For example, Aston's chapter 'Work, Family, Romance and the Utopian Sensibilities of the Chick Megamusical *Mamma Mia!*' (2013b) addresses contemporary debate concerned with the pressure women face to balance a career

and raise a family. I explore this issue in Chapter Four, in reference to *Blue Stockings* by Jessica Swale, and map Aston's articulation of the debate onto my research.

From a similar position to Aston and Harris, Dolan analyses contemporary performances from a feminist perspective and proactively bridges the gap between theory and practice, whilst explicitly offering a critical guide to feminist spectatorship. Dolan addresses the role of the feminist critic and voices the challenge of, 'writing for people interested in a feminist approach to theatre and performance [...] since that constituency is large and varied from theoretical, political, and ideological perspectives' (Dolan, 1991: ix). In reference to American culture and performance, Dolan interrogates the male gaze and the historically 'ideal' spectator who, 'has been assumed to be white, middle-class, heterosexual, and male,' alongside the ideological framework this assumption reveals (1991: 1). In response, Dolan explores the concept of the feminist spectator, in reference to methodologies employed by other scholars, and contributes a practical guide for feminist performance analysis.

Dolan's guide for feminist performance analysis in *The Feminist Spectator in Action* (2013) echoes an intersectional approach in identifying that, 'feminist criticism should give artists and audiences a language for thinking about gender, race, and sexuality across the landscape of the arts' (2013: 13). Dolan primarily focuses on gender and race as the two main variables she will consider in reference to performance spectators, but does not appear to draw a strong comparison between the two, other than treating both factors as forms of 'otherness'. This link can at times feel arbitrary, with little explanation as to why race is Dolan's chosen difference alongside gender, highlighting the fine line between identifying different variables and engaging with them critically. Dolan challenges the spectator to: 'shift your critical perspective to consider gender and race, and when you see maleness as also gendered and whiteness as also a race, it's remarkable how many representations continue to fit these conservative examples' (2013: 194). This perspective indicates towards removing the notion of a cultural 'norm', as having a norm implies that there is a centre, a correct position, and thus any variant is off balance. Whereas, if one places both maleness and femaleness under the category of gender, then it is no longer a paradigm of conforming to the dominant gender or not, but rather subscribing to a category under the umbrella term 'gender'. By placing gender in this position it is addressed alongside

other characteristics. This shift in perspective foregrounds an awareness of the complex matrix of identity politics operating in the representation of women in a theatrical context. Therefore, in listing and exploring variables within an individual's identity I move away from the notion that diversity should only be commented on if it is outside the expected norm, rather an individual's class, race, religion etc. should be acknowledged and negotiated equally alongside dominant social groups. This approach is employed for character analysis, as a means to explore the representation of gender identity in contemporary British playwriting.

With a focus on gender representation, in 1983 the Sphinx Theatre Company, a feminist theatre group producing work in the UK since the 1970s, 'commissioned the first report on the status of women in theatre by the Conference of Women Theatre Directors and Administrators' (Sphinx, 2015: n.p.). The company have continued to be at the 'forefront of addressing the gender imbalance in theatre' and in response to their analysis Sphinx Associate Ros Phillips developed the Sphinx Test (Sphinx, 2015). The test was developed 'in response to the Bechdel Test,' used for film analysis, and comprises a selection of questions that 'enable writers and artists at all levels to consider those unconscious biases and gender balance more easily and in so doing help create more and better roles for women on the UK stage' (Sphinx, 2015). The test provides tangible tools to analyse the dramaturgy of a play and when put into conversation with feminist scholarship, the gap between the academy and industry is bridged for the benefit of discussion. It productively goes beyond simply identifying the presence of women in the UK theatre industry, by providing questions under the headings protagonist, driver, star and power, which assist exploration of specific dramaturgical devices. For example, relating to the title 'protagonist' they ask 'is there a women centre stage?' (Sphinx, 2015). A question such as this gets to the particulars of a play's structure and while the answer may be short, the implications of such can then be considered in reference to the broader landscape of feminist discourse. As a result, the Sphinx Test provides practical tools for analysis which help identify normative dramaturgical devices and structures. When read in the light of feminist theatre scholarship, this method not only enables identification of patriarchal narrative structures, but consideration of their potential implications which could prompt the need for change. I draw on the Sphinx Test throughout this project to

facilitate detailed consideration of narrative construction, with a focus on gender politics, and while the questions are arguably basic they provide a practical way to begin problematising a play's dramaturgy.

The Sphinx Test foregrounds a focus on dramatic form. The development of, and need for, this resource highlights the historically patriarchal structures from which dramatic content and form originally developed. Dolan highlights this patriarchal influence, arguing that 'power and ideology are inevitably written into form' (1991: xiv). The dramatic form addressed within this thesis, through analysis of mainstream new playwriting, carries historical and sociocultural baggage that frames the dramaturgical structures and narrative content of the plays addressed. Primarily, dramatic narrative structures are individual centred and protagonist driven, rather than employing a collective focus. This narrative structure, and subsequent implications on the representation of feminist history, is explored further in Chapter Two where Dreadnought Theatre Company's organised walk provides a contrasting example beyond the discussed mainstream dramatic form. Conventions of traditional narrative form, such as the protagonist driven plotline, arguably go unquestioned by contemporary playwrights. Within the confines of the new writing industry, playwrights may attempt to create work that is radical or political in some respect, yet plays still adopt a form which enables them to be considered within the landscape of mainstream theatre.

Feminist discourse has worked to challenge these patriarchal theatrical structures. Beginning with Greek theatre, Sue-Ellen Case maps the legacy of patriarchal theatre traditions and outlines that 'the image of 'Woman' as she is seen on the stage [is] institutionalised through patriarchal culture and represented by male-originated signs of her appropriate gender behaviour' (2008: 11). Through her analysis Case identifies 'the hierarchical organising-principles of traditional form that served to elide women from discourse' and goes on to explore an alternative feminist *Poetics* in response to Aristotle (2008: 129, 114). Case's *Feminism and Theatre* (2008) is one of the early feminist critiques of traditional theatrical form that made way for an array of feminist analysis to develop within the field of theatre studies over recent decades.

In addition, the tradition of British playwriting sits within the wider landscape of the British theatre industry and is consequently shaped by the sociocultural politics

of this institution and the hierarchies it ensures. Where playwrights explicitly attempt to foreground the female narrative, or challenge conventional gender representation, within the plays addressed it is vital to note that these works are still produced by an institution configured around a patriarchal perspective and means of cultural production. In this regard, within the case studies addressed these structures inevitably constrain the attempts of the playwrights to foreground a feminist perspective. However, this does not render the site of analysis redundant; on the contrary it highlights the need for an engagement beyond the individual production to consider the relationship between dramatic form and the theatrical institution, and indicates how playwrights are both confined by and attempting to challenge this central cultural platform of expression.

Where the Sphinx Test provides tools for exploration of dramaturgy and narrative in plays of the discussed dramatic form, popular feminist discourse works in conjunction with this analysis to consider the content and themes raised in a play beyond the context of theatre. Caitlin Moran, is a prominent voice in popular feminist debate with her book *How to be a Woman* (2012) covering a range of issues, of varying magnitude, from hair removal to abortion rights. Comedian Bridget Christie (2015) identifies Moran as a key contributor to contemporary feminist debate. While positioning herself as a newcomer, in *A Book For Her* Christie (2015) explores feminism in reference to her experience of creating a stand-up comedy routine, which responded to her frustrations with gender inequality in everyday life. In contrast to Moran and Christie, Roxanne Gay (2014) brings themes of race and sexuality alongside her debate concerning gender. Gay considers the cultural pressures of being a feminist and how this identity is negotiated across different social settings. Through this discussion she positions herself as teaching in American higher education and reflects on her pedagogy from a feminist perspective. Although Gay does not claim *Bad Feminist* to be an academic text, rather the book is a collection of essays, she shines a light on academic practice through her analysis. This bridges the gap between feminism 'inside' and 'outside', identified by Aston and Harris, from a perspective that links popular feminist debate to academic practice and university as an institution. This literature, together with blogs, articles and online material, provides a point of reference from which to explore how plays mirror current feminist debate.

Although discussing similar topics, Natasha Walter (2010) counters the informal speculative tone of both Moran and Christie with frequent reference to scientific and sociological case studies and evidence from her own ethnographic fieldwork. For example, she discusses prostitution in reference to interviews she conducted with women who have worked in the sex industry. In *Living Dolls* (2010) Walter considers sexism in everyday British culture and addresses topics such as glamour modelling, pornography, the notion of ‘choice’ and gender stereotypes. Walter positions this book in relation to her earlier work *The New Feminism* (1999), and clarifies her impetus to write *Living Dolls*:

It was easy for me to argue in [...] *The New Feminism*, [...] that even if the women’s movement may have quietened down, feminism had become part of the very air we breathed. [...] I believed that we only had to put in place the conditions for equality for the remnants of old-fashioned sexism in our culture to wither away. I am ready to admit that I was entirely wrong. [...] The rise of a hypersexual culture is not proof that we have reached full equality; rather, it has reflected and exaggerated the deeper imbalances of power in our society. (2010: 8)

Walter interrogates the notion of a ‘hypersexual’ culture with reference to a number of case studies, providing a sociological overview of the inequalities she observes, which are frequently veiled in narratives of empowerment. Walter argues against the ‘resurgence of the idea that traditional femininity is biologically rather than socially constructed,’ (2010: 11) and in response interrogates patriarchal social structures and attitudes that reinforce gender roles. From this perspective, Walter’s discourse challenges liberal feminism and illuminates debate concerning perceived choice and empowerment, discussed throughout this thesis, by shifting focus back to the patriarchal structures which imply notions of ‘choice’, rather than blaming actions of the individual.

Placing popular feminist discourse in conjunction with scholarship from feminist cultural theorists has facilitated my exploration of the social issues raised within a play alongside critique of dramaturgical structures throughout this thesis. Considering feminist literature beyond the field of theatre studies, theories concerning second and third wave feminism, and more specifically neoliberalism and postfeminism, have shaped my interrogation of the individual and collective within the feminist movement. Claire Snyder positions third-wave feminism as a concept

regarding personal choice, rather than a political group, which has evolved in response 'to a postmodern, post-Marxist world in which all foundations and grand narratives have been called into question' (2008: 187). Snyder goes on to recognise the challenge this discourse has brought for unity amongst feminists. The tension between the individual and collective within feminist discourse has been a prominent theme for this research; as the difference in perspective shapes the feminist outlook offered, while in a performance context theatrical techniques influence the foregrounding of either the individual or collective perspective. This indicates a tension between dramaturgical and ideological ideals in the representation of gender identity on stage. I primarily address this concept in Chapter Two regarding representations of the suffrage movement and develop the debate further in Chapter Four with regard to the notion of choice as manifested in liberal feminism.

In contrast to Snyder, Elizabeth Evans focuses on theories of intersectionality and neoliberalism in her exploration of third-wave feminism. Evans critiques the 'neoliberal context' of modern feminism, which 'advocates and rewards individualism' and 'has not always made it easy to promote collective identity and resistance' (2015: 2). From this position, Evans 'explores whether intersectionality can be incorporated within a feminist praxis that does not ultimately reduce analysis to the level of the individual' (2015: 40). This highlights the need for unity amongst feminists; but indicates that realignment to a political perspective is required, in order to cultivate solidarity amongst a movement. Intersectionality facilitates a focus first on the individual, and then the collective, in order to acknowledge the diversity amongst women while maintaining political engagement, which can challenge patriarchal structures that perpetuate oppression. In Chapter Three I address themes of intersectionality further, in reference to representations of class and race in contemporary plays that reimagine the Victorian period.

Influenced by the work of cultural theorist Angela McRobbie, Rosalind Gill and Christina Scharff's edited collection *New Femininities* (2011b) is significant in its definition and exploration of neoliberalism, in reference to Western culture, and its application of feminist theory to contemporary cultural activity. There is crossover between the topics addressed in this collection and the writing of popular feminists discussed above, with an emphasis on the manifestation of femininity and materiality

in our culture. For example, Imogen Tyler (2011) explores the pressure placed on women during pregnancy to adhere to society's notions of beauty, this resonates with Moran's (2012) comments on the beauty industry and motherhood.

The majority of plays I address within this thesis represent two sides of a historical conflict or debate in their subject matter; the most prominent being the campaign for women's equal enfranchisement and those who at the time opposed the motion. My performance analysis explores how both sides of a historical debate are represented and reconstructed through the dramaturgy of a play and goes on to interrogate the gender politics at work in these retellings of women's history. Within the plays addressed, characters who oppose women's rights are frequently represented to be a form of 'other', as their narratives are distanced from contemporary audiences. The process of positioning disturbing chapters of cultural history in relation to an 'other' has been theorised across a spectrum of academic discourse. Alain Badiou, according to Harris, suggests that by viewing the 'other' 'as a traumatised victim,' (Badiou ctd. in Harris, 2009: n.p.) a sense of distance is created. Harris draws this concept alongside Thomas A. Vogler's notion that distance generates, 'a secure place of innocence to view atrocities from, atrocities that are always acts of an Other, different in essence from ourselves' (Vogler ctd. in Harris, 2009: n.p.). This discourse operates within a field of scholarship which theorises the concept of othering, as a means to explore ethical and social distancing from that which is described to be in some respect different. Within my research I do not employ the term 'other' in this theoretical sense; rather I explore opposition within debate, as set up by the playwright's dramaturgy, not the wider sense of 'othering' regarding cultural criticism. While concepts of the 'other' does cross into questions of historiography, which is conducive to my exploration of the playwright, this theory is not employed, as I explore opposition in reference to dramaturgy, rather than larger questions of ethics.

History and Theatre Studies

Historical representation in contemporary theatrical performance is the subject of this thesis; theories of history and historiography are, consequently, central to my performance analysis. Hayden White considers historical representation in relation to narrative discourse, and argues that engagement with historiography forms 'the basis

for the appeal of narrativity as a form for the representation of events constructed to be real rather than imaginary' (1987: 4). White concludes:

What I have sought to suggest is that this value attached to narrativity in the representation of real events arises out of a desire to have real events display the coherence, integrity, fullness and closure of an image of life that is and can only be imaginary. (1987: 24)

This emphasises the role of narrativity in the way a culture understands and represents its history and alludes to the notion that the conclusion of narratives shapes periodization of the past, which subsequently call on the imaginary for its fruition. White problematises the relationship between historiography and narration, stating:

The very distinction between real and imaginary events that is basic to modern discussions of both history and fiction presupposes a notion of reality in which "the true" is identified with "the real" only insofar as it can be shown to possess the character of narrativity. (1987: 6)

This forefronts narrative within historical enquiry and consequently historical representation, but White positions the relationship between the two as 'purely conventional' whereby narrative feeds the concept of reality on which history draws.

Drawing on White's theories, Mary Fulbrook (2002) challenges postmodern debate in her complex overview of historical theory. Fulbrook address the position of the historian arguing that, 'all history writing inevitably entails taking a stand on key theoretical issues, whether or not the historian is aware of these - and many practicing historians are not. There is no escape from having a theoretical position, whether explicit or implicit' (2002: ix). This serves as a clear reminder to consider the cultural context in which one conducts research and more specifically approaches history. I consider this notion not only with regard to my own interpretation and analysis of the plays within this project, but in reference to the play's audiences. Where Fulbrook calls for the researcher to be aware of the perspective from which they operate, Bennett's theory of horizon of expectations enables consideration of how such paradigms may shape a spectator's encounter with a performance. Hence, putting Fulbrook's concept into conversation with Bennett's theory the ideologies and cultural structures in which both a performance and audience operate are illuminated. Consequently, this perspective enables consideration of the elements which may shape an audiences' horizon of expectations. I primarily consider this

concept for myself as a researcher, before speculating on the experience of an audience, in line with Fulbrook's position: 'I do not, then, think it is possible to 'stand outside' any or all theoretical approaches' (2002: x). Furthermore, this consideration applies to the perspective from which a playwright constructs historical representation in the process of playwriting.

Bringing together Fulbrook and Bennett's theories enables consideration of the context of a performance, audience, and oneself as a researcher. In contrast, Tracey C. Davis critiques emphasis on a performance's context by highlighting the researcher's subjectivity: 'a problem with "context" is that, though it is provided for the sake of "completeness," one scholar's criterion for gestalt may be another's idea of irrelevance' (2004: 204). Davis goes on to acknowledge that this is an inescapable problem, but one which requires 'innovative approaches' (2004: 209). The aspects of context one focuses on in reference to a performance inevitably mirror the research questions with which they approach a piece, which are subsequently shaped by the cultural context from which they embark upon research. Therefore, where Fulbrook calls for the researcher to recognise the position from which they enquire, Davis calls for them to note the role of subjectivity in their interrogation. Consequently, both strands are applicable for performance analysis and to address the positionality of the researcher. I address the notion of context in a multitude of ways; primarily in reference to the cultural landscape in which a performance takes place with an emphasis on feminist rhetoric within that moment. I recognise that I explore context in the pursuit of elements linked to feminist debate and, as identified by Davis, that a performance's context remains subjective. However, the subjective aspect does not render the process redundant, especially as the alternative leans problematically towards approaching a performance as context-less. Rather, I acknowledge that one's analysis does not depict an objective account of a performance's context and that subjectivity remains part of the inevitable lens from which one approaches research.

Similarly to Davis, historian Freddie Rokem identifies the formative relationship between a performance and the cultural context in which it is created. Rokem addresses plays with a historical setting, with a particular focus on performances that re-enact specific historical events, stating:

Theatrical performances about historical events are aesthetic adaptations or revisions of events that we more or less intuitively (or on the basis of some form of general knowledge or accepted consensus) know have actually occurred. The theatre, by performing history, is thus re-doing something which has already been done in the past, creating a secondary elaboration of this historical event. (2000: 6)

Rokem considers this genre of performance in reference to theories of witnessing and argues ‘that the theatre can seduce us to believe that it is possible for the actor to become a witness for the now dead witnesses’ (2000: xii). From this position Rokem forefronts a focus on the actor as a connection to the real and explores the energies in live performance, while paradoxically acknowledging that a theatrical performance, ‘will always remain a construction that can never become “real” in the sense that the historical past was’ (2000: 202). Rokem’s emphasis on witnessing presupposes a focus on the historical event under reconstruction and while he does make reference to fictional pieces with a historical setting, he primarily explores the former. This resonates with Taylor’s observation that historical studies centres on events, or rather, ‘the “live” embodied practice,’ which she claims is then of interest from a performance perspective (2006: 69). Taylor goes on to suggest that the act of performance is able to ‘distill meaning from past events’ and subsequently express them in the present (2006: 71). Like Rokem, this places emphasis on the historical event in the act of performance and foregrounds a focus on the history, with performance as the means of interpretation. In contrast, a focus on the playwright has caused me to give greater consideration to the dramaturgy and structure of a play, rather than the specific energies of the actors who perform the piece. As Rokem and Taylor consider the process of retelling history through performance, they centralize the past event, this negates the wider cultural structures that frame and shape a piece. I bridge this gap by shifting focus away from the historical period to consider the dramaturgical process of retelling the past and a performance’s subsequent relationship to contemporary cultural debate.

The Heritage Debate

Notions of memory are a prominent feature of historical theory and cross into concepts of historical representation. This is particularly evident in the performance

events I discuss created to mark centenaries, which frequently incorporate first-hand accounts of the historical moment being remembered. Pierre Nora places history and memory in opposition, believing memory ‘remains in permanent evolution,’ in contrast to history as the problematic reconstruction ‘of what is no longer’ (1989: 8-9). Raphael Samuel (1999) addresses memory in the context of heritage and like Nora distinguishes it from the formal structures of history; attributing it rather to anecdote and myth making. From this differentiation, Samuel proposes a contrast between history and heritage, whereby, ‘The first is concerned with explanation, bringing a sceptical intelligence to bear on the complexities and contradictoriness of the record; the second sentimentalizes, and is content merely to celebrate’ (1999: 270). Samuel condemns the consumerist nature of the heritage industry (1999: 266); this resonates with Robert Hewison’s criticism that the ‘growth of heritage culture has led not only to a distortion of the past, but to a stifling of the culture of the present’ (1987: 10). From a similar perspective, David Lowenthal deplores notions of heritage, arguing that, ‘heritage mandates *mis*readings of the past’ (1998: 129). However, with the development of the field of heritage studies focus has moved away from heritage as a direct opposition to history. Laurajane Smith shifts attention beyond ‘disciplines of history, archaeology and architecture,’ and rather addresses heritage as a ‘cultural process or performance concerned with the production and negotiation of cultural identity, individual and collective memory, and social and cultural values’ (2007: 1-2). Building on Smith’s focus on heritage as an act of the individual, rather than a material concept, Anthony Jackson and Jenny Kidd explore performances at museums as acts of heritage, in their edited collection *Performing Heritage* (2011).

While heritage studies contributes to debate concerning the retelling of history, recent scholarship, identified above, focuses on the individual’s encounter with the event or site as a performance of heritage. However, with regards to this project, although the performances in question offer a representation of the past, the experience of attending a play is not explicitly culturally framed as an act of heritage. Therefore, while the field of heritage studies contributes to the notion of retelling history it has not been a prominent feature of this study, yet it was foundational in my initial exploration of concepts of authenticity. Upon embarking on this thesis questions of authenticity, in reference to theatrical performances which reconstruct

the past, were at the forefront of my enquiry; as I speculated that audiences and critics were considering productions in relation to historical accuracy and using the term to describe and measure a reimagining of the past. However, my understanding of the concept of authenticity developed as I encountered literature from cultural critic Walter Benjamin (1992), social anthropologists Lionel Trilling (1972) and Richard Handler (1986), and theatre scholar Elizabeth Burns (1972) who considers the notion in reference to theatrical conventions. Following engagement with this scholarship, questions regarding authenticity in terms of materiality became redundant, with regard to this project, as I developed an understanding of the term as a mode of evaluation. Nevertheless, this repositioning of the term still directs attention to an assessment of theatrical representation in reference to a perceived historical original. Grappling with theories of authenticity has illuminated my research questions, which require an interrogation of dramaturgical and theatrical conventions, rather than attention to historical accuracy, in order to explore the sociocultural dialogue between a representation of the past and the contemporary moment. This distinction directs attention to theories of historiography, which foreground questions of how history is conducted and retold, rather than a focus on the specifics of the period. However, three of the ten plays I analyse within this thesis premiered at Shakespeare's Globe Theatre, which as a reconstructed Elizabethan playhouse has been extensively addressed by scholars in relation to authenticity. Notions of authenticity are imbedded in the Globe space and shape reception and analysis of work produced at this theatre. Furthermore, performances at Shakespeare's Globe complicate my delineation between the plays discussed and notions of heritage; as the site is a historical replica and consequently framed by historical debate and read as a site of cultural heritage. Given this complex relationship to historical representation and authenticity, a case study of the Globe theatre is a fruitful example through which to illustrate my journey with the concept of authenticity in reference to theatrical performance.

Authenticity at Shakespeare's Globe Theatre

A large body of scholarship has surrounded Shakespeare's Globe theatre on South Bank since its planning stages in the twentieth century, and covers the building's architecture, education resources, original practices productions, and the

institution as a tourist attraction. William Worthen's (2003) research is foundational in studies of the Globe and moves focus beyond theatrical performance to address the institution as a whole. Building on Worthen, Christie Carson and Farah Karim-Cooper direct attention back to performance in order 'to re-establish a dialogue between the scholar and the practitioner' (2008: 6). Amongst this body of scholarship theorists have addressed both the replica Globe building and productions staged in the theatre space in reference to authenticity. In his book *The Globe Theatre Project: Shakespeare and Authenticity*, Rob Conkie interrogates why energy at Shakespeare's Globe has been focused on 'the pursuit of authenticity' (2006: 1). From a similar position to Conkie, Franklin J. Hildy (2008) hones his focus on authenticity to address the process of planning and building the space, and traces the history of the Globe project in reference to Sam Wannamaker's vision for the theatre. Hildy critiques different attempts to reconstruct the Elizabethan theatre in America and considers their influence on the reconstruction of the Globe in London. Hildy suggests that the emphasis on creating an 'authentic reconstruction [...] forced a level of discipline on the project that had never been attempted before' (2008: 14). However, the process of building the replica Globe theatre revealed new knowledge about the original and ironically 'because of its steadfast dedication to the idea of authenticity this theatre has actually identified its own flaws' (Hildy, 2008: 15). Valerie Claydon Pye brings a new perspective to the field by drawing on theories regarding tourism, in order to explore narratives produced by the building and consider how these then perform authenticity. Pye illuminates Hildy's specific architectural approach, by considering the institution in reference to tourism and adopts a broader focus by positioning the theatre within the capitalist landscape in which it operates. Pye acknowledges that audiences are aware they have not time travelled to the original Elizabethan Globe and explores how one negotiates authenticity in one's reading of the space (Pye, 2014: 414). Pye's discourse productively frees authenticity from the judgement of historical accuracy and instead positions it as a subjective concept, exercised through an individual's experience. She employs a sociological approach and does not attempt to measure authenticity in accordance to the archaeology of the physical site; rather Pye interrogates narratives that are created by the Globe and explores how these contribute to different readings of authenticity by visitors.

Regarding authenticity and performance at Shakespeare's Globe, scholars have focused primarily on 'original practices' productions. Original practices refers to productions that attempt to employ elements of practice, from word pronunciation to costume technique, which are believed to have been used at the original Globe theatre. Theorists vary in their interpretations of this subject. Don Weingust criticises both British and American original practices productions claiming they only partially adhere to historical conventions, for example, the replica Globe is larger than the Elizabethan Globe space (2014: 407). Weingust identifies original practices productions as a 'marketing opportunity,' and goes on to question whether these performances 'of Shakespeare are really forms of "authentic performances", or rather are more "performances of authenticity"' (2014: 405). This implies a commodity driven quality to authenticity, whereby framing a piece as original provides authenticity for consumption. However, from a different perspective to Weingust, Carson is critical of the application of authenticity in analysis of the Globe and, drawing on writing by Hildy, argues that the Globe has achieved, 'not authenticity but a practical space for experimentation that is informed by scholarly concerns about the period' (2008: 29). Carson shifts focus away from a belief that performances at the Globe can be authentic to the Elizabethan original. This productively opens up space to consider the work of original practices productions as a place of experimentation and discovery, and the dialogue between this historical theatrical practice and the contemporary theatre industry. This focus not only acknowledges the contemporary position of the artists involved, but enables techniques of original practice to become a tool for theatrical discovery, rather than strict rules which if adhered to hold promise of an 'authentic production'. This echoes Tim Carroll's (2008) approach to authenticity in performance, whereby he equates the term with realism and argues against its use, instead Carroll wishes to explore how Globe performances operate within the realm of an audience's imagination.

Carroll's frustration with the rhetoric of authenticity is grounded in the notion that the original performance is the source of authenticity, which modern productions are to be held accountable to. This outlook can be debilitating to performance analysis as the unknown original production sets the bar by which the performance should be measured. But, if authenticity moves away from this concept and instead addresses

the perspective of the audience it becomes an evaluative tool. As suggested by Pye, audiences not only recognise the modern moment from which they access a performance, they also read historical narratives into their experience and reflect on authenticity accordingly. In a similar vein, Theo Van Leeuwen recognises authenticity as, ‘an evaluative concept’ that is not ‘value-free’ (2001: 392). This foregrounds authenticity as an active process. Van Leeuwen provides definitions of the term and in the case of the Globe his concept that, ‘applies it [authenticity] to faithful reconstruction or representation, as when baroque music is played on authentic instruments (paradoxically usually copies) in historically accurate ways,’ is productive for analysis (2001: 392-393). By moving authenticity into the realm of evaluation and reconstruction, it can be used to explore different interpretations of productions in the Globe space and highlights how, ‘non-specialist spectators can read that which can be seen as inauthentic to experts as authentic’ (Pye, 2014: 422). This places importance on the encounter rather than the historical roots of the thing being encountered. Therefore, approaching authenticity as an evaluative tool places emphasis on the experience of the spectator and moves away from a material accuracy. This delineation is beneficial when considering theatrical performance and its language of representation; as the theatre works with the rhetoric of representation and thus materials are not claimed to be authentic, rather representations of the objects in question. This notion is inevitably complicated by the concept of original practices at the Globe; but once again if emphasis is on the embodied action or device, rather than the historical date of the object used to conduct an activity, authenticity can become an evaluative tool for the spectator. This once more emphasises that authenticity is in the eye of the beholder; it is a rhetoric active in audience reception and a tool which spectators may use to form a response to a performance. In this regard, the notion that an authentic production can be achieved becomes redundant as the concept is subjective. This case study of the Globe demonstrates a rejection of my initial understanding of authenticity, as linked to a material original with regards to performances that reconstruct a historical period, and move to address authenticity as an evaluative tool. This approach places notions of authenticity in the realm of audience interpretation, which subsequently suggests that the retelling of history through performance is an act of representation. The framing of theatricality and

notion that there is not an authentic original at the centre of a performance alludes to the concept that plays that are set in a historical period are, by nature, a representation of that historical moment. As discussed, I am not concerned with a production's faithfulness to the historical moment but rather what such a reimagining tells us about the contemporary moment and the gender politics of repeated narratives and theatrical conventions. Hence, authenticity, even when recognised as an evaluative tool for the spectator, still foregrounds a focus on historical accuracy rather than the wider cultural politics of theatrical representation which my research questions address. Therefore, questions of authenticity become redundant for this investigation into the retelling of history in contemporary playwriting. With a focus on how history is represented, rather than if it is authentic to an original or not, my process becomes one of historiographic enquiry. Authenticity is a term which spectators may use to describe a performance at the Globe; this rhetoric aligns with my understanding of the concept as an evaluative tool, instead of a quality to measure through performance analysis.

On reflection, scholarship regarding performances at the new Globe appears to focus primarily on original practices productions and solely on productions of work by Shakespeare and his contemporaries. Theorists have not yet explored new writing staged at the Globe. New writing complicates this field as a production may represent a historical period, but the dramaturgy has been created solely from the perspective of modern artists. How then do productions of this calibre function in a space created to experiment with Elizabethan theatrical conventions? I contribute to this gap in scholarship by addressing three pieces of new writing staged at the Globe². Each play is set in a different era than the Elizabethan or contemporary, and consequently historical representation is complicated by the layering of time periods and framing of this replica space.

Historiography and Historical Representation

With this shift in focus from the specifics of a historical moment to the process of retelling history, as embodied through my journey with notions of authenticity,

² *Doctor Scroggy's War* by Howard Brenton (2014a) discussed in Chapter One, *Blue Stockings* and *Nell Gwynn* by Jessica Swale (2013b) (2015b) discussed in Chapter Four.

theories of historiography have become central to my research. Questions of historiography are pertinent in reference to playwriting, dramaturgy and theatrical devices in the plays under consideration. Historiographic enquiry has facilitated my exploration of gender politics within theatrical representations which adhere to dominant historical narratives. This starting point has subsequently enabled exploration of those playwrights who challenge these norms. David Wiles foregrounds a focus on historiography in his exploration of theatre history and argues that ‘any historian needs to interrogate the present in order to ask important questions of the past’ (2013: 5). Similarly, Postlewait brings theories of historiography alongside theatre studies, and defines historiography as:

Not only the methods that define and guide the practice of historical study and writing but also the self-reflexive mindset that leads us to investigate the processes and aims of historical understanding. Etymologically, the word historiography means the writing of history. (2009: 2)

Postlewait considers research into the history of theatre. From this perspective he is not addressing plays which are set in the past, but rather performances that occurred in the past and employing historiography as a means to explore how such theatre has been accounted for by historians. As discussed in reference to Fulbrook and Davis, Postlewait also places emphasis on the context of an event. He develops debate by rejecting the notion that simply ‘event=context’ and instead offers a four part model that considers the world, agents, receptions and artistic heritage, of an event (2009: 10-15). These elements were arguably already under consideration by theorists who address contextualization, but Postlewait offers an explicit reminder of the dynamics which contribute to an event’s overall context.

Charlotte Canning and Postlewait’s co-edited collection *Reconstructing the Past* (2010b) covers a range of international contexts in its exploration of both theatre history and approaches to theatre historiography. Canning and Postlewait suggest that, ‘historical representation seeks to be an objective image of the thing itself, yet it cannot avoid being, in some capacity, a subjective distortion of that thing’ (2010a: 11). However, this assumption negates the possibility that playwrights and theatre makers may knowingly use history as a means to instigate political debate, challenge dominate cultural narratives or offer an alternative perspective, as is evident in the epic theatre

tradition. While Canning and Postlewait productively identify that the process results in a 'subjective distortion,' the notion that historical representation always 'seeks to be objective' ignores the possibility of a conscious intention on the part of the playwright in their reimagining of history. Claire Cochrane and Jo Robinson draw on Canning and Postlewait's questioning of 'truth' within historical enquiry, and go on to 'suggest that a further concern can be raised about the consequences of the truth, and of truth-telling' (2016: 2). From this position, they explore the ethical implications of a belief in the 'fundamental duty of the historian,' commanded by Canning and Postlewait, to tell the 'truth' (Cochrane and Robinson, 2016: 2). A recent contribution to the field, this collection from Cochrane and Robinson challenges the canon of theatre history and develops debate regarding the complex relationship between evidence and memory. Cochrane and Robinson focus on theatre history as they bring feminist epistemology alongside their exploration of historiography, I develop this debate by drawing on these two discourses in reference to contemporary new writing.

As previously identified, in reference to Sierz's theories, Feldman explores the representation of history in twentieth-century British theatre with a particular focus on the metatheatricality of plays which include a play-within-a-play. Feldman's approach moves away from a focus on historiography with regards to theatre history, as modelled by Cochrane and Robinson, and towards a consideration of contemporary plays that are set in a historical period. Feldman's selection of plays appears limited in number given the broad time period they span (1964-98), but one assumes this is a result of the necessity for a piece to include a play-within-a-play in order to fall within his project boundaries. In this thesis I bring this focus on the performance of history into plays produced in the twenty-first century. Questions of gender representation have previously been overlooked in this genre of new writing, but I bridge this gap by incorporating feminist analysis into this aspect of theatre historiography.

A feminist perspective within theatre historiography is modelled by Bennett in her exploration of Canadian theatre, where she argues that the act of bringing together theories of feminism and theatre history does not by default result in cultural equality (1992: n.p.). Rather Bennett calls for a bridging of the relationship between theatre academics and practitioners and focuses primarily on work that is explicitly feminist,

while simultaneously exploring it through a feminist lens, as a means to move forward in gender equality within this field. I echo this method in developing theories of historiography in the work of academic discourse and playwriting. I expand on Bennett's engagement with feminist practitioners by exploring work that does not claim to be feminist, in order to broaden the dialogue and foreground a focus on gender politics in historiographic analysis of the process of playwriting.

In a similar vein to Bennett's call for further development in aligning feminism and historiography, Angelika Epple and Angelika Schaser question 'the traditional canon of historiography' and explore 'its gendered basis,' in their edited collection *Gendering Historiography* (2009: 8). Epple and Schaser address the development of theories of historiography and as a result call to dissolve national master narratives in favour of a pluralistic view, believing it would provide 'insights into both excluded and included histories' (2009: 14-15). Within this collection, Krista Cowman observes a marginalisation within the academy of feminist 'activists' histories' and goes on to challenge:

As feminist historians, how many of us are immediately aware of the current priorities of today's women's movements? How do we represent these within our academic work, or connect our researches into this broader context? Overlooking them may not be to the long term advantage of women's history. If we dismiss these links, we risk denying activists, historical agency. We also perpetuate a narrower and less nuanced history when we could be creating something much more inclusive. (2009: 159)

This methodology called for by Cowman is significant and I adopt it within this thesis, not from the position of a historian but in contribution to historiographic discourse through linking the representation of history to contemporary feminist debate. Cowman goes on to 'recognize how relatively recent challenges to the gendering of historiography are' (2009: 159). In response to this developing reaction to the canon, my exploration of contemporary plays offers a critique of the normative historiography which has developed in British playwriting. I progress debate concerning feminist theatre historiography by identifying this norm and expanding focus to explore those performances which operate beyond it. This discussion develops further to address how these representations challenge or mirror

contemporary feminist discourse, consequently representing current ‘priorities of today’s women’s movements’ within the academy, as called for by Cowman.

History of the Period

Scholarship regarding history of the period 1882-1928 has provided a point of reference on which to ground interpretations of contemporary playwrights’ retellings of this historical era. This is not to suggest that historians are able to uncover the ‘truth’ of the period, as explored in relation to Fulbrook’s theories, rather this literature has helped provide an understanding of the period in question from which to explore its reimagining on the contemporary stage. *English Feminism 1780-1980* (1997) by Barbara Cain forms the foundation of engagement with historians’ scholarship on the period. Cain documents the development and growth of feminism, in the context of Britain, and focuses on key figures who progressed the cause alongside different groups within the wider feminist movement. Cain provides a timeline of ‘Legislation, Institutional Change, and Public Events,’ ‘Feminist Lives and Campaigns,’ and ‘Publications’ between 1792 and 1982 (1997: xiii-xvii).

At choice moments I consult historians’ writing on a specific event or topic. For example, in Chapter Three Elizabeth Longford’s (1964) account of Queen Victoria illuminates analysis of *The Empress* by Tankia Gupta, a play which dramatises the relationship between Queen Victoria and her teacher, or Munshi, Abdul Karim. Chapters One and Two require a greater breadth of historical scholarship as two large historical events, World War One (WWI) and the British suffrage campaign, are focused on respectively. *The Last Great War* (2008) by Adrian Gregory considers social and cultural changes that occurred in British society during WWI. This insight facilitates analysis of *An August Bank Holiday Lark* (2014a), by Deborah McAndrew, which follows a fictional Lancashire community during the outbreak of war and forms the primary case study for my analysis of WWI plays. With a focus on analysing the representation of women within the plays discussed, Gail Braybon’s chapter ‘Women, War, and Work’ (2000), in Hew Strachan’s (2000) edited collection on WWI, provides historical background regarding how the war impacted women’s roles within the home and work environment.

Exploration of the suffrage movement in Chapter Two touches on contemporary organised walks that commemorate or re-enact events of the suffrage period. Pageantry performances and group protests from the historical era sit in conjunction with these contemporary acts. In *Spectacular Confessions* (1997) historian Barbara Green reads suffrage ‘pageants and processions’ as ‘theatrical spectacles’ (1997: 3). Green’s scholarship enables me to compare and contrast historical women’s collective walks or pageants to contemporary cultural activity that attempts to replicate this act. Green provides insight into how historically society responded to this act of protest which juxtaposes contemporary responses to representations of the suffrage movement.

The four content chapters of this thesis each draw on a specific historical event or theme within the 1882-1928 historical boundary and as a result each chapter calls on literature that relates to the topic in question. For example, in Chapter Three I explore the representation of class and race; during this analysis scholarship concerned with social attitudes regarding race and racism and the development of this rhetoric is addressed. As each chapter requires me to consult specific areas of literature, this scholarship is reviewed within the chapters themselves, so as to situate engagement with secondary sources alongside the analysis it is directly concerned with. Thus, this literature review offers investigation of the primary fields of scholarship I address in this thesis and demonstrates where this project sits in relation to these sources. Overall, where previously scholars have consulted theatre history, the specific genre of historical representation in new writing has been overlooked. While Rokem (2000) and Feldman (2013) have begun to chart this territory a critique of gender representation is lacking. My research in this thesis occupies this lacuna by employing feminist performance analysis to explore how the reimagining of the past in contemporary British playwriting mirrors and challenges current feminist discourse.

Chapter One
The Wartime Woman: the impact of the centenary year on theatrical representations of World War One.

Introduction

The centenary of the outbreak of World War One (WWI), marked in 2014, revealed a national motivation to dramatise the historical moment, as indicated by the vast example of work created in response to the cultural anniversary. The centenary year saw a host of events across the nation and a range of media was employed to engage with the many facets of the war; one platform for commemoration was the stage. Playwriting is a common form employed to mark cultural events and to enable a community to reimagine its past; the backdrop of a centenary inevitably has an influence and shapes work that is produced within this landscape. New writing that developed in response to the anniversary of WWI provides a fruitful example to explore the two-way relationship between the representation of the past on stage and the context in which a piece is created, as the centenary foregrounds a focus on history within the cultural rhetoric which frames a play. Interrogation of plays produced in the centenary year highlights recurring modes of representation and dramaturgy for female characters that occur between the pieces. This crossover points to a normative historiography that has developed regarding the representation of this period in contemporary playwriting.

In this chapter, I identify a correlation between plays which premiered in 2014 and those set during WWI (see Appendix Two), with four pieces of new writing produced that year. Additionally two plays fall within the project boundary where the action is set during WWI but they were produced prior to 2014. Thus six plays in total, of the twenty three my research identifies, are concerned with this chapter of history. This initial focus is wide because it allows consideration of the breadth of contemporary new writing that has responded to this pivotal chapter of British history. The framing of the centenary provides a specific cultural landscape which relates to the contents of the plays and hence the relationship between the representation of history and the cultural moment in which it is produced can be brought into sharp focus given this direct dialogue. This exploration, of the cultural

phenomenon of the centenary, is developed in Chapter Two to consider centenaries attributed to the women's suffrage movement, thus refining my focus to a feminist chapter of history.

With a focus on the relationship between performance and cultural context, the landscape of centenary activity which frames these plays is significant. At the forefront of centenary events was The Royal British Legion, a charity who provides support for those serving in the armed forces and their families, while simultaneously committing to, 'helping everyone understand the importance of Remembrance so that sacrifices of our Armed Forces past and present are never forgotten' (RBL, 2015b: n.p.). The Royal British Legion is famed for their annual poppy appeal prior to Remembrance Day on the 11th of November and events across the centenary year were linked to the charity. One of the most prominent events was the installation of 888,246 ceramic poppies in the Tower of London's dry moat. The installation, titled *Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red*, was a collaboration between ceramic artist Paul Cummins and stage designer Tom Piper; each poppy was planted by a volunteer and represented 'the life of a British and Colonial soldier lost during the First World War' (1418Now, 2015: n.p.). The installation attracted over five million visitors and once it had come to an end poppies were available to the general public to purchase, with proceeds going to a selection of Service charities (RBL, 2015a: n.p.) (1418Now, 2015: n.p.). An educational programme ran alongside the installation called *Why Remember*; this included a project with Arcola Youth Theatre who created a site specific performance at the Tower of London which worked with personal accounts of WWI and the poppies as its stimulus (HRP, 2017: n.p.).

Additionally, the BBC broadcast a large volume of programmes throughout the year that related to the war, all of which were accompanied by online resources that drew on the BBC's archive to offer information both, on an international scale and regarding domestic life in Britain (BBC, 2014: n.p.). As well as documentaries the BBC created fiction, inspired by events of the war; for example Radio 4 aired a drama series titled *Home Front* and BBC One programmed *The Crimson Field* a drama following volunteer nurses. Like the BBC, *The Daily Telegraph* newspaper released archival material; each day it republished the paper it had produced on that date 100 years previously. This project is set to run until the centenary of WWI's end in 2018

(TDT, 2014: n.p.). Commemoration occurred across media, with the English National Ballet producing a piece titled *Lest We Forget*, echoing the famous mantra associated with remembrance rhetoric. Choreographers Liam Scarlett, Russell Maliphant and Akram Khan each created a dance to comprise the three sections of this piece (ENB, 2015: n.p.). *Lest We Forget* explored ‘the experiences of those who fought the war, and those who stayed behind’ (ENB, 2015: n.p.). This dualism has become a popular focus for creators and curators of WWI centenary events.

This centenary is an example of doubleness within historiography; the representation of WWI in these mainstream plays, produced in the centenary year, tell audiences about the historical moment while simultaneously asking spectators to reflect upon what this history means today. Through interrogation of these plays’ dramaturgies, established modes of representation emerge. These devices are repeatedly drawn on by playwrights to retell this period and direct audiences about how to engage with this chapter of history. This notion of doubleness extends to representation in performance, as the retelling of the past in the contemporary moment not only mirrors current cultural attitudes but speaks back to the moment in which it was created. Consequently, in this case the notion of mirroring is not passive; rather it is an active process occurring in mainstream cultural activity.

As identified above, two of the six plays from my fieldwork that are set in WWI were produced before the centenary: *To The Green Fields Beyond* by Nick Whitby (2000), directed by Sam Mendes, premiered on the 14th of September 2000 at the Donmar Warehouse and *Sea and Land and Sky* by Abigail Docherty (2014), directed by Andy Arnold, premiered at the Tron Theatre in Glasgow in 2010. *To The Green Fields Beyond* follows an eight man tank crew the night before they advance with the frontline in an attempt to gain ground. The play does not glorify the soldiers’ service but rather their blunt language, racial hierarchy and moments of violence dramatise the limits their psyches have been pushed to by the conflict. *Sea and Land and Sky* is based on, ‘a collection of diaries kept by Scottish nurses who served overseas during the First World War,’ and offers a violent retelling of the frontline (Rawlinson, 2014: 33). Stylistically, the play creates a grotesque representation of the physical and psychological effects of war, for example, the character Ailsa collects dismembered corpses and attempts to reassemble them (Docherty, 2014: 422).

In contrast to these two blunt reimaginings of violence, the four plays which premiered in the centenary year set a different tone. The centenary plays are: *An August Bank Holiday Lark* by Deborah McAndrew (2014b) (2014a), directed by Barry Rutter, premiered at the New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme; *Doctor Scroggy's War* by Howard Brenton (2014b) (2014a), directed by John Dove, premiered at Shakespeare's Globe, London; *The Christmas Truce* by Phil Porter (2014), directed by Erica Whyman, premiered at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon; and *Versailles* written and directed by Peter Gill (2014), premiered at the Donmar Warehouse, London. *An August Bank Holiday Lark* is set in the fictional Lancashire town of Greenmill and focuses on folk dancing and the Rushcart festival; a Morris dancing tradition still honoured in some Northern communities (The Morris Ring, 2015: n.p.). The play follows the community as their young men go to war and their everyday lives and traditions of folk dancing are affected by the conflict. *Doctor Scroggy's War* is based on the historical figure Harold Gillies, a pioneering surgeon who experimented with facial reconstructive surgery during WWI. The piece follows fictional soldier Jack Twigg as he is injured in combat and treated by Gillies. During his time in hospital, Jack encounters Gillies' comical alter ego Doctor Scroggy who appears at night distributing champagne and oysters to the patients. *The Christmas Truce* centres on a section of soldiers and volunteer nurses as they travel to the frontline. The play dramatises the events of Christmas day 1914 when historically soldiers called a temporary truce and played football with German soldiers in no-man's-land. *Versailles* focuses on the middle class Rawlinson family and their neighbours as they adjust to life post war. Act two, of three, is set in Paris and follows the Rawlinson's son Leonard as 'he serves as a financial advisor to the British delegation' in their negotiation of the Treaty of Versailles (Woolf, 2014: 26). Theatre critic Paul Taylor recognises the wealth of books and articles that focus on the causes of WWI, but goes on to note that *Versailles* was the only play produced in the centenary year which chose to focus on the, 'long-term effects of the decisions made in the immediate aftermath,' of the war (2014: n.p.).

A stark difference between the pre-2014 plays and the centenary plays is that both *To The Green Fields Beyond* and *Sea and Land and Sky* attempt to dramatises the violence of frontline action; these plays focus on those involved in combat and

concentrate on their experience and engagement with violent acts of war. Consequently, the narratives of female characters are embedded in these representations of violence and frontline combat. In contrast, each of the centenary plays reimagines the war in relation to an institution, historical figure or community. For example, *Doctor Scroggy's War* dramatises the work of a historical surgeon, *Versailles* is set at the end of the war and narrates a political treaty, *An August Bank Holiday Lark* centres on the tradition of folk dancing in a community during the outbreak of war, and while *The Christmas Truce* is set in the trenches it includes a concert to boost morale, cricket scores to represent casualties and reimagines the famous story of soldiers playing football on Christmas day. This indicates a difference in dramaturgy, whereby plays produced pre-2014 represent war, as reimagined through violent conflict, in contrast to plays produced during the centenary year where WWI forms the plays backdrop but the narrative focus is beyond the combat. This mode of representation in the centenary plays echoes sociologist Cynthia Cockburn's notion that, 'War as institution is made up of, refreshed by and adaptively reproduced by violence as banal practice, in the everyday life of boot camp and battlefield' (2007: 249). The pre-2014 plays challenge this normality of violence in war by foregrounding it in their narratives and using the horrors of combat to define the characters' experiences. In contrast, the centenary plays side step extensive representation of violence in favour of other subjects, thus reinforcing the cultural perception, argued by Cockburn, of violence as an inevitable and banal aspect of war requiring no further reflection. This suggests that the framing of the centenary instigated a different type of response from the playwright. It implies historiographic parameters that prompt playwrights to look past the conflict and instead thematically layer their engagement with combat. This distances narratives from the horrors of violence within war, reinstating it as an inevitable facet of conflict, and aligns focus with the wider landscape of cultural activity within the centenary year that addressed a multitude of institutions and experiences of life during this period.

The pre-2014 plays, primarily *Sea and Land and Sky*, dramatises the bloodshed of combat through narratives of the women; unlike the centenary plays, which frame violence in reference to the heroic soldier. For example, *Sea and Land and Sky* includes the character of Lily returning from a village that has been struck, stage directions

dictate she is, ‘*naked and covered head to foot in blood*’ (Docherty, 2014: 462). This indicates the integration of the female narrative into the violent representation of war, which contrasts the tropes of female characters in the centenary plays discussed below.

The mantra ‘lest we forget’, a line from Rudyard Kipling’s poem *Recessional*, frames British cultural remembrance of WWI. This narrative is powerful; it requires us to honour the deceased, to prevent future conflict, and not to forget the horrors of war. The centenary plays, and to a lesser extent the pre-2014 plays, sit within this lest we forget cultural landscape. Adrian Gregory draws attention to early connections between Kipling’s line and remembrance of WWI, ‘in the immediate post-war years there was certainly an idealisation, exemplified by the film ‘Lest We Forget’, which highlighted the ongoing debt to the wounded soldier’ (2008: 265-266). Gregory proposes that in the aftermath of the war:

The language of sacrifice was remade in order to stress universal grief as the common experience of war and that this is to some extent a mythology designed to cover up the social tensions that the war had created. The future understanding of the war would be shaped by this idea of universal bereavement. (2008: 7)

The notion of a collective bereavement continues to shape cultural responses to the remembrance of WWI. Grief is an appropriate response for those lost and injured in historical conflict. However, this is a passive mode of collective grief; it removes obligation for the state to examine the fundamental ethics and legislative force of war. As Victoria Basham sharply identifies, remembrance rhetoric enables communities ‘to forget the violence and bloodiness of actual warfare and the victims it creates,’ in favour of the ‘Poppy Appeal’s celebration of soldiers, living and dead, as ‘heroes’ (2016: 892). Alan Bennett echoes this notion of forgetting in his script for the film version of his play *The History Boys*. Bennett writes:

It’s not lest we forget, but lest we remember. That’s what this is about... the memorials, the Cenotaph, the Two Minutes’ Silence. Because there’s no better way of forgetting something than by commemorating it. (2006: 28)

Bennett poignantly suggests a cultural attitude which further reinforces Cockburn’s argument on the framing of violence within war as banal. Taken together, Bennett and Cockburn indicate a sustained critique that commemoration enables our culture

to avoid confronting the harrowing reality of warfare. Stylistically, by creating a narrative in the backdrop of WWI, but alternative to the conflict, playwrights reinforce Bennett's observation that in remembering we are able to forget.

This creates significant questions about the centenary plays. If they are not simply remembering, as the centenary rhetoric requests, then how is WWI history used in these pieces? And how do such representations speak of the contemporary moment in which the performances took place? The thematic crossovers between the plays signify normative historical narratives associated with WWI, as well as recurring methods for representing these historical moments within theatrical performance. The recurrence of these narratives has dramaturgical and ideological implications. This distinction frames the female narratives within the plays, as the normative historiography operating within these pieces centralizes the narrative of male characters. Unlike the pre-2014 plays, in the centenary plays the female narrative is formulated away from representations of violence and bloodshed, hence the distinction between the representation of violence in the pre-2014 and the centenary plays maps onto the dramaturgy of the female characters.

The identification of normative narratives associated with WWI, and modes of representing such, calls for consideration of where women feature within reconstructions of this period. In historical scholarship Gregory identifies 'a thriving literature on women's history and the issue of the change (or lack of change) in gender roles' during the war years (2008: 6). Reflection on the role of women during the war is incorporated into compendiums on the period, for example, Gail Braybon's chapter 'Women, War and Work' (2000) in Hew Strachan's *The Oxford Illustrated History of the First World War* (2000). This sits alongside popular literature on the topic, such as *Fighting on the Home Front*, by former BBC Chief News Correspondent Kate Adie (2013). Adie interprets women's experiences during WWI as a transition from domestic to public life which acted as a catalyst for gaining equal rights. The last century has seen extensive contributions from this perspective regarding women's involvement in the war, with recent work addressing the experience of specific individuals; such as, *Lady Under Fire on the Western Front* (Hallam and Hallam, 2010), a collection of letters by Lady Dorothea Feilding who drove ambulances for a volunteer unit in Belgium.

While women do feature in historical and sociological reflection regarding WWI their experiences are primarily explored in reference to the centralised masculine experience; this emphasises the position of war as a patriarchal institution. Cockburn foregrounds this cultural structure stating, ‘masculinity shapes war and war shapes masculinity’ (2007: 248). This resonates with Cawo Mohamed Abdi’s observation, regarding wars fought by the USA, that war extends ‘insidious practices and invented traditions that further consolidate patriarchy and exacerbate women’s social subordination’ (2007: 183). However, while structures of war are patriarchal and entwined in notions of masculinity this does not legitimize reflection on the female experience as secondary to that of the male. Angelika Epple and Angelika Schaser (2009) challenge the notion of a master narrative in historical theory and instead call for consideration of ‘multiple histories’. In contrast to the formation of a master narrative, Epple and Schaser suggest that a ‘pluralistic view provides insights into both included and excluded histories,’ and go on to argue that, ‘if there could be such a thing as a new master narrative, it should be based on the idea of multiple histories’ (2009: 15). The notion of multiple histories recognises the plurality of experience across British culture regarding WWI and moves beyond the centralising of male practice as the means to understand the participation of women. This shift in focus enables consideration of different experiences, still in relation to one another, but not of greater or lesser importance and thus the concept of a defining centrality is removed. Nevertheless, this complexity is not reflected in the reimagining of WWI in the centenary plays. *Doctor Scroggy’s War*, *The Christmas Truce* and *Versailles* are each structured to serve and foreground a central male narrative. As a result the dramaturgy of these plays subscribes to a normative patriarchal master narrative of WWI, which problematically causes the female characters to be constructed and understood in reference to a male plot.

An August Bank Holiday Lark is a distinct contrast to the other three centenary plays. McAndrew, the play’s author, claims that through the piece she aimed to challenge traditional male-centred narratives of WWI and forefront women in the representation of this historical period (2015). This claim draws attention to the dramaturgy of the female characters; how then does content, form, and the structure of female narratives, differ in this scenario in contrast to the other three plays? To

first identify the normative gendering of narratives, I interrogate *Doctor Scroggy's War*, *The Christmas Truce* and *Versailles*, before embarking upon an analysis of *An August Bank Holiday Lark*. My analysis is performance- and text-based and draws on the four playtexts, as well as archive recordings of *Doctor Scroggy's War* and *An August Bank Holiday Lark*, along with reviews and performance photos of all four premiering productions. The four centenary plays form the focus of this chapter in order to explore recurring character stereotypes, forms and theatrical devices employed by playwrights and directors creating work within the centenary year. Exploration of crossover in dramaturgy and modes of representation, between these plays, suggests a figurative 'melting pot' of devices drawn on by playwrights to shape their reimagining of the war. The recurrence of theatrical techniques used to represent war will inevitably shape an audience's horizon of expectations (Bennett, 1997); this leads me to consider how the two way relationship, between spectators and a performance, reinforces normative historiography in theatrical representations of WWI.

Recurring Modes of Representation in Centenary Plays

Analysis of three of the four centenary plays reveals theatrical devices and modes of representation that form a theatrical and cultural language for commemorating and reimagining the war. Crossovers between the plays signal a normative historiography that has developed through the repetition of performance techniques and modes of representation. Female characters are particularly prominent within this context and I return to address the character tropes present within these plays. The notion of normative historiography indicates unconscious but powerful narrative structures repeatedly subscribed to by playwrights which form a normative way of retelling this chapter of history in a theatrical context. In this respect, there is the danger that culturally playwrights are read as historians, when more accurately their process is one of historiography. For example, through *The Christmas Truce* Porter offers a historical reimagining of a documented moment in history; when historically a truce was called on Christmas day and English and German soldiers played a game of football in no-man's-land. Porter interprets the historical source and chooses how to retell this moment. The majority of the second act of *The Christmas Truce* focuses

on this narrative and unfolds as voices of German soldiers singing are heard by the characters of the British soldiers prompting them to sing Christmas carols back. This singing is greeted by applause from the German trench. The men then emerge from the trenches and each side takes time to bury their dead. The scene closes with each Section singing *O Come All Ye Faithful* in their native language. The next scene opens with British soldier Riley producing a semi-inflated football and men from both sides play a game together in no-man's-land.

The danger of normative historiography, operating in a theatrical context, is that through continually recreating select images and narratives relating to WWI, they become central to the cultural narrative and reference on which an understanding of cultural history is built. I do not mean to suggest that audiences believe plays to be historical documents, but rather that theatrical performances frequently form a contribution to an individual's understanding of a historical event. Thus the politics of these recurring modes of representation are an important focus, given their potential cultural implications.

The distinction between historian and historiographer in the process of playwriting, outlined above, is significant. Mary Fulbrook reflects on Hayden White's theories of historiography:

What Hayden White and his followers have done is thus to focus less on the sources themselves than on the uses the historian makes of them when making a selection from them and imposing a constructed account in representing them: it is the extraordinary lability and range of interpretations possible in the mode of representation, rather than problems concerned with evidence from the maelstrom of an undisputed past reality, which is the prime focus of their concern. (2002: 21-22)

This approach from White, outlined by Fulbrook, is central to the investigation of this thesis; whereby my enquiry focuses primarily on how history is used, not the historical source. Fulbrook's articulation of White's method applies directly to my engagement with the collective of centenary plays and directs attention towards what a playwright makes of historical sources rather than, as Fulbrook identifies, attention to evidence of 'an undisputed past reality.' This directs focus to the theatrical elements and devices used to retell this chapter of history and facilitates consideration of the process as historiographic. From this analysis, areas of crossover between the plays

indicate the development of a normative historiography in playwriting regarding the reimagining of WWI. Hence, my engagement with the plays is one of historiographic enquiry. As discussed in the Introductory Chapter, Thomas Postlewait identifies the practice of historiography as ‘the self-reflexive mindset that leads us to investigate the processes and aims of historical understanding’ (2009: 2). Within the genre addressed by this project, playwrights interpret the historical moment and in this process normative conventions and tropes have developed for retelling the past that are left unquestioned. However, in conjunction to reflection on my own methods, I argue that when a playwright critically engages with their reimagining of the past, beyond the historical source, and challenges the normative tropes they have inherited for historical representation their process becomes one of historiographic engagement.

Considering the centenary plays alongside one another indicates similarity in content, character type, plotline and modes of representing this period of history. Predictably, production photographs depict a likeness in costume, predominantly simple Edwardian dress, with richer colours and fabrics used for costumes of higher class characters in *Versailles*, and when necessary uniform is worn, mainly to portray soldiers for the men and nurses for the women. Songs are sung by soldiers in *The Christmas Truce* and *Doctor Scroggy’s War* conjuring a sense of solidarity. In both plays songs are sung by wounded soldiers in hospital, creating a playful tone only to be reprimanded by a nurse. For example, in *Doctor Scroggy’s War* when Jack’s parents visit him in hospital three injured patients enter singing wearing ‘women’s dresses,’ only for their antics to be put to a stop by nurse Catherine (Brenton, 2014b: 63-64). Choral song plays a more complex role in *The Christmas Truce* as music weaves throughout the piece to reflect the tone of the corresponding action; from military songs sung as the soldiers journey to the frontline to the layering of Christmas carols as the ceasefire ends. Like *Doctor Scroggy’s War*, in the hospital setting patients sing chorally, in this case it is a Christmas carol which the majority of nurses are moved to join in with only to be scolded by Matron (Porter, 2014: 69-70). In each case it is the character of the female nurse who puts a stop to the fun of the wounded men.

All three plays depict a son leaving for war and physical or psychological injuries are represented by soldiers in each of the plays. For example, in *Doctor Scroggy’s War* Jack suffers facial injuries, in *The Christmas Truce* a ward of injured soldiers are depicted

in hospital beds, and in *Versailles* the character of Hugh Skidmore suffers from psychological trauma following the war. Direct address is used by characters of nurses in *Doctor Scroggy's War* and soldiers in *The Christmas Truce* as a device to narrate combat. These areas of crossover are relatively conventional and hardly surprising; as the cultural moment calls for theatre to respond to the centenary there is inevitably overlap between the modes of representation for both general narratives and aesthetics of the period. However, within this trope character stereotypes have developed, such as the cowardly soldier as is the case with Liggins in *The Christmas Truce* who missed parts of the basic training because 'the food in Sussex upset my stomach' (Porter, 2014: 12). Liggins becomes the butt of jokes amongst the section, then when they mock him about 'chatting the Farmer's daughter up' his '*head pokes over the top of the trench for a brief moment and he is shot by a sniper*' (Porter, 2014: 37-38).

In both *Doctor Scroggy's War* and *The Christmas Truce* the groups of nurses have a combination of the same character stereotypes. Referring to the plays respectively, both pieces include: a new young nurse who follows the rules (Tilly and Maude); a young nurse who holds her own and argues back (Penelope and Phoebe); an older nurse who outranks the others and calls for order on the ward (Catherine Black and Matron). In these three plays the female characters are predominantly reduced to the role of nurse or mother; with each of their narratives configured in relation to a male protagonist. The younger female characters also act as love interests for the men and function to build a romantic aspect to the male narrative. These recurring female character types formulate and reinforce character stereotypes and become established devices to be drawn on by playwrights without consideration of the politics of their representation.

Dramaturgy of the Female Narrative

The historical role of women within WWI is complex regarding changes to work and social structures; as identified in the introduction there is 'thriving literature' on this topic (Gregory, 2008: 6). Yet, the centenary plays include female characters predominantly as nurses, mothers and romantic interests for the male characters. Braybon clarifies that 'Women's wartime lives were as varied as men's; they were

influenced by class, age, marital status, trade, geographical area' (2000: 150). Braybon challenges myths surrounding women's involvement in WWI. For example, the myth that the war was the first time many women worked, rather Braybon highlights that, 'contrary to propaganda reports at the time, there was no enormous influx of non-working women into men's jobs: millions of working-class women in Britain moved into *different* trades when the opportunity arose' (2000: 154). This complex social debate regarding the historical experience of women in WWI is not reflected in the dramaturgy of female characters in these three centenary plays.

The Mother Figure

The stereotypical character of the mother figure, in the plays discussed, centres on the depiction of worry, pride in one's son, and is a source of comic relief. There are similarities between the characters Mrs Twigg, Jack's mother in *Doctor Scroggy's War*, and Edith Rawlinson, Leonard's mother in *Versailles*, which indicate a stereotype in the representation of the WWI mother figure. These characters echoes sociologist Sandra I. Cheldelin's observation regarding the cultural attitude to mothers in reference to war, 'Mothers' are rarely perceived as a threat to military or governmental leaders or to dictators; mothers take care of families in the community' (2015: 31). Throughout *Versailles* when opinions are viewed or discussion becomes heated Edith interjects with the same anxious phrase, for example:

Geoffrey We all, I think, hope for a lasting peace. But that doesn't stop many us from wanting Germany punished for what she did in prosecuting this war. Hanging the Kaiser is not only a backbench Tory issue, you know

Edith Oh dear
(Gill, 2014: 18)

Edith repeats this mantra throughout the play and her unease could be read as an embodiment of the discomfort the middle classes experienced in negotiating society post war. However, this anxious repetition could have been performed for comic effect, whereby Edith is used as the device to lighten Geoffrey's political debate. Edith's anxiety as characters discuss the social and political climate of the war brings questions of pacifism into the character of the mother figure, whereby Edith's unease

could be with respect to the immediate social setting and her role as host or regarding larger issues of an aversion to combat.

Cockburn summarises scholarship that has explored the notion of motherhood in relation to pacifism and feminism, and criticises the naivety of Catherine E. Marshall who was writing during WWI. Marshall suggested that, “the experiences and habits of mind which women acquire as mothers,” could be employed to shed new light on the conflict (2007: 211). Cockburn identifies that, in contrast to Marshall’s opinion, during WWI, ‘women were waving the flag and urging men to war’ (2007: 211). This highlights a contradiction between anti-war maternal instincts and a mother’s pride at her son fighting for their country. Sara Ruddick’s (1989) theory connecting ‘maternal thinking’ to peace moves away from biological essentialism, focusing instead on social influences and the impact balances of power, gained from engagement with feminist discourse, have within patriarchal culture on women’s anti-war activism. Cockburn develops the debate by building on feminist thinking by Anna Jónasdóttir, to conclude that women freely give love in their social environment which is then exploited by men and becomes the source of patriarchal power. This shifts focus away from innate qualities of motherhood and towards examination of social structures. Applying this theory to the character of Edith, it is not her role as a mother that instigates pacifism but rather her desire to avoid confrontation which performs love and thus gives power to the characters who are expressing contrasting provocative opinions. Gill has constructed Edith in the role of host to represent a caring energy which is then available for others, particularly the male characters, to exploit and draw on to fuel their position. Therefore, it is how the character of Edith is written to perform qualities associated with motherhood which contributes to the social hierarchy explored in the play. This scenario, of a mother keeping the peace, is further complicated by Edith’s pride in her son due to his involvement in the war; in each case she is investing her support and care which is then used to empower the men in the play. However, Jónasdóttir’s theory, according to Cockburn, problematically places blame on women, suggesting they give men power which reinforces the patriarchy. In contrast, it is a case of women being powerless within the patriarchy instead of the idea that power is surrendered to men. Therefore, there is not a straightforward connection between motherhood and pacifism or support for

the war; rather Gill constructs Edith's relationship to the war as a negotiation between feelings towards her son and broader social and power dynamics influenced by the patriarchy.

Within the mother figure stereotype, each character's response to the outcome of her son's involvement in the war varies. In the case of Mrs Twigg in *Doctor Scroggy's War*, when she and her husband go to visit Jack for the first time, after he has suffered facial injuries, it is Mrs Twigg who remains composed. Stage directions dictate that Mr Twigg, '*sinks to his knees*' (Brenton, 2014b: 67) and says in an aside, 'You're not looking at a face, it's not a face at all, you're looking in the gates of hell' (Brenton, 2014b: 68). In contrast, Brenton directs that Mrs Twigg, '*controls herself then slowly reaches out to JACK,*' and in performance this movement was coupled with reassuring tones to deliver the line, 'It's all right, my dear, I'll touch it, let me touch it...' (2014b: 67) (2014a: n.p.) Brenton deviates from the archetype of the hysterical women and the stoic male by physically showing Mr Twigg's uncontrolled reaction, and instead reinforces the notion of mother as maternal caregiver, another quality attributed to cultural expectations of motherhood.

Mrs Twigg also echoes Edith's performance of worry; a characteristic which is a trait of the mother figure stereotype. For example:

MRS TWIGG. Jack's a good boy. He said he was coming home, 'fore he gets the train! Oh my God. The Germans have got him.

MR TWIGG. He's nowhere near France yet, Rachael.

MRS TWIGG. But what about the spies?

MR TWIGG. What spies?

MRS TWIGG. All over London.

(Brenton, 2014b: 33)

The spiralling of worry, founded on unsubstantiated claims, forms a primary component of the mother figure and attributes to the framing of this stereotype as comical. Considering this stereotype predominantly refers to mothers of grown up children, age plays an important role in this character type. Ruth Shade proposes that 'all jokes about older women relate to one of three subjects,' and the character of Mrs Twigg adheres to Shade's first category where humour is built from the mother 'controlling relationships with immediate family' (2010: 73).

Similarly to Edith in *Versailles*, it is the mother figure who is the source of comedy in *Doctor Scroggy's War* and in the Globe production Katy Stephens' performance of Mrs Twigg was met with frequent laughter from the audience (Brenton, 2014a). Jack's parents are first introduced to the audience when he comes home, accompanied by his upper class friend Ralph, to announce that he has signed up and is leaving for France the following day. As Mrs Twigg is introduced to Ralph it is the intersection of her energetic temperament and low social status that provides the means for a comic performance. The text states:

MRS TWIGG. Ralph, is it? Well, Ralphy...

MR TWIGG (*sotto*). Rachael, he's a lord.

MRS TWIGG. Well, they have 'em at Oxford don't they, that's why we wanted Jack to go there! Be amongst lords! Turn into one himself!

Roars with laughter. Curtseys to RALPH.

(Brenton, 2014b: 20)

In this exchange Mrs Twigg's over the top response highlights her lower social status and causes embarrassment for Jack. Amongst the three men her actions are the source of humour for the audience, but while it appears that Mrs Twigg is in on the joke, as implied by the direction for her to laugh, the audience are laughing at her, her over the top curtsey and brash response to an aristocrat. Sally Chivers reflects on humour relating to older women and argues that 'aging does not currently garner the same careful approach as other forms of grouping people (such as gender, ethnicity and sexuality)' (2003: xii). This indicates that a politically correct focus overlooks humour based on age. Hence, ageist rhetoric operating within the representation of the stereotypical mother figure, in narratives representing WWI, goes unrecognised as the stereotype is continually drawn on and reinforced.

Shade argues that the way older women are represented as comical and the butt of jokes indicates an unease within British and American culture towards mature women (2010: 72). The continued representation of older women as comical contributes to ageist rhetoric that is present in contemporary popular culture. For example, research led by politician Harriet Harman revealed that, in Britain, 'only 7% of the total TV workforce (on and off-screen) are women over the age of 50,' illustrating that, 'there is a combination of ageism and sexism that hits women on TV

that doesn't apply to men in the same way' (Wylie, 2013: n.p.). By framing older women in theatrical performances as comical they are not given an equal platform of representation, rather the notion of women aging is dealt with by making them comical. Elaine Aston states that, 'as a profession, theatre is a microcosm of age-related inequalities. Older women performers constantly raise objections both to the lack of decent parts available to them and to the pressures of having to keep up glamorous appearances' (2013a: 89). Edith and Mrs Twigg fall into Aston's category of simplistic roles for older women performers. For these characters their age contributes to the image of a flustered female who offers melodramatic responses to seemingly level headed male characters. Edith and Mrs Twigg are used to bring moments of comedy into a male driven narrative. The mother character provides a means to show the soldier leaving for war and those who are proud of him, whilst simultaneously embodying worry which allows the soldier to appear brave and, through the worry and fuss over one's son, moments of comedy can be crafted into a melancholic subject matter. Thus, the archetype of the mother figure not only offers a limited two-dimensional depiction of older women, contributing to ageist rhetoric, but this character is created to serve a male driven plot.

This character stereotype indicates a recurring dramaturgical structure in the representation of WWI. In response, I rectify this by centring the narratives of the women in the play in my analysis, as a means to expose the politics of this untroubled dramaturgical structure. It does not appear that the playwrights in question are attempting to be explicitly political about women in this historical moment; consequently focusing on women's narratives reveals common structures and trends of representation that occur when contemporary playwrights incorporate female characters into their reimagining of WWI.

The Young Woman

In *Doctor Scroggy's War*, protagonist Jack first encounters his love interest The Hon. Penelope Wedgewood at a military drinks reception at The Ritz, which Jack attends with his upper class friend Ralph the night before they leave for war. Brenton uses Penelope's high social status to place her in a position of power over Jack. Upon first meeting, Penelope seduces Jack and it is represented as such that Penelope's

character is in control of the situation. However, she is still framed by Jack's experience and this representation of a woman seemingly using her sexuality as a source of power is constructed by an objectifying male gaze. At their first meeting the audience is led to believe that Jack is not accustomed to high society; in an aside he shares, 'when I'm with toffs I feel... thin, weedy, like I'm not really... here' (Brenton, 2014b: 24). After getting acquainted, Penelope and Jack leave the party to have sex. Penelope is the one to turn their conversation from pleasantries to flirtation; to Jack's shock she refers to the Commander-in-Chief as 'little jolly Johnny,' before dismissing such names as 'Barrack-room stuff' (Brenton, 2014b: 29-30). Penelope confesses her desire for Jack in an aside, 'I'm a fool for cherry lips and a uniform,' and later instigates their physical relationship by kissing Jack before leading him off to her room at the hotel (Brenton, 2014b: 30-31).

In the scene before the party Jack visits his parents, accompanied by Ralph, to tell them that he has enlisted in the army and he promises he will be back in time to see them before he leaves for war the following morning. The character of Penelope functions dramaturgically as the device which stops Jack going home to see his parents; because he has spent the night with her. The foregrounding of sexual desire in Penelope's narrative resonates with popular feminist Natasha Walter's observation that:

The fact that women can now be sexually active and experienced without being condemned is a direct result of second-wave feminism. And this is clearly something to be celebrated. But it is strange that all aspects of the current hypersexual culture are often now seen as proof of women's growing freedom and power. (2010: 5)

Walter outlines the complicated balance between recognising women as sexually active, while avoiding the assumption that this equates empowerment. While female liberation is one reading of Penelope's opening scene, her sexual desire is presented as the primary trait of her character. The character is framed in reference to her sexuality which is used dramaturgically as the source of tension in Jack's narrative. This plot point gives space for the audience to interpret her sexual desire in a negative light and this characterisation plays into the stereotype of woman as seducer or temptress. Classics scholar Malcolm Davies articulates the narrative function of this character type, 'the word 'temptress' has a more esoteric, technical sense: 'ambivalent

female helper figure who actually hinders the hero at an early stage of his quest’, (2004: 609) echoing Penelope’s dramaturgical function in the beginnings of Jack’s narrative.

As the piece progresses Penelope’s narrative does include other elements, predominantly her experience as a VAD nurse. Yet, even her actions in this profession are formulated in reference to Jack’s plot, whereby she is the one to find him injured on the battlefield but due to this facial injury she does not recognise him. Following their initial encounter at The Ritz, the audience next sees Penelope as a nurse on the frontline, but her reputation is commented on by Ralph when she is not present on stage. Ralph remarks to Jack that Penelope has become ‘loud’ and a ‘pants-stealer,’ (Brenton, 2014b: 41) and the audience are left to fabricate Penelope’s progression of character based on Ralph’s judgement of her.

Brenton does not end the play with Penelope and Jack romantically together. After Penelope does not recognise Jack injured on the battlefield, the pair are unexpectedly reunited when Penelope and Ralph accompany Queen Mary on a tour of the hospital. Upon being reunited the couple confess their romantic feelings for one another. Following this Ralph returns to war and is killed in action. Penelope delivers the news to Jack and informs him that she is going to join a women’s group of pacifists in the East End. Jack is opposed to her plan and expresses his own intentions to return to war. Their difference of opinion regarding the war causes their relationship to end. In this final scene, Brenton uses Penelope’s intention to join the pacifist movement to highlight Jack’s loyalty to a war that has left him severely injured. Penelope’s outlook is framed as the logical choice, while Jack’s commitment to the war is met by opposition first from Penelope, then Fergal, a fellow hospital patient, followed by his parents, and finally Gillies’ alter ego Doctor Scroggy who then breaks his persona to speak sense as Gillies. Gillies voices his frustration with the system, ‘I tell you what I’m sick of, Jack. Healing young men’s faces and then seeing them smashed to bits all over again’ (2014b: 106). It is through Jack’s extreme commitment to the war that Brenton is able to challenge it. While this content is anti-war, it is a bold choice of performance tone given this piece premiered in the centenary year, when a large amount of cultural activity worked to commemorate the war. However, this is in keeping with the nature of Brenton’s work. Richard Boon narrates Brenton’s

shift from staging plays at fringe theatres in the 1970s to mainstream production houses. Boon suggests it is the, 'social and political usefulness of his work in the 'real world' that motivates the move,' given the ability of large theatres to reach a bigger more diverse audience who, Brenton argued, are not wholly focused on style, as fringe audiences were, but rather consider a play's content (Boon, 2012: 156-157). Therefore, although Brenton's approach to WWI challenges prevailing national narratives, this political standpoint may have been anticipated by viewers given his previous body of work.

In each of the plays a female character is the cause of heartache for the serving soldier. As discussed, Jack's interest in Penelope is the cause of him letting down his parents and his loneliness in the decision to return to war is emphasised when he and Penelope end their relationship as a result. In a similar fashion, in *Versailles* Mabel Rawlinson, Edith's daughter, ends her relationship to fiancé Hugh. This contributes to the depiction of Hugh's character as a psychologically wounded soldier and portrays a sense of loneliness and inability to return to civilian life. A smaller plot point, but still in line with this theme, in *The Christmas Truce* the soldier Clover receives a letter from 'his Nellie' which the other men encourage him to read aloud; the letter, anticipated by the group to be a love letter, is a rejection of his affections, 'I'll just come out and say it. I've thought it through and I don't want to be your sweetheart any more...' (Porter, 2014: 33) In each of these cases the romantic plot heightens the tragedy for the male characters, where the breaking off of an attachment is used as a device to enhance the challenging existence of the soldier; the female characters become the means to deepen their hardship.

Like Penelope in *Doctor Scroggy's War*, in *Versailles* the character of Miss Angela Isham functions to advance the male plot. Act Two of *Versailles* is set in Paris and follows Leonard as he forms part of the committee working on the Treaty of Versailles. A section of dialogue in Act Two between Angela, a 'member of the delegation', and The Honourable Fredrick Gibb, a 'senior member of the delegation' (Gill, 2014: n.p.) is structured so that Fredrick's lines drive the action while Angela adds short nondescript comments. It is likely this structural format is not consciously linked to the difference in gender of the two characters, as the playtext specifies that Fredrick is in a senior position and during this scene he is relaying developments

concerning the treaty to Angela. However, her lines appear particularly nondescript and include, 'Indeed' 'Do you think so?' 'I do' dispersed amongst Fredrick's long sections of text where he expresses opinions on social class (Gill, 2014: 77). Through this dialogue an audience would learn Fredrick's views and gain insight into his family background, whereas Angela's dialogue is used to facilitate his delivery of opinions. Fredrick's engagement with the political debate reimagined in the play is complex, while Gill offers no such room for the character of Angela to voice a response. The text does not give a performer the same views or glimpses of background to build the character of Angela from as it does for Fredrick.

The Sphinx Test (2015), a test which offers tools to facilitate investigation of gender equality in the theatre industry, questions whether a female character is driving a scene by determining whether the character is 'active rather than reactive'. In this scene Angela is reactive to Fredrick's actions; if her dialogue were removed the scene would still make sense and the plot would progress. Similarly, the Sphinx Test explores power by asking 'is the story essential?' This question highlights Angela's lack of narrative; not only is her story seemingly unessential to the development of the plot, which in this act centres on Leonard's contrasting social beliefs to those shaping the Treaty of Versailles, but as the dialogue offers little information about her character there are limited resources for a performer to fabricate a background story. A performer may be given the stage time and rehearsal process to cultivate methods for representing a complexity of character beyond the prescribed dialogue and stage directions, but this still does not mean their story will become essential to a plot created around the actions of a different character's narrative. In this scene Gill focuses on the male character and uses the female character to steer conversation when necessary. This indicates a normative patriarchal dramaturgy employed by Gill as a conventional method for building a narrative.

Aspects of the playtext of *Versailles* point towards misogyny in Gill's writing. In the stage directions Gill refers to the female characters as 'girls'. For example, '*The girls hand round cake and sandwiches and bread and butter*' (2014: 13). The character profiles that proceed the script dictate that the youngest female character is Mabel, who Gill writes is age twenty, thus all of the female characters are of an age where the appropriate gender pronoun is 'woman' not 'girl'. One could assume that the

playwright subconsciously uses the term, which exposes socially engrained rhetoric that, left unchallenged, reinforces male superiority within the theatre industry. Linguistics scholar Robin Tolmach Lakoff remarks, ‘one seldom hears a man past the age of adolescence referred to as a boy, [...] but women of all ages are “girls”’ (2004: 56). Lakoff links the term to images of youth but identifies ‘in recalling youth, frivolity and immaturity, girl brings to mind irresponsibility’ (2004: 56). While troubling this division of terminology, Lakoff does not go on to critique the feminist implication of this distinction in language. This debate gained popular attention in 2015 when education secretary Nicky Morgan and energy secretary Amber Rudd were referred to as girls by a press photographer. Hannah Jane Parkinson used this incident to consider the use of the term girl in the work place, ‘Calling women “girls” is especially undermining and patronising in the workplace. People might say this is oversensitive (I am a woman after all), but in a world in which substantial pay inequality and glass ceilings still exist, language matters’ (2015: n.p.). Mapping this notion onto the environment of theatre making, Gill’s use of the term girl in stage directions could seamlessly cause the term to be used in the rehearsal room and, as Parkinson suggests, consequently undermine and patronise female performers in their place of work. In order to challenge gender equality within the theatre industry, on and off stage, distinction in terminology such as girl in place of woman should be contested.

Focusing on female narratives within these three centenary plays exposes how the characters function to serve a male-centred plot. This problematic dramaturgy goes seemingly unquestioned and forms part of the normative historiography that frames these plays, as modes for retelling WWI history in playwriting are reinforced through repetition. However, within the landscape of plays produced in the centenary year, playwright Deborah McAndrew knowingly attempts to challenge the dominant masculine narrative of war in her play *An August Bank Holiday Lark*. What then does it look like when a playwright attempts to foreground the female experience in their reimagining of WWI? And what normative conventions in the representation of this historical period are still subscribed to in this retelling? These questions are at the forefront of my investigation of this play, as I explore McAndrew’s attempt to challenge the conventional dramaturgy that has developed in the continued reimagining of WWI.

Subverting Patriarchal Dramaturgy in *An August Bank Holiday Lark*

My analysis of *An August Bank Holiday Lark* comes out of an interview I conducted with the play's author Deborah McAndrew (2015), who generously gave insight into the playtext and first production. McAndrew expressed the view that through the play she wished to reclaim from the military the men who died in WWI and reinstate them as belonging to the women they left behind. Culturally, Britain remembers the men who died collectively as soldiers; associating them primarily with the military. However, McAndrew voiced her vision for *An August Bank Holiday Lark* to be:

A tribute to the women who picked it all up at the end, they picked up the pieces of the children, the men and the work and the lives and they held it all together and they carried on and you know they did lose a lot of their men. (2015)

McAndrew's choice of words affiliates soldiers with the individual women of the period, as she refers to them as 'their men.' This contrasts with contemporary cultural narratives that associate soldiers with Britain as a collective; those who fought in WWI are framed as 'our' men. In her reflection on the politics of dead bodies, Katherine Verdery states that, 'the notion of repossessing "our" dead is common worldwide, as is evident from customs of warfare that return dead soldiers to their home countries' (1999: 47). Verdery goes on to propose that returning 'cultural property or "heritage"', of this nature, plays a role in the 'building [of] modern national identities' (1999: 48). Drawing on Verdery's theory, Jennifer Iles notes that when soldiers' bodies are returned to be buried in their home country, 'they once again become "our" cultural property,' (2008: 213) echoing the rhetoric McAndrew endeavours to challenge. In her attempt to reclaim men from the military, McAndrew stated that she aimed to disengage with symbols of remembrance traditionally associated with WWI, as a means to challenge the contemporary audience to engage with the impact of war beyond repeated acts of commemoration (2015). This focus has dramaturgical implications and attention to the play's structure and use of symbols indicates the politics of previously establishes conventions for representing this period, through the lens of a playwright who consciously rejects them. My analysis draws on the

playtext of *An August Bank Holiday Lark* (McAndrew, 2014b) and a recording of the 2014 Northern BroadSides production (McAndrew, 2014a).

Plot Synopsis and Text in Performance

Set in the fictional Lancashire town Greenmill, *An August Bank Holiday Lark* has a cast of twelve with no clear protagonist, but in our interview McAndrew said she sees the play as ‘Mary’s story’ (2015). Mary Farrar is the daughter of John Farrar, leader of the folk dancing group, and the first scene sets up Mary’s secret relationship with dance group member Frank Armitage. The couple meet in secret due to fears of Mary’s father’s disapproval. A quarrel breaks out between Frank’s mother Alice Armitage and Mary’s father when Alice’s cockerel escapes and eats the flowers John had grown to decorate his hat for the Rushcart festival. As the argument unfolds it becomes apparent that this has happened before and a grudge has been held between the Armitage and Farrar families. That evening the dance group hold a rehearsal led by John; his sons Edward (Ted) and William (Will) are enthusiastic members of the group, joined by Frank and local men Jim Haworth, Alan Ramsden, Herbert Tweddle and Dick Shaw. Two days later the community is preparing for the Rushcart festival and young mill worker Susie Hughes purposefully reveals Frank and Mary’s relationship to John, to which he refuses to give his blessing. In this moment Ted and Will also announce that they plan to enlist the following day. The final scene of Act One takes place on Rushcart Day, when Mary, Alice, Susie and local school teacher Edie Stapleton play instruments and sing while the men pull the Rushcart and sing dressed in their dancing attire. During the festival Frank shares that he too has enlisted and declares to John, ‘when I come back a soldier I’ll ask for Mary’s hand in marriage – with, or without, your blessing’ (McAndrew, 2014b: 48).

Act Two begins with Alice and Mary setting up the village hall ready for Mary and Frank’s wedding the following day. Frank, Ted and Will come back to Greenmill for the night with only forty-eight hours leave from the army. Mary initiates her and Frank sleeping together the night before the wedding as he will have to leave shortly after the reception. Moments throughout the wedding allude to the war time setting; specific conflicts are referenced and the simple wedding breakfast and decorations

echo limited resources. Following a toast from John, the community descends into dancing; the dance sequence ends with the three soldiers marching off back to war.

The final act begins with Mary heavily pregnant. She is at home with her disapproving father who has calculated that the child was conceived out of wedlock. Whilst at home news arrives that Ted and Will have been killed in action in Gallipoli and the shock sends Mary into labour. Mary gives birth to a boy and names him, 'Edward William Francis' (McAndrew, 2014b: 81). Broken at the loss of his sons, John drinks in a pub with Dick, where Alice joins to give him a box of chicks as a peace offering after their years of disputes. Edie shares with Mary that she intends to move to Manchester to campaign for the suffrage movement, while Susie's working responsibilities at the mill are increased. Mary receives news that her husband has been injured and in the final scene she is reunited with Frank whose leg has been partially amputated. The penultimate scene is a monologue delivered by Frank where he recounts the combat in Gallipoli. The text is verbatim and stage directions specify, '*The text he [Frank] recites is from the contemporary military war diary of the 6th Battalion, Loyal North Lancashire Regiment from the August offensive at Gallipoli*' (McAndrew, 2014b: 90). This monologue is the only time the piece attempts to represent the combat, rather than reimagining the effects of war on the community. The play closes with a '*sombre and military*' style dance to the beat of a single drum with the dancers, '*simply dressed in white shirts and breeches and clogs,*' holding a banner that reads '2014 We Remember Them' (McAndrew, 2014b: 94).

The 2014 Northern BroadSides production was staged in-the-round for its premier at the New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme. While on tour, the production adapted to the spaces provided and as such the recorded version I viewed was staged end-on. A simple black curtain was used as the backdrop and the set comprised chairs and tables when needed and a couple of hay bales. The main piece of set was the Rushcart (see Figures 1.1 and 1.2): a large wooden structure on wheels which the male performers covered in rushes before parading it around the stage at the close of Act One. The costume adhered to traditional working class Edwardian dress: skirts and blouses for the women and shirts and trousers for the men, all a palette of brown and grey. Exceptions to this style of costume were military uniforms worn by Will, Ted and Frank after they had signed up, and Morris dancing outfits

comprising waistcoats and sashes for the men and bonnets decorated with flowers worn by both male and female characters (see Figures 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3). Female members of the cast played musical instruments for the dances, which occurred periodically throughout the piece, and the whole ensemble sang; this contributed to a sense of community amongst the characters. The final dance had a slower pace, set by the music, with the heavy thud of wooden dancing clogs on the floor contrasting the lighter taps of the earlier upbeat dances. For this dance performers wore monotone costumes of white shirts and black trousers, juxtaposing the multi-coloured flower strewn costumes of the previous routines, thus embodying the impact of war on this fictional community and setting the closing melancholy tone.



Figure 1.1: Unknown. (2014) 'Northern Broadsides production of *An August Bank Holiday Lark – Rushcart*', [Photograph] (Deborah McAndrew's own private collection) [16-3-17]



Figure 1.2: Clark, N. (2014) 'Northern Broadsides production of *An August Bank Holiday Lark* – Rushcart Festival', [Photograph] (Deborah McAndrew's own private collection) [16-3-17].



Figure 1.3: Unknown. (2014) 'Northern Broadsides production of *An August Bank Holiday Lark* – Cast', [Photograph] (Deborah McAndrew's own private collection) [16-3-17]

The Dramaturgy of Paying Tribute to the Women

McAndrew challenges norms of structure and dramaturgy in *An August Bank Holiday Lark* to carry out her notion of paying tribute to women from this historical period. The piece offers a journey, of varying degrees, for each of the twelve characters within the context of a wartime community. Given the ensemble nature of the play I find it interesting that McAndrew identified the play as Mary's story and following a re-examination of the plot I am inclined to agree. Mary experiences great loss as a result of the war: her two brothers die, her father becomes withdrawn and her husband is injured. She is left to care for three men: her husband, father and son. Mary's narrative is central to the play as the changes to her circumstances (getting married, having a baby, losing her brothers) form the main plot points of the piece which are narrated in the broader context of the folk dancing community. While a play's protagonist is not necessarily the character with the most lines or stage time, characters' narratives frequently function around their actions. However, there is a relative degree of action that can be understood in *An August Bank Holiday Lark* without reference to Mary's storyline. Through the text McAndrew provides context to each character and although not all twelve are equally developed, each has a sense of character arc through the play, with the arguable exception of Jim. For example, Alan Ramsden is not part of the play's two central families (the Farrars and the Armitages) and could be viewed as a secondary character, yet his narrative still follows a dramatic arc. Alan begins as a member of the dance group; his wife has recently given birth to their fourth child which forms his justification for not signing on as a soldier. Following Ted and Will's death, Susie hands Alan a white feather and accuses him of cowardice. In his final scene, Alan enters in uniform ready to depart for war; he gives Susie back the white feather and exits. Although Alan's actions do not directly relate to those of Mary, his story is still told within the broader picture of community life and illustrates the effects of WWI.

In attempting to pay tribute to the women, McAndrew has created a structure that invests in each of the twelve characters, giving space for audiences to learn about them and see their relationships with one another. In eliminating the notion of a male-centred plot McAndrew moves towards an ensemble piece where narratives of

individual characters, as well as the community as a whole, show clear character progression and each comes to a point of conclusion, as is illustrated by Alan's storyline above. The ensemble configuration of the play does not explicitly foreground female narratives, as the premise of paying tribute to the women implies. In actual fact the play's plot is still driven by the actions of male characters: them leaving for war, Ted and Will being killed and Frank returning injured. Hence, Mary's actions are still a reaction to circumstances created by the driving narratives of the male characters. For example, the news of Ted and Will's death prompts Mary to go into early labour. In telling 'Mary's story' McAndrew gives background and depth to all characters to form an inclusive ensemble and shapes the dramaturgy of Mary's storyline as a response to the actions of the men in her life; the female narrative is still formed from a normative male-centred structure. Therefore, even with the intention of challenging conventional dramaturgical structures, a play aiming to centralise the female experience pays equal attention to the male characters while simultaneously using their actions to shape the development of the play's narrative. In this respect, equality in attention to the female characters is framed as paying them extra consideration.

In this historical period, debate concerning emancipation for women continued following the development of the suffrage movement in the nineteenth century; McAndrew uses Edie's storyline to bring this subject matter into the play. The way other characters talk about Edie builds an image of her political engagement, for example, when Ted and Will discuss potential women to marry:

Ted What about Edie?
Will Edie Stapleton? She's old.
Ted She's twenty-three.
Will No thanks. I don't want an older woman – especially not one
 with ideas. That cousin of hers in Manchester thinks women
 should have the vote.
Ted She might be right.
Will You marry Edie then.
(McAndrew, 2014b: 26-27)

This exchange acts as an introduction to Edie's political interests but it is not until her final scene that she explicitly shares with Mary her desire to become politically active. In this scene, Edie discusses with Mary what she will do following her mother's death

and talks of the option to stay with a cousin in Manchester, 'I could teach all day [...] I'd earn enough to send something to Granddad. And if it suits me there, Dorothy says when the war's over they'll be campaigning again – for The Cause. I'd like to do that' (McAndrew, 2014b: 86). This narrative is echoed through the character of Penelope in *Doctor Scroggy's War*. In Penelope's final scene she tells Jack how she plans to join, 'Sylvia Pankhurst's organisation,' a group of women who historically split from the Suffragettes (Brenton, 2014b: 100). Penelope explains, 'Sylvia's split with her mother. She thinks the war is wrong. (*A beat*) So do I' (Brenton, 2014b: 100).

Narratives relating to women's suffrage are not traditionally prominent in plays that reimagine WWI. The dominant historical narrative is that the Suffragette movement stopped campaigning during the war and redirected energies to the war effort, Braybon states:

Mrs Pankhurst, leader of Britain's militant suffragettes, could not have put it better when she called for 'women's right to serve'. Even those far less enthusiastic about the war than the Pankhursts soon realized that women could prove once and for all that they were worthy of civil and political rights. (2000: 152)

Braybon criticises the traditional view among historians that, 'in Britain, women's ostensible 'reward' for their work was suffrage for those over 30,' suggesting instead that, 'the extension of franchise had probably been delayed rather than accelerated by the exigencies of war' (2000: 161). Despite Braybon's criticism, this observation still subscribes to the notion that the action of the Suffragettes halting their campaign to help the war effort was mirrored across the whole suffrage movement, thus omitting consideration of other reactions from suffrage groups. This could explain why narratives relating to women's suffrage are rare within plays that reimagine WWI, as the Suffragettes are frequently foregrounded to represent the movement as a whole with less cultural attention granted to the network of non-militant groups within the historical movement. The term Suffragette refers to the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) who engaged in violent acts of protest, referred to as militancy, such as window smashing, cutting phone lines and setting fire to post boxes. This strand of women's suffrage contrasted 'the much larger National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS) who generally engaged in law-abiding, constitutional

activity,' and non-violent acts of protest, this fraction of the suffrage movement is defined as non-militant (Purvis, 2000: 136).

In contrast to Braydon's focus on the Suffragettes, Sandra Stanley Holton (2006) outlines the complexity of responses to the war from the suffrage movement, thus challenging the popular, and simplistic, narrative that all energies from the suffrage campaign were redirected to the war effort. Holton accounts:

The fragmentation and demoralization evident among the WSPU in the months before the war only escalated after Christabel and Emmeline Pankhurst announced the end of militancy, and adopted the stance of super-patriots. Those who disagreed with this response to the war formed their own breakaway bodies, in which the freelance militants of the prewar years were a notable presence. The National Union was similarly divided between patriots [...] and those democratic suffragists now in the fore of its leadership. (2006: 251)

This illustrates the fragmentation of opinions within the wider suffrage movement and challenges traditional narratives voiced by Braybon. Under the umbrella term of suffrage were those who identified as pacifists, against violence and the conflict, and those who backed the country's war effort and described themselves as patriots. Holton goes on to emphasise that:

The National Union never altogether suspended its suffrage concerns and, together with the WFL [Women's Freedom League], the East London Federation and the United Suffragists, it took up the campaign again as soon as the question of franchise reform returned to the political agenda in 1916. (2006: 252)

This serves as a reminder that the suffrage movement was vast and cannot be defined by a single historical narrative. Holton illustrates that a concern and focus on women's enfranchisement remained during the war years and McAndrew and Brenton dramatise this facet of WWI history through the characters of Edie and Penelope. Through their engagement with history, both playwrights make reference to the notion that questions of women's enfranchisement continued during the war years.

However, McAndrew and Brenton differ in their approach to the suffrage movement. In *Doctor Scroggy's War*, Penelope's intention to join Sylvia Pankhurst is linked to pacifism. While associated with suffrage, Brenton frames this decision from Penelope as a way of challenging war. Questions of women's enfranchisement do not

appear to be at the forefront of the character's decision, although one could assume that a contemporary audience would make connections between the name Pankhurst and the historical campaign for women's rights. Whereas, in *An August Bank Holiday Lark* McAndrew explicitly connects Edie's opinions, and decision to move to Manchester, with the view that women should have the vote. Edie embodies the historical narrative, identified by Holton, that a focus on women's suffrage and desire to campaign for the vote continued during the war years and was not wholly replaced by contribution to the war effort, as the historical canon suggests. This demonstrates a feminist historiography on the part of McAndrew, whereby she uses a public platform to represent a lesser known historical narrative that retells a moment of feminist history. The history McAndrew engages with is feminist in content and her method of foregrounding this marginalised historical narrative is feminist in action.

Symbols of Remembrance

Alongside an intention to foreground the female narrative, McAndrew specified her desire to exclude objects from the play that are traditionally connected with the remembrance of the war:

I didn't want any poppies. At all. The only reference to poppies is [from] John Farrar³. So I absolutely bought the poppy back down to [...] what it is, which is just a wayside flower. (2015: n.p.)

This further demonstrates McAndrew's aim to challenge the normative narratives of remembrance that shape the retelling of WWI. The Flanders poppy is, 'one of the most enduring and powerful symbols of remembrance of the war dead in Britain,' with red paper poppies traditionally worn 'during Remembrance Week in Early November' (Iles, 2008: 201). Iles observes that primarily 'it was poetical literature which helped to establish the flower as Britain's universally respected symbol of remembrance for the fallen,' and goes on to acknowledge *In Flanders Fields* by Col. John McCrae as the poem which 'established the poppy [...] as the remembrance symbol of the First World War,' and has come to stand for subsequent military conflicts (2008: 204-205). Iles interrogates politics which have surrounded the symbol

³ Act One, Scene Two 'John I'm not giving a valedictory speech with no' but a scratty bit o' bindweed and a few wild poppies in my hat' (McAndrew, 2014b: 17).

since the British Legion's first poppy appeal in 1921; considering initial criticism which condemned the flower's connotations to 'opiates and forgetfulness' and subsequent attitudes in the 1970s which regarded the symbol as 'backward-looking, empty rhetoric' (2008: 205-207). Yet the symbol began to flourish again in the 1990s following the '80th anniversary of Armistice Day in 1998,' (Iles, 2008: 207) and this momentum sustained through to the centenary year in 2014. However, in contention with the British Legion's poppy appeal, 'the Women's Co-Operative Guild introduced the white poppy in 1933 as a symbol of lasting peace' (Basham, 2016: 891). The white poppy has remained a politicised symbol which Iles describes as 'a secondary symbol in that it exists only in opposition to the Flanders poppy' (2008: 209).

In a performance context, the poppy is a cultural object that is drawn on as a signifier of remembrance for WWI. But, by actively disengaging with this symbol in *An August Bank Holiday Lark* McAndrew moves away from modes of representation established in the twentieth century and works to evoke the historical moment through other conventions. In stripping back this symbol of remembrance, which holds strong connotations to the male soldier, the complexity of the experience of the historical women is foregrounded in this reimagining.

The poppy is an example of normative historiography operating outside of a theatrical context. It is an immensely powerful symbol in British culture that is historiographical in its use; as it reduces a multifaceted chapter of history down to a singular social symbol and through the repetition of its representation a cultural response is cultivated and repeated. Like the theatrical performances discussed, the poppy becomes historiographical as it is the representation that is doing the historical work, it is a way of retelling the period created after the event and subsequently provides a form for looking back that carries a host of narratives and politics reduced into a single symbol. Given this normative quality, the poppy has come to provoke a degree of cultural passivity. This passivity carries into a theatrical context, whereby audiences have socially learnt the appropriate cultural response to the object. This echoes Basham's notion that activities on Remembrance Day have become 'highly scripted,' alluding to the repeated response called for and delivered by individuals on an annual basis (2016: 888). So, by removing the poppy audiences are confronted with the complex historical period that lies behind the symbol of remembrance. The poppy

is a fundamental symbol of what Iles refers to as the ‘remembrance industry,’ (2008: 207) which suggests acts of remembrance are managed in business terms. It is this ‘industry’ which produces national narratives and symbols which have been drawn on for the reconstruction of WWI in contemporary theatrical performance. *An August Bank Holiday Lark* moves away from traditional symbols of remembrance and retells the conflict through the complexity of changes to families and social structures.

Although disengaging with the poppy, McAndrew does include the symbol of a white feather in *An August Bank Holiday Lark*, which unlike the poppy was a symbol established during the war years rather than after. Undoubtedly less prominent than the poppy, but still associated with WWI, white feathers were handed out during the war to ununiformed men as an act of shame that carried social pressure to enlist (Gregory, 2008: 77). McAndrew expressed a desire to move past symbols associated with WWI, commenting that they are, ‘fat and loud’ (2015) and wishing instead to interrogate the particular objects. As discussed, in the play mill worker Susie gives a white feather to Alan, father of three, to mark his lack of uniform and by the end of the piece he has signed up. The white feather Susie gives can be traced throughout the piece; it is originally from Alice’s white cockerel, Albert, who escapes and fuels a disagreement between neighbours John and Alice. From this incident Susie keeps the feather and wears it in her bonnet at the Rushcart festival before presenting it to Alan in a later scene. McAndrew commented on the narrative of this object:

A feather only becomes a symbol [when] we make these things what they are, it starts out in the arse of a chicken, that’s what it is. I suppose if I was going to bring in those symbols they were going to start where they begin. [...] I didn’t want to batter my audience over the head with symbols [...] again it comes back to this point ordinary, ordinary, ordinary. (2015)

McAndrew appears to be linking the notion of the ordinary to individual people and everyday activities; rather than wider images of remembrance which refer to the masses and figure of the soldier. Here McAndrew implies that the removal of cultural symbols is a means to access history of the everyday; suggesting that symbols mask the historical narrative and act as a distancing device, as is implied by Basham’s notion of ‘forgetting’ (2016: 892). McAndrew highlights how symbols of remembrance are frequently understood in contemporary terms, instead of considering the source of

an icon, and warns against solely relying on them as a way to represent narratives of WWI.

While McAndrew does confront the esteem with which the symbol of the white feather is held, by tracing it to its root in a chicken's rear end, the characters' narratives in *An August Bank Holiday Lark* still subscribe to the cultural understanding of war as an act of sacrifice. For example, the loss of Will and Ted's lives and Frank's loss of a leg, act as the community's contribution and sacrifice to the war, collectively they are seen to be giving something to the conflict. Susie voices her perception of loss, 'what about those of us who'll never get a husband now there's no decent men left. [...] More men have to sign up and fight on. We have to win, or William and Ted will have died for nothing' (McAndrew, 2014b: 83). Basham proposes that 'contemporary British acts of remembrance serve to reproduce war as a matter of sacrifice and in doing so, work to erase the violence, done to and by the bodies they commemorate and celebrate' (2016: 885). Drawing Basham's theory alongside *An August Bank Holiday Lark*, indicates that even though McAndrew actively challenges symbols of remembrance, which mask the realities of war, the narratives she constructs still shift focus away from the violence of war by framing the actions of soldiers as a sacrifice. In this respect, while moving away from images associated with the remembrance industry, McAndrew still subscribes to a dominant cultural outlook in her reimagining of WWI. But, within this dominant outlook, the inclusion of this symbol is the means through which Susie's character voices her experience and opinion of the conflict. Consequently, McAndrew subverts the traditional passive use of symbols and employs them as a means to give space to the experience of the women.

Conclusion

Engagement with the WWI centenary has provided a broad sample of plays that reimagine the past with a specific focus on this chapter of history. Given the similarity in subject matter, and wider cultural landscape in which the performances occurred, the areas of crossover in content and dramaturgical form between the centenary plays indicate recurring modes for representing this historical moment. Comparison of character stereotypes, aesthetics and plot structures between *Doctor Scroggy's War*, *The*

Christmas Truce and *Versailles* suggests that a normative historiography has developed in playwriting; whereby both historical narratives and methods for dramatising such narratives have been repeated and shaped. Thus, ways of interpreting the historical source have been streamlined and foregrounded as the appropriate method for representing the war. The concept of normative historiography is central to this thesis as I engage with the politics of retelling the past on the contemporary stage. This concept provides a tool through which to consider established theatrical devices and methods that have developed as means to represent the past, along with indicating occasions when these normative devices have been challenged, as is the case with McAndrew and *An August Bank Holiday Lark*. Through identification of such elements, with reference to different historical contexts, I problematise the gender politics of such devices with a focus on the stereotype of the mother figure and the dramaturgy of the younger female character. These character tropes have become central in theatrical representation of this historical period. While, the lack of consideration for the implications of these modes for reimagining history has perpetuated the construction of the female narratives as a function of the male-centred plot.

McAndrew's approach to history in *An August Bank Holiday Lark* appears to be the exception amongst the centenary plays, whereby she actively attempts to challenge prevailing historical narratives, and their theatrical representation, and structure her play accordingly. McAndrew identifies the presiding cultural ownership of men who fought in the war and consequently aims to represent history from the perspective of the women left behind. This illustrates an engagement from McAndrew with the way in which history is being told, in this case that soldiers are culturally 'ours', and a conscious decision to explore and subsequently represent history from a different perspective. In addressing the source of objects from the period, such as the white feather, and looking past symbols of remembrance, such as the poppy, McAndrew moves away from master narratives of commemoration associated with the centenary and dramatises what she deems 'ordinary' community life within this historical period. McAndrew's attempt to strip back rhetoric, which other playwrights may call on unproblematically for the representation of WWI, demonstrates a synthesis in her work between methods of playwriting and historiography. This echoes Postlewait's notion

that the practice of historiography calls for one to be 'self-reflexive' of the process of historical understanding (2009: 2). McAndrew is self-reflexive in reference to both her perspective of the historical narrative being retold and the theatrical devices used to conjure the historical moment in which the fiction is set. Within this process, McAndrew not only challenges prevailing cultural narratives regarding the past, but interrogates the cultural methods for commemorating and representing this chapter of history. This critical engagement is one of historiographic enquiry within the process of playwriting.

However, McAndrew's subscription to dominant narratives which frame combat through the sacrifice of soldiers indicates the power of the normative structures that shape the continued representation of WWI; while simultaneously highlighting the patriarchal constraints of the dramatic form employed, as discussed in the Introductory Chapter. Even when McAndrew consciously attempts to break away from established modes of representation, certain elements and dramaturgical structures are still subscribed to. For example, *The Northern Broadside's* production drew on conventions that occur across the other centenary plays, such as, the character of the injured soldier and direct address used to narrate combat. Dramaturgically, the female narratives in *An August Bank Holiday Lark* continue to be shaped in response to the actions of the male soldiers. This highlights the patriarchal institution of war to which this normative historiography relates, and further complicates the challenge to distort and counter the normative male-centred plot, as conditioned by the patriarchal theatre industry in which the play was produced.

These four plays contributed to the landscape of cultural events that marked the centenary of WWI; with representations offered to contemporary audiences about this chapter of history shaping prevailing cultural narratives, as methods for retelling the past were repeated and normalized. This echoes the doubleness suggested initially, whereby the plays in question not only act as a means to tell audiences about the past but also inform spectators on how to participate in acts of commemoration, contributing to the industry of remembrance. Building on my exploration of this centenary, and the dramaturgy of female narratives in reference to the patriarchal institution of war, in the following chapter I explore centenary events which engage directly with feminist history in the form of the suffrage movement. Drawing on the

Chapter One: The Wartime Woman

notion of a normative historiography within playwriting, exploration of the suffrage centenary enables consideration of how a historical conflict is retold when the opposition was part of the culture being remembered. This was the case for the suffrage movement, unlike plays which reimagine WWI where the opposition is able to remain removed from collective remembrance. Thus, the retelling of suffrage history poses a dramaturgical challenge, that of representing an internal cultural opposition which requires confrontation if the political history is to be reimagined. I interrogate this dramaturgical challenge, and subsequent implication on current feminist discourse, in the following chapter through my exploration of performances which reimagine the suffrage movement.

Chapter Two

The Political Woman: reimagining the suffrage movement.

Introduction

As the previous chapter illustrates, the centenary of the outbreak of WWI has been marked at length culturally, and 2014 signalled the beginning of four years of centenary moments that will commemorate the war through to the centenary of its end in 2018. My engagement with the WWI centenary identified recurring modes of representation which contribute to a normative historiography that has developed in contemporary playwriting. The plays discussed each shaped the female narratives to serve a central male character or, in the case of *An August Bank Holiday Lark*, while McAndrew attempted to foreground the female narrative, which still took on the form of an ensemble piece shaped around the actions of the male characters. How then are women represented in centenary events when the history being marked is of feminist activism? And how does the mode of performance shape the representation of feminism? These initial questions have led me to explore the reimagining of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century suffrage movement in contemporary performance.

Over the last 15 years fingerprints of the suffrage movement have been present throughout cultural activity and this commemoration contributes to this generation's landscape of centenary events. 1997 marked the National Union of Suffrage Societies' (NUWSS) centenary (Liddington, 2013: 6), while 2003 was a hundred years since the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) was founded in Manchester. Jill Liddington comments on the number of events she attended and organised in 2003, in Manchester and London, to mark the WSPU's centenary, which included: conferences, live performances, tours and a radio programme (2005: 195). Alongside this, 2013 marked a century since Suffragette Emily Wilding Davison was trampled by the King's Horse at the Epsom Derby and died four days later in hospital. Since her death Davison has become a martyr for the cause and her commemoration provides a distinct example of normative historiography in the recurring representation of a historical figure; I return to this idea in reference to the representation of Davison on stage and screen. In this chapter I use the term 'suffrage'

in reference to the wider political movement; 'Suffragette' in relation to members of the WSPU; and 'suffragist' describes members of the suffrage movement who did not partake in or support militant activity (Purvis, 2000: 136).

Suffrage history has brought a multitude of centenaries, yet in contrast to the complex political history of the movement, cultural memory foregrounds the Suffragettes as symbols of women's fight for equal enfranchisement, generating a singular narrative of remembrance in the commemoration of a multifaceted movement. British culture has celebrated and commemorated the activity and political agenda of the movement through a variety of media. Hilda Kean observes:

Academic history aside, the exploits of British suffrage feminists are kept alive in film and fiction, and commemorated within the physical landscape, museums and galleries. Through unofficial forms of knowledge, including local histories, family stories, and tourist trails, suffrage history has been created and 'remembered' for different generations. (2005: 581)

The different modes of commemoration, identified by Kean, shape the historical feminism that is represented, with certain forms promoting attention to unity and the collective⁴ while others foreground a focus on the individual. The traditional storytelling structure of theatre promotes a narrative form that centres on the individual. This is prominent in *Her Naked Skin* by Rebecca Lenkiewicz; a play that reimagines the Suffragette movement with a focus on the experiences of two central characters. In a similar vein, the film *Suffragette*, written by Abi Morgan, premiered in 2015 with a narrative centred on a fictional Suffragette and her experience of joining the movement. This focus on the individual contrasts with the representation of the suffrage movement offered by Dreadnought Theatre Company in their 2013 re-enactment of a suffrage pilgrimage undertaken a hundred years previously. Dreadnought's method of group walking cultivated unity amongst participants and positions engagement with feminism as a shared and united experience. This contrast highlights how different performance methods shape an artist's engagement with history and subsequent interaction with historical and contemporary feminist

⁴ I employ the term collective as an adjective throughout this chapter, referring to people acting as a group, rather than a noun indicating a formal cooperative.

discourse and has prompted my engagement with these three pieces within this chapter.

The historical politics of the suffrage movement pose dramaturgical challenges for theatrical representation. Unlike the commemoration of WWI, where the opposition can be distanced as foreign and a focus on representing British culture avoids engagement with reimagining the opposition all together, in suffrage history opposition to the cause is the dominant hegemony of the culture being remembered. Consequently, the cultural backdrop in which to retell the movement is the society which oppressed them.

Exploration of performances that represent the suffrage movement highlight how the historical opposition to the campaign is not fully embodied in contemporary reimaginings of the period. In the three performances identified above, the opposition is either represented by two-dimensional characters or not at all. This creates distance between contemporary audiences and the historical narrative, enabling the focus to remain on women's fight for the vote but not reflecting on the oppressive patriarchal social structures in which they lived. This echoes the Whig view of history, on the part of contemporary culture, whereby the historical opposition was 'wrong' and we can now assume a superior position in believing to 'know better'. In maintaining a distance between the viewer and representations of opposition, parallels between sexism in the historical moment and contemporary society are reduced. This ultimately affects the ability of the retelling of suffrage history to challenge or mirror current feminist discourse. The three productions discussed above; *Her Naked Skin*, *Suffragette* and Dreadnought's pilgrimage, provide fruitful and contrasting examples of the representation of opposition across different media and the dialogue such representations have with contemporary feminist debate.

Although detailed analysis of a film is beyond the reach of this thesis, as this medium refers to a different aesthetic and field of scholarship, I address *Suffragette* as a cultural phenomenon and mainstream example of a reimagining of the Suffragette's campaign within the landscape of contemporary activity that represents the movement.

Cultural Activity in Response to Suffrage History

A vast landscape of cultural and commercial activity operates within contemporary British society in response to the history of the suffrage movement, cultivating normative narratives, objects and modes for representing the period. From notebooks emblazoned with ‘Votes For Women’, to the Suffragette colour palette used by Royal Holloway University to mark their history with Bedford College, to the inclusion of performers dressed as Suffragettes in the London 2012 Olympics opening ceremony, the movement is remembered and commemorated through a variety of media. During the suffrage period, ‘the material culture of the movement was consciously developed and given an importance;’ for example, ‘crochery recalling anti-slavery campaigns, buttons recalling trade union badges, hunger-striking and imprisonment medals,’ all contributed to this strand of the movement, which provides a material legacy for the political campaign (Kean, 2005: 585).

In contemporary society, the Suffragette colours and slogans from their campaigns have been incorporated onto objects that are available in gift shops; fusing narratives of women’s suffrage with mass production and the tourist industry. An interesting tension lies between objects which were cultivated during the period in response to the actions of the campaign and those created today to be purchased as souvenirs. The Museum of London, which houses an exhibition of original artefacts from the Suffragette campaign, has a range of gifts available including pin badges, tote bags in the Suffragette colours and mugs donned with the ‘Votes For Women’ slogan (ML, 2016). In 2014 the Royal Shakespeare Company’s gift shop, located at their theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon, had a similar range of items on sale which linked to their production of *The Christmas Truce* by Phil Porter (2014), as discussed in Chapter One. In these two cases the institutions in question did not appear to be attempting to commemorate the Suffragette movement or shine a particular light on their actions, rather the suffrage image and branding is drawn on and reimagined for general consumption. In this case history facilitates the means by which one can purchase an item branded with feminist politics; it may be a deliberate choice on the part of the wearer as a comment on their personal politics, but equally one can buy such an item without having to engage with the discourse of the historical campaign. This is

particularly prominent for the RSC gift shop items available in relation to *The Christmas Truce*, as the piece does not explicitly make reference to women's suffrage or represent any aspects of the campaign and no explanation was given in the gift shop display about what these items represented or how they linked to the historical narrative in the production.

Given the history of the Suffragette logos, slogans and colours which these items carry, they become political, but the static nature of the object does not demand response or engagement from the individual purchasing it. These objects fall within the landscape of cultural items that offer individuals feminism as a brand that can be purchased, yet an explicit response or change in behaviour is not required from the consumer regarding current feminist debate. For example, modern t-shirts bearing the logo 'This is what a feminist looks like', provoked controversy in 2014 as they were donned by politicians and their ethical sources went under question; this generated a focus on what a feminist was rather than shining a light on inequalities within contemporary culture (Hoskins, 2014: n.p.). These t-shirts, and the gift shop items branded with Suffragette colours and slogans, are examples of what Robert Goldman (1992) terms 'commodity feminism' which bears resemblance to liberal, and increasingly neoliberal, feminism. Goldman theorises that:

In mass advertising, feminism takes on a plurality of faces, but its potentially alternative ideological force is channelled into the commodity form so that it threatens neither patriarchal nor capitalist hegemony. Feminist morality, along with the tensions it contains, has been turned into yet another 'raw material' in the never-ending drive to renew and expand the commodity-sign values of consumer goods. (1992: 131)

Goldman's observations are made in reference to advertising, but resonate with goods available for purchase donned with contemporary or historical feminist slogans and symbols. In the case of the Suffragette gift shop items, attention on the history of the movement is directed into the object, consequently one engages with the item, rather than the politics of the historical campaign, and, as identified by Goldman, feminism becomes a material that can be purchased, instead of a political ideology. Nevertheless, such items may indicate sympathy with the broader politics of the Suffragette movement, yet this still calls for engagement and consideration beyond the moment of purchase.

Within this centennial landscape, contemporary British culture has offered a spectrum of performance events to celebrate, commemorate and attempts to restage narratives of the suffrage campaign. For example, Wonder Women is an annual festival that takes place in Manchester and began in 2013 to mark the centenary of Davison's death. The festival runs throughout March and incorporates celebrations for International Women's Day. The event describes itself as:

A commemoration of the suffragette movement born in our city – and a rallying cry for more national and international feminist debate. It's a city-wide, collaborative project with events, debate, music and art, which looks at how far we've come in 100 years – and asks how far we have yet to go. (Checkland Harding, 2015: n.p.)

The diverse programme of activities is not wholly focused on the Suffragette movement, although some events have a direct link; for instance the 2016 programme included, 'Living History performance: The Hard Way Up – A Suffragette's Story,' a 'performance based on the life of suffragette Hannah Mitchell' (Mackenzie-Smith, 2016: n.p.). This sat alongside a range of walking tours, archive exhibitions and talks focused on women's history. There was also a spectrum of activities available that explicitly focused on contemporary debates within feminism. For example, in 2014 the festival included a photography exhibition titled *The Mother* by Rebecca Lupton, displaying a selection of portraits where the artist had 'photographed and interviewed an enormous range of women about what motherhood is really like' (Stubbs, 2014: n.p.). The 2016 programme contained a discussion on 'modern feminism,' a workshop on 'women's sexual pleasure' and an event celebrating 'the role of women in the creative industries' (Mackenzie-Smith, 2016: n.p.). These contemporary debates are framed by the festival's commemoration of the suffrage movement which connects suffrage to feminism; drawing on historical feminists as the foundation from which to develop and provoke current discourse.

The blurb for the 2016 Wonder Women festival looks on to the next centenary:

In two years, British women will have much to celebrate. In two years, it will be 100 years since women first won the (partial) right to vote. That right was the culmination of a long, hard struggle – and although we've come a long way, ladies, there is still much work to be done. (CT, 2016: n.p.)

As the suffrage movement was vast and spanned centuries, a host of anniversaries are available to be called upon and used as a platform for contemporary feminism. A centenary year appears to carry social weight and add gravitas to contemporary debate, as Liddington comments, ‘centennial commemorations tend to possess greater emotive power than those which mark the passing of smaller units of time’ (2005: 196). Centennial events foreground a mutual cultural respect for history and from this foundation a platform for contemporary discussion is cultivated, demonstrated by events available at Manchester’s Wonder Women festival. In this context, the presence of a historical narrative validates the space in which current debate can be addressed; as such the historical permits the political. In this respect history becomes a commodity. However, the usual pejorative connotations of this notion are subverted and rather history forms a foundation that ignites shared knowledge between audiences that is then used as a springboard from which new ideas are introduced and explored.

The East London Suffragette Festival provides an example of this ‘springboard’ structure. The festival was a one off event in 2014 to mark a hundred years since Sylvia Pankhurst split from her mother Emmeline and the WSPU to form the East London Suffragettes (ELS, 2014c: n.p.). The event’s website states its desire to celebrate and recognise the Suffragette history in this community, alongside a focus on promoting East London and raising, ‘awareness and support for contemporary women’s rights and equality causes and campaigns’ (ELS, 2014a: n.p.). Amongst this, money was raised for the charity Newham Action Against Domestic Violence. In this scenario, the historical narrative provides a platform for a community to be celebrated and from this place of unity a focus on social action and equality was cultivated.

Liddington questions the necessity for suffrage centenaries, when there are no longer individuals alive able to give first-hand testimony (2005: 196). Drawing on theories by cultural historian Pierre Nora, Liddington considers the role of memory in commemoration, and identifies how Nora ‘argues that, in a world turned upside down, collective memory has been replaced by historians’ reconstructions of the past – along with the staging of popular anniversary events’ (2005: 196). Liddington goes on to explore the subjects of centenary celebrations and how commemoration is conducted, alongside memory’s fading role within this dynamic. She considers how

fading memories are replaced by representation and formal historical accounts, and addresses the historiography of events commemorated and their place within cultural activity. Liddington concludes:

There is less and less ‘danger’ for academic historians that elderly women with survivor stories will pop up unexpectedly in seminars to challenge analytical narratives. Yet many twenty-first-century feminists, if no longer directly a ‘people of memory’, will want to commemorate the heroic suffragette campaign pitted against an obdurate Liberal Government with all its prison finger-printing and secret photographic surveillance. (2005: 219)

The fragility of memory is amplified at the East London Suffragette Festival, as collective memories which relate to the original event were delivered by second, third and fourth generation relatives of Sylvia Pankhurst. These contributions come to stand in for the collective memory which sits alongside historical accounts. Yet, Liddington’s focus on the lack of witnesses to the original event being commemorated overlooks the support for charity and development of community created at an event such as this. Under the banner of a historical moment, and through this sense of a shared history, participants are able to consider contemporary issues, support a charity and promote pride in their community. The historical moment being remembered sits alongside positive community development. In this case, the history of the East London Suffragettes provides a catalyst from which a sense of unity amongst those attending the festival can be cultivated, as is demonstrated by the archived thread of positive Twitter responses and photographs throughout and after the event (ELS, 2014b).

An Individualist or Collective Focus

Like the festivals discussed, an ethos of unity is present in organised walks undertaken to commemorate suffrage history. This method of remembering and representing the suffrage movement encourages a focus on the collective within current feminist discourse, which counters the individualist outlook cultivated by neoliberal strands of feminism and wider social structures. Sandra Kemp and Judith Squires comment on these two strands within feminist discourse and theorise that:

This shift from the overtly collectivist and political to the more individualist and philosophical might be viewed negatively as a shift from insurrection to introspection, or positively as the coming to age of feminism as an intellectual endeavour, or perhaps more neutrally as simply symptomatic of the 1990s. (1997b: 8)

Twenty years on from when Kemp and Squires first made this observation, while an individualist focus is still prominent in feminist debate, notions of collectivism are gathering momentum. In current feminist discourse collectivist activity is occurring both on an overtly political level, for example 4.8 million people participated in 673 Women's Marches that took place across the world in 2017 in opposition to Donald Trump's inaugurations as president of the USA (Krol, 2017: n.p.), and in conjunction with historical commemoration, as is the case with events centred around the suffrage movement. The foregrounding of the individual in favour of the collective, or vice versa, exists in tension within the landscape of current feminisms.

The tension between a focus on the collective or individual is exemplified by the difference between second and third wave feminist perspectives. Claire Snyder narrates this difference, stating, 'classic second-wave feminism argues that in patriarchal society women share common experiences, and through a sharing of their experiences with one another [...] they can generate knowledge about their own oppression' (2008: 184). Snyder argues that this approach contrasts 'the personal story' which 'constitutes one of the central hallmarks of third-wave feminism' (2008: 184). Moving past the division of feminism into waves, Rosalind Gill and Christina Scharff connect a focus on the individual with the development of postfeminism. Gill and Scharff argue that postfeminism resonates strongly with neoliberalism, stating that both 'appear to be structured by a current of individualism that has almost entirely replaced notions of the social or political, or any idea of individuals as subject to pressures, constraints or influence from outside themselves' (2011a: 7). Sheryl Sandberg's populist theory of 'Lean In' (2013) feminism strongly resonates with individualist neoliberal attitudes within feminist discourse identified by Gill and Scharff. Sandberg's aim is to get women into positions of power, in the work environment, and she argues the means to achieve this is for women to get rid of their 'internal barriers' which stand in their way (2013: 8). For Sandberg, the concept of 'leaning in' means 'being ambitious in any pursuit' and she goes on to state that 'some

of the most important contributions to our world are made by caring for one person at a time. We each have to chart our own unique course and define which goals fit our lives, values, and dreams' (2013: 10). 'Lean In' feminism advocates that, 'we can reignite the revolution by internalizing the revolution' (2013: 11). This individualistic approach is problematic; in placing all focus on the individual, Sandberg also places all responsibility. From this perspective women are left responsible for carving out their own equality within the patriarchal society that oppresses them, which paradoxically inverts the notion of the 'personal as political' that was central to 1970s liberal feminism. Sandberg's denial of the influence of external circumstances echoes Gill and Scharff's criticism and as a result under this theory oppressive social structures are left unaccountable for the discrimination experienced by women across social classes, work and family environments.

Sandberg briefly acknowledges criticism that her strand of feminism attributes blame to the victim, but dismisses this notion, claiming instead, 'I believe that female leaders are key to the solution' (2013: 11). This still places efforts with women and holds no accountability to the patriarchal social structures that cause women's journeys to positions of leadership to be a challenge. Elizabeth Bruenig problematises Sandberg's approach to gaining equality:

The idea of feminism rests on the notion that all women can be united on the axis of their womanhood, and that our collective lot can be improved by boosting the place of that axis in the matrix of society. What will make things easier for women, therefore, will make things easier for an individual woman. But the reverse, moving from the individual to the general, is not true: What makes life easier for an individual woman will not necessarily make life easier for women at large. In the case of Sandberg's corporate feminism, what makes life easier for any given woman high on the corporate ladder might actually make life harder for women toiling near the bottom rungs. (2015: n.p.)

In contrast to Sandberg, Bruenig calls for a focus on the collective and then the individual, within feminist discourse, as the direction in which to work to instigate change. Starting from a collectivist position does not have to mean a return to single issue feminism, but rather beginning with a sense of unity creates a space within which differences of individual experience can be addressed. Theories of intersectionality have developed within feminist discourse to encompass the complexity of identity

politics at an individual level and can aid in the collective into individual approach suggested by Bruenig. I explore theories of intersectionality further in Chapter Three in reference to the representation of class and race in contemporary theatre.

Within the landscape of performance that commemorates the suffrage movement, different performance styles foreground the individual or collective and the feminist narrative offered is shaped accordingly. For example, the devices used for Dreadnought's pilgrimage foregrounds a focus on the collective while the dramaturgy of *Her Naked Skin* centres on the experience of the individual. Geraldine Harris calls for feminist discourse to consider, 'the tension between individual freedom and the collective responsibility' (2014: 191). It is this collective responsibility which is cultivated by the representation of feminism through organised walks, while the inclusion of history moves away from notions of responsibility and towards unity and celebration in shared feminism.

The practice of organised walking was historically employed by the suffrage movement; their walking activities ranged from collective marching to theatrical pageants. Historian Barbara Green outlines, 'the most theatrical spectacles were the pageants and processions that turned London's streets into a stage for activist performances' (1997: 3). Green describes specific examples of suffrage pageants:

On February 9, 1907, 3,000 women braved the rain and mud to march from Hyde Park to Exeter in the NUWSS's [National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies] famous Mud March; by June 13, 1908, the numbers of marches rose to at least 10,000 in a procession planned by the NUWSS. The pageants increased in size and beauty: on June 21, 1908 the WSPU presented their Women's Sunday Procession, an enterprise that involved 30,000 women marching in seven processions (having trained into London on thirty special trains) and drew a crowd surpassing a quarter of a million spectators. (1997: 74-75)

This illustrates the scale of the pageants and notion of the collective these activities produced. The WSPU pageants 'were highly produced and featured an alliance between feminism and the theatre,' in the act of protest (1997: 5). Green explores the complications class divisions brought to unity within these events and works to 'recognize the ways in which the suffragettes were canny theorists of the problems of spectatorship that complicated their attempts to envisage collectivity' (1997: 33). She goes on to interrogate how those orchestrating the pageants and performances

worked to reconstruct modes of spectatorship by bringing different gazes alongside each other which consequently undo one another. In light of this, Green concludes, 'each attempt to forge new scopic relations between the activist and the crowd is negotiated through the difficult and perilous act of cross-class dressing, a masquerade that works to reposition the feminist activist for another look' (1997: 33). This implies that a new identity is forged, that of the feminist activist, and reconfigured from the perspective of the spectator, which suggests an awareness amongst the Suffragettes of how their actions were perceived by those observing and places emphasis on the spectator as the authority in reading their collectivity. Green's theories offer insight into how notions of the collective were historically cultivated to bring strength to the campaign and perceived by those spectating and participating in suffrage performance.

In contrast to the pageants outlined by Green, contemporary walks operate with a different impetus to that of the original period: on a basic level for the suffrage movement pageants were a method of protest and means to advance the campaign for the right to vote, whereas contemporary representations act as a site of memory, reconstruction or remembrance and, although at times attempt to portray a current message of feminism, root themselves in a historical moment. In this arena the history supersedes the protest. This creates a marked tension when applied to contemporary organised walks, such as Reclaim The Night, an annual march that takes place in cities across Britain to mark 'the annual United Nations Day to End Violence Against Women (25th November)' and 'shout a loud NO to rape and all forms of male violence against women' (RTN, 2016: n.p.). Events such as this do not claim to be re-enactments of feminist history, yet their political trajectory stands on the shoulders of centuries of campaigns and they bear similarities to historical pageants in their performative nature. However, in this scenario history is not prioritised above protest and the focus remains on seeking change in modern society, whereas in contemporary organised walks and performances that represent suffrage history attention is primarily on the historical campaign. There are distinctions between contemporary performances that commemorate suffrage and incorporate walking to those which re-enact historical walks or pageants. For example, the 2014 Wonder Women festival included a tour titled *The Pankhursts* which guided people around, 'key sites which

featured in the long campaign' for the vote, linking the history of the Pankhurst family and the suffrage campaign to sites in modern Manchester (Stubbs, 2014: n.p.). The festival programme has incorporated several walks over its years connecting different moments of Manchester's history to sites in the contemporary landscape. Similarly, in 2013 excerpts from historical suffrage dramas, written by the Actresses' Franchise League, were performed at sites across London's Covent Garden as part of the living literature walk *Stage Rights!* (Paxton, 2013: n.p.). These types of walks work primarily to communicate the history of the sites being encountered by audience members whereas for other events the act of walking is itself the commemoration and performance of suffrage history, such as theatre company Dreadnought's South West pilgrimage. These examples, both with a historical link and those explicitly focused on contemporary issues, indicate a resurgence in recent years towards the tradition of group walking in cultural practice. Through these acts, women as a collective inhabit and claim public and civic spaces which are not always deemed 'safe space' for the individual.

Dreadnought's Pilgrimage

Amongst the landscape of organised walks that retell and commemorate the suffrage period, feminist theatre company Dreadnought undertook a pilgrimage in 2013 to mark the centenary of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies' (NUWSS) march from Land's End to Hyde Park in 1913 (Dreadnought, 2016a: n.p.) (Dreadnought, 2013b: n.p.). The 1913 march was undertaken by suffragists, non-militant members of the suffrage campaign, and took six weeks; seven women completed the route in its entirety with others accompanying them along the way (Dreadnought., 2013: n.p.). Dreadnought followed the same route as the original South West pilgrimage and at venues along the journey performed the play *Oxygen* by Natalie McGrath (2013); a piece of new writing that reimagines the suffrage movement, with a particular focus on the South West pilgrimage. The project was publicly funded by Arts Council England and professionally curated. In contrast to *Her Naked Skin* and the film *Suffragette*, in retelling suffrage history Dreadnought do not explicitly embody opposition to the campaign, which formed the dominant

cultural hegemony of the period; rather they foreground commemoration of the movement.

For Dreadnought the act of walking was the means through which the historical representation of the suffrage period was built. Dreadnought's pilgrimage has been documented on an interactive online map that exists beyond the project and narrates the events which took place along the journey (2013a: n.p.). Alongside multiple performances of *Oxygen*, the pilgrimage included a variety of events such as an afternoon tea hosted in Teignmouth to celebrate the suffrage movement; visits to local primary and secondary schools from Dreadnought to talk about suffrage history; and a discussion in Bristol which questioned the effectiveness of militancy in the campaign for the right to vote (Dreadnought, 2013a: n.p.). The pilgrimage also incorporated re-enactments of specific events from historical accounts of the march. For example, in Corsham Dreadnought marked the centenary of the pilgrimage's arrival by re-enacting a walk through the town centre and ended by performing a scene outside the town hall based on a photograph taken from the original occasion. The online interactive map acted as a resource to inform people of events as the project was going on and invited the public to join the march (Dreadnought, 2013a: n.p.). The pilgrimage was led by the five cast members of *Oxygen* and began at Land's End where, 'episodes from *Oxygen* were performed, songs sung, stories of great grandmothers who were in Holloway shared, and a naming of the women who walked took place' (Dreadnought, 2016b: n.p.). The five performers were dressed in Edwardian costume for the pilgrimage and carried a banner. Members of the public were able to join Dreadnought along the route and as the pilgrimage passed through different towns, organisations and schools had arranged to join the march; for example, photos from Topsham depict a large group of women in Edwardian dress holding a banner for the 'Topsham Suffragists'. (Dreadnought, 2016b: n.p.) Dreadnought's pilgrimage spanned a month and finished in Hyde Park, where they hosted a celebratory picnic before performing *Oxygen* (Dreadnought, 2013a: n.p.). Photographs on the company's website show participants dressed in the Suffragette colours of purple, white and green, and others wearing red, white and green which were historically associated with suffragists. At times those in costume are pictured

alongside individuals in modern dress, but the image of marching women in solidarity is firmly framed by the historical period (Dreadnought, 2016b: n.p.).

Dreadnought's pilgrimage worked to bring women together through the re-enactment of suffrage history and centred on historical feminism as a movement of unity, moving focus away from individualist notions of feminism, such as those offered by Sandberg (2013). This created a complex layering of performance, whereby performers played the role of Edwardian suffragists offering images of unity with their fellow women while also encouraging contemporary spectators to participate and join them in their pilgrimage and activities. Thus, a collective of contemporary women was cultivated through the commemoration of a collective of historical women.

The performative act of walking in Dreadnought's pilgrimage works to cultivate images of the collective and an environment of unity. In their article, 'Walking Women: Shifting the Tales and Scales of Mobility,' Deirdre Heddon and Cathy Turner critique the male canon of theorists who tend 'towards an implicitly masculinist ideology,' and frame, 'walking as individualist, heroic, epic and transgressive' (2012: 224). Through their research project 'Walking Women,' Heddon and Turner engage with female walking artists to interrogate the absence of women from this discourse and how this is linked to 'the persistent cultural and ideological narratives attached to walking' (2012: 225). Counter to previously dominant masculine narratives of the individual, 'Walking Women' led Heddon and Turner to a focus on the collective, stating, 'the work seems actively to solicit, indeed build relations rather than escape them (relations with strangers, relations with others walking the Pennine Way, relations with refugees, relations with those in the locale...)' (2012: 234) This resonates with Dreadnought's practice, as throughout their pilgrimage they invited individuals to join them and, through the shared act of walking, relationships developed between participants, creating a collective group.

Heddon and Turner suggest 'a wider cultural shift towards relational or dialogical aesthetics,' which leads them to consider what is meant by 'relationship' and dialogue' (2012: 235). They develop writing by Claire Bishop who offers questions through which to explore 'relational art'. Building on theories by Nicolas Bourriaud, Bishop defines relational art as works that 'seek to establish intersubjective encounters

(be these literal or potential) in which meaning is elaborated *collectively* (RA, p. 18) rather than in the privatized space of individual consumption' (2004: 54). As touched on by Heddon and Turner, Bishop counsels, 'if relational art produces human relations, then the next logical question to ask is what types of relations are being produced, for whom, and why?' (2004: 65). Applying this to Dreadnought's pilgrimage, the mode of performance facilitated groups of women, and to a lesser degree men and children, to share conversations, dress alike in period costume and carry banners bearing slogans and emblems from the historical period. In this instance, this mode of performance is built from the history of women partaking in the same exercise 100 years previously. However, one fundamental difference between the historical event and the contemporary re-enactment of it is that modern day participants do not appear to be campaigning as their foremothers were. The centenary framing enables individuals to participate physically in a historical act and generate a united collective without campaigning for the cause the historical feminists protested for; in this case the function is to remember. While this act of feminist remembrance does carry political tones given the historical content being commemorated, it simultaneously signifies the different political extent of activism compared to acts of remembrance.

Through this commemorative piece Dreadnought devote little attention to the opposition against whom the historical women protested; rather their focus is on bringing women together to walk and celebrate the past. The foregrounding of nostalgia brings individuals together through attention to the historical event, and the act of walking contributes to a relational performance that facilitates discussion and a chance for individuals to get to know one another through the common cause of commemorating the suffrage movement. Yet, this momentum does not appear to then propel engagement with current issues. The absent embodiment of opposition shifts attention away from what the women were fighting against and their respective motives for doing so. This subsequently directs audiences' focus away from the walk as a historical act of political protest and towards historical narratives of women joining together, for community. This is not to suggest that images of community are detrimental but rather that the representation of activism is reduced, thus belittling

the weight of the suffragists' actions. But what then is the nature of the community cultivated by this event?

Applying Bishop's questioning of the types of relationships produced more directly, photographs of the pilgrimage show women walking together, holding banners between them, talking, laughing, a large number in period costume but some in modern dress; this conjures an image of unity and solidity under the banner of the historical suffrage movement (Dreadnought, 2016b: n.p.). Granted this interpretation is based on observations, not direct feedback from participants and the photos on the website offer a curated depiction of the event, but these photos suggest that communities which the pilgrimage passed through joined the walk and brought their own context to the piece. For example, pictures depict women in Edwardian dress gathered by a banner which reads 'National Union of Suffrage Societies Non-Militant Non-Party Corsham Welcomes You' (Dreadnought, 2016b: n.p.). Hence, the 'whom' in this piece of relational art is not only the performers but also the communities within the towns through which the pilgrimage passed. Considering 'why' these relationships were produced, the historical moment being represented creates a shared cause that immediately gives strangers a commonality on which to interact and experience the walk together. The act of walking together creates relationships and the process of re-enacting gives participants the space and format to share in something that historically centred on women sharing together. One photo from the project shows a performer in Edwardian dress holding a whiteboard with the question 'What do you want in 2013?' to which the response 'every woman, man and child to be free from violence and poverty equality and respect for all,' has been written (Dreadnought, 2016b: n.p.). This shows the beginnings of linking the reconstruction of historical feminism to contemporary inequalities and points the unity cultivated by the event towards the notion that there is still inequality to challenge and fight. This contemporary focus does not appear to be at the forefront of the project's intentions but acts as an undercurrent through the process.

Bishop's writing facilitates analysis of the event itself and the notion of relational art enables consideration of the shared experience generated by the process of participating in the act of walking, which Heddon and Turner acknowledge as a relational practice that can promote unity amongst those involved. However, Bishop's

questioning does not go beyond the artistic event; the outcome of relationships cultivated by the shared experience of encountering an artwork is not taken into consideration. Looking beyond the moment of an artistic piece, in this case the pilgrimage, could establish if the unity formed between individuals compelled further engagement in feminist discourse, exceeding togetherness experienced in the moment, or if it dispelled once the act of walking came to an end. The notion of tracking impact beyond the event poses logistical challenges, but expanding analysis to acknowledge that unity created in the moment of relational art has the potential to exist beyond a piece takes into account the wider cultural moment in which the project takes place and how notions of the collective, created in the performance, could influence an individual's attitudes and actions beyond the artistic encounter.

The collective experience cultivated through Dreadnought's performative walking resonates with Freddie Rokem's observation that, 'collective identities, whether they are cultural/ethnic, national, or even transnational, grow from a sense of the past; the theatre very forcefully participates in the ongoing representations and debates about these pasts' (2000: 3). Here Rokem identifies performance as an active agent in this process. In the case of Dreadnought, the community created is rooted in a feminist history that offers a collectivist approach, which echoes and fosters an image of unity within the landscape of contemporary feminisms. Performance participates in this process by creating a platform from which collective identities can be established and developed. Notably Dreadnought's mode of performance created a connection between contemporary unity and historical feminist discourse without the embodiment of an opposition, thus focus remained on the actions of the women united in their feminist outlook.

Her Naked Skin

Plot Synopsis

Dreadnought's pilgrimage highlights the notion of unity cultivated by the performance style of organised walking; this sits in direct opposition to narrative-driven theatrical performance which centres on individual characters to construct storytelling. This focus on the individual is mirrored in attention given to playwrights

and both *Her Naked Skin* and rhetoric surrounding the play's author Rebecca Lenkiewicz provide an example of how an individualist focus shapes the dramaturgy and reception of a play. *Her Naked Skin* premiered on 24th July 2008 at the National Theatre and was the first play by a living female playwright to be performed on the Olivier stage (2008b). The play includes a character of the historical figure Emily Wilding Davison and dramatises sequences of militant protest and forcible feeding. Unlike Dreadnought's pilgrimage, *Her Naked Skin* represents opposition to the suffrage movement, both in a political and domestic context. However, the dramaturgy of the piece creates distance between the historical opposition represented in the play and current cultural patriarchal dynamics and subsequently provides a complex example of how a culture navigates its history in theatrical performance.

Her Naked Skin centres on two suffragettes: the young working class Eve Douglas and the older married upper class Celia Cain. The play begins with the character of Emily Wilding Davison, as she silently puts on her hat and Suffragette sash before leaving. Film footage is then played from the 1913 Derby where the historical figure was trampled by the King's horse. The next scene is set in The House of Commons and depicts the Prime Minister and members of his cabinet debating Emily's accident. The men fear that if she dies the movement will gain a martyr. Following this, a group of Suffragettes gather and smash windows, which earns them each a sentence in Holloway Prison. While serving this time Eve and Celia become close. Once out of prison the women attend a rally led by Florence Boorman, a senior Suffragette who served with Celia and Eve in Holloway. Meanwhile Celia's husband William begins the play as sympathetic but with growing concerns for Celia's health he asks her to stop her involvement with the cause, which she refuses to do. In the final scene of Act One, Eve and Celia are in bed together at Eve's lodgings and Celia confesses, 'I think I love you' (Lenkiewicz, 2008a: 44).

Act Two begins in Epping Forest where Celia and Eve extract themselves from the group during Suffragette target shooting practice. Unaware of her relationship with Eve, William, Celia's husband, gives Celia an ultimatum regarding hunger striking that, 'If you refuse to eat in there [prison]. When you come out. There will be no home for you here' (Lenkiewicz, 2008a: 61). Celia and Eve then meet in a tea shop

and Celia calls for an end to their relationship. Eve's further involvement with the Suffragettes causes her to return to prison and whilst inside she undergoes forcible feeding. The action then depicts Eve back at her lodgings where she slits her wrists. The following scene takes place in Holloway Prison Hospital where Florence and Celia visit Eve who has bandaged wrists and is delirious from a fever. The final scene takes place at Florence's house; conversation reveals that several months have passed and that Celia has been living with Florence but is now waiting for William to pick her up. Florence shares that she has seen Eve who is 'to be married' (Lenkiewicz, 2008a: 89). William arrives and Celia expresses that although she had planned to go home with him she no longer intends to. The play closes with Celia alone, she puts on her coat and checks herself in the mirror, as Emily did in the opening scene, before leaving.

Rebecca Lenkiewicz

In his review of *Her Naked Skin* critic Dominic Cavendish declares, 'Lenkiewicz is making history here' (2008: n.p.). In a similar vein, mention of *Her Naked Skin* in promotional material, reviews and articles, during the play's run and thereafter, is repeatedly followed by a nod to the production as unique for the Olivier. For example, Lyn Gardner makes reference to *Her Naked Skin* in an interview with Lenkiewicz in 2015 and follows with the tagline, 'the first original play by a living female writer to be staged in the Olivier' (2015a: n.p.). Similarly, *The National Theatre Story* by Daniel Rosenthal, a book which accounts the institution's history since the nineteenth-century, highlights this fact but swiftly offsets it with Nicolas Hytner's justification that 'there are not many original plays in the Olivier by writers of either sex' (Hytner, cited in Rosenthal, 2013: 769). During the production's run this framing could have influenced audiences' horizon of expectations (Bennett, 1997), whereby the play became a measure of women's playwriting abilities, meaning Lenkiewicz was primarily read in reference to her gender. This focus problematically projects the notion that women are new to playwriting. This resonates with Katherine Newey's writing on 'exceptionality' in nineteenth century playwriting, which identifies the cultural 'positioning of a minority of women playwrights as 'exceptional'' (2005: 11). Newey states that, 'the discourse of exceptionality is part of the gendered process of

uncoupling the identity of ‘woman’ from that of ‘playwright’ (2005: 11). In order to challenge this structure Newey argues ‘for the normative identity of women playwrights in the nineteenth century’ (2005: 11). The cultural response to Lenkiewicz provides a clear example of exceptionality operating within the twenty-first century theatre industry. In framing her position as the first living female playwright to have work performed on the Olivier stage as exceptional, commentators reinforce the arena of playwriting as masculine. On the one hand, foregrounding Lenkiewicz’s achievement celebrates the progression of women in the theatre industry and highlights the absurdity of how long it has taken for women to be given this opportunity. Yet on the other hand, it devalues the current work of other women playwrights and theatre makers and cultivates the notion that women should be grateful for being granted access to this male domain.

Framing Lenkiewicz as an exception distorts the cultural image of women’s involvement in the theatre industry and problematically suggests that women playwrights are a new phenomenon. A vast body of research from theatre historians demonstrates that in British theatre this is not the case. For example, Margaret Rubik’s book *Early Women Dramatists 1550-1800* (1998) surveys the work of historical women within the theatre industry with reference to their position in society. In the context of the English stage, Jane Milling identifies that the first performances of female dramatists’ work occurred in the Restoration period, stating that, ‘with the exception of Katherine Philips’s translation of Corneille’s *Pompey*, staged in 1663 by Ogilby in Dublin, women were not to see their drama, and certainly not original drama, on the English public stage until the spring of 1669’ (2000: 267). Milling ‘examines the means by which these women’s works found access to the public theatre,’ with a particular focus on the role of patronage (2000: 267). Examining the same historical context through to the Georgian period, Helen Brooks (2014) problematises public/private sphere rhetoric and its subsequent shaping of the ‘actress as whore’ persona enforced by researchers. Brooks contests ‘erotic and sexual’ frameworks for historical enquiry and instead argues for recognition of ‘these historic actresses’ economic, professional, and artistic agency’ (2014: 566). Similarly to Brooks, in *Treading the Bands* (2006) Gilli Bush-Bailey conducts historiographic analysis of the late Stuart period to interrogate why, ‘in the history of the theatre, the sexualised construction of its working women

has remained at the heart of the narrative' (2006: 5). In response Bush-Bailey sets about, 'the task of revisiting and reviewing the histories of the first professional women working in the public London theatres' (2006: 9). Focusing specifically on playwrights, in *Getting into the Act* Ellen Donkin surveys the work of seven women 'whose plays were produced in London between 1775 and 1800,' describing them as 'designated survivors of the system' (1995: 3). In contrast to the above, Donkin closes her study by turning to the present and observes that the number of plays produced written by women is still dishearteningly low. As a result, Donkin concludes that, 'in order to break patterns of the past, it will not be enough for women to write marvellous plays. They must develop foolproof strategies for producing them' (1995: 190). Moving to the Victorian period, Newey's book *Women's Theatre Writing in Victorian Britain*, referenced above, uncovers female playwrights writing 'from the late Romantic period to the beginning of the twentieth century,' and brings light to their works, which have been previously overlooked by historians (2005: 1). This book explores factors which have contributed to the oversight of these historical women's plays and addresses their work in relation to the wider cultural context of Victorian Britain. Offering breadth, as well as depth, Melinda Finberg's edited collection *Eighteenth-century Women Dramatists* (2001) and Tracy Davis and Donkin's coedited *Women and Playwriting in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (1999), both document the vast history of female playwrights and address women's involvement in this profession with reference to the wider social context. Shifting focus beyond Britain, Susan Croft's book *She Also Wrote Plays* surveys hundreds of writers to provide 'an international guide to women playwrights from the 10th to the 21st century' (2001). Similarly, situated in the current international theatrical landscape Penny Farfan and Lesley Ferris' book *Contemporary Women Playwrights* (2013a) brings this discourse sharply into contemporary debate.

This critical work clearly demonstrates that the woman playwright is not a new phenomenon. Yet, in framing Lenkiewicz as an exception, close attention was paid to gender politics within *Her Naked Skin* as the play came to be judged as women's contribution to playwriting. This scrutiny is shown in the tagline to a review on the feminist website *The F Word* which reads, 'Rebecca Lenkiewicz's take on the suffrage movement hinges on a clichéd story of forbidden love between seamstress Eve

Douglas and Lady Celia Cain. Debi Withers is exasperated' (Withers, 2008: n.p.).

Withers criticises Lenkiewicz's inclusion of a homosexual sortyline:

My worry is how the forbidden love story has become the recurring and standardised trope of lesbian fiction – be it on film, TV, theatre, or in books. These forms of representation are increasingly pedestrian, uninspiring and, I would argue, reinforce heteropatriarchal ideas of what a lesbian life should look like, what it is allowed to look like. (2008: n.p.)

Lenkiewicz contributes to this trope, with the historical social structures in the play playing a fundamental role in shaping the love story as forbidden, as exemplified in this exchange:

Eve It would be different if we were allowed to be together
Celia Men and women are allowed to be together. And they're the worst of the lot.

(2008a: 70)

Celia's retort could be performed comically to mock heteronormative social structures, suggesting that the normality Eve is longing for is equally troublesome, but framed as the desirable option. This romantic narrative deflects from the political potential of the piece, as it foregrounds notions of forbidden love and directs focus to the loss of a relationship, rather than the political movement and the broader social inequalities that oppressed women in the period Lenkiewicz is reimagining. In contrast to Withers, Cavendish patronisingly commends Lenkiewicz on including male characters in the political debate, 'It acknowledges that the cost of the campaign to secure votes for women wasn't always borne solely by women' (2008: n.p.). While given as a compliment this serves as a reminder that in retelling women's history Lenkiewicz is still judged in her attention to masculine narratives. While focusing on different moments of narrative, both Withers and Cavendish interpret *Her Naked Skin* in reference to gender; as Withers criticises her subscription to normative narratives, Cavendish praises her conventional inclusion of masculine characters.

Though *Her Naked Skin* contributes to the homosexual forbidden love trope, identified by Withers, would Lenkiewicz not have also been criticised had the play centered on a heterosexual romantic storyline? In this regard she could not win; the framing of exceptionalism places Lenkiewicz in the line of fire where subscription to any norm is hailed as missed opportunity but subversion from the expected runs the

risk of jeopardising women's place on the Olivier stage. This cultural response ensures that this work continues to be framed as the minority **and highlights the patriarchal constraints of the contemporary theatre industry discussed in the Introductory Chapter**. While Lenkiewicz was held to such high accountability, *Her Naked Skin* also adheres to recurring modes for representing the Suffragette movement. For example, window smashing, group rallies, husbands asking their wives to leave and forcible feeding all recur in fictional reimaginings of the suffrage movement. This set of familiar tropes echoes Elizabeth Robins' 1907 suffrage drama *Votes For Women!* (1998: [1907]), which juxtaposes the domestic and public setting as a means to explore women's political agency. *Her Naked Skin* echoes this historical theatrical trajectory in the inclusion of a public rally, as is the case in Act Two of *Votes For Women!*, alongside private conversations framed by the domestic setting. This normativity in the fictional narrative of *Her Naked Skin* maps onto the dramaturgy of the play.

The Dramaturgy of Militancy and Torture in Her Naked Skin

In the National Theatre production, *Her Naked Skin* adheres to one form of aesthetic representation, by using non-naturalistic scenography and mime to stage militant activity by the Suffragettes, and then contrasts this stylistic choice by employing realism for the later scene of Eve being forcibly fed. This indicates a dramaturgical choice from both the playwright and director to create contrasting representations of the historical violence on either side of the campaign. The juxtaposing dramaturgy and representation of torture and window smashing demonstrates a complex cultural negotiation on the part of the playwright and director, whereby the radical historical movement is centralised and domesticated while the historical cultural norm is framed as the opposition. Exploration of the contrasting modes of representation between the window smashing and forcible feeding provides an example of how the medium of playwriting responds to and shapes the reimagining of this historical campaign and its subsequent dialogue with contemporary feminist discourse.

Distinction in description between the fictional narrative and the actions carried out by the actors highlight how specific elements worked within the performance text as a whole. This resonates with Lucy Nevitt's notion that:

We must always consider the ways in which acts of violence are positioned within the wider frame of the play or performance in which they occur. We must also consider the ways in which they are depicted and performed, which means that analysis of moments in performance (the choices made by fight directors, directors, performers and designers, as well as the expectations and experiences of spectators) is just as important as the analysis of any written script. (2013: 11-12)

Employing Nevitt's attention to both text and performance techniques indicates the contrasting modes for representing violent behaviour carried out by the Suffragettes and their opposition in *Her Naked Skin*. It is in this difference that the implications on contemporary feminist discourse become apparent, as the force of the movement is reduced while the torture of the patriarchy is pushed to such extremity that it bears little resemblance to contemporary oppression. In centralising the Suffragettes' narrative, their militancy is glossed over and their oppressors are positioned as outside the central norm. This dramaturgy has ideological implications; while the extremity of the Suffragettes' actions are overlooked, their subsequent punishment frames them as victims rather than political radicals.

Beginning with the representation of militant behaviour, Act One Scene Three portrays the Suffragettes smashing windows. The fictional action begins with Eve tentatively approaching Celia, Celia asking 'Is it your first time?' to which Eve responds 'I don't think I can do it' (Lenkiewicz, 2008a: 8). Moments after Celia walks away, Eve takes out a small hammer, raises her arm and thrusts the hammer forward to smash the window in front of her. Celia meets Eve's relief and excitement with a comment on the premature timing of her actions, before taking out her own hammer and smashing a window. This is followed by multiple Suffragettes doing the same and shouting excitedly; they do not respond physically to the broken glass now lying around them, but rather continue their cries as they run out of sight. The staging of this sequence begins with the performers milling around a bare stage; after dialogue between Jemima Rooper (playing Eve) and Lesley Manville (playing Celia), Rooper faces the audience, takes a small hammer out of her pocket, raises the hand holding the hammer and quickly pushes her arm forward. The action of Rooper thrusting the hammer is accompanied with a sound effect of smashing glass. After a brief exchange of dialogue, Manville produces a hammer from her pocket and performs the same action and the sound effect is used again. The other performers playing Suffragettes

in the scene stand on different parts of the bare stage, slightly separate from one another; following Manville's action they each take hammers out of their pockets and at different intervals repeat the same movement. As multiple actors perform this gesture the sound of smashing glass is repeated with each movement and as the sound clips overlap the performers shriek and run off stage in different directions leaving a bare stage.

This violent sequence lasted for a fleeting moment as the production did not dwell on the embodiment of militant activity from the Suffragette era; rather this representation played down the extremity of the movement's behaviour and by marginalising this side of the narrative the extremes early feminists went to were belittled. In contrast to this non-naturalistic staging the representation of forcible feeding in *Her Naked Skin* confronts audiences with a detailed re-enactment of an act of torture many Suffragettes endured. The fictional action begins with prison guards leading Eve into a doctor's office, where she is instructed to sit down while her legs and hands are tied together. Dr Vale briefly asks questions regarding Eve's health before concluding that she will be forcibly fed as a result of her hunger striking. A nurse holding a long tube, funnel and flask of liquid climbs up to stand on a chair positioned next to Eve. Guards and nurses hold Eve still and with two guards holding her face in position Vale begins inserting the tube into her nose; the tube is attached at the other end to the funnel held by the nurse standing on a chair. Vale clarifies that the tube needs to be pushed 'in a good twenty inches [...] so it goes right through to the stomach' (Lenkiewicz, 2008a: 81). Once the tube is in place Vale directs the nurse to pour the flask of liquid into the funnel, as Eve's body shakes in reaction Vale calls first for a wooden gag which Eve resists and spits out and so a metal gag is demanded by Vale which the guards force into her mouth and hold in position. Once the nurse has declared that all the liquid has gone, Vale slowly removes the tube. When the final part of the tube is removed Vale bends down to look at Eve and she vomits over him, which he responds to by slapping her across the face. The National Theatre production employed stage illusion⁵ of mimetic realism to perform these fictional actions, as depicted in Figure 2.1.

⁵ In a private conversation with Rebecca Lenkiewicz she shared that the production hired a magician to create the illusion of forcible feeding for this sequence.



Figure 2.1: Ashmore, C. (2008) '*Her Naked Skin* Forcible Feeding Scene', [Photograph] (National Theatre Archive) [13-5-17].

A prioritising of the act of forcible feeding, over acts of militancy, was reflected in the set design. The window smashing sequence took place on a bare stage with a general lighting wash. This is not to say that a complex set is necessary to validate the action, but rather this choice stood out as the majority of the following scenes used a revolving set to provide props, furniture and large structures to illustrate the different settings, from Holloway Prison to a tea room. For example, in the case of the forcible feeding scene (Act Two Scene Ten) the action took place with prison cells as its backdrop and medical equipment was used which echoed those described in Suffragette accounts of this act of torture (see Figure 2.1). This highlights the different aesthetic choices made within the piece; the forcible feeding scene used several pieces of furniture and a multitude of props to conduct the naturalistic portrayal of the action, in contrast to the mimed sequence representing window smashing performed on a bare stage. Instead of dwelling on the militant act, the window smashing sequence functioned primarily as a dramaturgical device to progress the plot and provide a reason for the women to serve time in prison.

Chapter Two: The Political Woman

Critic's responses to *Her Naked Skin* indicate the realist and violent staging of the forcible feeding sequence. Michael Billington describes it as, 'one of the most horrifying scenes on the London stage,' (2008: n.p.) while Georgie Hobbs observed that 'six people walked out, as I had wanted to' (2008: n.p.). However, Hobbs goes on to question such visceral responses arguing, 'You're supposed to know what you're signing up for in a play about suffragists largely set in Holloway Prison; force feeding is expected' (2008: n.p.). This indicates recurring narratives that feature in the retelling of this period of history. Hobbs' comments suggests that an audiences' horizon of expectations would anticipate such a narrative and as a result they should not have been so offended that they left the theatre. For Hobbs, the recurring narratives should have caused desensitisation on the part of the viewer, but it appears that this cultural framework pushes the mode of representation rather than calling for an alternative narrative. In the case of *Her Naked Skin* Lenkiewicz subscribes to the normative and anticipated elements of the suffrage movement but pushes the realist mode of representation and in doing so disgruntles audiences through the theatrical devices used within a narrative they are familiar with.

When read alongside historical accounts from members of the suffrage movement, the window smashing scene's use of a unified group of women, small hammers and the noting of an agreed time that the deed was to be carried out, all adhere to the social and logistical conventions of the historical act. The narrative from window smashing to forcible feeding retold in *Her Naked Skin* represents what the Suffragette Fellowship archive defines as an 'authentic' experience of militancy. Founded in 1926 the Suffragette Fellowship:

Devised a questionnaire designed to record former suffragettes' experiences of militancy. Centering on the question "when were you imprisoned?" this survey at once documented and defined suffrage militancy. To be authentic, suffrage militancy followed one trajectory: from militant action, defined narrowly as violence against property, through arrest, to incarceration and, eventually, the hunger-strike and forcible feeding. (Mayhall, 1999: 3)

This narrative is adhered to in *Her Naked Skin* and resonates with Sandra Stanley Holton's exploration of suffrage historiography in which she categorises

interpretations and accounts of the suffrage campaign into ‘constitutionalist’ or ‘militant’ histories. Holton proposes that the framework of militant histories created,

The dichotomous categorisation of suffragists: as radicals or conservatives, as militants or non-militants, as populists or elitists. This was a plot in which clear continuities between nineteenth- and twentieth-century campaigns became almost invisible. Militancy was presented as an unequivocal break with the past, in its readiness to engage in ‘the politics of disruption’. (2000: 19)

Holton’s binary distinctions are mirrored in contemporary representations of the suffrage movement and the dominant focus on the Suffragettes in the reimagining of this period. Applying this to a theatrical context, narratives of militancy offer physical actions which lend themselves to dramatisation beyond non-militant ideologies. The representation of militancy in *Her Naked Skin* shows a balance between drawing on normative narratives of the suffrage movement that are readily active, while playing down the act of violence in the briefness of its staging. In this theatrical context the recurring historical narrative of militancy is framed through the experience of the individual. The normative formation of a dramatic narrative, of focusing on the story of a central character, mirrors the historiography of the suffrage movement. As Holton argues, ‘militant histories emphasised the role of heroic individuals in major processes of social change, not the gradual and progressive evolution of a society through its own organic capacity for development and growth’ (2000: 19). This resonates with the dramaturgy of Eve’s character, which foregrounds her endurance of prison and forcible feeding. However, the contrasting modes for representing the window smashing and forcible feeding shift Eve’s experience from one of boldness to victimisation; in downplaying the act of militancy, the piece weakens the political narrative and protest of the Suffragettes and glosses over the disruption identified by Holton.

The traditional conventions of theatre shape the representation of feminist history to focus on the individual, as demonstrated through Eve’s narrative, which contrasts the collectivist image promoted through Dreadnought’s shared mode of walking. This individualist focus is exemplified in the character of Emily Wilding Davison, a historical figure whose story is frequently drawn upon to stand for the suffrage movement as a whole. Davison’s historical narrative provides a sharp

example of normative historiography within the representation of the suffrage movement and how this normative form perpetuates a feminism focused on the individual in contrast to the collective dynamic of the original movement.

Emily Wilding Davison on Stage and Screen

An intricate weave of historical context and fiction is demonstrated in *Her Naked Skin* when Emily Wilding Davison is reimagined in the opening scene. In the National Theatre production Zoe Aldrich (playing Emily) entered an almost bare stage with a chair in the centre. On the chair was a coat, hat and suffragette sash, all of which she put on slowly, maintaining a gaze out to the audience. After Aldrich exited, a video was projected onto the back wall of the set showing footage of Davison being trampled by the King's horse. The video used original footage from the incident edited alongside close ups of horses' hooves, and was layered with dramatic instrumental music. Like the window smashing sequence, the inclusion of the film breaks from the realist *mise-en-scène* that has been established and is used throughout the majority of the play. This framed the piece with a very specific narrative of the suffrage movement, drawing on the popular symbol of Davison as a means to locate audiences in the historical campaign. Yet the intervention of the original footage with music and dramatic close ups distances the familiar footage and, in theatricalising it, Davison's narrative is moved into the fictional frame with which the rest of the fiction took place.

Katherine Kelly read this opening as an indicator of Lenkiewicz's faithfulness to the historical moment, commenting, 'with the documentary opening, Lenkiewicz signals that her approach to representing the suffrage era will loosely follow [...] the detailed texture of recorded history' (2010: 657). This opening scene instantly situates audiences in the suffrage period and this sequence was later returned to by the fictional character Celia. The final moments of the performance saw Manville standing alone with a chair centre stage, slowly putting on her coat and, echoing Aldrich's gestures, securing her hat with a hatpin before exiting. In the moment leading up to this Celia has decided to leave William as he does not support her political activism and this final sequence emphasises the sacrifice and loneliness of her decision to be a Suffragette. By mirroring the movements of the character of

Emily, the line between a historical figure and an imagined character is further woven together, as the historical narrative of Davison is embodied by Celia. For the spectator, the consequences of Celia's actions are reflected in her loneliness, although she is part of something bigger, like Emily, in this moment she is faced with her solitude.

The representation of Davison in *Her Naked Skin* poses both a dramaturgical and ideological problem. As identified above, dramaturgically the film breaks the *mise-en-scène* of the play, whilst ideologically the framing of this narrative foregrounds a focus on the individual within this reimagining of the historical feminist movement. This echoes notions of individualism identified by Gill and Scharff (2011a: 7). Elizabeth Evans expands on the development of individualism in contemporary culture, proposing that, 'the normalisation of individualism as a default political ontology makes collective identity or action difficult to adopt, on either a theoretical or practical level' (2015: 46). Evans' observation is mirrored in *Her Naked Skin*, as the piece foregrounds the individual in the representation of politics. This is both a function of traditional dramaturgy and the ideological structures which surround the play's approach to feminist history and echoes individualist strands of contemporary feminist discourse.

The historical theatricality of the Suffragettes' commemoration of Davison is a key component in contemporary society's continued return to this event when reimagining the suffrage movement. In their accounts of Suffragette members, historians Purvis and Holton reflect that Davison's attitude and willingness for extreme actions was not the norm amongst members of the WSPU (2000: 140). Yet the historical figure is frequently drawn upon and represented as a symbol not only for the Suffragette's but for women's emancipation across Britain. For example, a social media campaign was launched in 2014 titled #Emilymatters which used the historical figure as a springboard from which to advance gender equality and highlight the importance of voting (Willoughby, 2017). In this case, the single actions of the historical figure come to represent the whole. Similarly, in *Her Naked Skin* Davison's historical actions are the basis from which an image of the political movement is created, meaning the radical actions of an individual drive the political image of the collective in the play. This once again distances audiences from an accessible notion

Chapter Two: The Political Woman

of the collective to suggest that progress is made in politics by the extreme actions of a few.

Like *Her Naked Skin*, the film *Suffragette*, which premiered in 2015, reconstructs Davison being trampled by the King's horse at the Epsom Derby in 1913, but in contrast to the play this historical narrative is used as the culmination of the plot rather than the introduction. As previously outlined, while film analysis is beyond the scope of this research, I address *Suffragette* as an example of the representation of Davison's narrative in mainstream cultural activity.

The film's protagonist Maud Watts attends the Derby with the character of Emily Wilding Davison and the positioning of this incident at the end of the film alludes to the equation that Davison's death resulted in women's emancipation. The action depicts Maude and Emily at the Derby; their aim is to get their Suffragette ribbons seen by the television cameras filming the event. Their first attempt is to get close to the King's horse as it is paraded around the paddock but they are ushered away by security. Emily's character appears to have a plan that Maude is not privy to and rushes through the crowds, this is interspersed with shots of galloping horses who have begun the race. Emily approaches a barrier on the racecourse and Maude catches up to her. As the horses race around the corner, Emily turns to Maude and says 'Never surrender, never give up the fight,' a line said to Maude by Emmeline Pankhurst earlier in the film, before stepping under the barrier and leaping towards the King's horse, which collides with her and she is trampled to the ground (Gavron, 2015).

Historians have debated whether Davison's sacrifice was intentional. Katharine Cockin states:

Unanswered questions still surround Davison's death. The intentionality ascribed by the active verb routinely used to describe Davison's transition from one state to another – she *threw* herself under the King's horse – cannot be proven. The ideological force of martyr status seems to depend on intentionality, threatened by any possibility of arbitrariness or accident. (2004: 18)

The film is ambiguous in its portrayal of the intention of the character of Emily. On the one hand, the action shows Emily and Maude initially trying to access the King's horse when it is stationary in the paddock, where the stakes are the potential of arrest

but not fatality. Yet on the other hand, several of Emily's lines allude to her willingness to do whatever it takes, such as, the day before the Derby when her and Maude are planning what they will do she stares at Maude and says, 'no matter what the risk we must not fail' (Gavron, 2015: n.p.). Coupled with the repetition of a phrase Emmeline's character speaks earlier in the film, these lines indicate a readiness to go to the extreme and an awareness of the danger of her actions. The film treads a line of ambiguity surrounding the intention of Emily's actions; highlighting that she acted freely, with an awareness of risk, smooths the narrative of martyrdom suggesting consent on Davison's part and thus eases contemporary social conscience. Reimagining the historical figure's actions as a conscious sacrifice enables their extremity to be elevated, whereas acknowledging the potential accidental nature of her behaviour directs sympathies towards the tragic, consequently deflating political energy.

In *Suffragette* the sequence at the Derby is followed by Suffragettes parading for Emily's funeral. The characters fill the streets dressed in white dresses with black sashes, and the screen then fades to black and shows original footage of women marching for Davison's funeral in 1913. Like *Her Naked Skin*, the representation of Davison's historical narrative is coupled with the inclusion of footage relating to the event, indicating the development of a normative technique drawn on to enhance the representation of this historical moment. The original footage becomes a tool which can be drawn upon and layered to create the desired effect on the part of the artist, where the framing of the historical object can guide audiences' responses. This footage reminds audiences that this event really happened and the inclusion of such material implies legitimacy, as if history is governed by a greater authorial body, in this representation of Davison's narrative. This leads to the problematic notion of ranking historical representations, whereby if a retelling includes elements from the historical moment it carries greater cultural weight or perceived authenticity to the original. However, by moving away from the notion that incorporating original elements adds value, and towards consideration of contemporary cultural attitudes and norms of representation that may influence a work, an understanding of a performance as an exploration of history, not a pure revival, can develop. This demonstrates the shift

Chapter Two: The Political Woman

from a focus on historical accuracy to historiography in performance analysis, argued and developed throughout this thesis.

Following this closing sequence in *Suffragette*, text on the screen reads:

Emily Wilding Davison's death was reported across the world.
It drew global attention to the fight for women's rights.
It was a fight that led to the imprisonment of more than a thousand
British women.
In 1918 the vote was given to certain women aged over 30.
In 1925 the law recognised a mother's rights over her children.
In 1928 women achieved the same voting rights as men.
(Gavron, 2015)

The film then lists the dates different countries granted women the right to vote, from New Zealand in 1893 through to Saudi Arabia in 2015 (Gavron, 2015). Although this informs spectators that it was fifteen years after Davison's death that the vote was won, this swift overview indicates Davison's death as the primary cause of emancipation; a simple equation is created that downplays the fifteen-year gap which notably included a world war. For example, in response to the film a teenage viewer commented, 'I thought it was devastating that men only realised that they should allow the women to have rights when something terrible happened' (BBC., 2015). This rhetoric not only implies the equation identified above, but also infers that this human right is something women have been generously awarded, thus reinforcing the cultural patriarchal narrative that women have been granted access, rather than generating a social shift towards equality at an ideological level. While this ending could have served to alert audiences to the fifteen-year interval, in presenting spectators with the date, no narrative was offered to illuminate what campaigning and activism occurred in this historical period and how it progressed to enfranchisement. Culturally the period after Davison's death receives less attention in terms of commemoration for the movement, as is indicated by the narrative offered in *Suffragette*.

Alongside the normative representation of the historical narrative of Davison, similarly to *Her Naked Skin*, *Suffragette* offers a two-dimensional representation of characters in opposition to the movement. Catherine Shoard, film editor for *The Guardian*, states:

Yes we all know women should have the vote we're just coming at it from a 21st century perspective, obviously they should have the vote. What you need to do to make a drama like this come alive I think, is have the opposite side, have their stand point explained, have interesting reasons why they might have thought that. Because people weren't all completely stupid up until 100 years ago [...] All you get is you just sort of get sex pests and fools saying women are stupid and all you're meant to do is sort of roll your eyes in a 2015 way at this. (Brooks et al., 2015)

In recognising the simplicity of the historical debate set up by the film, Shoard suggests the treatment of the opposition to the Suffragettes' campaign enables audiences to distance themselves from the debate. Like *Her Naked Skin*, this generates ideological problems in the connection between this historical representation and contemporary feminist debate. In the film, the framing of both the public and domestic reimaginings of opposition create distance from contemporary society and consequently this representation is readily dismissible in comparison to current oppression.

In the film, the character of Maud's employer Mr Taylor, and her husband Sonny, form the main opposition to her individual narrative. Mr Taylor fulfils the 'sex pest' stereotype suggested by Shoard; Maude sees Taylor sexually assaulting a teenage girl which compels her to share her testimony in a later scene at an audience with government officials. Taylor prowls the laundry room floor making derogatory remarks regarding women's rights, embodying a two-dimensional historical stereotype of a sexist industrial employer who sees himself above the working class and especially superior to women. Structurally the public setting lends itself to two-dimensional opposition; this echoes *Her Naked Skin* where similar tones of opposition are offered by male characters in a scene set at a Suffragette rally. For example, one male bystander shouts 'Bitches! Unnatural fucking bitches, all of you!' (Lenkiewicz, 2008a: 28)

In contrast, the domestic setting complicates the reimagining of opposition in both the film and play as narratives of romance intertwine with opposition to the cause. In *Her Naked Skin* the narrative of William, Celia's husband, transitions from one of support to opposition. Through this arc William is framed as the injured party as he brings her flowers in prison and offers to get her psychological help, while Celia's character forgets his birthday and later rejects him. Although in opposition to

Chapter Two: The Political Woman

the movement, William's actions work to portray the character of a loving husband, consequently grounding Celia's political involvement in a domestic setting.

In *Suffragette* Maude's husband Sonny portrays a two-dimensional opposition to Maude's actions, yet in contrast to Taylor's narrative the plot offers motives for Sonny's opposition, namely in the public ridicule he receives for having a political wife. Sonny shows resistance to Maude's involvement from the beginning of the film and as her participation in the campaign progresses he locks her out of the house and eventually gives their son away for adoption. Dramaturgically Sonny's character is an exploration of opposition in a domestic environment, however, the character offers no redeemable features, rather he simply functions as a voice against Maude's involvement with the movement. In representing consistent resistance throughout, Sonny's character denies audiences a chance to explore the complexities of everyday sexism in this period beyond men not wanting their wives to be Suffragettes, once again echoing Shoard's criticism and holding the historical politics at arm's length which reduces any parallel to contemporary everyday sexism. In representing extreme acts of protest from the Suffragettes, alongside two-dimensional oppressors, the reasons for disagreement are not extensively represented; the film creates a historical narrative of two extremities. This contrast shifts themes of feminism away from day to day sexism and oppression from a spectrum of patriarchal social structures and towards an image of historical feminism as acts of militancy against 'bad' men who did not listen. This resonates with Laura Mayhall's comment on representations of the Suffragette as 'removed far enough historically to pose no threat to the established order, yet seemingly radical enough to denote progress' (1999: 15). Both *Suffragette* and *Her Naked Skin* provide examples of this mode of representation suggested by Mayhall, whereby the Suffragette comes to stand for a radical image of historical feminism but two-dimensional or sympathetic representations of the opposition limit contemporary comparison to oppression. Consequently, the feminist narrative is kept as firmly historical, emphasising the distance between current society and Edwardian Britain. These narrative structures and representations of the suffrage movement negate the opportunity to explore the intricacies of the historical moment, beyond the normative historiography, and how they may speak to contemporary feminist discourse.

While this historical narrative may be easy to ‘roll your eyes’ at given the resolved issue of women’s voting rights in Western society, some historical feminist issues are not so neatly reconciled in contemporary culture and need working through further. Historical representation becomes the means through which to explore such topics and *Blues Stockings* by Jessica Swale is an acute example of this in contemporary British playwriting. In *Blue Stockings*, Swale explores the historical sacrifice of reputation and marriage women faced in order to study in higher education; she uses this historical narrative as a means to discuss contemporary pressure experienced by women between balancing a career and raising a family. *Blue Stockings* forms the case study for my final chapter, as the play is a distinct example of the complexity of representing opposition when the historical debate is not so neatly resolved, as appears to be the case with the suffrage movement.

Conclusion

Like the remembrance of WWI, exploration of commemoration of the suffrage movement, through centenary and other cultural activity, indicates the vast landscape of events that respond to this historical period. A focus beyond the theatre, in my engagement with representations of the suffrage movement, has highlighted how different performance styles shape the reimagining of the past and the consequent dialogue with contemporary feminist discourse. This dichotomy in representations of feminist history intersects with tensions between a focus on the individual or collective in current feminist debate. For example, performance techniques used for Dreadnought’s pilgrimage cultivate a notion of unity under the banner of suffrage history. The practice of walking promotes a collectivist approach; as Heddon and Turner identify it is a mode of practice which works to build relations between participants and it is in this shared space that Dreadnought foreground feminist themes. I contribute to this scholarship by considering the interaction between these relational experiences and the representation of history; in the case of Dreadnought the historical narrative offers a collective approach which then maps onto the shared experience of the modern day participants. The distinct difference between this mode of performance, in contrast to representations of the suffrage movement in film and

theatre, is the absence of an opposition. Methods of organised walking do not employ a traditional theatrical narrative structure, which shifts engagement with suffrage history whereby togetherness is promoted as the primary focus over an embodiment of the discrimination which fuelled the political activism.

The narrative structures in *Her Naked Skin* and *Suffragette* contrast with the image of historical feminism offered by Dreadnought's performance style. Both the play and film indicate recurring themes within representation of the suffrage movement; for example, window smashing as an act of militancy; both aristocratic and working class women becoming involved in the movement and the subsequent class politics; forcible feeding as punishment for hunger strike; and a character of a husband who is disgraced for his wife's actions. These recurring themes indicate normative historiography in the reimagining of the wider suffrage movement, which has come to be primarily represented through a focus on the Suffragettes and their acts of militancy. These three performances, *Her Naked Skin*, *Suffragette* and Dreadnought's pilgrimage, provide a sharp example of normative historiography operating within the reimagining of feminist history. These normative devices both dramaturgically and ideologically shape the feminism offered through the performances to contemporary audiences. For example, the dramaturgical narrative structure of theatre traditionally centres on a protagonist; as a result *Her Naked Skin* centres on Celia and builds an individualist ideology of feminism that foregrounds the actions of the individual, operating to their own agenda, as a means to instigate change. The case study of Lenkiewicz exemplifies the relationship between a performance and the cultural moment in which it is performed, as the rhetoric regarding the first living female playwright to be staged at the Olivier influences reception and response to this reimagining of history.

Recurring representations of Emily Wilding Davison are an example of normative historiography functioning in the retelling of a historical figure. This recurrence not only narrows representation of the historical movement, where the work of a vast collective comes to be retold through an individual, but also offers a specific type of feminism to contemporary audiences; away from collective structures and towards the extraordinary actions of an individual. This positioning of the individual, before the collective, parallels Bruenig's criticism of Sandberg's theories of

'lean in' feminism. The feminist discourse drawn upon, from either an individualist or collectivist perspective, has helped interrogate the reimagining of feminist history in the performances discussed and the subsequent role the performance style plays in the feminist narrative represented.

The dramaturgical challenge of staging opposition shapes how the suffrage movement is represented. As outlined in the introduction, unlike the WWI plays for suffrage drama, the opposition is part of the dominant cultural structure in which the movement was operating and consequently opposition is frequently included in realist reimaginings of this period. As discussed, in *Her Naked Skin* Lenkiewicz frames the Suffragette characters as the central cultural force and as a result opposition manifests itself in the form of two-dimensional characters who are positioned outside the norm. Swale counters this narrative structure in her representation of Victorian women's campaign for graduation rights in *Blue Stockings*. Unlike Lenkiewicz, Swale acknowledges opposition to the cause as the cultural hegemony and as a result builds narratives on characters' attempts to challenge and infiltrate the system. I discuss Swale's construction of narrative and its subsequent relationship to contemporary feminist discourse further in Chapter Four. Overall, this exploration of normative historiography highlights the role of performance styles and techniques in shaping reconstructions of feminist history, which subsequently influence the dialogue between representations of the past and current feminist debate.

Chapter Three

The Victorian Woman: identity politics in Neo-Victorian performance.

Introduction

The previous chapters focus on centenaries and the representation of specific moments of history regarding war and political protest. This exploration has identified recurring modes of representation and normative historiography within contemporary new writing that is set in a historical period. Alongside the commemoration of particular historical events (WWI and the suffrage movement), these dynamics are present in wider representations of the historical period under consideration and resonate with theories of neo-Victorianism in literature, film and cultural activity. The earlier section of my 1882-1928 project boundary includes the Victorian period when the British Empire was at its height, consequently issues of racial diversity and discrimination were present in British culture. While performances discussed in the previous chapters have addressed differences of class, the narratives offered have focused on the white experience. Theories of neo-Victorianism and intersectionality facilitate my expansion of this perspective and form the critical framework through which to further develop the notion of normative historiography, posed in Chapter One. Neo-Victorian studies facilitates consideration of recurring modes for representing the historical period in question. Simultaneously, intersectionality enables interrogation of representation beyond an emphasis on gender to encompass a wider focus on identity politics, in this case class and race, and how the representation of such on stage mirrors or challenges contemporary cultural debate.

In reference to wider cultural activity, Cora Kaplan observes that, ‘the fascination with things Victorian has been a British postwar vogue which shows no signs of exhaustion’ (2007: 2). Similarly, Mark Llewellyn identifies ‘the post-millennial increase in attention back to the nineteenth century’ (2008: 174-175). This can be seen across a spectrum of cultural activity including literature, television, film, heritage sites, interior design and theatre. Academics have responded with the development of neo-Victorian studies as a means to explore this cultural movement. Llewellyn defines neo-Victorian studies as a multidisciplinary field which moves beyond fiction

set in the Victorian period, or the re-writing of historical narratives, and rather ‘has the potential to help us think through the ways in which we teach, research and publish on the Victorians themselves’ (2008: 165). In the first edition of the journal *Neo-Victorian Studies*, Llewellyn recognises the journal as a platform to ‘bring together the discussion of the contemporary with that contemporary’s engagement with the earlier historical moment’ (2008: 176). Llewellyn further expands this idea with Ann Heilmann in their co-authored book *Neo-Victorianism* (2010), where they articulate their perception of the field:

‘neo-Victorian’ is *more than* historical fiction set in the nineteenth century. To be part of the neo-Victorianism we discuss in this book, texts (literary, filmic, audio/visual) must in some respect be *self-consciously engaged with the act of (re)interpretation, (re)discovery and (re)vision concerning the Victorians*. Much of the discussion we formulate [...] therefore resides within its own hybrid critical space: drawing on contemporary debates and recent research within Victorian studies and works on or of contemporary culture. (2010: 4)

This ‘hybrid critical space’ strongly resonates with the central enquiry of this thesis, as I explore the dialogue between reimaginings of the past and the contemporary culture in which it was created. I extend this critical move by interrogating the element of self-conscious engagement as an act of historiography, which with regards to this study is in reference to the playwright. This engagement becomes one of historiography, on the part of the playwright, when normative dramaturgical and theatrical devices for representing the past are critically engaged with and challenged. Playwrights who adopt this method of engagement in their process, develop beyond creating historical fiction in a theatrical context and towards the method of critical response suggested above. Positioning the conscious process of ‘*(re)interpretation, (re)discovery and (re)vision*’, identified by Heilmann and Llewellyn, as modes of historiography illuminates the act of historical enquiry and interpretation, whilst recognising the complexity of structures that operate within and shape the dialogue between contemporary debate and the interpretation of history.

Joyce Goggin and Tara MacDonald have shaped my engagement with the field as they map the interaction between feminist discourse and neo-Victorian studies. Goggin and MacDonald claim that, ‘for contemporary feminist writers, artists, musicians, performers, and academics, the Victorian period remains an important site

of historical re-vision,' arguing that these enquiries are fuelled by the period's tension between 'strict sexual codes and restrictive female roles' and the suffrage campaign (2013: 2-3). Within these historical patriarchal structures, the experiences of women varied on account of their social position. The class system played an instrumental role in Victorian oppression along with discrimination on grounds of race, fuelled by the imperial outlook of the British Empire that shaped the landscape of Victorian culture. Thus, the intersection of class and race for women in this period was significant in shaping their cultural experiences. This parallels contemporary discourse regarding intersectionality. Hence, a focus on the representation of these identity categories, intersecting with one another, further expands exploration of the normative modes for reimagining women within this period and the implications of such on contemporary debate.

In their discussion Goggin and MacDonald primarily draw on literature as their site of exploration. Contributing another perspective, Benjamin Poore brings theories of neo-Victorianism into the field of theatre studies. Addressing work from the 1960s onwards, in *Heritage, Nostalgia and Modern British Theatre*, Poore 'seeks to place British theatre about the Victorians in its broader cultural context' (2011: 2). Similar to Llewellyn and Heilmann, Poore's 'overarching argument [...] is that the way in which we represent the past on stage tells us much about how we regard ourselves in the present' (2011: 2). I develop Poore's argument by bringing a sharp focus on gender politics into the discussion. With the majority of neo-Victorian studies exploring literature and film, Poore's book stood alone as the primary contribution on theatre, but the field has recently been expanded by Poore and Beth Palmer's co-edited edition of *Neo-Victorian Studies* which centres on performance (2016). This highlights the current turn within the field to consider theatre. This thesis is positioned within this turn. Where existing scholarship is primarily focused on narrative content, I develop discussion to incorporate a focus on text in performance and analysis of production aesthetics. I extend this discourse by incorporating a feminist critique to performance analysis, which draws together the current contributions of feminism and theatre studies developing within neo-Victorian studies.

Scuttlers by Rona Munro (2015b) is a clear example of work that actively engages with the interpretation of Victorian history, as distinguished by Llewellyn and

Heilmann (2010). *Scuttlers* premiered at the Manchester Royal Exchange in 2015 and is unique amongst the landscape of plays that fit my project boundaries as the only piece which focuses wholly on the adolescent Victorian working class. The historical Manchester setting mirrors contemporary issues faced both by the city and wider British culture. Munro states, ‘*Scuttlers* was written in response to the street riots of 2011,’ (2015b: 5) which situates the piece as a knowing interpretation of current events. My analysis draws on the published playtext (Munro, 2015b) and a live production viewed on the 17th February 2015 (Munro, 2015a). I subsequently call on *The Riot* by Nick Darke (1999a) as a secondary example; the play centres on Victorian riots within a Cornish fishing village. *The Riot* parallels themes raised in *Scuttlers* and illuminates exploration of themes of social mobility within representations of the Victorian working class.

Across the plays I have explored, class politics recur as a theme in plays that reimagine the past. Culturally we appear a degree removed from the poverty of the Victorian working class. As a society, steps have been taken since the nineteenth century to combat and prevent such conditions, such as the nationalisation of the health service. This has cultivated a degree of superiority over nineteenth century society regarding class, which feeds into the recurring theatrical representation of these social structures within British history. In contrast, this same ease in recollection does not appear present in contemporary society regarding imperial British history. While Postcolonial discourse occupies a necessary space in modern culture, representations of colonisation and the British Empire are absent from new writing in the twenty-first century mainstream theatre industry. This echoes cultural unease surrounding differences of race and indicates the progress still to be made in contemporary culture to combat discrimination. As a result these historical narratives do not appear to sit with such distance and ease as Victorian class discrimination and consequently do not attract the same attention for narrative construction. These contrasting contemporary responses towards Victorian attitudes regarding class and race feed a loop of theatrical representation, whereby representation of Victorian discrimination on grounds of class is easier on the contemporary conscience. Thus, narratives are repeatedly centred on class division, rather than diversity of race. Neo-Victorian studies offers discourse regarding Victorian class structures and the British

Empire and I draw on this theorisation in reference to normative historiography in order to trouble the representation of diversity amongst gender, class and race in the reimagining of the Victorian past on the British stage.

Each of the twenty three plays that form the data for this thesis are set during the height of the British Empire. While imperial themes may be addressed laterally, astonishingly, only one play amongst the twenty three, *The Empress* by Tanika Gupta (2013b), directly engages with this social and political backdrop and consequently embodies differences of race on stage in this historical setting. This contrasts the theatrical landscape of the late 1960s to the early 80s which Poore recognises as a period when ‘plays about the British Empire in the Victorian period, [were] a popular subject and setting for a series of high-profile works’ (2011: 46). Poore goes on to catalogue such works and theorise this turn in performance since post 1968 the Lord Chamberlain’s approval was no longer required:

The fashion for empire plays [...] was to some extent made possible by the 1968 Theatres Act, since the Lord Chamberlain’s office, in addition to banning representations of God and of past and present monarchs in work that was not sufficiently ‘serious’, had also been known to censor representations of public figures [...] The tone of these imperial plays can also be seen in the context of theatre from 1968 on pushing the boundaries of taste that had previously been enforced by a member of the Queen’s household. (2011: 48)

Characteristic of this trope is Caryl Churchill’s play *Cloud Nine*. Through cross race, gender and generational casting Churchill shines a light on the complexity of identity politics, while critiquing Victorian attitudes of Empire and colonialism alongside 1970s Britain, the context within which the piece premiered. Premiering over thirty years since the ‘empire plays’ described by Poore, *The Empress* takes on a different tone, moving away from a political focus and towards a biographical reimagining of Queen Victoria. The play premiered at the Royal Shakespeare Company’s (RSC) Swan Theatre in 2013 and reimagines the historical relationship between Queen Victoria and her Indian teacher, or munshi, Abdul Karim. A second plot follows Rani, a fictional Indian woman, and her experience of working in England as a nanny and her involvement in the political campaign for the first Indian MP in Britain.

The Empress provides a platform from which to explore the representation of class and race within contemporary plays that reimagine the Victorian period.

Consideration of this play also highlights the dramaturgical challenge of staging ideas, or rather the challenge of representing ideological and political elements of a historical narrative through drama; such as, a political campaign which is a theoretical and ideas-based historical narrative. Exploration of the challenge of staging ideas in *The Empress*, indicates that the heteronormative romantic plot provides a device for playwrights which can bring dynamic action into a predominantly conceptual historical narrative. However, the layering of the heteronormative romantic plot onto the representation of a historical political campaign shifts attention away from the political themes of the play and rather towards a formulaic romantic narrative. This dynamic is particularly prominent through the fictional character of Rani in *The Empress*: the character is a young Indian woman involved in a political campaign during the late Victorian period. This character profile provides potential to emphasise social challenges and the developing role of women within a political context. Yet, dramaturgically, Rani's romantic storyline overshadows her political involvement and detracts attention from the feminist potential of the piece.

Scuttlers

Plot Synopsis

In contrast to the diversity of class representation in other plays within this study, in *Scuttlers* Munro focuses not only on narratives of the working class but those of working class adolescents, an under represented demographic in the reconstruction of this historical period. The piece draws on Manchester's industrial Victorian history to tell the story of two rival street gangs. The Manchester Royal Exchange production, directed by Wils Wilson, reimagined the Victorian working class through the dramatic narrative and the aesthetic and aural qualities of the piece.

Set in Ancoats Manchester in 1882⁶, *Scuttlers* follows two gangs: Prussia Street and the Tigers of Bengal Street, led by George and Sean respectively. The piece opens with the Tigers attacking a drunk man and then moves to a Lodging House where mill workers and members of the Tigers (Theresa, Polly and Margaret) share a bed. We learn that the drunk man is Margaret's mother's lover who made a pass at her; not

⁶ The playtext states the action is set in 1882 (Munro, 2015: 9), however the Author's Note says 1884 (Munro, 2015: 5) and the production blurb reads 1885 (MRE, 2015: n.p.). For the purpose of this analysis I will use the date given in the playtext.

believing the accusation, Margaret's mother threw her out and Margaret begins the play as a new member of the Tigers, taken in by Theresa. Theresa is a dedicated member of the gang and claims she is without family. Polly, dressed in traditionally male clothing, is named the gang's 'tiger cub' and 'mascot' by their leader Sean (Munro, 2015b: 35). The Tigers are followed by Thomas Clayton, a pickpocket who longs to join the gang and one day be the 'king of Bengal Street,' a title he believes his absent father of the same name used to hold (Munro, 2015b: 22, 54).

Tensions rise between the two gangs when the mills stop in Act One and threats of an attack are continually made before the gangs fight one another in Act Two. Throughout the piece there are disputes among Tiger members: Jimmy questions Sean's leadership which leads to Polly, on Sean's orders, slapping him repeatedly across the face. In response, Jimmy later attacks Polly, and with the help of other Tigers he strips her, puts her in a dress and beats her. On the other side of the bridge, Joe, a soldier who has returned from combat, joins Prussia Street and wishes to see Susan, George's sister, who in his absence has had their baby. Joe proposes to Susan and she declines. Against Susan's wishes, George leads the Prussia Street gang into a fight, accompanied by Joe. We learn that Joe used to be a Tiger, and as the action unfolds it is revealed that Theresa is his estranged sister.

While the gangs are preparing to fight, Margaret, complaining of earache, visits a dispensary where Susan works as a nurse. After an examination, Susan removes a dead butterfly from Margaret's ear. As the women talk, Susan offers Margaret a job as a nurse; she initially declines but accepts in a later scene. The play climaxes with the fight that has been building throughout, and as the gangs face one another Sean and Jimmy realise they are outnumbered two to one by Prussia Street and back down. As Theresa's frustration at their cowardice increases, Thomas attacks, stabbing both George and Joe and then running away. Margaret gets the wounded men to the dispensary, where Susan attends to their injuries and instructs Margaret on how to help. After uttering one more proposal to Susan, Joe dies while George survives. Polly then enters with two Policemen and accuses Sean and Jimmy, presumably for her attack although it is not made clear, and they are arrested. Thomas then brags of his violent actions and is also arrested. The penultimate scene shows Sean, Jimmy and Thomas in prison, the two Tigers now cautious of the unpredictable Thomas. The

final scene sees Polly standing on the blood-stained street, warning passers-by, ‘Don’t walk there. A man died there. That’s a man’s blood!’ (Munro, 2015b: 87)

Mise-en-scène

This production of *Scuttlers* created an aesthetic and audio score for the dramatic action that mirrored the industrial setting represented in the text. The set comprised a large circular loom, which shed pieces of cotton, hanging centre stage of the in-the-round configured auditorium (see Figure 3.1). This construction was lowered and raised from the performance space for different scenes (see Figure 3.2 for the set in transition) and could be seen at all times in the rafters of the auditorium. From my seat in the highest circle of the auditorium, the loom was at eye level when raised above the playing space and sat alongside large industrial wheels and the theatre’s lighting rig (as illustrated in the top section of Figure 3.1). In this regard, the production made no attempt to hide the mechanics of the production and the theatrical devices and equipment employed, such as the lighting rig, sat alongside the loom to contribute to the industrial mise-en-scène of the production.



Figure 3.1: Fraser, R. (2015) 'Manchester Royal Exchange *Scuttlers* Set – Loom', [Photograph] (my own private collection) [17-2-15].

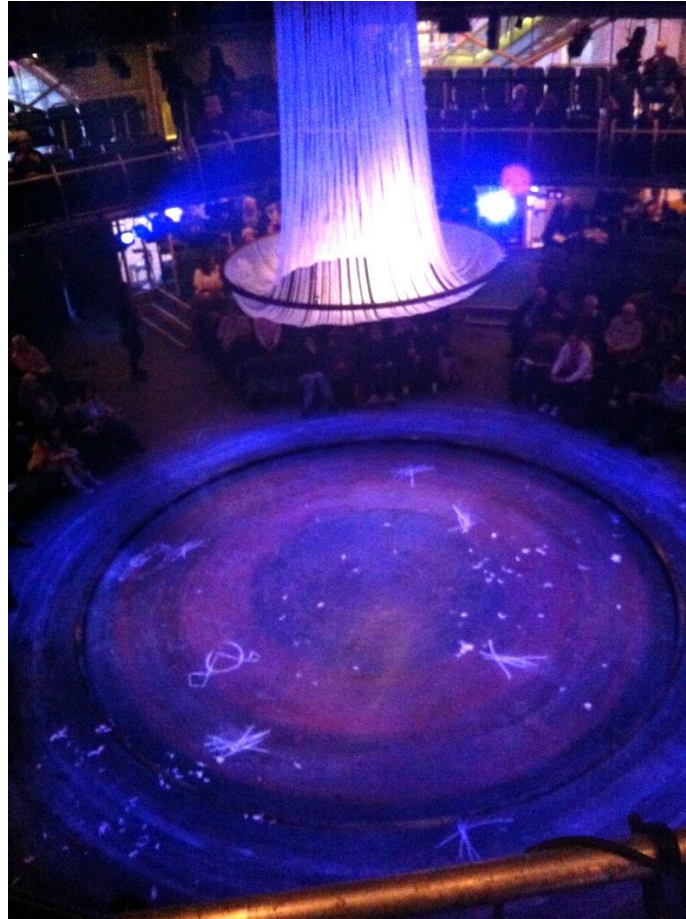


Figure 3.2: Fraser, R. (2015) 'Manchester Royal Exchange *Scuttlers* Set – Loom Raised', [Photograph] (my own private collection) [17-2-15].

Critic Matt Trueman directly links this set design to the class divide embodied through the play: 'above, a giant loom makes a kind of chandelier - a nod to the unaffordable luxuries being produced' (2015: n.p.). In the penultimate scene the loom 'lowers to become a jail cell,' (Trueman, 2015: n.p.) for Thomas, Sean and Jimmy, trapping them in a symbol of the industrial world that dictated social structures and power hierarchies during this period. Thus, the loom becomes a sign of their social prison as well as their legal one.

The industrial setting was echoed in the soundscape that accompanied the Royal Exchange production, described by Lyn Gardner as 'full of noise and fury, the cacophony of the mill machinery and the stamping of clogs' (2015b: n.p.). The score incorporated sounds of industrial machinery and clangs of metal hitting metal and continually rumbled throughout scenes. This soundscape worked, alongside the in-the-round auditorium, to immerse audiences in the industrial environment that would have echoed through the streets during this period. Once again the audio equipment

was made clear to the audience, as the level on which I was seated also housed a large sound desk which was operated in full view of the audience throughout. The sound design functioned on two levels; firstly, to create a sense of the Victorian period and secondly, to highlight the class politics at work in the play by evoking an industrial setting.

Performing at the Royal Exchange Theatre framed *Scuttlers* in industrial history, as this space, ‘was one of the world’s centres for cotton trade until the Second World War, when the building took a direct hit during the Manchester blitz. Reduced in size but not stature, the Hall was repaired and saw continued trade until 1968’ (MRE, 2017: n.p.). This grounded the production in the industrial history specific to Manchester which the piece reimagined. The in-the-round configuration of the space contributed to the immersive aural and aesthetic qualities of this production, which blurred the mechanics of the theatre with the Victorian set to further surround audiences in the industrial working class world of the play.

Neo-Victorian Aesthetics and Dramaturgy

Heilmann and Llewellyn make reference to a blog by US literary academic Miriam Elizabeth Burstein, in which Burstein satirically lists ‘rules’ for novels set in the Victorian period. These elements are predominantly centred on character type and include ideas such as:

2. Christians *may* be Good, as long as they are *not* evangelical.
[...]
4. All heroes and heroines are Instinctively Admired by members of Oppressed Populations.
[...]
6. There must be at least one Prostitute, who will be an Alcoholic and/or have a Heart of Gold.
[...]
9. There must be at least one scene set in a Wretched Slum, which will be very Dirty and Damp.

(Burstein, cited in Heilmann and Llewellyn, 2010: 6-7)

Burstein’s ironic list, referring to the novel, resonates with theatrical representations of the Victorian period, with elements from the above selection present in both *Scuttlers* and *The Empress*. Her satirical response to these modes for retelling the Victorians indicates the normative nature of the qualities she comments on. In the

context of theatre, this notion of normative elements in the retelling of the Victorian period is present in aesthetic choices as well as the plot structures and character types identified by Burstein. The costume in *Scuttlers* was reminiscent of film and theatre that represents the Victorian working class, such as the slums in the musical *Oliver!*, with costumes all a palette of brown and grey. The performers had smudges of brown, grey and black make up on their faces and bodies, presumably to look like dirt, which added to the image of their poor living conditions. As such, this production of *Scuttlers* did draw on specific theatrical devices for representing the Victorian period but it is from this starting point that a playwright is able to reflectively engage with the Victorian period, as identified by Heilmann and Llewellyn (2010). These normative modes of representation are needed to conjure the aesthetic of a historical moment, but, as I discuss in Chapter One in reference to WWI, these devices require interrogation in order to trouble the normative historiography that has developed in the representation of a historical period through the medium of theatre.

The mise-en-scène created in the Royal Exchange production of *Scuttlers* plays into an audiences' horizon of expectations (Bennett, 1997), by conjuring an aesthetic and audio score that audiences would likely be familiar with and read as signifiers of the Victorian working class. Building on this, Munro took *Scuttlers* beyond a historical drama by linking the piece to contemporary issues; primarily in Manchester where the piece premiered. In *Scuttlers*, Munro foregrounds the female characters and uses their narratives to explore notions of social mobility in the context of the Victorian working class. Consequently, *Scuttlers* provides a clear example of a neo-Victorian play.

Considering the dialogue between the contemporary moment and historical representation, Palmer and Poore theorise a 'double-consciousness' on the part of the audience, as performances attempt 'to balance the possibility of immersing the audience in a recreated Victorian world while retaining their sense of contemporary selfhood that experiences the performance intellectually and critically' (2016: 4). *Scuttlers*' final scene brings this process into sharp focus by moving the action to a modern day setting. As outlined above, in the final moments of the play Polly stands in the street '*trying to protect the blood*' spilt where Joe was killed; stage directions dictate that in this sequence '*the street throngs with people again*' (Munro, 2015b: 87). In the Royal Exchange production, members of the ensemble hurriedly crossed the in-the-round

playing space while Chloe Harris, playing Polly, tried to divert them away. Ensemble members were initially dressed in Victorian costume, but as the scene progressed performers crossed the space in modern day dress, their numbers increasing, drowning out Polly's cries (Munro, 2015a). This change of costume style is not signalled in the playtext, but in the Royal Exchange production it explicitly beckoned the 'double-consciousness' Palmer and Poore suggest is required on the part of the neo-Victorian audience. Here the immersive experience of the Victorian world is brought visually into the contemporary moment for audiences, leaving no ambiguity on the part of the viewer as to the playwright and director's intention to reconstruct the past in order to speak to the present.

Kaplan identifies how class politics within the Victorian period have been drawn on for contrasting effect in modern culture. She argues that the Victorians:

Had a strong affective presence in modern Britain in the supposedly libertarian 1960s and 1970s, when the nation was thought to be on its way to becoming a class-less and multicultural society. Its idiomatic function was enhanced in the 1980s and 1990s when Victorian Values – thrift, family, enterprise – were brought back as the positive ethic of Conservative government. (2007: 5)

Kaplan goes on to comment on 'the curious appropriation of the Victorian for disparate political and cultural agendas in the present' (2007: 5). Consequently, Munro's use of Victorian working class politics as a means to comment on the contemporary moment is culturally well-trodden ground. Inspired by the 2011 riots in Manchester, Munro ends *Scuttlers* with performers in contemporary dress treading the space where moments previously Victorian working class gang rivalry has led to outbreaks of violence. Echoes of the Victorian conflict remain in the space, physically embodied by Polly, as contemporary society sweeps over and in this sense Munro draws a closeness rather than distance between the historical and contemporary cultural politics. This exemplifies the appropriation of the Victorian, identified by Kaplan, to fulfil the cultural agenda of responding to and raising issues related to the 2011 riots. This moment was intensified by the in-the-round staging as the chaos built with performers crossing from various points around the playing space. Performers entered and exited through aisles in between spectators seated on the bottom layer of the auditorium, further drawing the audience into the world of the play.

Narratives of Social Mobility

Central to Munro's reimagining of the Victorian working class is the theme of social mobility, offered through the character of Margaret. This narrative provides a theatrical example of Kaplan's notion of appropriation of the Victorian for modern cultural agendas (2007: 5). The broader cultural context in which *Scuttlers* was first performed is one in which social mobility remains an unstable possibility. Sociologist Mike Savage identifies, 'a notable consensus which has emerged in politics and the media that social mobility in Britain is in striking decline. This view was first mooted during the New Labour era and was strongly reinforced by the Coalition government elected in 2010' (2015: 189). Savage goes on to clarify that it depends how social mobility is measured, with income and occupation being the main variables, as to whether this trajectory is accurate, but notes that the prevailing cultural narrative is that social mobility is under threat (2015: 191-192). This echoes historian Jon Lawrence's study of Victorian and Edwardian class structures in Britain, and how they have been interpreted and documented by scholars in the decades since, in which he observes that Britain was, 'a more class divided and class conscious society between 1870 and 1914' (1998: 26). This is not to suggest that divisions in social class were dormant in the mid-twentieth century but, as proposed by Savage, concerns of class division and lack of social mobility has increased in the last two decades, echoing the rigid structure of late nineteenth/early twentieth century British culture. These contemporary structures of feeling are brought alongside social structures from the Victorian period in depictions of the working class in *Scuttlers*, where Munro represents social mobility through Margaret's narrative.

Act Two opens with Margaret visiting Susan in the Dispensary. While waiting to be examined, she mops the floor; Susan observes and offers her a job, to which Margaret replies, 'I'm not fit for something like that. I couldn't talk to a doctor' (Munro, 2015b: 65). As she leaves Susan remarks, 'I've looked inside your head, remember. No Tigers in there' (Munro, 2015b: 67). This text disassociates Margaret's character from connotations of violence which form the gang's identity. By implying that affiliation to the gang is on the surface, Munro infers the potential for individual change and as Margaret helps Susan care for George she concludes, 'I think I could

work here,' (2015b: 81) and transitions from a factory worker to a nurse. In the Royal Exchange production Caitriona Ennis' performance of Margaret adhered to previously discussed conventions for representing the Victorian working class; for example, she wore plain, dirt-stained clothes and had a cough to echo the industrial setting. Against this backdrop, Ennis performed Margaret's narrative, offered in the text, which challenges the rigid Victorian social structures, established in the world of the play, by aspiring to and obtaining a better job. The historical setting enables Munro to not only create a historical narrative different to the norm, but to show a female character succeeding within oppressive social structures. Margaret takes the job after the final fight scene, upon seeing the consequences of the violence that has been alluded to throughout. Read in light of Munro's stimulus of Britain's 2011 riots, the prospect of a better job is the means by which Margaret is able to remove herself from the violence of gang culture and this comes through social mobility offered by Susan. In *Scuttlers*, better opportunities for the individual are proposed as the route away from street violence.

Daniel Briggs comments on the general public's interpretation of the 2011 riots, stating, 'some of their discussions seemed to reflect political discourses that the 'gangs' were to blame and that to restore law and order, the 'criminals' needed harsh punishments' (2012: 13). This firmly categorises those involved as the 'other', thus negating a desire to understand what led to such behaviour. In relation to politicians, media and the police, Briggs notes how they collectively, 'missed the glaring significance of a sinister commitment to consumerism [...] and predictably obfuscated the typical questions from the media which were directed at core issues of social mobility, racism, discrimination, and aggressive policing' (2012: 12). These issues appear present in Munro's representation of rioting in a Victorian context, yet rather than resigning to this social structure she explores the outcome if circumstances change for individual characters. Munro centres on female characters, in this case Margaret and Polly, as the means to explore life outside of gang culture. Regarding Margaret's narrative, her decision to walk away from gang life does not stop the violence carried out by the collective, yet it represents the potential to leave and that occupational prospects could draw an individual away from gang culture. Margaret's character has a positive outcome, socially progressing to what one assumes is a more

stable job with better income and so occupationally and economically viewed as a progression. But the narrative of social mobility, offered by Munro, relies on the individual seeking their own alternative future within the social system. It is not the system that helps Margaret out of life in a gang but rather Susan's investment, having noticed her potential. This does not frame social mobility as society's obligation but rather situates it as something an individual has to carve out within the social structures that oppress them. The system does not open the door for Margaret's character; rather it is her assertive attitude and Susan's generosity that bring about change. This narrative is likely a result of the way theatre often functions as telling stories about and through individual characters, which consequently foregrounds the individual experience. This is coupled with the historical period in which the action is set, whereby there was no welfare system in place to engage with notions of social mobility. Yet, from a different angle, and considering Munro's dialogue with contemporary events, the individualist focus echoes post-Thatcher neoliberal cultural attitudes whereby it is down to an individual to build their future rather than challenging social dynamics that maintain class structures. Munro's representation of the alternative to gang culture, offered through Margaret's narrative, suggests hope in life outside of the violent culture the character was within, yet reinforces the neoliberal narrative that it is solely down to the actions of the individual.

Margaret's narrative of social mobility highlights the complexity of the intersection between Victorian class politics, the conventions of theatre and the playwright's focus on a contemporary issue. Both the plot structure and the Victorian setting shape the narrative and consequently, when mapped onto current debate, synthesises with individualist perspectives within contemporary discourse. In this regard, dramaturgical conventions and structures become prominent in the examination of the reimagining of history addressed by neo-Victorian studies. Practical theatrical devices play a significant role in this process and distinguish this analysis from existing literature which addresses the novel. Therefore, nuances in neo-Victorian studies are required in order to tailor analysis to the specific media being addressed.

The Riot

The Riot by Nick Darke bears similarities to *Scuttlers* regarding themes of social mobility. The play was first performed at the Cottesloe in 1999 before going on tour in 2000. Set in 1899⁷ *The Riot* tells the story of the, ‘Sabbath Riots’ in Newlyn, Cornwall, [...] when the fishermen demonstrated violently against the Sunday fishing fleet from Lowestoft’ (Darke, 2015: n.p.). Like *Scuttlers*, *The Riot* offers representations of the Victorian working class revolting to get their voices heard amongst the oppressive social structures in which they live. Premiering within months of the new millennium, the play references the turn of the twentieth century, and Darke clarifies his reasons for this historical setting:

The backbone industries of Cornwall’s economy were in terminal decline and thousands of young people were forced to leave the county, as they are now. The cause of unrest in Newlyn was not just religious but a feeling of frustration brought about by poverty and unemployment. So nothing much has altered in the last hundred years. (1999b: n.p.)

Resounding with theories of neo-Victorianism, Darke draws a direct correlation between historical events and the current social climate of Cornwall, believing its culture ‘is showing signs of a renaissance, of which *The Riot* is a part’ (1999b: n.p.). This embodies Kaplan’s theory (2007: 5) regarding the appropriation of the Victorian for the means of a cultural agenda, whereby Darke draws on events of the Victorian period to cultivate a resurgence of cultural activity for the community whose history he is retelling. Darke’s reflection on Cornish history expresses structures of feeling from the time regarding unemployment and poverty in Cornwall. This echoes Raymond Williams’ theory that ‘art and literature, are often among the very first indications that [...] a new structure is forming,’ (1977: 133) highlighting the relationship between a performance and the cultural moment in which the piece is formed. Within this negotiation Darke, like Munro, offers a narrative of social mobility that speaks of the challenges facing Cornish citizens at the turn of the millennium. In a moment of looking to the future, it is history which provides the means through which to challenge the social structures of the contemporary moment.

⁷ The action is set in 1899 but the programme states ‘disturbance which occurred in the port of Newlyn, Cornwall’ took place in 1896, on which the action is ‘loosely based’ (Darke, 1999b: n.p.).

The Riot tells the story of unrest in Cornwall regarding Sunday fishing, focusing on Bolitho, 'the harbour's principle patron and benefactor,' (Darke, 1999b: n.p.) and his household of staff. Harriet, a working class character, appears in the kitchen of Bolitho's house seemingly looking for a job. As the play progresses she accuses him of killing her brothers and observes the action that unfolds in the kitchen. Harriet is interviewed for a position by Mrs Trix, who instructs her on how to curtsy; in the Cottesloe production this resulted in Emma Rice (playing Harriet) comically lifting her skirt and deeply squatting, whilst maintaining a glazed expression. Elements of Rice's performance of Harriet embodied unexpected qualities for women during the period; for example on several occasions she smoked a pipe, she also sat on the ground reading with her legs spread apart. These actions allude to Harriet's lower social position, whereby the etiquette of the middle class is not relevant to her working class experience. This production drew on similar aesthetic conventions to represent the working class as *Scuttlers* at the Royal Exchange. Costumes were a palette of brown, grey and black, and characters had dirt on their hands and faces.

Like Margaret in *Scuttlers*, Harriet's story is one of social mobility. In the action, as staged in the Cottesloe production, a fight gets out of hand and Harriet is stabbed. As she lies dying, Bolitho comforts her and they discuss crime and justice. Bolitho is blamed for her death. As a noose is lowered and placed around his neck, Harriet gets up, and shows that the stabbing was fake. Challenged and moved by Harriet's actions, Bolitho gives her ownership of a bank and £600. Through challenging authority, Harriet advances in economic and social status; testing the system proves to be productive for her. By demonstrating persistence, Harriet's character is able to rise in social rank, unlike Margaret, for whom moving away from gang culture is her avenue of social mobility; for Harriet it is through persistently questioning authority that she is rewarded. Thus, Darke constructs a narrative of triumph for the Cornish working class where a working class female demonstrates enterprise, a Victorian value Kaplan identifies as foregrounded in the 1990s (2007: 5). Through Harriet's narrative Darke draws on traditional Victorian values, yet pushes beyond the patriarchal culture of the period by demonstrating the potential for a working class woman to succeed in this culture. Reading this alongside Darke's belief in the renaissance of Cornwall, Harriet's

success and enterprise against the social expectation comes to stand for the potential for Cornwall to move beyond adverse social challenges that were present at the time.

Through Harriet's narrative Darke places emphasis on the individual; it is a result of her persistence and challenge to authority that a change in circumstances is gained. Like Margaret's narrative, in *The Riot* the oppressive social structures that cause Harriet's hardship go unchallenged, and focus remains on the individual's, rather than the system's, responsibility to instigate change. By prompting empathy for the success of the individual, both Darke and Munro limit an audience's engagement with the wider social structures of the historical context, which may speak to the contemporary moment. These two narratives suggest a recurring theme in contemporary playwriting, whereby actions of social mobility are driven by the individual. This engagement with the past reflects problematic Thatcherite neoliberal attitudes, which arguably go unquestioned by the playwright, and mitigate society from a responsibility to facilitate social mobility, placing pressure on the individual. As identified above, this may to some degree be a result of the dramaturgical structure of theatre which often centres on telling an individual's story. Yet, through Harriet's narrative, Darke demonstrates persistence and keenness to challenge authority which goes some way in exposing the system, beyond Margaret's engagement with it in *Scuttlers*.

Although there is a fifteen-year gap between the first productions of these two plays, *The Riot* acts as an additional example of a neo-Victorian piece offering themes of social mobility for a working class character. Both Darke and Munro claim to be responding to the contemporary moment and even though their cultural moments are relatively different, given the lapse in time, the Victorian period has remained a historical setting to draw on through which narratives of class politics can be constructed.

Female Narratives in Scuttlers

Themes of social mobility are represented in both *Scuttlers* and *The Riot* through the narrative of a female character and for Munro the female narratives are the means through which audiences learn about the gang structure. This is intersectional analysis regarding identity politics of class and gender. Resounding with the Sphinx Test's question concerning a character's power, 'Is the story essential?' Theresa's narrative

is integral for depicting gang culture within the piece. In Act One Scene Two, Theresa talks with Margaret and Polly about the attack the gang carried out that day and repeats the phrase, 'Tigers don't tear you 'less you're asking for it,' she goes on to say, 'I don't let them. And that's how it is' (Munro, 2015b: 11-12). Munro uses this scene between the three women to articulate the gang's ethos and reiterate their violent way of working. Dramaturgically, this dialogue establishes Theresa's loyalty to the gang and articulates the structure of their group. Theresa's dialogue is essential in setting up the exposition for the 'Tigers' way of working and drive behind their actions. I would not go so far as to say this merits Theresa's story essential, as is questioned by the Sphinx Test, but rather that her dialogue is essential in serving the fabrication of a group identity. The play is driven by the gang rivalry, and the lack of a traditional male protagonist functions dramaturgically to foreground dynamic female characters. But attention to the ensemble limits the play's structural potential to be driven by female characters and as a result they remain predominantly reactionary to male characters' actions.

While Margaret's narrative offers a positive alternative to gang culture, Polly's narrative dramatises the internal violence that can occur in gang structures. Dramaturgically Polly's violent behaviour towards Jimmy provides the catalyst for her to be later attacked. In the Royal Exchange production Jimmy and other Tigers physically beat Polly; the group stripped her, untied her hair and forced her into a pink frilly dress. The text reads:

JIMMY. We wouldn't hurt you, little tiger cub. You're our mascot, aren't you? You can still be with the Tigers, little Polly. We'll still have a use for you. You just need to learn to dress right.

JIMMY holds up a lurid dress. POLLY realises what he means.

POLLY. Don't you fucking dare... don't you...

They pounce on her, trying to tear her clothes off. POLLY is fighting and screaming.
(Munro, 2015b: 68-69)

The in-the-round staging enhanced the menacing circling of Polly by the male characters. Here Munro uses a sign of hyper femininity, in the form of a 'lurid dress', as a tool for humiliation for Polly and a means to destabilise her social position. The intersection of Polly's class and gender form the frame for her oppression. Although of the same class, the male characters are positioned as socially superior to Polly's

character and discriminate against her for challenging her prescribed gender norm. This emphasises gang culture, alongside the wider context of Victorian Britain, as patriarchal: the male characters gain control through humiliation and assault on a woman which they carry out by branding her with a humiliating symbol of femininity. The sequence dramatises gender and class politics and physical conflict within this fictional gang's culture.

Through the characters of Margaret and Polly, Munro presents different outcomes as a result of conflict: Polly's narrative emphasises problems that can occur in gang culture, conversely a message of hope and way to move forward is provided in Margaret. Reading this in conjunction with the stimulus of the 2011 riots, Munro offers an alternative to gang culture through Margaret and a warning of the consequences of violence through Polly.

Munro's attention to female characters was commented on as unexpected by the production's reviews. Lynn Gardner positively articulates that, 'one of the fascinating things about the evening is the role that women played in the scuttler gangs' (2015b: n.p.). Similarly, Clare Brennan notes the rarity of women within representations of this historical context, 'less obviously, she [Munro] finds fairly credible roles for young women within the gang structure' (2015: n.p.). Jan Brierley's review suggests these narratives offer a different perspective to the industrial working life and gang culture, commenting that the female 'performances brought out the back story of broken families, poverty and of teenagers desperately wanting to belong' (2015: n.p.). In contrast, Trueman simply states: 'women join in too' (2015: n.p.). These comments sit within the bulk of each review that is dedicated to reflection on the male characters' narratives. On the one hand, it appears positive that reviewers are acknowledging Munro's attention to female characters and how this is still novel in modern playwriting, but their narratives are commented on primarily in reference to gender and linked to the domestic setting. The notion that female characters enable the dramatisation of family, as suggested by Brierley, still centralises the male experience, whereby the male characters are the means through which the story of the gang is told and the female characters are used to dramatise the wider relationships and social dynamics in which the gang occurs. Whereas, interrogation of the dramaturgy illuminates how Munro centralises female narratives in *Scuttlers* to

establish dynamics of the gang, beyond the domestic setting. This is particularly evident through the character of Theresa.

Clementine Ford observes that:

Depending on the privilege of our demographics, we experience different levels of representation. Women, for example, are used to being marginalised in art and history. The same is true for people of colour, people with disabilities, trans and gender diverse people, etc. (2016: n.p.)

Ford goes on to acknowledge the extensive representation of white men in media and entertainment, and notes that as a result, for the white male, it is, ‘very difficult for you to accept that you might not be the subject of a particular story or depiction’ (2016: n.p.). *Scuttlers*’ critics, both male and female, have positioned the male narratives within this ensemble piece as central and read the female characters’ narratives in accordance to a dominant masculine plot. However, consideration of Munro’s dramaturgy not only highlights the ensemble nature of the piece, where no clear protagonist is offered, but also that the gangs are the central through line, with female characters providing insight into this culture. Therefore, even when a performance centralises the female experience, which Ford notes is rare, critics may still foreground the male characters and thus reframe the piece through a focus on the normative masculine plot. For example, Trueman declares that, ‘Munro diagnoses a crisis of masculinity, as young men puff their chests and lock horns with one another’ (2015: n.p.). Hence, Munro’s attempt to highlight historical female narratives for audiences may still be countered by the backdrop of reviews which reframe the piece to forefront the masculine experience. This perspective from the reviewer reinforces the status quo that contemporary society, and our cultural history, privileges the patriarchy.

Engagement with *Scuttlers* and *The Riot* reveals both pieces to be works of neo-Victorian fiction as Munro and Darke self-consciously engage with the act of interpreting and reimagining the Victorian period, as is called for by Heilmann and Llewellyn. The aesthetic and textual representation of the Victorian working class in *Scuttlers* points to an extension of Heilmann and Llewellyn’s notion of neo-Victorian cultural activity. In contrast to the novel, theatre provides a visual and aural representation of the Victorian period as well as a textual one; both of these modes

build on an audiences' horizon of expectations to then offer an alternative interpretation of the Victorian narrative. Put another way, recurring modes for representing the Victorian working class mean that a production can employ these signifiers, as expected by an audience, and from this familiar representation the Victorian setting can be used to raise issues which resonate with the present. The concept of horizon of expectations identifies an audiences prior encounters with Victoriana, to employ Kaplan's phrase, and playwrights and directors employ these recurring tropes to represent the Victorian working class. It is from this place of recognition that alternative narratives can be created. For example, Munro uses established devices to represent the working class and from this offers a different perspective on working class narratives based around female experiences and themes of social mobility. Thus, horizon of expectations and the notion of recurring modes of representation facilitate interrogation of the distinction Heilmann and Llewellyn make between historical and neo-Victorian work in the context of the construction of a theatrical performance. This brings theories of historiography into neo-Victorian discourse as the devices used to interpret history are foregrounded. For instance, in the case of *Scuttlers*, the identification of recurring modes of representation, and consideration of how the representation of the working class worked in conjunction with an audiences' horizon of expectations, enabled identification of themes and ideas offered by the piece that moved beyond historical fiction and towards neo-Victorianism.

An intersectional approach highlights Munro's challenge to traditional male centred dramaturgical structures, in the construction of a narrative concerning class politics for a female character. In the case of the characters of Margaret and Harriet, their cultural position as both lower class and female contribute to their social discrimination and work in conjunction to frame social mobility as unexpected.

While *Scuttlers* is unusual as the only play amongst my data to focus wholly on the working class, themes of tension, politics and privilege across class boundaries do

occur in a number of plays that are addressed within this thesis⁸. However, as identified in the introduction, narratives directly relating to the Victorian Empire are rare. As a result, a conscious focus on racial diversity in representations of the Victorian period is also infrequent in twenty-first century new writing. This is counter to new writing produced in the late 1960s to early 1980s when history of the Empire was a popular subject matter for politically engaged performance. Poore attributes this shift to the election of Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government in 1979 when, 'playwrights began to focus more on poverty and iniquity at home' while 'plays about the empire became less frequent' (2011: 65). Poore links this decline to a rise in 'imperial values' in light of the Falklands war and increased government control on funding awarded by the Arts Council, meaning 'major subsidized bodies, such as the RSC and the National, would be nervous about putting on too many anti-patriotic plays' (2011: 66). Hence, *The Empress* by Gupta provides a distinct example through which to consider the representation of Empire, and intersection of class and race in the reimagining of the Victorian women, in contemporary British playwriting.

The Empress

Plot Synopsis

The plot of *The Empress* begins aboard a ship crossing from India to England in 1887 and follows Rani Das, a young Bengali ayah, as she travels from India with her English employers. The term 'ayah' refers to 'Indian nannies who looked after English children' (Gupta, 2013b: 15). On board the ship, Rani dreams of England with lascar Hari Sharma; historically lascars were 'sailors from the Empire used by British Empire for ships trading throughout the Indian Empire' (Gupta, 2013b: 15). Upon arriving in England, Rani's employer claims she no longer requires her services and Rani is dismissed. Hari takes Rani to stay at a boarding house for lascars, run by landlady Lascar Sally. At the boarding house, an intoxicated Hari forces himself on Rani; she escapes and flees to Tilbury docks. At the docks Rani encounters Firoza, an older

⁸ *Versailles* by Peter Gill and *Doctor Scroggy's War* by Howard Brenton discussed in Chapter One, *Her Naked Skin* by Rebecca Lenkiewicz discussed in Chapter Two and *Blue Stockings* and *Nell Gwynn* by Jessica Swale discussed in Chapter Four being the most notable representations of cross-class politics.

ayah, who helps her find a job in service working for Lord Oakham. Rani becomes involved with Oakham and falls pregnant; she names him as the father and is dismissed. Rani returns to the docks where Firoza and Sally observe her abandoning her child. They intervene and persuade Rani to take care of the baby. Alongside this action are scenes of Hari working on the ship where he initiates a revolution among the lascars, campaigning for better pay and working conditions.

Time passes and Act Two finds Rani housed in the charitable 'Home for Ayahs,' (Gupta, 2013b: 93) overseen by philanthropist Christian women. During her time there Rani meets Dadabhai Naoroji, a politician who is running to become the first Indian MP in Britain. From this meeting Rani becomes involved in Dadabhai's campaign and the action follows him winning the election. On the night of the election in 1892 Rani receives letters, courtesy of Sally, which Hari has written over the years they have been apart. The action then moves to 1900, where Dadabhai announces his retirement and Hari appears, reuniting him and Rani after thirteen years apart. The play ends back at the docks; Rani and Hari are married and accompanied by Rani's daughter, and they say goodbye to Dadabhai as he boards a ship to India.

A second plot runs alongside this story, based on historical accounts, following the relationship between Queen Victoria and her Indian servant Abdul Karim. Abdul meets Rani aboard the ship in the opening scene, but their storylines do not cross again until the closing moments of the play. Abdul has been sent to London as a golden anniversary gift for the Queen from Sir John Tyler, 'the governor of the north west provinces in India' (Gupta, 2013b: 31). The gift is met with excitement from the Queen and objection from the Royal Family and Royal Household. The Queen and Abdul grow close through their shared conversations, which take place in the presence of the Queen's disapproving Lady-In-Waiting, Lady Sarah. The Queen appoints Abdul to teach her Hindi and gives him the title 'munshi', meaning teacher. Hostility mounts in a threat from her sons and the Prime Minister, relayed by Sarah, that if the Queen makes 'the Munshi a Companion of the British Empire, they will have no alternative but to declare you insane' (Gupta, 2013b: 114). The piece follows their close relationship through to the Queen's death in 1901; after her passing Sarah announces instructions from the Royal Family that all correspondence between Abdul and the Queen will be burned and that he is to return to India. The play ends with

Abdul encountering Rani at the docks, where they discuss their experiences of England before Rani returns his father's compass, which Abdul gave her fourteen years prior when they first arrived in England.

The RSC production was performed on a thrust stage and had a narrow channel of water between the stage and the audience. The scale and detail of sets varied between scenes, with several using only simple furniture to delineate a change of location, while others had larger pieces like the mast of a ship. The production used an ensemble of performers, which included musicians, all in simple Victorian style costume. Puppets, without facial features, were included to represent the children and were operated by members of the ensemble. For the following analysis, I draw on the published playtext of *The Empress* (Gupta, 2013b) and RSC archive recording of the premiering production (Gupta, 2013a).

An Intersectional Perspective

Narratives and character types in *The Empress* are reminiscent of the previously mentioned tongue-in-cheek list configured by Burstein concerning neo-Victorian works. The character of Susan Matthews, Rani's employer, offers a negative representation of privilege. Rani appeals to her feelings regarding her unjust dismissal, to which Susan replies, 'you are merely my servant's offspring. Now take your filthy hands off my dress' (Gupta, 2013b: 36). In contrast to Susan's cold upper class demeanour, working class Sally brings comedy and energy to the piece, ticking the box for 'Heart of Gold' prostitute on Burstein's list (cited in Heilmann and Llewellyn, 2010: 7). Act One Scene Five introduces Sally, and her power over the lascars is established:

SALLY: Shut up! Have some respect. If it wasn't for me, you'd
 have to sleep in the streets. No one else will put you lot
 up.
LASCAR 3: Sorry Sally. You know we respect and adore you.
(Gupta, 2013b: 48)

And amongst the sailors she joins in with the male driven banter and jollity:

HARI: My backside is sore from the kickings he gave me.
SALLY: As long as it was just kickings he gave your arse and
nothing more...

(Gupta, 2013b: 45)

Sally's upbeat character is constructed primarily through her sexuality as she jokes with the lascars. In contrast to the aristocratic characters, Sally's lower status on the grounds of class and gender position her as a comrade to characters from colonised countries. For example, Act Two opens with Firoza teasing Sally about her continual heartbreak over sailors, offering an image of light-hearted friendship. Following this dialogue, they encounter Rani and together they dissuade her from abandoning her baby.

Sally's character, and the brothel setting in which she first appears, echo normative devices for retelling the Victorian period. But within the conventions of normative historiography for representing this period, *The Empress* constructs discrimination at the intersection of class, race and gender through both Firoza and Rani. Hence, while Sally's character subscribes to established modes of representation, her social position, in relation to Rani and Firzo, shows an embodiment of intersectionality whereby their difference of race contributes to their difference in social experience. With regards to *The Empress*, an intersectional approach facilitates consideration of the dramaturgical representation of the historical narratives and reception of such on the part of reviewers.

My engagement with feminist discourse has so far primarily focused on discrimination against women on both an individual and collective level, but feminist debate has long called for a wider consideration of identity politics to address the multitude of characteristics that contribute to a woman's identity. This development, in the landscape of feminisms, has been theorised as intersectionality. Patricia Hill Collins outlines how:

Intersectionality refers to particular forms of intersecting oppressions, for example, intersections of race and gender, or of sexuality and nation. Intersectional paradigms remind us that oppression cannot be reduced to one fundamental type, and that oppressions work together in producing injustice. (2000: 18)

Intersectionality enables consideration of differences amongst identity categories and takes into account how these characteristics shape one's experiences and intersect with discriminations of gender. Ange-Marie Hancock narrates the multidisciplinary nature of the field and asserts that, 'most intersectionality scholarship dates the beginning of the field to around 1988, when Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw delivered the paper that would become "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex" to the University of Chicago Legal Forum' (2015: 9). In this foundational article, referred to by Hancock, Crenshaw demands a reworking of 'the entire framework that has been used as a basis for translating "women's experience" or "the Black experience" into concrete policy' (1989: 140). Crenshaw argues that within these two boundaries, 'Black women are protected only to the extent that their experiences coincide with those of either of the two groups. Where their experiences are distinct, Black women can expect little protection' (1989: 143). She goes on to criticise the 'top-down' approach of antidiscrimination law, whereby 'sex and race discrimination have come to be defined in terms of the experiences of those who are privileged *but* for their racial or sexual characteristics,' resulting in sexual discrimination being based on the experience of white women (1989: 151). This paradigm allows for discrimination to only be operational in one area of an individual's identity. In response to this imbalance, Crenshaw proposes 'placing those who are currently marginalized in the center [*sic*]' as a 'way to resist efforts to compartmentalize experiences,' this outlook has developed into intersectionality (1989: 167).

Writing at the same time as Crenshaw, and coming from a similar position, bell hooks brings perspectives on race alongside feminist discourse. Hooks challenges the feminist pursuit of gaining equality with men by questioning, 'since men are not equals in white supremacist, capitalist, patriarchal class structure, which men do women want to be equal to?' (2015: 19). In her early engagement with feminist discourse, hooks rejects notions of biological essentialism and calls for 'a recognition of the need to eradicate the underlying cultural basis and causes of sexism and other forms of group oppression' (2015: 33). Through her foregrounding of questions of class and race, hooks has gone on to cultivate an intersectional approach within her engagement with feminist discourse. Considering this foundational literature by Collins, Crenshaw and hooks, working to bring the perspective of black women into a historically white

feminist movement, Jennifer Nash distinguishes that ‘intersectionality is a *product* of black feminism—rather than a synonym for black feminism’ (2011: 445). Nash goes on to note the breadth with which intersectionality is now used as ‘an analytic interested in how race, gender, class, and sexuality interact in complex ways that shape subjects and institutions alike’ (2011: 446). However, Nash argues that the widening use of intersectionality has resulted in black feminism coming to stand only for the intersection of race and gender and thus calls for reconsideration of the position of the now widely used theory of intersectionality within black feminism.

In contrast to the collectivist approach foregrounded by Crenshaw and hooks, Elizabeth Evans links intersectionality to neoliberalism in her engagement with third wave feminism. Evans identifies that, ‘a potential consequence of intersectionality is a potential return to standpoint feminism, whereby individuals can only advocate for themselves, rather than for the collective’ (2015: 57). This is a tangible issue when employing intersectionality; however, the alternative promotes a feminism that assumes all women’s experiences are the same and reduces a vast spectrum of individuals’ circumstances to be read solely in reference to their gender. As discussed in Chapter Two, a negotiation between a focus first on the collective and then the individual is needed in order to gain unity amongst women and then address the differences of their personal experiences, but without first coming from a place of unity there is the danger of restrictive standpoint feminism identified by Evans. However, this runs the risk of ranking one’s qualities to place discrimination at different levels of importance, as was identified by Crenshaw in her revolutionary article. Hence, intersectionality suggests an even plane where different characteristics are read in relation to one another, without implying the experience of one is more important, but instead that they cannot be understood in isolation. Hancock comments on this theory in contemporary discourse, observing that, ‘twenty-first century intersectionality is both an analytical framework and a complex of social practices’ (2015: 6-7). This resonates with hooks’ prior challenge that, ‘we are all so accustomed to looking solely from the standpoint of sex or race or class that the overlaps, the mergers, the place where nothing is as clear as it would seem are often ignored’ (1996: 121). This perspective productively prioritises the intersection, rather than a focus on the singular.

Applying this theory to my example of Sally and Firoza in *The Empress*, intersectionality facilitates consideration of the collision of class, race and sex on the part of both characters and how their difference in race shapes their experience. This problematises the notion of a central norm and moves away from only commenting on Firoza's race because she is 'not white' and recognises the privilege Sally's whiteness brings. Theories of neo-Victorian studies do not offer this distinction in the reimagining of this historical period. With regard to the trope of the 'Heart of Gold' prostitute in the case of Sally, while her gender and class generate discrimination, her race also shapes her social position and how it may be different to that of Firoza's character. Intersectionality facilitates consideration of the complex mesh of historical identities and social values offered in neo-Victorian performances which reimagine the Empire. When used in conjunction, the two theories offer consideration of the normative historiography that has emerged in the representation of the Victorian period in contemporary writing and how the identity politics of such could perpetuate narratives of discrimination or leave discrimination unacknowledged.

Both Collins and Crenshaw have made recent contributions to the field of intersectionality. *On Intersectionality* (2016) is a collection of Crenshaw's writing which responds to contemporary activism in America by mapping the trajectory of the theory forward from her foundational research decades before. In a similar vein, in *Intersectionality* (2016) Collins and Sirma Bilge respond to the popularity of the theory and trace its conceptualization and development, drawing on international examples. These works highlight the topicality of intersectional discourse, which I bring alongside neo-Victorian studies within a theatrical context. This combination enables exploration beyond gender in historical representation, to interrogate how playwrights subscribe to normative modes for representing different identity categories and problematise the narratives they offer and reinforce if such norms are repeated. This focus recognises the complexity of representation in a theatrical context, whereby characters are constructed to represent a spectrum of identities beyond their gender. In expanding on this interrogation of the female narrative, the tension between historical social conventions and contemporary cultural debate is drawn into focus as the interpretation of historical social politics indicates contemporary contention.

Use of the Term 'Race'

The term 'race' requires consideration to address the cultural implications of this socially constructed mode of categorisation. David Theo Goldberg traces its roots to modernity, progressing from the sixteenth century and the formation of 'the West' (1993: 3). Goldberg identifies race as a concept, grounded in scientific definitions that 'proves capable of being stretched across time and space' (1993: 4). While appearing universal, Goldberg problematises race as a form of social control:

Race in turn has been able to set scientific and political agendas, to contain the content and applicability of Reason, to define who may be excluded and to confine the terms of social inclusion and cohesion. (Goldberg, 1993: 4)

From a similar perspective, Ivan Hannaford criticises the biological factors on which categories of race are formed as causing an 'arbitrary hierarchical order' (1996: 4). Like Goldberg, Hannaford traces the development of race to the modern period:

It was not until after the French and American Revolutions and the social upheavals which followed that the idea of race was fully conceptualized and became deeply embedded in our understandings and explanations of the world. In other words, the dispositions and presuppositions of race and ethnicity were introduced—some would say “invented” or “fabricated”—in modern times and were the outcomes of a vast excrescence of recent thought on descent, generation, and inheritance. (1996: 6)

In *Race: the History of an Idea in the West*, Hannaford asserts race as a manmade concept forged from biological differences (1996: 3-4). In response, he seeks to read the past without modern constructs of race, arguing that narratives of race have been imposed on readings of Western history. Hannaford's research works to interrogate 'the uncritical acceptance of the concept of race,' challenging 'the reader not to accept the postulates of race as “givens” but to examine the past without the intellectual baggage acquired since the end of the seventeenth century' (1996: 4). However, current discourse still addresses race as an aspect of an individual's identity, as identified differences in class, race and gender are pivotal to intersectional discourse to facilitate exploration of prejudice and discrimination. From a feminist perspective, addressing class and race develops an intersectional approach, thus avoiding assumptions on

behalf of all women. Hence, recognising the term as socially constructed, not a biological presupposition, I employ it in reference to a character's ethnicity in order to further consider representations of women in the Victorian period in contemporary performance.

Staging a Political Campaign

Representations of racial hierarchy in *The Empress* are linked to the historical narratives being retold. Dadabhai's narrative is a reimagining of the first Indian MP to be elected to British parliament and Gupta brings Rani's character into the action of his campaign. The historical figure Dadabhai Naoroji or 'the Grand Old Man as he was popularly known, was amongst the first early Indian patriarchs of Indian nationalism. [...] He associated himself with the national organisation [Indian National Movement] since its inception and made effort to further the Indian national cause' (Pasricha, 2008: 11). He was elected as an MP for Central Finsbury in 1892 and 'during his three years in Parliament, Dadabhai worked, zealously for his, constituency, and was instrumental in getting two important concessions for India' (Pasricha, 2008: 23-24).

The RSC production of *The Empress* represented diversity amongst characters involved in Dadabhai's campaign with the inclusion of Indian and British, male and female, characters in ensemble group scenes. Gupta includes the character of an 18-year-old Mahatma Gandhi in Dadabhai's campaign group, thus staging the lesser known political origins of this famous historical figure. However, the political narrative is predominantly ideas-based and poses challenges in staging.

Naoroji's election victory highlights a challenging concept to represent on stage; that of victory for a large number of supporters, which logistically is difficult to perform. Act Two Scene Seven overcomes this challenge by beginning the scene, with 'a group of Indian and English men and women' entering; 'they are in high spirits as they carry DADABHAI NAOROJI in' (Gupta, 2013b: 108). These stage directions were adhered to in the RSC production. By entering the scene seemingly mid celebration, as suggested by cheers and noise from the performers, this gave the illusion that a larger celebration had occurred offstage. Dadabhai implies in his opening line that they have been drinking, 'I'm going to fall, you are all too intoxicated,' (Gupta, 2013b:

108) also pointing to the idea of celebrations of which the audience have not been privy to. This is a well-established theatrical device; echoing techniques from Greek tragedy, where the violent, ‘unstageable’ event occurred offstage but was reported onstage. Similar devices were employed in Elizabethan theatre to illustrate battle scenes, particularly prominent in *Henry V*, whereby a character rushes in, having been taking part in the battle, to relay the event and progress the action through their spoken account.

This scene also functions to progress the romantic plot, entwining Rani’s fictional romantic narrative with the reimagining of Dadabhai’s campaign. In the previous scene a bundle of letters from Hari have been delivered to Rani, via Sally and Firoza, and stage directions indicate that Rani is reading the letters as the crowd comes in (Gupta, 2013b: 108). In the performance Rani knelt and read the letters while a female performer stood over her and sang, unacknowledged by Rani. This action was coupled with the presence of Hari and a male singer on a balcony upstage centre. Hari knelt, shining the shoes of the man who sang in unison with the woman standing by Rani. The layering of atmospheric live music, along with the physical presence of Hari, heightened the moment of Rani reading his letters, evoking ideas of longing between the characters, reminding audiences of the heteronormative romantic plot running alongside Rani’s political endeavours, thus framing her political agency with romance.

Freddie Rokem comments on the complexity of constructing a real historical narrative into a traditional plot structure:

The events of history, as they “really” took place in the past, lack a coherent narrative structure, according to Aristotle. Any narrative version of these events is based on some form of selection. The historical realities do not have a beginning, a middle, and an end; therefore, the notion of performing history inevitably confronts the tensions between such narrative principles of selection, on the one hand, and the seemingly chaotic and sometimes unimaginable dimensions of these historical events and their catastrophic characteristics, on the other. (2000: 10)

The retelling of history for the theatrical form requires a negotiation from the playwright between conventions of narrative structure and the ‘chaotic’ dimensions of the historical moment, identified by Rokem. This negotiation can be linked to the challenge of staging ideas, whereby a historical narrative offers a collection of events,

conversations or abstract concepts that make up the moment being retold. Once a 'coherent narrative structure' is recognised, further attention may be required if the historical narrative does not readily offer points of action, and established theatrical conventions may be drawn upon to dramatise the historical moment. Rokem productively identifies two strands which can be negotiated to rework history into a dramatic representation. Nevertheless, this assumes that elements of the past are readily transferable to the medium of theatre and does not acknowledge the practicality of considering whether there are specific moments within a historical narrative that can be identified as foundational sections of action. However, when a historical narrative poses challenges in conforming to the traditional Aristotelian plot structure, fiction provides the means through which to complete the narrative arc of a piece. In reference to the challenge of staging Dadabhai's narrative in *The Empress*, a heteronormative romantic plot is layered alongside the historical narrative, in the form of Rani and Hari's relationship. Together, the reimagining of the historical event and the fictional romantic narrative create an action- and dialogue-driven plot structure with the expected dramaturgical peaks and troughs. The inclusion of romance alongside the historical narrative brings in a subject that is readily physical in its staging; where the historical subject may be challenging to dramatise, centuries of telling love stories on stage provides tropes for portraying these elements of human behaviour. This indicates a normative theatrical device available to playwrights, which can be employed to bring a shift of pace in the representation of a historical narrative.

However, this reduces Rani's character to a device through which to incorporate a romantic plot into Dadabhai's political campaign, rather than as a representation of women's historical political activism. Amanda Vickery criticises historians' continued delineation between the 'public' and 'private' spheres when analysing Victorian history and addresses the misconceptions this approach has driven. Vickery states:

Faith in the constitutive power of domestic precepts still lingers in the explanation of the achievements of mid-Victorian heroines. The heroic narrative assumes that a model of domestic femininity was actively imposed on women, who experienced feelings of entrapment of such strength that they were led fiercely to resist their containment, resulting in a glorious escape from the private sphere. (1993: 391-392)

Vickery goes on to refute this structure with the example of Florence Nightingale, who she notes was ‘taught Latin and Greek by her father’ and was expected to conduct, ‘good works and charitable visiting,’ thus countering the notion of Nightingale ‘locked in a parlour with nothing but advice books for nourishment’ (1993: 392). Rani’s plot in *The Empress* echoes the normative Victorian narrative contested by Vickery. Rani is confined to the domestic sphere, originally in her work as an ayah and then as she is housed in the ‘Home for Ayahs’ in Act Two Scene Three. Rani transitions from the domestic environment when she begins working for Dadabhai on his political campaign. This is not necessarily the ‘glorious escape’ suggested by Vickery but nevertheless it is framed as a positive transition into the world of politics. Through Rani’s narrative, Gupta is echoing the normative historiography, identified by Vickery, which implies that career success for a Victorian woman was presupposed by a breaking from domestic oppression. This resonates with Goggin and MacDonald’s notion of the ‘extraordinary woman’ in neo-Victorian fiction (2013: 7). Goggin and MacDonald build on Kaplan’s concept of the “elusive, exceptional woman” to identify a character type who is awoken, ‘to feminist consciousness and her own self-worth,’ and consequently ‘redeemed through work of some kind’ (2013: 6-7). Rani echoes this character type when she pursues a role in Dadabhai’s campaign. Rani combats his initial proposal that her interest to help others should be directed to the church:

RANI: No! I want to support your work to be the first Indian Member of Parliament. We need a voice in there. We are undervalued and treated as beneath the white man’s concern. I know, from personal experience. [...]

DADABHAI: Come to my house at noon tomorrow. Let us see how accomplished you are. I expect hard workers and quick minds.

RANI: I can do it.
(Gupta, 2013b: 98)

From this point on, Rani’s political activism unfolds as redemption for the shame she experienced at the hands of Oakham in Act One.

However, while Rani’s plot follows the narrative of breaking from the private sphere critiqued by Vickery, and echoes the neo-Victorian character type of the extraordinary women suggested by MacDonald and Goggin, these dimensions are in

tension with the heteronormative romance in Rani's plot. In succeeding to build a career Rani's happiness is framed by her romance with Hari; suggesting fulfilment is only achieved when occupational success is accompanied by romance. Therefore, dramaturgically Gupta subscribes to the character trope identified by Goggin and MacDonald, but simultaneously employs romance as a technique to dramatise Rani's engagement with politics. This brings Rani's narrative full circle, whereby she rejects the domestic sphere to work in politics, but then through engagement with romance enters the sphere of marriage which this historical lens connects to domestic oppression. Yet, Gupta frames Rani's relationship with Hari away from images of historical domestic oppression and rather portrays fulfilment for Rani's character through their marriage. This echoes contemporary pressure placed on women to balance career success with raising a family. I return to this debate in the following chapter in reference to the play *Blue Stockings*.

Rani and Hari's storyline suggests the use of a heteronormative romantic plot to counter the challenge of staging ideas within the historical political narrative being reimagined. However, how is the past negotiated by the playwright when the historical narrative being retold *is* a heteronormative romantic plot, yet offers little physical embodiment of the relationship? This is the case with historical accounts of Queen Victoria and Abdul Karim and I move to consider how Gupta worked with this dramaturgical challenge.

Upon first reading and then viewing *The Empress* I interpreted Rani as the protagonist. It is Rani's dramaturgical arc that led me to consider her story as the main plotline: Rani's narrative bookends the performance; the play opens with her and Hari on board a ship and then follows them as they grow and change through separation before being reunited at the end. Application of the Sphinx Test (2015) indicates that Rani's character is a driver of action, with her pursuit of involvement in Dadabhai's political campaign as active rather than reactive. The character also fulfils the Sphinx Test's two requirements for a protagonist by being centre stage and interacting with other women (2015). However, in reviews of the performance, critics interpreted the Queen and Abdul's relationship to be the main storyline. Although a fictional character, Rani's plot is the means through which an audience accesses the historical

narrative of Dadabhai Naoroji, thus, the focus on the Queen's story demonstrates a priority of one historical narrative over another.

Dominic Cavendish's review in *The Telegraph*, is prefaced with the tagline: 'Tanika Gupta's fascinating new play, explores the relationship between Queen Victoria and the Muslim son of a hospital assistant' (2013: n.p.). Cavendish describes giving voice to this narrative as 'commercial gold,' with his main criticism of the production that 'the central relationship gets sidelined; there's surely more to tell' (2013: n.p.). This echoes Poore's comment on the popularity of the 'biodrama', or more specifically plays that dramatise 'an episode from the life of an eminent Victorian,' in contemporary theatre (2011: 100). Cavendish reinforces this trope in his hunger for more of Gupta's reimagining of Queen Victoria. Meanwhile, he marginalises Rani and Hari's storyline, stating, 'there's also a rites of passage subplot involving a much abused lascar [...] and an abandoned young ayar [*sidi*]' (Cavendish, 2013: n.p.). This contrasts my initial interpretation of the main and subplot weighting in *The Empress*.

The technical difference in interpretation of *The Empress* between myself and Cavendish is significant. Writing for a conservative newspaper, Cavendish prioritises the white upper class storyline; this is an intersectional variation on my previous analysis regarding the prioritising of male narratives by critics, in this case the white narrative, which is assumed to be the most significant. Although Rani and Hari's narrative is fictional, in contrast to the representation of the historical figures of the Queen and Karim, their storyline incorporates the retelling of the historical figure of Naoroji whom Cavendish overlooks. This indicates the power of normative historiography, whereby the reviewer's horizon of expectations is shaped to focus on the white, and in this case royalist, narrative dominant in the historical culture being reimagined. As a reviewer, Cavendish's response holds cultural weight, hence if he reads a narrative as central this can shape response and perpetuate the normative historiography operating within the piece. Consequently, this indicates the active role of the theatre industry, and in this case the reviewer, in reinforcing the normative historiographic modes which frame the retelling of the past on the contemporary stage. Furthermore, this highlights culturally ingrained methods for retelling the past, whereby when multiple narratives are offered, external factors may still guide an

audience's response towards the dominant historical narrative, thus maintaining the norm.

The Queen and Abdul Karim

Historical accounts from the period indicate that the relationship between Queen Victoria and Abdul Karim consisted of written and spoken correspondence while Karim served as a member of her staff. Historian Elizabeth Pakenham describes how, 'The Queen bubbled with enthusiasm,' as they became acquainted, and 'Abdul was created the Queen's Munshi in 1889 [...] [and] rapidly graduated from blotting the Queen's letters to assisting her in their composition' (1964: 508). Considering how this relationship transfers to the stage, the challenge is that the historical narrative offers little physical action as their connection primarily grew through the exchange of letters. Gupta and Rice disrupt the static nature of this storyline by punctuating dialogue with shifts in physical dynamics between the two characters and by creating a theatrical spectacle of moments within the historical narrative. In what follows, I focus on moments of action that progressed the embodiment of the narrative beyond dialogue in order to explore how the text and RSC production overcame challenges of staging this historical relationship.

Gupta creates a moment of intimacy amongst the conversational dialogue in Act One Scene Seven when Abdul leads the Queen in a dance. The moment of dance is born out of the Queen questioning Abdul about the Taj Mahal. He tells the story of how it came to be made then explains that, 'your soldiers ma'am and officials have chiselled out the precious stones' (Gupta, 2013b: 58). Following this, it is nostalgia that leads to their dancing, as Abdul narrates, 'my father says that when he was a boy English men and women used it [the Taj Mahal] as a pleasure resort, dancing on the terrace. May I?' (Gupta, 2013b: 58). Gupta uses Abdul's father's memory to offer a moment of action for the characters. This sequence moves their relationship beyond spoken exchange and into a close physical proximity that by Sarah's '*outrage*,' as signified in the stage directions (2013b: 58), one can assume would have been deemed inappropriate. The presence of Sarah is a continual reminder of the disapproving eye of the Royal Family and Royal Household. With lower status than the Queen they are

denied the ability to stop the relationship, but Sarah embodies their attempts to prevent it, which Gupta brings to fruition in the aftermath of the Queen's death.

Following the Queen's death, the action sees Abdul paying his respects, before Sarah informs him:

I have instructions from the King. He wishes you to gather all correspondence from Her Majesty to you [...] Under supervision by the Master of the House and witnessed by myself, the letters will be burned. (Gupta, 2013b: 129)

Alongside this dialogue, the accompanying action is outlined in the stage directions:

As the letters pile up around him we hear the sound of a huge crackling bonfire which intensifies and fills the stage with a red glow. (Gupta, 2013b: 130)

From these stage directions Rice created a stylized spectacle that countered the still dialogue used to reimagine the Queen and Abdul's relationship. Tony Jayawardena (playing Abdul) stands at the foot of Beatie Edney's (playing the Queen) body, which is laid on a table up stage, while members of the ensemble take letters from his pockets, one by one, and each letter is set on fire and placed to float on the water which surrounds three sides of the thrust stage. While the letters burn, ensemble members strip Jayawardena of his red Indian robes and turban, leaving him dressed in simple white clothes. This moment is layered with communal humming from the ensemble; they hum a song with Christian lyrics with the original piece titled *The Beauty of Your Peace*. While I do not assume that all audience members would know the original, this points to the Christian British Empire enforcing its culture as the dominant power. This spectacle contrasts the majority of dialogue between the characters of the Queen and Abdul, which centres on everyday conversation, described by reviewer Michael Billington as rarely rising 'above the functional' (2013: n.p.). From a historical account that offers little physical action, Gupta and Rice create a moment of spectacle from the knowledge that the letters were burned. This dramaturgy resonates with Rokem's recognition in the role of selection in the performance of history (2000: 10). In this case, Gupta has selected the moment of the Queen and Abdul's letters being burned as the crescendo of her retelling of their relationship; a climax which was reinforced by the spectacle created in the RSC production.

The dynamic between the characters of Abdul and Sarah provides an example of Poore's suggestion that neo-Victorian 'plays can be read as reversing racist stereotypes of black and Asian people as muggers or native 'savages', implying that it is the Victorian empire-builders who have been the true historical 'savages' (2011: 46-47). Although Poore makes this assertion in reference to work produced in the 1960s-80s, this concept holds relevance to contemporary reimaginings of the Empire on stage. Sarah's disapproval of Abdul is voiced early on in the text: when he is first presented to the Queen, Sarah protests, 'he cannot stay here' (Gupta, 2013b: 39). This tension grows as the Queen and Abdul debate war, when Sarah comments on his readiness to give an opinion: 'you should know your boundaries' (Gupta, 2013b: 102). She is later used as a mouth piece for the Royal Family:

LADY SARAH: His Royal Highness asked me to remind you that the
Munshi is a servant, a teacher, but he is not equal of us
and yet you treat him as if he were one of those
deposed Indian Princes.

VICTORIA: This is your doing Lady Sarah?

LADY SARAH: No ma'am. I am simply conveying the views of your
son.

(Gupta, 2013b: 112)

From an intersectional perspective in this scenario, although at the time Sarah would have been seen as the socially lower gender, her difference in race to Abdul is the source of her superiority. Through Sarah, Gupta voices views from the historical period regarding biological differences that were used to justify racial discrimination. For example, Sarah states 'I understand Indian blood is thinner than the English. You must feel the cold more than we do' (Gupta, 2013b: 55). These beliefs were particularly prominent in the British Empire and used as grounds for invasion and colonisation (Goldberg, 1990: 217-218). This echoes Poore's notion of the reversal of stereotypes as a means to critique historical imperialist attitudes. Abdul's character seemingly sidesteps social hierarchy through his alliance to the Queen, until her death when his social position is performed through the burning of their letters, which embodies his powerlessness without her backing. Judith Butler argues that, 'sexual difference is not more primary than racial or ethnic difference and [...] one cannot apprehend sexual difference outside of the racial and ethnic frames by which it is articulated' (2004: 10). Sarah's attitude to Abdul, and the dynamic between the two, is

shaped by each character's experience within the social hierarchy as formed in reference to an intersection of their class, race and gender. While this dynamic is a theatrical representation of Victorian social structures, the complexity of discrimination and privilege serves as a reminder of Hancock's observation that 'categories of difference like race and gender cannot meaningfully exist apart from each other because they mutually construct each other' (2015: 20). However, consideration of social discrimination for the characters of Sarah and Abdul embodies Crenshaw's pivotal criticism of a top-down approach to antidiscrimination (1989: 151). In this vein, the experience of discrimination represented through Rani's character is different again, rather than an extension of either Sarah or Abdul's experience on the grounds of crossover in elements of class and race. But, as Hancock's observation indicates each character's representation of cultural experience is different, shaped by the intersection of their identity categories. So, through the narratives of the characters Rani, Sarah and Abdul, Gupta illustrates the historical imbalance of power formed by imperialist discrimination on the grounds of race, gender and class. While these narratives represent historical social structures, they reflect the complexity of contemporary identity politics within which a hierarchy of privilege is ingrained and it is this that intersectional discourse seeks to challenge.

Conclusion

To conclude, in broadening the lens beyond centenary events, to address representations of women in the Victorian period, I develop the notion of normative historiography in contemporary playwriting, by moving beyond a focus on gender to additionally trouble the representation of diversity amongst class and race. Theories of neo-Victorianism have enabled further exploration of the notion of recurring modes of representation, proposed in Chapter One, and I contribute a focus on aesthetics and dramaturgy to existing scholarship which considers such modes primarily in reference to novels. *Scuttlers* provides a distinct example of a neo-Victorian perspective within a theatrical performance. In the Royal Exchange production, Munro and director Wilson subscribed to established theatrical conventions to indicate a working class setting and highlight class politics within the

piece. From this backdrop, Munro foregrounds female narratives and explicitly parallels the piece to recent riots and gang conflict in Manchester. Analysis of *Scuttlers* demonstrates how theories of horizon of expectations can facilitate neo-Victorian analysis in a theatrical setting, whereby the theory indicates an audiences' previous encounters with representation of the historical period in question and the potential knowledge and expectation with which they approach a theatrical performance. It is this expectation which encompasses recurring modes of representation and in this case tropes have been established for representing the Victorian working class. Audiences may expect such devices to be used and Munro and Wilson were able to employ them as a means to communicate a particular social dynamic. Thus, horizon of expectations enables consideration of the established modes for representing a historical period that may be expected by an audience and it is from this backdrop that exploration of how playwrights have '*self-consciously engaged with the act of (re)interpretation, (re)discovery and (re)vision concerning the Victorians,*' suggested by Heilmann and Llewellyn, can be explored in a theatrical context (2010: 4).

Furthermore, such recurring conventions may shape a playwright's initial process with the act of interpreting the past, whereby the self-conscious process, identified by Heilmann and Llewellyn, carries sub-conscious affiliation to established theatrical conventions and narratives for retelling the period of history in question. Both of these processes are shaped by structures of historiography, as normative modes available offer a recurring perspective which exists in tension to the active role of reinterpreting the historical period. Consequently, a focus on previous works and conventions in the playwright's self-conscious process highlight normative devices which go uncontested. Although Heilmann and Llewellyn position the process to be explicitly self-aware, there inevitably remains unconscious subscription to normative modes of representation and exploration of this dialogue develops neo-Victorian studies to consider the factors that shape a knowing representation of the Victorian period.

Building on insight offered by neo-Victorian studies, theories of intersectionality have enabled a complex exploration of identity politics in reimaginings of the Victorian woman, moving beyond theatre aesthetics to address character dramaturgies and wider social structures. An intersectional approach to performance

analysis spotlights the diversity, or lack of diversity, in the retelling of history in contemporary new writing. *The Empress* stands alone as the only play within my data that explicitly reconstructs experiences shaped by the British Empire. In Poore's analysis of empire plays produced between 1960s-80s, he focuses on the representation of sexuality and race, drawing extensively on theories by Michel Foucault to address the influence of the sexual liberation of the 60s and 70s on the performances in question (2011: 46-66). I contribute a dramaturgical focus to plays that represent the empire and build on Poore's categorisation to add a surveying of twenty-first century work. Engagement with the dramaturgy of *The Empress* raises questions of the prioritisation of one historical narrative over the other in the play's reception. Llewellyn provides a sharp reminder on the construction of historical narratives:

This is not to argue that historical fiction (in or of any period) has an equal validity to historical narrative ("facts, facts, nothing but facts", to take a key Victorian educationalist phrase), but rather to suggest that neither is valid without the recognition of the fabrications of history as process, history as narrative and the historical as an imaginary configuration and combination of critical and creative thought. (2008: 180)

This perspective foregrounds a focus on the process of reimagining history and interrogation of dramaturgy, particularly the challenge of staging ideas, and facilitates exploration of this practice in a theatrical context. Consequently, recognising the process as one of historiography further facilitates the exertion of the perspective called for by Llewellyn.

Within this chapter the application of intersectionality to a theatrical context has contributed to intersectional discourse by problematising recurring modes for representing identity politics within a historical context. Normative historiography shapes and perpetuates theatrical representations of the past and through the application of intersectionality the representation of such is troubled, with a particular focus on the cultural implications of such reimaginings of history. Exploration of dramaturgical devices has highlighted the romantic plot and how it frames Rani's character arc in *The Empress*. I develop this enquiry further in the following chapter, with a focus on the playwright as historiographer in the construction of the past on the contemporary stage.

Chapter Four
The Educated Woman: *Blue Stockings* and the love/education dichotomy.

Introduction

‘Part of the joy of writing *Nell Gwynn* has been sketching around the bones of the known facts, imagining and inventing’ (Swale, 2016: 5). Here, playwright Jessica Swale knowingly acknowledges her process of drawing on historical ‘facts’ through which to create the fictional world of a play. Through shining a light on this process of ‘sketching around the bones’, in reference to other playwrights’ work, recurring modes of representation and themes of normative historiography have developed through this thesis. The previous chapters have each focused on the representation of some form of historical conflict: WWI, the suffrage campaign, Imperial and class-based oppression. For each of these historical debates the position of contemporary opinion appears relatively clear, meaning the dominant cultural stance is rarely contested. While the history of the British Empire is more complicated in this framework, primarily cultural rhetoric comfortably places the opposition in each of these conflicts as in the ‘wrong’. To take suffrage as an example, the notion that women should have the vote stands little chance of being widely contested in contemporary Western society and is accepted as the ‘right’ side of the historical debate. What, then, is the effect when the debate at the heart of a historical narrative, rather than being confined to a past generation, resonates with current cultural tension? This would mean there is doubt in the contemporary moment about the ‘right’ outcome of both the historical and present day debate. *Blue Stockings* by Jessica Swale provides a sharp example of this tension, whereby the retelling of Victorian women’s fight for graduation rights mirror current pressures placed on women to manage a career and raise a family. It is through Swale’s reimagining of this chapter of history that the process of historiography in playwriting becomes pertinent. As a result, Swale’s work is a fruitful case study through which to consider the challenging of normative historiography and its intersection with contemporary feminism.

The majority of plays in Swale’s body of work, as a writer, director and artistic director of theatre company Red Handed, are set in a historical context. The historical

subjects in the plays Swale has authored include: Tudor composer Thomas Tallis (*Thomas Tallis*); Restoration actress Nell Gwynn (*Nell Gwynn*); the Victorian campaign for women's graduation rights (*Blue Stockings*); illegal adoption in the 1920s (*The Mission*); and a comic two part journey through the last millennia of English history (*Mad Kings and Englishmen: History bung, drawn and quartered!*). Her work with Red Handed comprises revivals of old texts, including *The Rivals* by Richard Sheridan and *The Belle's Stratagem* by Hannah Cowley, as well as the premier of *Palace of the End* by Judith Thompson set in modern day Iraq. Similarly, Swale's work as a director centres on historical settings⁹, ranging from stagings of Elizabethan to early twentieth century playtexts, as well as new writing set in the past. This repertoire speaks of a continued focus from a contemporary playwright on representing history. Within these works, Swale foregrounds the experiences of women in her retelling of the past and reflects on these narratives in reference to contemporary feminist debate.

Blue Stockings, identified above, premiered professionally at Shakespeare's Globe on the 24th August 2013, and was directed by John Dove (Swale, 2013b). The play is set in 1896 and follows Victorian students at Girton College Cambridge as they campaign for the right for women to graduate. Historian Barbara Caine comments that, 'all mid-Victorian feminists agreed that educational deprivation was an essential feature of women's oppression' (1997: 115). Caine goes on to document founder Emily Davies' 'establishment of Girton College Cambridge,' (1997: 116) which forms the historical backdrop of the play's narrative. Through this chapter I draw on an interview I conducted with Swale (2015a), where she generously gave an insight into her process of retelling feminist history in *Blue Stockings* and the feminist debate she aimed to address through the play. My analysis of *Blue Stockings* identifies Swale's use

⁹ 'Director Credits Include: *The Complete Walks (The Tempest, Much Ado & Twelfth Night)* (Shakespeare's Globe); *Fallen Angels* (Salisbury Playhouse); *Far From The Madding Crowd, Sense And Sensibility, Sleuth* (Watermill Theatre); *The School For Scandal* (Park Theatre); *The Busy Body, Someone Who'll Watch Over Me, The Belle's Stratagem* (Southwark Playhouse); *The Rover, The Tempest* (Mostar, Bosnia-In-Herzegovina); *Winter* (Newfoundland Theatre, Canada); *Man Of Mode* (Guildhall); *Palace Of The End* (Arcola); *Bedlam* (Shakespeare's Globe); *The Rivals* (Southwark Playhouse); *School For Scandal* (Bridewell Theatre And Tour); *Finding Alice* (A Single Leaf Co. Tricycle, Lyric And Tour); *Much Ado About Nothing* (Youth Bridge Global, Bosnia-In-Herzegovina And Tour); *Twelfth Night* (Bridewell Theatre); *Comedy Of Errors* (Youth Bridge Global, Marshall Islands, South Pacific); *The Glass Tower* (Pleasance Theatre); *Baghdad Baby/Bare* (Camden People's Theatre)' (MLR, 2016: n.p.).

of history in contemporary performance as a means to illuminate current feminist debate regarding women's working patterns. This theme is refined in Swale's play *Nell Gwynn* (2015b), which premiered at Shakespeare's Globe on the 19th September 2015, and was directed by Christopher Luscombe. Through *Nell Gwynn*, Swale reconstructs the narrative of one of the first women to perform on the British stage, that of Restoration actress Nell Gwynn, and in doing so narrows her attention from social pressures that impact women's careers (in *Blue Stockings*) to more specifically consider women's roles in the theatre industry in reference to the seventeenth century.

In our interview Swale stated that she does not see herself as a historical writer, although her body of work indicates otherwise, but she did reflect:

One of the reasons I enjoy making work whether as a director or as a writer is because it's a chance to explore someone's experience that's not my own. And for me writing about Londoners now, I feel like I have a lot of that in my life already, [...] but I really love exploring a world that I know very little about [...] I prefer writing about history in some ways because you get to investigate a world that is far more foreign to me. (2015a)

In contrast to Swale's approach, reflection on recent playwriting in Britain indicates a wealth of new plays that centre on modern city life, such as *Stacy* (2007) by Jack Thorne, *Blink* (2012) by Phil Porter, and *Fleabag* (2013) by Phoebe Waller-Bridge. Each of these works is performed through direct address, has an urban setting and structures narratives primarily around dating and romantic relationships, with frequent references to modern technology and popular culture. Swale's work sits in stark contrast to this trope of new writing; yet her clear delineation in genre is significant as Swale's engagement with the past reveals ideologies about the moment from which she is writing, even if the action is not explicitly set in the present day. History as a land that 'is far more foreign' to her, is being explored and retold from the position of the present and thus Swale's binary, of writing either being about the past or the present, is blurred. As argued throughout this project, a playwright does not simply set action in the contemporary or the historical moment, but, through writing, multiple timeframes are put into conversation with one another. Consequently, the positionality of the playwright is important in this exchange and

provides a means through which to reflect upon the relationship between theatrical representations of the past and the contemporary moment.

In *Blue Stockings* Swale retells a lesser known chapter of British feminist history and grapples with the sacrifices historical women made to win the right to graduate. The play also forefronts a heteronormative romantic storyline and consequently analysis of *Blue Stockings* demonstrates the challenge of bringing narratives of romance and feminism alongside one another. Building on analysis in Chapter Three, regarding the dramaturgy of the heteronormative romantic plot, I explore how themes of romance obscure the performance's engagement with historical and contemporary feminist discourse. *Blue Stockings* demonstrates a two-way relationship between historical and contemporary feminism in a theatrical context, whereby a chapter in feminist history is reconstructed through performance to illuminate a current feminist issue, while contemporary attitudes towards the issue inevitably influence how the playwright reflects on this historical campaign. The representation of feminist history in this performance is explored in order to consider how Swale's interpretation of this historical narrative speaks of the challenges women are facing in contemporary society, with a particular focus on the pressure women experience to balance work and family life.

Blue Stockings

Plot Synopsis

Blue Stockings is set in 1896 and follows staff and students at Girton College Cambridge as they campaign for the right for women to graduate. The play centres on undergraduate Tess Moffat and her three female peers as they study science. The women are lectured by Miss Blake and Mr Banks, who also teaches at Trinity College¹⁰, and are in the care of Mrs Welsh, the mistress of Girton. In Mr Banks' first lesson, the female students ride a bicycle, controversially dressed in bloomers, and discuss the laws of motion. Miss Blake teaches the women moral science and in Act One Scene Three instigates a debate as to whether love or knowledge is the source of

¹⁰ Historically Trinity College only accepted male students and this structure is adhered to in *Blue Stockings*. Women undergraduates were not given admission to the college until 1978 (Trinity, 2016).

happiness, thus setting up an overarching theme for the piece concerning the women's choice between receiving an education or opting for marriage and a family. The women attend lectures with the male students at Trinity, until Dr Maudsley delivers a guest lecture on hysteria and Tess challenges his theoretical approach. This confrontation results in the female students being banned from Trinity lectures.

As the term progresses, Tess becomes friendly with Trinity student Ralph Mayhew. Tess orchestrates unchaperoned meetings with Ralph in an orchard, where they star gaze, read poetry and fall in love. Tess' romantic storyline sits in the wider context of the campaign to gain the right for women to graduate from Cambridge. This movement is led by Mrs Welsh who persuades the Senate to hold a vote on the matter (where only male university members may vote). While discussing the Senate vote, Miss Blake encourages the female students to hear suffragist Millicent Fawcett speak. However, Mrs Welsh opposes and clarifies that she wishes to distinguish their campaign from that of women's enfranchisement. Mr Banks supports their campaign for the right to graduate, which costs him the prospect of a fellowship and his existing job at Trinity.

Tess also crosses paths with Will Bennett: a student at Kings College and friend with whom she has grown up. When the students return from the Christmas break, Will confesses that he has fallen in love with Tess but she admits to having feelings for Ralph. Will visits Ralph to enquire after his intentions and, as the brandy and card playing escalates, Ralph brags that he has bought a ring. However, it transpires that the ring is not intended for Tess; rather, Ralph plans to propose to a student from Newnham College. When challenged on his choice, Ralph proclaims, 'My father has expectations. [...] Girton is – well, it's political,' (Swale, 2013a: 99) and Will is tasked with telling Tess of Ralph's engagement. Tess' sadness at the news disrupts her revision and she consequently fails her end of year viva. Ordinarily a failed viva would result in the student not returning to Cambridge, but Mrs Welsh declares that Tess may retake the exam and return in September.

Meanwhile, as the women (accompanied by Mr Banks) await the result of the Senate vote, Will arrives and informs them that thousands of men have descended on the streets rioting, burning an effigy of a woman in blue stockings on a bicycle. The Trinity students then appear and a scuffle breaks out which results in Mrs Welsh being

thrown to the floor. At this moment Mr Peck, the gardener, enters and announces that the vote was lost. The male students then ask what the women will do now, to which Tess replies, 'we'll carry on' (Swale, 2013a: 115). The final scene sees Tess and Will say goodbye; Tess admits that after what happened with Ralph she would never choose love over knowledge, but given time she hopes to love again. The pair agree to 'wait' for each other, with Tess concluding 'I'll be here in September. I'm not going anywhere' (Swale, 2013a: 116). The playtext ends with script presented 'either by projection or on three banners,' which reveals that following this vote the campaign continued for fifty years, and it was not until 1948 that '*Cambridge awarded women the right to graduate*' (Swale, 2013a: 116).

For the following analysis I draw on the published playtext of *Blue Stockings* (Swale, 2013a) and an archive recording of the Globe production which I viewed on the 14th May 2014.

Social Context and Feminist Debate

In *Blue Stockings*, Swale reimagines historical narratives of women faced with the choice between education or marriage and children. This contemporary retelling sits within a sociocultural landscape that engages with the rhetoric of choice within current liberal feminism. I consider this feminist literature in conjunction with Swale's dramaturgy and her interpretation of this historical social structure as posing choice for women. Swale sets up a debate in the historical narrative that maps onto contemporary feminist literature concerning current pressure experienced by women regarding their 'choice' to balance a career with family life. Exploration of this feminist literature facilitates analysis of how the dramaturgy of *Blue Stockings* foregrounds Tess' cultural position as a result of her choice-making and the subsequent implications of this representation.

Elizabeth Evans argues that a focus on concepts of choice developed from feminist 'liberationist movements of the 1960s and 1970s' (2015: 43). She goes on to associate discourse concerning choice with society's pursuit of neoliberal values (2015: 43). Growing from this original liberal movement, Claire Snyder attributes notions of choice to third-wave feminism and criticises the instability of the concept and its use to justify whatever actions an individual desires, 'apparently, any

choice that fulfills a woman's need or desire is feminist' (2008: 189). The current emphasis on choice within feminist discourse echoes neoliberalism and foregrounds a focus on the individual; which as demonstrated in Chapter Two shifts attention away from unity amongst a feminist collective, and the prospect of challenging patriarchal social structures, and towards an egocentric individualist feminism. The concept of choice within feminism sheds further light on analysis in Chapter Two, regarding the individual and the collective, by interrogating one of the central elements which drives the individualistic outlook that my earlier discussion has problematised. Swale represents the rhetoric of choice differently in *Blue Stockings* and *Nell Gwynn*, which influences the responsibility on both the individual and social structures offered in each retelling of history.

Linda Hirshman employs the term 'choice feminism' which she defines as, 'the shadowy remnant of the original movement,' which 'tells women that their choices, everyone's choices, the incredibly constrained "choices" they make, are good choices' (2006: n.p.). Writing in reference to American culture, Hirshman argues that choice feminism has resulted in women foregoing career development to focus their attention on the home. Hirshman traces this development:

Liberal feminists abandoned the judgmental starting point of the movement in favor of offering women "choices." The choice talk spilled over from people trying to avoid saying "abortion," and it provided an irresistible solution to feminists trying to duck the mommy wars. A woman could work, stay home, have 10 children or one, marry or stay single. It all counted as "feminist" as long as she chose it. (2005: n.p.)

Michaele Ferguson criticises this approach, outlined by Hirshman, and calls for feminists to extend their focus beyond 'the choices women make about wage work and unpaid labour in the home,' and to acknowledge that 'choice feminism is a much broader phenomenon' (2010: 247). She notes that in centring on the notion of choice, this strand of feminism calls for individuals to 'abstain from judging the contents of the choices women make' (Ferguson, 2010: 248). Ferguson goes on to critique this concept, identifying that in refraining from judgment, 'choice feminism evinces a fear of politics,' (2010: 248) and consequently shifts feminism away from political engagement and towards a futile concept that is negotiated by the individual to appease their existing ideologies.

There are echoes of these liberal choice feminist perspectives, regarding a shift from the political towards the individual, in theories of postfeminism. Shelly Budgeon identifies the strands of postfeminist discourse which work from the problematic assertion ‘that equality has been achieved,’ which as a result fosters a focus on the individual (2011: 281). Budgeon’s observation resonates with Rosalind Gill and Christina Scharff’s exploration of the relationship between postfeminism and neoliberalism:

Both appear to be structured by a current of individualism that has almost entirely replaced notions of the social or political, or any idea of individuals as subject to pressures, constraints or influence from outside themselves. Secondly, it is clear that the autonomous, calculating, self-regulating subject of neoliberalism bears a strong resemblance to the active, freely choosing, self-reinventing subject of postfeminism. These two parallels suggest, then, that postfeminism is not simply a response to feminism but also a sensibility that is at least partly constituted through the pervasiveness of neoliberal ideas. (2011a: 7)

Gill and Scharff develop this connection to explore how ‘popular cultural discourses’ demand women to ‘self-manage’ and go on to argue that, ‘to a much greater extent than men, women are required to work on and transform the self, to regulate every aspect of their conduct, and to present all their actions as freely chosen’ (2011a: 7). This pressure is cultivated through popularist feminist discourse that forefronts notions of choice.

Sheryl Sandberg’s (2013) theory of ‘lean in’ feminism, discussed in Chapter Two, is a pertinent example of the cultural discourse, shaped by neoliberalism and postfeminism, identified by Gill and Scharff. Sandberg embodies the pressure on women to self-manage their achievements and social progression, by problematically celebrating one’s opportunity for choice, stating, ‘success is making the best choices we can... and accepting them’ (2013: 140).

Caroline Fredrickson (2015) criticises Sandberg’s approach to feminism, noting the position of privilege from which Sandberg theorises. In reference to American culture, although it can be applied to a British context, Fredrickson notes ‘our tendency to avoid collective solutions to collective problems in favour of self-help approaches, and a separation of so-called identity issues from the discussion on economic justice’ (2015: n.p.). Fredrickson goes on to state that this outlook leads to

a culture that blames ‘women for their status,’ and that Sandberg’s rhetoric focuses on highly-paid women while negating those who do not have a choice about whether or not to work alongside raising a family, but for whom it is a necessity (2015: n.p.). This serves as a reminder that for the majority of women it is economically necessary that they work while raising a family; choice-centred liberal feminism problematically frames this as a decision women are given and left to manage. Consequently, the career and home life divide, when addressed at the level of individual choice, is contained by neoliberal capitalist social structures. This postfeminist approach, critiqued by Fredrickson, adds another layer of pressure, to the existing pressure women experience, and theories such as Sandberg’s problematically frame this social oppression as a woman’s choice.

Fredrickson’s criticism echoes Natasha Walter’s argument that perceived notions of choice are oppressing women. Walter proposes, ‘we should be looking for true choice, in a society characterised by freedom and equality. Instead, right now a rhetoric of choice is masking very real pressures on the generation of women’ (2010: 14). However, Walter does not explicitly outline what the alternative of ‘true choice’ looks like in practice. The term ‘choice’ is not productive in an attempt to shift social structures away from this outlook, and the neoliberal attitudes it carries. Rather, a change in semantics is required, as suggested by Evans: ‘the challenge lies in finding an alternative language that has resonance, particularly for feminist movements who necessarily have to speak to multiple audiences’ (2015: 43). Language is central to feminist discourse; where notions of choice are foregrounded, attitudes against resistance, strikes and solidarity develop as individuals are left to negotiate their own experiences. Consequently, attention to language is an initial step in challenging this fragmentation. Initiating a change in rhetoric could drive to realign a focus on the political within feminist discourse, in order to challenge the social structures, such as patriarchy and capitalism, that pressure women to manufacture their own success while they are simultaneously told that their social situation is a result of their ‘choices’.

Both Hirshman and Ferguson call for a focus on the political in reaction to choice feminism, but the two theorists offer very different trajectories. As previously noted, Hirshman argues that choice feminism has resulted in ‘educated women opting

out' to become 'unfree dependents on their husbands' (2006: n.p.). Hirshman retaliates with a call for women to return to work. In her article 'Homeward Bound' Hirshman discusses her longitudinal research which followed the career path of highly educated women whose wedding announcements featured in *The New York Times* 'Sunday Styles' section. She records the elite jobs of the women at marriage and notes that when tracked down seven years later 'almost all the brides [are] at home with their children' (2005: n.p.). In response to this data, Hirshman outlines three rules she believes will instigate change and urges women to: 'Prepare yourself to qualify for good work, treat work seriously, and don't put yourself in a position of unequal resources when you marry' (2005: n.p.). In response to criticism that her theories are forceful, Hirshman qualifies that 'the government interferes in women's lives all the time' and that her aim is to see women in positions of power (2006: n.p.). While this positively identifies a desire to have women in positions of power and as policy makers, Hirshman's theories are based on research into an elite few. Similarly to Sandberg, she does not acknowledge the social and economic spectrum of diversity amongst women, whereby some may not be given the opportunity to attend university, let alone make the decision not to study art as she demands. While Hirshman moves away from all-encompassing attitudes of choice feminism, she still places great onus on women's decisions and assimilates the pressure to self-manage. Although steering women towards social engagement, Hirshman does not hold the system accountable, but rather women within it, declaring: 'Women must take responsibility for the consequences of their decisions' (2005: n.p.). Thus, for Hirshman, individual choice is positioned as the primary contributor to a woman's circumstances, rather than recognising social structures as drivers of inequality.

Ferguson offers a wider perspective than Hirshman on feminism and political engagement. Like Hirshman and Sandberg, Ferguson calls for women to be in positions of power, but for Ferguson this is with a desire for women to engage 'in the political practice of creating, reimagining, and transforming the shared world in which they live' (2010: 251). Ferguson's argument sharply contrasts Hirshman and Sandberg's focus on women gaining equal economic status to men, and where they offer strict practical advice to women, she speaks in terms of changing ideologies. As a counter to choice feminism, Ferguson calls for individuals to become politically

engaged and willing to make judgments. She goes on to distinguish between being judgemental and ‘inappropriately imposing personal standards on other people from without,’ to ‘the practice of judgement’ which ‘involves becoming aware that we make political claims within a world of others who are differently situated and who need to be persuaded of the validity of our claims’ (Ferguson, 2010: 251). This productively shifts focus away from pressure on the sole actions of women, either under the guise of choice or not, and offers a change in ideological focus. This perspective encourages individuals that disagreements and discussion are not negative but essential to progress in social change, but to do so from an informed position, ready to engage with those who think differently. Ferguson acknowledges the complexity of negotiating feminist attitudes in day to day life. In rejecting choice feminism, she highlights how a feminism that is prepared to engage and criticise, in the pursuit of change, draws attention to methods for transforming the structures which oppress women, rather than interrogating their actions in the workplace as the reason for social inequality.

Through *Blue Stockings* and *Nell Gwynn*, Swale interacts with the cultural debate explored through this literature. Interestingly, she constructs contrasting representations of perceived choice in each of the plays. This difference indicates a shift in the playwright’s engagement and interpretation of the contemporary debate. In this case, history is the means through which Swale interrogates and formulates a response to this cultural issue.

Historical Narratives Paralleled to Contemporary Pressure

In an article with the *Evening Standard* Swale links the historical campaign, reimagined in *Blue Stockings*, to the recent rise in university fees, ‘after so many years of fighting for equal access to education, how are we once again in a position where able, passionate students don’t have this access?’ (Swale, 2013c: n.p.). With a focus on equality in higher education, Swale proclaims, ‘the issue at the heart of the play is as pertinent now as ever’ (2013c: n.p.). This illustrates the playwright’s active engagement with the historical narrative as a means to contribute to contemporary debate. There are two forms of exclusion at stake in both the historical narrative being addressed and the parallel to contemporary issues: that of sexual and economic

Chapter Four: The Educated Woman

equality, as Swale addresses inequality in access to education for women and for those who cannot afford it.

The Victorian education system at Cambridge forms the foundation of the play's plot:

Though the girls studied the same degree courses as the men and matched them grade for grade, when the gents donned their gowns for degree day the women were left with nothing but a tarnished reputation to show for their troubles. (Swale, 2013c: n.p.)

In our interview Swale said a clear dichotomy shaped the narrative of *Blue Stockings*; 'these women were faced with a very particular question which was love or education' (2015a). This narrows focus to specifically address the sacrifices historical women made to fight against inequality in higher education. The character Miss Blake voices this debate in the text:

But what if you had to choose? Between love and knowledge? Which would you choose? A dotting husband or a life of intellectual fire... and you're perfectly alone?

(Swale, 2013a: 24)

The piece sets up the narrative that historically women had a choice, and that during this period some women chose to pursue an education and to campaign for the right for women to graduate; a sacrifice we reap the rewards of today, in the equal access of both male and female students to higher education in Britain. Reflecting on the historical situation, Swale states, 'in 1896, the choice to study was pretty much a passport to spinsterhood,' (2013c: n.p.) and the social conventions represented throughout *Blue Stockings* portray the view that love and education are mutually exclusive. However, Swale's approach portrays the contemporary assumption that in the Victorian period marriage equated love and romance; this negates the strict patriarchal structures that framed the Victorian institution of marriage. Jennifer Phegley describes that in the Victorian era:

Marriage was still largely an economic decision. As the economy moved from communal agrarian modes of production toward waged manufacturing and commercial systems, the increasing separation of the home and the workplace precipitated the wider division between male and female domains. The resulting decrease in work opportunities for some working- and all middle-class women made marriage an economic

necessity or, at least, the best means of improving their status. (2012: 13-14)

This necessity for women indicates a subsequent control by men, whereby they held the economic and social power within a relationship, with the majority of control reinforced by legislation. For example, married women could not legally own property until the Married Women's Property Act was introduced in 1882. Swale's interpretation speaks of contemporary views of marriage, which equate the concept to love and a choice in one's partner. In contrast, for Victorian women, love may not have been the alternative to education; rather both the institutions of marriage and education had implications on their social and economic futures. This shifts the dichotomy away from a decision of the heart and indicates the oppressive structures that framed Victorian women's vocations. Hence, Swale's interpretation of this historical tension indicates the imposition of modern views onto the historical context, which reframes the choice and its subsequent implications.

Budgeon proposes that the rhetoric of choice oversimplifies challenges faced by women:

A fundamental misrecognition of the causes of social disadvantage as explanations for inequality are seen to reside in the ability or motivation of individuals to make 'good' choices (Rich, 2005; Walkerdine et al., 2001). Although constructing an unfettered relationship to choice may enhance a sense of personal empowerment it also places incredible pressure on individuals to make the 'right' choices (Baker, 2008). (2011: 285-286)

Blue Stockings focuses on the implications of different choices rather than acknowledging the social and systemic pressures that put these choices in place, and it is the male characters' actions which dictate the women's decisions. Consequently, under the guise of individual freedom the female characters are subject to social pressure without being able to exercise the choice they are perceived to possess. For example, as Tess becomes more romantically involved with Ralph, she loses interest in her studies, claiming rather that he is 'an education' (Swale, 2013a: 84). This suggests she has made her choice, but in buying a ring for another woman Ralph's actions end their attachment. Hurt from their relationship, Tess prioritises education and confesses to Will, 'I can't love again. Not wholly. Not yet' (Swale, 2013a: 116). This is not Tess choosing education over love but rather the actions of Ralph's

Chapter Four: The Educated Woman

character, operating within patriarchal social structures, that leave her in this position; Tess must endure the stigma of making the wrong choice without having had the freedom to do so. This builds on Fredrickson's (2015) analysis, discussed above, whereby in current culture women are judged on their choice to return to work after having children or scrutinised for how they self-manage work and family life, as reiterated earlier, for many women this is not a choice but an economic necessity. Once again, like Phegley's observation of the Victorian period, economic pressure continues to influence women's experiences and the subsequent opportunities available to them. As demonstrated by Sandberg and Hirshman, contemporary society judges the choices women make regarding their career and upbringing of children. Consequently, this may cause individuals to feel stigma for their actions, which in reality have been dictated by patriarchal social pressures. Hence, like Tess' narrative, women's 'choices' are observed and judged regardless of the lack of choice they face in their circumstance.

In the final scene between Tess and Will, she reflects on her perceived choice:

'What if you had to choose – between love and knowledge?' I was asked to choose. And I couldn't; I couldn't choose. But now, I know. I could never choose love. Not alone, not over this. Learning, life. I'd never be happy, and nor would he. (Swale, 2013a: 115-116)

Dramaturgically, Ralph's poor treatment of Tess is the instigator for her performance of empowerment. The indication that Tess would not choose love 'alone' signals that in retrospect she is in fact attempting to manage both. Swale frames this outcome for Tess, whereby the text implies that romance lies ahead for her and Will, as a utopian ending where the character is granted the two things she has spent the play fighting for. However, this utopian outcome problematically reinforces current expectations placed on women to 'choose' to manage both their career and home life, resulting in the overworking of a generation of supposedly liberated women.

In our interview Swale reflected on this Victorian debate in reference to contemporary society:

I think if you honestly ask people and said at eighteen you are never ever going to have an education again [...] but you are going to meet someone and have a family if that's what you want. Or you can have the education but you will never have a relationship, I just think the number of women

who would choose an education is tiny. But that was really what they faced and if they hadn't been brave enough to pursue that then [...] we wouldn't be in the position now where we are able to have an education. (2015a)

Here Swale problematically alludes to the idea of an innate element in women drawn to raising a family and away from theories of culturally constructed images of gender. This implies notions of biological determinism; which appears regressive in light of feminist scholarship that has worked to breakdown these preconceived concepts. Walter voices this development in scholarship, 'If we move away from biological determinism we enter a world with more freedom, not less, because then those behaviours traditionally associated with masculinity and femininity could become real choices for each individual' (2010: 230). Nonetheless, Swale's interpretation of the historical narrative does illuminate current social pressures placed on women, discussed above, to work to the same professional level as men, while paradoxically expectations of women regarding family life have not been adjusted. Elaine Aston comments on this pressure, identifying 'a postfeminist narrative that is neither about leaving home, nor staying put, but of moving routinely and relentlessly, back and forth, between the spheres of home and work' (2013b: 124). However, the politics of this social structure do not appear to be reflected in Tess' utopian ending, whereby the character of Tess is able to have both love and an education without signs of the strain of balancing identified by Aston. Therefore, in the process of exploring the debate, and acknowledging its challenges, Swale's alternative to choosing still leaves the social structures that assimilate pressure unaccountable.

The expectation on women to tirelessly move between the 'spheres of home and work,' identified by Aston (2013b: 124), is echoed and explored in popular feminist writing. Journalist and feminist writer Caitlin Moran interrogates Western social structures and expectations regarding women in the environment of work and their role as mothers (2012). Moran explores why women, unlike men, are routinely asked when they will be having children and formulates subtext to the question:

When are you going to blow a four-year chunk, minimum, out of your career [...] by having a baby? [...] When people ask women, 'When are you going to have a baby?' what they're really asking is, 'When are you going to leave?' (2012: 240)

Chapter Four: The Educated Woman

Here Moran illustrates the sacrifice raising a family has on a woman's career. While cultural debate strives to make women equal in the workplace, attitudes to the domestic sphere have not been adjusted accordingly and thus pressure mounts for women to manage both. Moran outlines the '30 per cent' pay gap between men and women and comments that women, 'usually have to watch their career go all Titanic when the question of 'Who will look after the kids?' raises its head' (2012: 180-181). Similarly Walter identifies this inequality, stating, 'even when women work full-time, according to one study, they do twenty-three hours of domestic work a week, as opposed to men's eight hours' (2010: 9).

This commentary maps the cultural terrain in which *Blue Stockings* is situated and the current debate within feminism Swale is intervening in through her representation of feminist history. This debate is addressed in popular and academic feminist writing, with feminist scholarship in the field of theatre studies contributing to the discussion. In her analysis of the musical *Mamma Mia*, Aston formulates the issue contemporary women face: 'Western women's improved mobility and equality in the public sphere of work has not lessened their domestic and maternal duties, but has meant that significant numbers are left coping with the responsibilities of managing both' (2013b: 115). Swale embodies Aston's theory while reflecting on her own social experience; "It comes back to the idea about women trying to do everything," she says. "I am trying not to make sacrifices, but there are a lot of balls to keep juggling" (Morrison, 2013: n.p.). This problematically echoes the notion that the onus is on Swale, that it should be the woman who makes a sacrifice or devises a way to manage. Swale's personal experience mirrors the contemporary debate in which she interjects and through her engagement with history she is able to explore a utopian solution to the contemporary cultural pressure; the historical narrative becomes the foreign land in which to imagine an alternative, where there is ease in managing both.

Romance

While establishing a link between historical and contemporary feminist debate, in an interview Swale also highlights the romantic narrative in *Blue Stockings*. The interviewer states, 'She is keen to stress that the play is not all politics. "One of the most interesting elements is the friendships and the love story – they are timeless"'

(Morrison, 2013: n.p.). In *Blue Stockings* romance becomes the means through which to make the political narrative palatable, and this mirrors the narrative structure of *The Empress* discussed in Chapter Three and alludes to the normative narrative convention developed in the retelling of political campaigns. However, in contrast to this coupling of political women and romance, Aston states, 'Traditionally, romance and feminism have been unable to reconcile their differences. Given the feminist struggle against patriarchy, heterosexual female desire always has been a hard subject to place and debate in feminism' (2013b: 125). The challenge to reconcile narratives of feminism and romance is embodied throughout *Blue Stockings*. This contrasts with *The Empress*, where Rani and Hari's relationship does not explicitly pose conflict for her political engagement, whereas in *Blue Stockings* the narrative of women's fight to graduate is retold in reference to their sacrifice of marriage, thus explicitly entwining the feminist and romantic plot.

While the notion of women having access to higher education may seem like a straightforward debate in the twenty-first century, *Blue Stockings* frames Tess' romantic attachment to Ralph as a desirable alternative. Swale includes Tess' excitement at sharing notes with Ralph in the library and the thrill of breaking the rules by sneaking out to meet him in the orchard. This guides audiences towards an emotional investment in the romantic storyline, blurring the feminist message of the piece. In this respect, the romantic narrative detracted from the potential to explore the political themes of the piece and historical women's movement being represented. For example, the effect of class politics on the women's access to education is touched on in the play through the character of Maeve, but this narrative is side-lined by Tess' longing for Ralph and the subsequent effect of their relationship on her education.

Swale clarified that stories of romance did not come out of her research into the historical campaign for graduation rights, rather she assumed that as women left home and 'encountered young men for the first time it was a no brainer really that [romance] would be a factor' (2015a). This notion is manifested in the text through the relationship that develops between Tess and Ralph.

Theories regarding the romantic plot in literature illuminate the romantic storyline in *Blue Stockings*. Mary Carden's analysis speaks of characters who 'define their lives through the love they lack' (2003: 9). This is apparent in *Blue Stockings*,

Chapter Four: The Educated Woman

whereby both individual characters and the broader political movement is defined in reference to the love the women are denied; romance becomes the means through which audiences are to understand the women's social circumstances. Carden identifies the trend to draw romance into the retelling of history:

Even the driest historical text – rooted firmly in a tradition presented as factual and rigorous, in direct opposition to the sentimentality and fantasy ascribed to romance – shares some of the functions and assumptions of the most melodramatic of love stories. [...] Romance and history both purport to teach us where we come from and how we might envision our ideal futures. (2003: 4)

Carden's claim that bringing together history and romance teaches 'how we might envision our ideal futures,' (2003: 4) resonates with Swale's construction of Tess' narrative that manages both outcomes of what is framed by the play as a historically mutually exclusive decision.

In terms of ideology, Tess' narrative is problematic: although the piece reconstructs a chapter of history where women forwent marriage so that today women have the right to graduate, *Blue Stockings* implies this still isn't enough; if one chooses an education she will need love as well. Literary theorist Northrop Frye, according to Jean Radford, identifies that 'the popular appeal of romance, [...] is that it dissolves the boundaries between the actual and the potential, offering a vision of 'the possible or future or ideal'' (1986: 9). Radford goes on to identify that the notion of what is ideal will change with 'varying ideological conditions,' (1986: 9) suggesting a fluidity to the romantic plotline. This is demonstrated in *Blue Stockings* whereby the ideal outcome, championed by modern feminism, is for the women to have both romance and an education, which Tess obtains in the final scene; an education itself would not be enough. This sits in conjunction with contemporary unease at the notion of the single woman and alludes once more to confusion from a modern perspective at a Victorian woman opting for education over the prospect of marriage. Overall, in centralising Tess' choice, and subsequently rejecting the notion that the character has to make a choice, focus remains on the actions of the individual. This leads to larger social questions of how this dynamic could culturally be revised, while striving for equal opportunities in the workplace and family structure.

Representing Opposition

Blue Stockings dramatises both sides of the debate regarding women's presence at Cambridge during this historical period and the campaign for graduation rights. As outlined in the introduction, both the ideological and dramaturgical positioning of this opposition differs from the representation of historical conflicts analysed in previous chapters. In line with the plot of *Blue Stockings*, historical accounts offer information concerning men who were sympathetic to women studying at Cambridge. For example, Mr Tomkinson who, 'took part in the foundation of Girton,' was described as 'a specially useful ally' to the cause (Stephen, 1933: 8). Margaret Birney Vickery recognises opposition from Victorian culture, noting, 'the issue of education for girls and women equal to that for boys and men raised an outcry in society' (1999: 14). Swale's 'Note to the Players' indicates a desire to understand and communicate the male perspective from this period through characterisation in *Blue Stockings*:

It would be easy to assume that those who condemn women's education [...] are heartless misogynists. That's simply not the case. These men speak the prevailing opinions of the time. They're not the devils of the piece; they genuinely believed that women's health and the future of Britain was at stake. (2013a: 8)

With this attention to the male viewpoint, Swale appears to be an apologist for the repression of women's education; or rather this indicates the pressure on the playwright to write characters which are credible and sympathetic even if ideologically they represent problematic opinions. It is a cultural expectation of the contemporary playwright to create roles of this nature, instead of two dimensional characters which result in the black and white of melodrama; rather a spectrum of responses to the debate is formed through different characters in this play.

The complexities of Swale's representation of the opposition comes into sharp focus when put into conversation with Rebecca Lenkiewicz's reimagining of opposition to women's suffrage in *Her Naked Skin*. As discussed in Chapter Two, Lenkiewicz centralises female characters in her representation of the suffrage campaign and as a result characters in opposition to the feminist movement are two dimensional, reducing the gravitas of the experiences of women during this period. However, the dramaturgy of *Blue Stockings* constructs the historical campaign

differently to *Her Naked Skin*: in *Blue Stockings* Swale centralises the patriarchal hegemony, while the female scholars and students are depicted as imposing on the masculine institution of education. This maintains the concept that historically women were oppressed within this social structure and with this as the social backdrop for the narrative, Swale creates characters who advocate for both sides of the debate. The notion that historically women should forego marriage in pursuit of an education is not a widely explored or commented upon debate in modern society, unlike women's suffrage. This highlights the complexity and unknown quality of the historical debate Swale is retelling and this unease is mirrored in the modern issues being contested. Hence, the ease of a sexist two-dimensional opposition does not serve this retelling, where notions of the right or wrong side of the historical debate are blurred.

The characters of male students at Trinity, in *Blue Stockings*, act as a counter voice to the women's campaign and vary in their degrees of opposition. For Holmes and Edwards, their final sentiments once the vote has been lost echo the beginning of a change of heart. In contrast, Lloyd maintains his strong opposition to the women being at Cambridge, which culminates in an outburst in the haberdashery where he lists what the men had to go through to get to University:

These buildings. They make us men. Eight hundred years we've studied here. [...] Then you. You what? Waltz in, with your bonnets and your pretensions and your self-belief and think you have a right to set foot in these walls? (Swale, 2013a: 88-89)

In our interview Swale voiced her sympathy for the male students; she considered their frustration if they had worked to a specific intellectual and social standard and then arrived at Cambridge to find women of any social class were allowed entrance (2015a). This argument is voiced through the character of Lloyd, who unlike Holmes and Edwards does not change his position on the debate; rather he is the one who purchases a pair of blue stockings from the haberdashery which the audience is led to believe form part of the effigy that is burnt in the offstage riot. Through the character of Lloyd, Swale explores the comparison between the entrance requirements for men and women at Cambridge, and uses this contrast as the motive for Lloyd's discrimination against the women. In this case, Swale gives motive to the actions

which oppress the female characters, using them to push the campaign, so that as the opposition grows stronger, so too can the women's side of the debate gather momentum.

Holmes and Edwards begin to show compassion for the women's campaign when it is announced that the vote was lost. Stage directions dictate that Holmes proclaims in an '*exploding*' manner, 'I can't agree with your campaign. [...] But, by God, I respect you. And I won't see you dishonoured. Ladies, I'm sorry for your loss' (Swale, 2013a: 114). Instead of a sudden shift in opinion, Swale works to show their gradual consideration for the women in this political battle; this creates a more fluid progression of thinking rather than showing the men impulsively switching allegiances. This demonstrates attention from the playwright to not only voice both sides of the debate but to envisage how social attitudes would have begun to change, which contributes to an understanding of how the anti-suffrage society of the play came to be one that granted women the right to graduate. Swale states in an interview that, 'there are as many men in *Blue Stockings* as women, because they were as important as women in that movement. In fact plenty of the main opponents were women: Queen Victoria was the biggest advocate of the idea women shouldn't be allowed to study' (Kenber, 2013: n.p.). This outlook brings the whole debate into focus, acknowledging unexpected support and opposition. However, the cultural necessity to give space to the male role within a historical narrative highlights the masculine structures that shape our storytelling. Yet, in shining a light on both sides of the debate, space is given to consider the complexities of the argument, beyond stark sexism that is quickly dismissed by a contemporary audience. Giving room to the whole debate elevates the endurance and extremity of the historical women's actions.

Dramaturgically, neither the characters of Holmes and Edwards, nor the female characters, drive the action of the vote; rather both sides respond to the outcome. In this instance, Swale centralises the patriarchal hegemony and characters from each side of the debate respond to action offstage that is instigated by a faceless patriarchal opposition. Holmes and Edwards are not represented as participants in the vote, so although their characters echo sentiments of the opposition in this sequence, they are not active agents in driving the action and thus responsibility is reduced.

Consequently, Swale depicts both the male and female characters in Act Two Scene Eleven, when the outcome of the vote is announced, as reactionary; rather than the male characters progressing the action, which the female characters respond to, the action is driven by the offstage opposition. As a result, both sides of the debate, embodied through the characters, yield to the patriarchal hegemony. This dramaturgical structure positions the character's experiences in reference to the wider social structures which influence them and recognises power beyond their actions that shape the political campaign.

In *Blue Stockings*, Swale's process of reimagining history and constructing dramaturgy differs from Lenkiewicz's in *Her Naked Skin*. In *Her Naked Skin*, Lenkiewicz centralises the suffrage movement, their relationships with one another and the internal conflict between women. In contrast, while Swale does consider tension between the women, she primarily creates drama out of the historical debate and shapes the dramaturgy of the piece around the development of the historical campaign. Swale's approach formulates a complex retelling of the campaign as characters' opinions are shown to change in response to developments in the movement, rather than maintaining a stock opposition throughout.

The dramaturgy of *Blue Stockings* and Swale's 'Note to the Players,' identified above, suggest an agenda to voice both sides of the historical debate, by dramatising the women's oppression and considering the ideologies of the oppressors. This echoes Robert Connell's observation that, 'a gender order where men dominate women cannot avoid constituting men as an interest group concerned with defence, and women as an interest group concerned with change' (2005: 82). However, Swale's approach to the male narrative of defence appears to go to lengths to placate and understand their actions, which reflects the ideological position with which she engages and interprets the historical narrative. If the historical debate can appear tangible then does this prompt audiences to engage with both sides and subsequently map this onto the contemporary moment? This resonates with the attention given to the role of men in contemporary feminist debate and indicates the influence of this modern shift in reflection on feminist history. However, this focus problematically leads to the appeasement of men's role in historical oppression. While including men in modern feminist debate can lead to productive awareness and change, the

ramifications of this shift shape contemporary interpretations of feminist history. Both the ideological and dramaturgical complexities that shape Swale's representation of opposition in *Blue Stockings* indicate the current social tensions that surround the issues raised in this historical narrative. The stark difference for Lenkiewicz and Swale is the dominant cultural response to the themes they raise; as discussed, for Lenkiewicz women's enfranchisement holds little controversy for a contemporary audience whereas, for Swale, debate regarding tensions between love and work is pertinent with current cultural discussion. Hence, the appeasement of both sides of the debate through *Blue Stockings* indicates the historiographical challenge when retelling a feminist historical narrative that resonates with unresolved contemporary feminist debate.

Normative Historiography and Shakespeare's Globe Theatre

Exploration of the dramaturgy in *Blue Stockings*, and Swale's focus on untold historical narratives, illuminate how the playwright challenges the theatrical structures that frame contemporary reimaginings of the past. The Globe space which housed this production further complicates the notion of normative historiography through the multiple layering of time periods and provides a distinct example of how normative historiography can operate and develop in response to a theatrical space. *Blue Stockings*, as performed at the Globe, framed a reimagining of Victorian feminist history with normative conventions of the replica Elizabethan space and through this encounter Swale created a narrative which speaks of current cultural pressures placed on women. The conflict between the layering of the Elizabethan and Victorian periods is amplified through the jig which closed the Globe production of *Blue Stockings*. This example indicates how the representation of dual historical periods further complicates an audience's horizon of expectations (Bennett, 1997). But the notion of normative historiography brings the politics of this theatrical convention into clear focus.

My introductory chapter maps the extensive literature which surrounds the Globe theatre, both in reference to performances produced in the space and the wider institution as a tourist site, architectural replica and education resource. Alan Dessen

recognises live music and dancing as key components in the trend for original practices productions at the new Globe space (2008: 45). In keeping with these original practices, the Globe production of *Blue Stockings* ended with a jig, which is not included in the stage directions of the published playtext (Swale, 2013a). The jig was performed by the whole cast; this is customary for productions staged at the modern Globe as it aims to honour the Elizabethan tradition that plays end with a jig in an attempt to send audiences home on a happy note.

Historically at London playhouses, jigs were, ‘a musical sung-drama sometimes featuring dance,’ and research suggests, ‘these jigs were frequently bawdy, sometimes libellous, often farcical, and were set to, and accompanied by, popular tunes of the day’ (Clegg and Skeaping, 2014: 1). However, while the replica Globe theatre honours this tradition, the jigs in contemporary productions are primarily upbeat dance routines, at times including singing, rather than incorporating a new short story as jigs historically did. The jig in *Blue Stockings* included ballroom-style choreography that echoed the Victorian period; the music then broke into a faster jazz score which was accompanied by flapper-style choreography and an upbeat tempo that is usual for the modern Globe jig. The transition from a formal partnered ballroom piece into a faster group routine arose with no obvious motivation and the dance as a whole jarred with the final action of the play. Prior to the jig, the performers sang a solemn choral song as banners fell upstage declaring it was fifty years until the Girton women won the right to graduate. Swale identified the play’s subject matter as an untold narrative and so one can assume the fact the campaign took fifty years would have been unexpected to audiences (2015a). However, the gravitas of this historical narrative was glossed over as the cast descended into the jig, moving the audience back to familiar territory as the piece adhered to a convention dictated by the space.

As outlined in my engagement with scholarship in the introductory chapter, the Globe is frequently referred to in reference to authenticity and when employed as a tool for evaluation the concept productively shines a light on the politics of historical representation in this reconstructed theatrical space. Addressing the jig in terms of authenticity, this production of *Blue Stockings* honoured the modern and historical Globe tradition of ending the production with a jig, but does this act alone deem the practice authentic, and if so to what or who is this contemporary production being

authentic to? The inclusion of a jig is authentic to the contemporary Globe as an institution. While the jig negotiated a mix of Victorian ballroom dance, jazz music, flapper-style choreography, and a contemporary production team and audience, it represented a theatrical element the Globe as an institution deems essential in order to recreate theatrical practice similar to that believed to have occurred on the original Globe stage. This indicates a recurring mode of representation which can be employed to denote the historical period being reimagined. The concept of the jig is a device which can be drawn on to honour the traditions of the original space, which some may read as being 'authentic' to it. But in the case of *Blue Stockings* this indicates a prioritising of the historical period attributed to the theatrical space over the era represented in the world of the play. Consequently, this traditional way of representing the Elizabethan period jars as an unconventional device to retell the Victorian era.

The ballroom dance steps, in the Globe production of *Blue Stockings*, echo the Victorian period but the faster paced flapper-style choreography and the overall concept of ending a Victorian period drama with a jig appeared outside expected conventions for a representation of this historical era. In light of this, recurring modes of representation work in conjunction with horizon of expectations to negotiate the layering of historical representations in this performance. For example, a spectator may approach *Blue Stockings* knowing that the modern Globe employs Elizabethan theatre disciplines, thus this becomes a measure by which they can interpret the piece and in doing so analyse the representation. A spectator's horizon of expectations will shape the lens through which they read the performance space and fictional narrative and hence recurring modes of representation form the signifiers which conjure familiar theatrical conventions that can be read in reference to a historical period.

Given that *Blue Stockings* is not set in the Elizabethan period, nor was the piece written during the Elizabethan era, rules of original practices are redundant in this production, yet unlike other producing houses the nature of this venue's research and reconstruction means, "the Globe theatre's work is read in the light of the entire site" (Pye, 2014: 421). Consequently, in this production of *Blue Stockings*, different modes of normative historiography operate in reference to the text in performance and the theatrical space, as audiences are confronted with dual historical periods

through a hybrid set of conventions. For example, the jig has become a symbol of the new Globe theatre just as much as it is deemed part of the original; *Blue Stockings* is interpreted in light of both theatrical techniques anticipated at the replica Globe and normative representations of the Victorian period.

The inclusion of a jig is a usual convention for this theatrical space, which indicates that were the playtext of *Blue Stockings* to be performed in a different space, the jig would not fall within an audience's horizon of expectations. Hence, the jig is associated with the replica Elizabethan theatre, rather than the representation of the Victorian period in the play. This acknowledges the role of the theatrical space in shaping an audience's horizon of expectations for a performance. It also suggests two modes of normative historiography at work within this production of *Blue Stockings*; on one level, the piece adhered to established modes of representing the Victorian period, as theorised in Chapter Three. On another level, the production employed theatrical devices associated with Elizabethan theatre; primarily the jig but also the position of live musicians in the balcony, interaction with groundlings, multi-roling and use of an ensemble. These techniques reinforce usual ways of reconstructing original practices used at the Elizabethan playhouse in this replica space. Thus, modes of normative historiography were working across two historical periods in this production, each offering established modes of representation that could be drawn on by the playwright and production team to represent both the Victorian period in the world of the play and the Elizabethan period through the theatrical space and its traditional conventions. Subsequently, an audience's horizon of expectations would be operating across both historical periods. In viewing this production, women are retold their history through a complex mesh of theatrical layering, while Swale also hoped to stimulate a connection to contemporary debate. However, the upbeat jig reduces the poignant effect of the text's ending, which reveals how long the campaign took, ultimately limiting the potential for connecting the current debate to the historical representation. In this case theatrical entertainment, prescribed by conventions of the space, is foregrounded at the expense of dwelling on the lengths historical women went to to fight for graduation rights.

Nell Gwynn

The example of the jig indicates the challenge of staging a historical period in a theatrical space which brings an additional historical framing. Subsequently, this case study introduces a focus on the one play that falls outside of the predominant historical boundary of this thesis. Where Swale's *Blue Stockings* jarred with conventions of the space, her later play *Nell Gwynn*, set in the Restoration period and premiering in 2015, wove the Globe conventions into the plot of the piece. For example, comic songs and dance motifs were used throughout the piece to develop the plot; in the final jig these sequences came to a crescendo and echoed the lively finale of original practices productions. Primarily, this ease with the space was conjured as the Restoration period holds aesthetic similarities to the Elizabethan era and the piece was set in the playhouse, making the replica Elizabethan space central to the narrative, rather than its backdrop.

In *Nell Gwynn* Swale continues her engagement with history by reimagining seventeenth century London and the experience of one of the first women to perform on the British stage. Through the play's representation of a Restoration playhouse, and the emerging role of women within it, Swale incorporates humour and comments in the text which appear directed to the contemporary theatre industry. Critic Claire Allfree remarked that:

Swale has an awful lot of fun riffing on the gender politics of Restoration England, and although Nell comes across as a bit of a proto-feminist cipher as a result, one of the joys of this play lies in its easy postmodern wit and lightness of touch. (2015: n.p.)

This highlights the feminist lens through which Swale reimagines the historical narrative of Nell Gwynn. In an interview, Swale comments, 'I never set out to write a documentary-style play,' (2016: 5) thus distinguishing between the role of playwright and historian and inadvertently noting the process of interpretation and creation of fiction in her engagement with the historical moment. In addressing the role of women within the theatre industry, Swale narrows her focus from *Blue Stockings*, where she explores social pressures on women regarding education, work and raising a family, to specifically consider women in the industry in which she works. This play is significant as Swale challenges normative historiography in representations of this

historical figure. As such, this play is a seminal example of the playwright assuming the role of historiographer.

The historical setting of *Nell Gwynn* (1660s) falls outside the historical period (1882-1928) that is central to this thesis. However, this performance is foundational in its contribution to the notion of Swale as a historiographer; it illustrates how she uses a historical figure, and the form of playwriting, to challenge theatre as an institution and women's position within it. *Nell Gwynn* is crafted with a complexity beyond the dramaturgy of *Blue Stockings* and while choice is still a fundamental part of Swale's plot, the character of Nell acknowledges the powerlessness in her perceived freedom. Thus, consideration of *Nell Gwynn* sheds further light on the dramaturgical structure of *Blue Stockings* and Swale's process of retelling the past on the contemporary stage.

Plot Synopsis

The action of *Nell Gwynn* is set in London in the 1660s and begins at the Drury Lane playhouse. The play opens with orange seller Nell Gwynn answering back to hecklers in the audience, which compels her to go on stage. After this incident, leading actor of the King's Company Charles Hart invites Nell to join their company. The play follows the company as they transition to having a female performer. Hart gives Nell lessons in acting and the two become romantically involved. King Charles II then comes to the theatre and is captured by Nell's performance, prompting him to visit her in her dressing room. Charles is persistent in his pursuit of Nell and asks her to come and live at the palace as his mistress, to which she agrees, against the King's advisor's wishes.

Act Two is set '*a good few years later*' and begins with Charles receiving council from his advisor Lord Arlington regarding his relationship with parliament and his 'fragile' bond with France (Swale, 2016: 79-81). Arlington recommends Charles takes a new mistress, Louise de Keroualle, who the French have brought with them on their visit. Charles' acceptance of Louise causes a dispute with Nell and when he brings her to the playhouse Nell performs a musical number, in French, dressed in an oversized hat that replicates the one Louise is sporting. As a result, the company's manager, Thomas Killigrew, asks Nell to leave as he has received threats from the palace.

Following this, Charles has an apoplectic fit and Nell, and her son, are forbidden from seeing him before he dies. The final scene takes place back at the playhouse, ‘*some weeks later*’ (Swale, 2016: 119), where the company are struggling to rehearse for a new play. Nell appears and Killigrew agrees to take her back. The character of playwright John Dryden confesses he is having trouble writing an epilogue for his new play and Nell asks if she can write it. The play closes with Nell speaking the epilogue for the play the company are staging, which Swale’s stage directions state was ‘*almost certainly written by the real Nell Gwynn and was likely her last performance*’ (2016: 125-126).

For the following performance analysis I draw on the published playtext of *Nell Gwynn* (Swale, 2016) and the premiering production at Shakespeare’s Globe theatre which I viewed on the 24th September 2015. The Globe production was the first staging of Swale’s text before it transferred to the West End Apollo Theatre¹¹, where it opened on the 4th February 2016. The play commenced a National tour¹² between March and April 2017 before returning to the Globe in May 2017 (SGT, 2016: n.p.). The 2015 Globe production, directed by Christopher Luscombe, included songs and ditties accompanied by live musicians, and dances performed both by the character of Nell and members of the ensemble. Aesthetically the production had lavish Restoration costumes and items of furniture to dress the set and backdrop in keeping with the Restoration period. The production was loud and bawdy, with crude jokes in the text being played up for the audience. The raucous upbeat nature of this production was noted in reviews: Allfree described it as a ‘ribald, buzzy production,’ (2015: n.p.) and Fiona Mountford proclaimed the event was a ‘rollicking good evening’s entertainment’ (2015: n.p.). Performers crossed into the yard space, alongside audience members, throughout the play, which enhanced the playful nature of the piece and positioned the audience as groundlings in the world of the play.

¹¹ There were alterations in the cast when the production transferred to the Apollo Theatre. Namely for the role of Nell, which was played by Gugu Mbatha-Raw at the Globe and Gemma Arterton at the Apollo.

¹² For the national tour the role of Nell was played by Laura Pitt-Pulford.

Representing Nell Gwynn in Scholarship, Literature and Performance

The historical figure of Nell Gwynn is addressed by scholars and frequently referred to as part of the canon of women who were pivotal in advancing the inclusion of women on the English stage. In *The First English Actresses: Women and Drama, 1660-1700* Elizabeth Howe (1992) explores the socio-political culture of Restoration England and developments within the theatres which enabled women to perform. Howe's book makes reference to a range of Restoration actresses and includes data of Gwynn's known performances. Similarly to Howe, Gilli Bush-Bailey uncovers narratives of women within Restoration theatre. Bush-Bailey refers to performances by Gwynn as she explores collaborations between seventeenth century actresses and female playwrights in her book *Treading the Boards* (2006). Scholarship regarding the first actresses in Britain repeatedly centres on gender analysis and sexuality, with Gwynn's work as an orange seller and prostitute, and her relationship with Charles II, foregrounded as defining features of the historical figure. In this regard, Gwynn features in Kirsten Pullen's (2005) research into the history of the association between actress and prostitute; Pullen explores how this identity has been negotiated both privately and in the public eye across centuries. Gill Perry, Joseph Roach and Shearer West contribute to this debate in their book *The First Actresses: Nell Gwynn to Sarah Siddons* (2011), which explores themes of female sexuality and celebrity in reference to portraits of seventeenth-century actresses. In stark contrast, Helen Brooks challenges this focus on actresses' sexuality in her study of the Georgian actress. Brooks positions this perspective on the Georgian actress as 'an inheritance from studies of her Restoration predecessors,' and in response examines 'how alternate theories of the public/private divide might allow us to extricate discussion about actresses from a focus on their sexuality' (2014: 551). Swale's interpretation of Gwynn's history echoes Brooks' historiography, as she moves away from primarily defining the character of Nell in reference to her sexuality and instead considers her role in the workings of the theatre industry.

Swale's play sits amongst a landscape of contemporary writers, working across a variety of media, who include narratives linked to the historical figure of Gwynn in their reimaginings of the Restoration period. Television and film which have a character of Gwynn include: *Stage Beauty* (2004), *Charles II: The Power and the Passion*

(2003) and *England, My England* (1995). The following novels also offer a reimagining of Gwynn: *Exit the Actress* by Priya Parmar (2011), *The Darling Strumpet* by Gillian Bagwell (2011), *The King's Favorite* by Susan Holloway Scott (2008) and *The Perfect Royal Mistress* by Diane Haeger (2007).

With regards to the theatre, *Victory* by Howard Barker (1990), depicts different facets of Restoration society, comprising republican rebels, bankers and courtiers, in the aftermath of the civil war and incorporates a character of Gwynn who is primarily represented as Charles II's mistress. In contrast, *Playhouse Creatures* by April De Angelis (1999) is set in the theatre and focuses on Restoration actresses, including a character of Gwynn. Theorists Lesley Ferris and Melissa Lee, discuss De Angelis' engagement with history in their exploration of *Playhouse Creatures*:

In the course of her research, De Angelis realized that the lives and stories of these pioneering performing women had either been hidden from history or presented with a romantic gloss that overlooked professional achievement. For De Angelis, such a lacuna in the historical record certainly spoke to the hegemony of a patriarchal perspective and a concomitant privileging of the experiences and achievements of men. (2013: 218)

This commentary alludes to the role of historiography in De Angelis' process and demonstrates how playwriting is a platform from which the retelling of women's history can be challenged. De Angelis' process exemplifies Brooks' call for future discussion 'to break away from this well-rehearsed discourse' which focuses on the 'actress-as-whore' persona and to acknowledge the diversity of women's social roles (2014: 566). Swale's interpretation of Gwynn resonates with De Angelis' and indicates a shift in contemporary representation to foreground Gwynn's professional career. This actively positions the work of the playwright in the development of historiography, as both De Angelis and Swale have moved away from normative narratives, to offer an alternative interpretation of this historical figure, through a medium that reaches a wide audience and contributes to our cultural understanding of history.

In the same year that Swale's *Nell Gwynn* premiered, Bella Merlin wrote and performed a one woman show about the historical actress titled *Nell Gwynne: A Dramatick Essay on Acting and Prostitution*, which premiered at The Ruby Theatre,

Hollywood. Playing the character of Gwynn, Merlin retells stories from her life while the piece claims to pose ‘serious questions about the legacy of women in theatre’ (2015: n.p.). The timing of these two works, and their conscious connection between the past and the contemporary theatre industry, allude to a shift in recurring narratives for the retelling of this historical figure. These productions significantly point to a gap in current scholarship regarding contemporary portrayals of the historical figure of Gwynn and their dialogue with historiography of the Restoration actress. The way Gwynn’s historical narrative is being interpreted through playwriting has changed in recent works; this reflects De Angelis’ desire to shift attention away from the sexualized patriarchy and towards Gwynn’s work in the playhouse. This development in contemporary playwriting reflects concerns of the current generation; in particular, women’s involvement and representation in the theatre industry. In response, I propose that further research is required to explore how prevailing narratives of women within the historical theatre industry are changing and the implications of this reframing of women’s history for contemporary cultural debate.

Representing a Historical Theatre Industry

In *Nell Gwynn* Swale uses her representation of the Restoration theatre to comment on the contemporary theatre industry. This perspective is brought into sharp focus as the character of Nell criticises the female roles she is given to perform. For example:

NELL. Yet again, some gallant falls for a wilting, waifish woman without a bean of personality or a single funny line, but hey, it doesn’t matter, cos she’s pretty –

DRYDEN. Now wait a minute –

NELL. And what does this flimsy whimsy want from life? Adventure? Respect? No... all she wants is this flopsome fop cos once he wrote her a poem and compared her to a flower. Is that what you think women want?

DRYDEN. Well, I –
NELL. No, Mr Dryden! It's not! We're as knotty and tangly as
you are, and yet how do you write us?
(Swale, 2016: 45-46)

Here Swale creates a proto-feminist attitude for the character of Nell to make a poignant comment about dramaturgy. In returning to the historical moment when women began performing at playhouses in Britain, Swale is able to use these theatrical origins as a means to comment on issues of plot, character and form. In highlighting the lack of intention and complexity of characters in the play within a play in *Nell Gwynn*, Swale nods not only to Restoration dramaturgy, but also speaks of contemporary concerns and conveys the position from which the playwright encounters and interprets the historical narrative. The historical narrative becomes the means through which Swale challenges normative theatrical and narrative conventions.

Swale incorporates a metatheatrical nod in an exchange of dialogue between the characters of Nell and King Charles, whereby Nell parallels their relationship to a romantic plot:

NELL. How'd you know what happens next?
CHARLES. Isn't it obvious? Boy meets girl, girl resists, then, after a
bit of badinage... he bags her.
NELL. That's your experience, is it?
CHARLES. Every time.
NELL. You haven't been watching the right plays, sir. The girl
in this tale isn't half so predictable.
(2016: 64-65)

This tone resonates with Alexander Feldman's (2013) theory of 'historiographic metatheatre'. Feldman states that his theory addresses plays in which:

Self-reflexive engagements with the traditions and forms of dramatic art illuminate historical themes and aid in the representation of historical events. The description of these works as *historiographic* rather than simply *historical* is indicative of the playwrights' interest in not only the events of the past but also the way in which they are constituted in the discourse of history. (2013: 2-3)

Feldman acknowledges the ideologies that shape a playwright's interaction with history and suggests that in the same way historiography addresses a playwright's interpretative approach to the past, the notion of metatheatre implies that same

reflexive approach is present as they consider the concept of theatre in this historical framework (2013: 3). This theory recognises the playwright's process of interpretation as active, in that ideologies shape their engagement with history and theatre which are subsequently reimagined through performance. Feldman suggests that 'metatheatre is the self-conscious counterpart to dramatic art' which exposes 'the theatricality within theatre,' and as a result stimulates 'questions as to the artifice, the spectacle, and the dramatic constructs of the world beyond' (2013: 3). In the above exchange Nell's character is not inherently metatheatrical, in that she does not explicitly acknowledge her world as a construct of theatre, but her comments on the construction of plot point to ideas beyond the world of the play and specifically to a criticism of theatrical stereotypes. This moment operates on two levels: Swale offers an alternative interpretation of the historical figure of Gwynn, that of a theatrically critical performer, alongside a broader comment on the construction of narrative which is relevant beyond Nell's fictional reality.

Nell Gwynn is a clear example of Feldman's distinction between a work as 'historiographic' rather than 'historical', whereby Swale does not only engage with the historical narrative but also acknowledges the untold aspects of Gwynn's history as her cause to address this chapter of the past. This approach was apparent in our interview, as Swale commented, 'it's also interesting that as a woman she [Gwynn] had the same sort of trajectory as Dick Whittington and yet nobody's really told her story and Dick Whittington gets told every Christmas' (2015a). Through this distinction, Swale foregrounds questions of historiography in her engagement with Gwynn's historical trajectory. While consideration of scholarship and previous representations indicate a primary focus by researchers and writers on Gwynn's sexuality and relationship with the King, Swale counters this approach by centring on theatrical history. Thus, *Nell Gwynn* is a demonstration of historiographic metatheatre, which is manifested in the above dialogue, as Swale engages with the ideologies surrounding the retelling of this chapter of history and repositions focus on the history of Gwynn to address her theatrical exploits as well as her relationship with Charles. Simultaneously, Swale metatheatrically uses the character of Nell to question theatrical conventions that are still inherent in the British theatrical canon. Hence,

Feldman's two strands, historiographic and metatheatrical, are embodied within this play.

Although not specifically engaging with the representation of the Victorian period, Feldman's theory develops scholarship discussed in Chapter Three regarding neo-Victorian studies. Feldman's distinction between 'historiographic' and 'historical' works echoes Mark Llewellyn and Ann Heilmann's (2010) delineation between works that retell Victorian history and those that critically engage with its representation. Feldman's attention to metatheatre, refines the lens of historiography to distinctly shine a light on theatre's relationship with its own history. Analysis of *Nell Gwynn* develops this concept further by refining the focus to address gender politics and explore the complexity of representation in the reimaginings of women's theatrical history. This analysis indicates Swale's dramaturgy as operating on two levels, challenging both normative historiography, in terms of historical narrative, and normative theatrical conventions employed by the contemporary theatre industry. Therefore, I develop Feldman's contribution to this field and highlight how, for the contemporary playwright, theatre history is a device through which to interrogate contemporary theatrical form and women's place within this industry.

Nell's narrative in *Nell Gwynn* provides both a parallel and a contrast to Tess's narrative in *Blue Stockings*. Similarly to Tess, Swale constructs Nell's narrative to feature a perceived choice: Nell is made to choose between her life with Charles, living at the palace as his mistress, or her career in the theatre. This once again mirrors contemporary pressures regarding the balance between a career and family life, as discussed above, but more specifically hones in on the industry in which Swale works. However, through *Nell Gwynn*, Swale challenges the liberal feminist perspective by highlighting that the character of Nell does in fact not have the choice other characters imply she does. For example, when Nell misses rehearsals to be with Charles, Hart protests, but Nancy defends Nell's position:

Chapter Four: The Educated Woman

HART. She can't just swan up at the prologue. We have to rehearse – together. We're supposed to be a company.

[...]

KILLIGREW. He's the King. What could I say?

HART. She chose him!

NANCY. She doesn't have a choice.

(Swale, 2016: 94)

In a later scene Killigrew tells Nell she is out of the company after he has received threats from the palace regarding her performance which insulted the French (Swale, 2016: 103). Then in the following scene Nell speaks of having to share Charles with other women: 'The playhouse won't have me. They asked me to choose. But I have no choice. Because I can't have you' (Swale, 2016: 106). Here Nell's character voices her lack of control over the situation; it is suggested that she has a choice between performing, and her relationship with Charles, when in actual fact her exclusion from the company is a result of Killigrew's actions, and not her choice. Through Nell's response to her circumstances, where she notes that she is powerless, Swale progresses the debate regarding pressure experienced by women to balance family life and a career, first raised in *Blue Stockings*. Swale's interpretation of this historical figure maps onto Ferguson's reaction to choice feminism, whereby Ferguson calls for women to engage in the political world they aim to change and be active in its reimagining (2010: 251). Through the character of Nell, Swale shifts focus back to the system that puts constraints on Nell's actions, rather than suggesting that her shortcomings are a result of her poor decision making. This illustrates an ideological focus from Swale, theorised by Ferguson, which addresses the social structures that facilitate oppression veiled as choice. Through the character of Nell, Swale progresses from framing the character's actions in reference to choice, as is the case with Tess in *Blue Stockings*, to highlight that while the character is an active agent in the situation, wider social structures dictate the pressure experienced when managing a career and a relationship.

Overall, Swale's reimagining of the historical figure of Gwynn offers an alternative narrative to previous works, in the form of plays, novels, television series and films, which have centred on her sexual promiscuity. While Swale does dramatise Nell's relationships with King Charles and Charles Hart they are represented alongside the development of her career in the theatre. Hence, Swale offers a different

reconstruction of women's history within the theatre and goes beyond the stereotype of a historical prostitute to use the character of Nell as a mouthpiece to comment on the wider theatre industry. As discussed in the introduction to this chapter, Swale (2015a) expressed in our interview that she has no desire to write about her life in London. Yet, paradoxically, while she is not explicitly representing contemporary London life in *Nell Gwynn*, her retelling of London during the Restoration period points to current issues in the industry in which she works. Therefore, Swale's distinction between writing either about the past or the present becomes blurred, as the lens through which she approaches the past is inevitably shaped by contemporary concerns. Consequently, elements of Swale's current life in London inevitably shape the play; they are just not explicitly framed by a twenty-first century setting.

Conclusion

Exploration of *Blue Stockings* and *Nell Gwynn* illustrates how Swale challenges normative historiographies, in a theatrical context, through her reimagining of the past on the contemporary stage. Swale's representation of both fictional Tess and the historical figure Nell echo current social pressure placed on women regarding balancing a career and raising a family. The politics of Swale's process of interpreting history provides a distinct example of feminist historiography in the practice of contemporary playwriting, whereby the playwright encounters and interprets the past, with a focus on the historical narratives of women and surrounding gender politics. Susan Bennett theorises feminist historiography:

No longer should we construct historiographies which exclude the makers of theatre from participation. We need to foster a relationship, an interaction between the history of practice and the practice of history, to encourage a collaboratively-produced 'expertise.' With feminists on both the maker and recorder sides of the equation, we should surely be able to assist in each other's struggle. (1992: n.p.)

Bennett's call for an acknowledgment of the historiographic lens that shapes theatre making is embodied through Swale's conscious challenging of representations of women's history, as exemplified in her comparison between Gwynn and Dick Whittington. This thesis directly responds to Bennett's request to include theatre makers in historiographies of performance, as I have identified and developed the

notion of normative historiography in a theatrical context. Engagement with the work of Swale and Deborah McAndrew (see Chapter One) has further refined this theory as both playwrights consciously challenge normative conventions with a view to foreground female narratives. Both Bennett's theory and exploration of Swale's playwriting demonstrate that historiography is not just applicable for academic practice, but also in the work of the playwright and Bennett indicates how both methods can be shaped from a feminist perspective.

Through Bennett's foregrounding of a feminist perspective, questions of gender politics become the norm and a two-way relationship is created between the academy and the industry that consequently encourages the development of feminism within theatrical debate, representation and analysis. While the notion of a shared feminist perspective is problematic, given the vast variations amongst feminisms, this approach does productively foreground a focus on feminist discourse in a theatrical context, which can be continually revised and interpreted by practitioners and scholars alike. My research builds on Bennett's theory by applying feminist discourse, and a historiographic lens, to the work of contemporary British playwrights and their representations of the past, in order to consider how dramaturgically women's historical narratives are constructed as well as the ideologies, belief systems and gender politics of this dramatic form.

Exploration of Tess' narrative in *Blue Stockings* indicates the impossibility of choice feminism. Building on theories by Ferguson (2010), my analysis indicates that choice feminism can be challenged by both a broader focus on social structures that facilitate oppression and a willingness to pass judgement, crucially from an informed position, in order to instigate change and progress towards agreement with those of opposing opinions. This model gives women the agency to instigate change, while also directing attention towards changing the ideologies and cultural structures that create the pressure to self-manage, rather than suggesting that women's circumstances are solely a result of their choices.

In conclusion, by approaching the critically engaged playwright as a historiographer, analysis of historical representation moves away from a focus on historical accuracy to illuminate the politics of the playwright's representation of the past and enables exploration of how a piece responds to and reflects the cultural

moment in which it was created. Exploration of Swale's intervention into contemporary feminist debate, through her self-reflexive reimagining of the past on stage, illustrates the productive dynamic of this analytical perspective. By directing attention away from faithfulness to the historical moment and towards the playwright's process of encountering, interpreting and subsequently representing the past, the historiographic analysis called for by Bennett is achieved. This method facilitates a focus on the relationship between the representation of history on stage and a performance's cultural context. The feminist lens narrows focus on the contemporary moment and I develop this theoretical perspective to consider how women are retold their history through new playwriting and the subsequent dialogue with feminist discourse.

Conclusion

Overview

Susan Bennett calls for academics to include theatre makers in the construction of historiography and adds the need for a feminist perspective on both sides of this dialogue, stating:

No longer should we construct historiographies which exclude the makers of theatre from participation. We need to foster a relationship, an interaction between the history of practice and the practice of history, to encourage a collaboratively-produced 'expertise.' With feminists on both the maker and recorder sides of the equation, we should surely be able to assist in each other's struggle. (1992: n.p.)

This thesis is an embodiment of this discourse called for by Bennett. In identifying and problematising the normative historiographies that shape the representation of the past on stage, playwrights who actively challenge these structures have emerged. The case study of Jessica Swale (Chapter Four) provides a distinct example of the exploration of a theatre maker's process from a feminist historiographic perspective, both on the part of the playwright and the researcher. Consequently, this research indicates the power and restrictions of existing normative theatrical structures. Engagement with the work of Swale and Deborah McAndrew (Chapter One), indicates that once a playwright begins considering questions of historiography in their approach to retelling the past, their engagement with history moves beyond normative singular narratives and enables, not only a reflection on the history itself, but consideration of how it has been retold. This perspective draws the playwright's attention to their position in the trajectory of the historical moment in question.

At the outset of this project, authenticity was a key theme, in the exploration of theatrical performances set in a historical period, but written in the contemporary moment. However, as I encountered scholarship regarding authenticity alongside theories of theatrical representation and spectatorship, its role within analysis lessened and my understanding of the term has shifted from that of universal essentialism to a language of interpretation for the spectator. With this shift, the notion of authenticity became redundant; as theories on the subject foster a focus on historical accuracy. Not only does this perspective problematically imply historical essentialism, it negates

Conclusion

the broader dramaturgical and cultural implications of the representation of the past on stage. This change in focus, away from notions of historical accuracy, foregrounds performance as a representation of history and with that the role of interpretation, on the part of the playwright and audience, becomes significant.

With this marked shift in focus, theories regarding historiography came to be essential to this research, as the process of representing the past on stage incorporates exploration and interpretation of the historical area of enquiry. Hence, moving attention towards the process of retelling the past, my initial interest in the relationship between the representation of history and the contemporary moment came into sharp focus as attention turned to the process of ‘doing history’, not the specifics of the historical moment in question. This development directs attention to the playwright and consequently debate regarding the dramaturgical devices and cultural implications of these works has unfolded.

Through the subsequent research conducted, I have interrogated and developed the idea of normative historiographies operating in new playwriting. Investigation of this concept, in reference to different historical topics (WWI, women’s suffrage, the Victorian Empire, the campaign for graduation rights, and the Restoration theatre) has led to the plurality of this term. This plurality also operates within the same historical genre; for example, there is no singular way each playwright represents WWI but, I argue, there are normative devices for representing the trenches, home front, and hospital setting. These areas of crossover indicate a number of normative historiographies operating in reference to performances that retell this chapter of history. I refer to normative historiography as the broader term which encompasses a plurality in its application.

Addressing the concept as plural recognises the multitude of normative conventions working across dramaturgical and aesthetic devices. These conventions vary with the historical subject matter and create a shared language for the representation of both aesthetic and social structures of a period. These conventions are not value-free resources; rather they are culturally coded, and that coding is formed in the contemporary moment, through the engagement and interpretation of history on the part of the theatre maker. The notion of a complex network of normative historiographies foregrounds an emphasis on the process of repetition and

highlights the difficulty in challenging conventions that shape dramaturgical structures and ideologies beyond the devices used for representation. The plurality of normative historiography gives a complex language for historical representation, in which those conventions being challenged and those being subscribed to are negotiated. For example, in *Scuttlers* (Chapter Three) Rona Munro adheres to normative aesthetic conventions for representing the Victorian working class, but she subverts patriarchal narrative structures to foreground the experience of women in this period. Hence, a focus on several strands of historiography operating within Munro's process, and the text in performance, distils the different interpretations of history operating across this representation and facilitates exploration of the politics of this reimagining of the past.

My exploration of normative historiographies has shone a light on the dramaturgical and ideological implications of normative modes for the representation of the past on stage. For example, dramaturgical narrative structures, such as a husband creating obstacles for a woman's involvement in the suffrage campaign (Chapter Two), and character stereotypes, like the mother figure in WWI plays (Chapter One) or the loveable prostitute in the Victorian period (Chapter Three), are repeated. These theatrical devices have subsequent ideological implications in their representation of women within a historical context, such as the repeated narrative that women's involvement in the war effort gained them the vote, which overlooks the complexity of the historical suffrage movement.

Forms of normative historiography operating within the contemporary theatre industry, with a focus on new writing, function in conjunction with the patriarchal hegemony that shapes current social structures. This inherent patriarchal thread is evident both in terms of performance content and character dramaturgy, and with regards to structures and ideologies framing the workings of the theatre industry. Within the theatre industry this is demonstrated in finer details, such as Peter Gill's stage directions referring to women as girls in *Versailles*, and on a larger scale, as exemplified by the rhetoric responding to Rebecca Lenkiewicz as the first living female playwright to have work staged at the Olivier. Themes of romance, in each of the plays investigated, indicate these patriarchal ideologies in playwrighting.

Conclusion

Themes of romance are central to notions of normative historiography and the subsequent patriarchal implications of this framework. In the majority of plays discussed, romance is a source of pressure for the female characters and used as the means to heighten the stakes of their involvement in an institution or movement that is beyond the domestic setting. For example, Penelope's affiliation to the pacifist women's movement in *Doctor Scroggy's War*, Celia's role as a Suffragette in *Her Naked Skin* and Tess' pursuit of an education in *Blue Stockings*. When these normative structures that drive a focus on romance and the male plot are challenged, history becomes a powerful tool to comment on the contemporary moment. This is exemplified by Swale in *Nell Gwynn*. Through this play Swale actively engages with the process of playwriting through a historiographic lens and in doing so offers a different perspective of this historical figure; one that moves beyond the reams of historical research and representation which focuses on her sexuality. Swale reframes the debate so the historical woman of Gwynn is understood in reference to her career. In shifting this focus, romance becomes additional to her passion for acting and the male characters are constructed to serve her relationship and involvement with the theatre industry. This play demonstrates the active role of the playwright in challenging normative historiography and how repositioning a focus away from the masculine narrative can drive a feminist perspective.

Consequently, this historiographic process, on the part of the playwright, opens up the breadth of the historical moment and identifies the multiple avenues through which one can explore and interpret the past. As identified by the influx of centenaries, history is retold at every cultural junction and if the singular masculine narrative remains central, then it will continue to perpetuate a patriarchal perspective in the present. But, if history is approached and interpreted as multi-layered, the dialogue with the present becomes complex and moves to challenge these patriarchal structures in the representation of the past in playwriting.

Findings and Original Contribution

Drawing on existing scholarship, and through the extensive archival fieldwork undertaken, I have primarily contributed to the field of theatre studies in this thesis

through exploration of a specific genre of new writing. As identified in the introductory chapter, scholarship within this field predominantly addresses history in reference to the history of theatre practice, rather than as a focus of a play's narrative. Freddie Rokem (2000), Benjamin Poore (2011) and Alexander Feldman (2013) have taken up this topic; however, they do not address the gender politics of these representations of the past. This thesis fills this gap in scholarship and goes on to explore the intersection of this specific genre of new writing with contemporary feminist debate.

I have brought theories of theatre studies into the field of neo-Victorian studies, building on Poore's (2011) attention to narrative content, to contribute a specific focus on the aesthetics, dramaturgy and representation of Victorian culture in a performance context. This extends the field beyond existing scholarship, which predominantly focuses on the medium of literature. From the central locale of theatre studies, I have developed theories of historiography to consider its role in the process of playwriting, shifting this discourse beyond tools for scholarly analysis to theorise the playwright's process of interpreting and reimagining history through the medium of theatre. This work has been undertaken from a feminist perspective, with regard for gender politics at every junction. A focus on theories within the academy and theatre industry is mirrored in attention to academic and popular feminist literature. I have drawn and built on the work of Elaine Aston (1995) (2006) (2013), Geraldine Harris (1999) (2008) (2014) and Jill Dolan (1991) (2013) to conduct feminist performance analysis, within this specific theatrical genre where the politics of gender representation has not previously been considered.

As outlined above, this research has led to: the identification of normative historiographies operating within contemporary playwriting; the suggested role of the playwright in challenging these conventions; and the cultural, ideological and aesthetic work to be considered in this process. However, in directing attention to the process of playwriting, where does that leave these texts which have already been formed and undergone their premiere production? That is where the role of a second production becomes particularly pertinent. In this respect, the playtext is relatively formed and exists as a cultural object, but in a second production choices in representation and interpretation of the text remain active. Consequently, the role of the director, and

Conclusion

performers, is particularly prominent in challenging normative historiographies in the texts discussed. The jig performed at the end of the Globe production of *Blue Stockings* is a marked example of this. As discussed in Chapter Four, the premiering professional production of *Blue Stockings* took place at Shakespeare's Globe and incorporated a jig, which is not included in the playtext. This theatrical device is usual for plays staged in this space as it adheres to Elizabethan theatrical conventions, which the replica Elizabethan playhouse aims to incorporate throughout its work. However, this sequence detracted from the play's poignant ending whereby banners were hung to reveal that it was fifty years until '*Cambridge awarded women the right to graduate*' (Swale, 2013a: 116). This ending is outlined in the playtext's closing stage directions and in a subsequent production of this text a director or ensemble have the choice about how to represent this lesser known chapter of feminist history. Therefore, although the premiering production adhered to the Globe theatre's conventions, whereby a play fitting the dramatic arc of a comedy should end on a positive note and send an audience home happy, these devices can be troubled in future interpretations of this text. Ultimately, although the texts discussed throughout this project, which adhere to normative historiographies, might not extensively change, the work of directors and theatre makers becomes the means through which to challenge these conventions in later productions of these works.

Interestingly, of the ten plays explored in this thesis, *Blue Stockings* and *Nell Gwynn* are the only ones which have gone on to have second productions. This indicates that it is not necessarily getting new writing staged which is the greater challenge, but getting future productions and entering the repertoire for works of this nature. The challenge of a second production is heightened as the works addressed in this project predominantly retell specific moments of history, in reference to a centenary or event in the contemporary moment, and thus their relevance changes in the aftermath of their original staging. In this regard, it is Swale's work which challenges the norms of representing the past and has gone on to have future performances. This indicates the complexity in her engagement with the past and intervention into contemporary debate that moves beyond a specific event, as is the case with WWI, to address current issues that continue to develop and require cultural focus.

Bennett's (1997) commentary on horizon of expectations has contributed extensively to the development of the concept of normative historiography throughout this thesis. Bennett's development of the theory foregrounds the role of the audience in the dialogue between performance and cultural context, which is central to my research approach. Hans Robert Jauss' concept of 'horizon of expectations' (1982) has helped identify both a subscription to, and departure from, established modes of representation in contemporary reconstructions of the past; this is particularly prominent in the case of *Scuttlers* by Munro. Putting the notion of horizon of expectations into conversation with neo-Victorian studies, in reference to *Scuttlers*, identified the conventional devices used for representing the Victorian working class; for example, an industrial setting, characters with poor health and performers with smudges of dirt on their exposed flesh. Application of the theory of horizon of expectations indicates these signifiers as familiar to audiences, which can be readily drawn on by playwrights and directors to represent the Victorian working class. Yet, from this platform of recognised aesthetics, Munro creates a play that foregrounds the female narrative and stages themes of social mobility which resonate with the cultural context in which the piece premiered. In this regard, the piece functions as neo-Victorian, as Munro explores and reimagines social structures from the nineteenth century and offers alternatives to the gang culture represented through the piece. Through this example, I develop the notion of horizon of expectations in a theatrical context and bring the discourse into the field of neo-Victorian studies. Engaging with these two theories in conjunction enables me to explore the recurring modes for representing the Victorian period, in a theatrical context, alongside aspects of contemporary productions that depart from these normative modes and the subsequent dialogue this holds with the context in which the piece was performed, as discussed above. This pairing recognises crossover between the two theories and facilitates exploration of neo-Victorian studies in a theatrical context by incorporating the role of the audience, which differs greatly from the role of the reader considered in previous exploration of literature.

I further contribute to the field of neo-Victorian studies by employing theories of intersectionality to explore representations of diversity in *Scuttlers*, *The Riot* and *The Empress*. My intersectional approach echoes performance analysis by Jill Dolan (2013)

Conclusion

in the focus on gender and race, and I develop this further by addressing the representation of class, in conjunction with discrimination and privilege, at the intersection of these three identity categories. Analysis of representation of the Empire in *The Empress* employs an intersectional approach to the reimagining of history, while simultaneously drawing neo-Victorian studies into the realm of performance analysis. Thus, this original coupling of these two theories facilitates a focus on the complexity of identity politics within the context of representing the past. This analysis indicates how shifting representations of the Victorians into the realm of physical performance further complicates their retelling, as the reimagining moves beyond literature to present audiences with a visual and aural encounter. Hence, the narratives reflected upon become particularly relevant as they represent a time when discrimination on grounds of class and race was prominent in society, which bears challenging comparison and contrast to contemporary culture. The representation of such, through theatrical devices, is all the more pertinent as it gives the spectator a multisensory experience.

Contemporary Relevance

A focus on contemporary culture has been at the centre of this project and this research is relevant to both scholars and theatre practitioners. In a recent interview with *The Telegraph*, novelist Hilary Mantel criticised female authors, arguing they must, ‘stop rewriting history to make their female characters falsely “empowered”’ (Furness, 2017: n.p.). Mantel problematically works with the binary that there is a correct or ‘false’, to use her term, way to interpret history on the part of the novelist. But, in doing so she engages in historiographic debate and goes on to conclude that, “When the reader of a story says, ‘Which bits of this are true?’ he must ask that question of the historian, as well as the novelist: increasingly, the historian is ready for the challenge” (Mantel, cited in Furness, 2017: n.p.). This demonstrates an acknowledgement of the role of historiography in both the work of the historian and the novelist and indicates the contemporary relevance of this debate. This interview was a precursor to Radio 4’s 2017 Reith Lectures series, in which Mantel ‘will ask questions about the legitimacy and usefulness of historical fiction, examine the role

of research, and explore how a writer might serve the recorded facts whilst giving breathing space to the imagination' (BBC, 2017: n.p.). Although referring to literature, this debate maps directly onto playwriting and Mantel's exchange with the historian embodies Bennett's (1992: n.p.) call for a dialogue between the artist and academic in the process of feminist historiography. This highlights the rise in focus, beyond the academy, on questions of historiography in contemporary art that reimagines the past.

The opening sentence of this thesis highlights that we are a culture for whom centenaries are significant; as a result, the subsequent engagement with centenaries and our culture's continued reimagining of the past makes the 'why now' question all the more pertinent for this project. 2018 and 2028 will mark two major centenaries for women's history. They relate to the Representation of the People's Act passed in 1918, which enabled women over the age of 30 to vote, and, as discussed in reference to my project boundaries, equal voting rights for men and women over the age of 21 gained in 1928. Momentum is already building for the 2018 centenary, as the Parliamentary project Vote 100 has conducted 'a four year programme of activities starting in 2015 and culminating with a major public exhibition in 2018 in Westminster Hall' (Parliament, 2017: n.p.). The continued enthusiasm surrounding centenaries, particularly those relating to the experiences of women, makes exploration of the politics of representing women in a historical context, and interrogation of normative historiographies, particularly relevant. Emphasis on how normative narratives can be disrupted provides space for the masculine structures which shape the representation of history to be challenged and alternatives to be offered. Consequently, this approach ensures the female narrative is foregrounded in the retelling of these significant developments in women's political rights.

Further Research

The project boundaries imposed during the fieldwork acted to focus the data collected. As this project developed, the role of the playwright became increasingly prominent and their engagement, interpretation and reimagining of the past became the means to explore my research questions. How a playwright is situated in ideology and culture has been instrumental in exploring the relationship between a

Conclusion

performance and the contemporary moment in which it was created, which is at the centre of this study. In focusing primarily on the playwright, works of adaptation, or restagings of existing texts, have not been addressed within this research project. Both genres develop the complexity of historical layering in performance and provide fruitful ground for further investigation. In this study, I remained focused on new writing as the genre sharply pinpoints the initial context in which a piece is first formed.

The final chapter outlines grounds for further research on two counts, in the form of new writing at Shakespeare's Globe and representations of historical figure Nell Gwynn. This thesis has analysed three plays that premiered at the Globe space: *Doctor Scroggy's War*, *Blue Stockings* and *Nell Gwynn*. Whilst a vast body of scholarship addresses productions that restage historical playtexts at the new Globe, this literature does not apply the same questions of authenticity, performance technique, and textual analysis to new writing staged at this theatre. In these productions, the historical layering is significant, as a contemporary playwright's reimagining of the past is framed by a replica Elizabethan playhouse. I have contributed to this gap in scholarship through my exploration of normative historiography operating at the Globe space, in reference to *Blue Stockings*, and this initial analysis indicates grounds for further research.

Exploration of representations of Emily Wilding Davison in Chapter Two brings theories of normative historiography alongside the reimagining of a historical figure. This framework can be applied to address other historical political women, with Margaret Thatcher standing out as a pertinent example of a historical figure who has been represented through a diverse range of techniques and narratives. Unlike Davison, this historical figure provokes highly contrasting responses from artists and audiences, making the relationship between the reconstruction of Thatcher and the cultural context of a performance a distinctly political subject of enquiry, particularly when coupled with current neoliberal feminist debate. The closer proximity of her political career to the contemporary moment makes such pieces highly charged representations to consider. Recent productions that offer a reimagining of Thatcher include: *Market Boy* by David Eldridge (2006), *Handbagged* by Moira Buffini (2013) and *The Audience* by Peter Morgan (2013), and form a productive starting point from which

to interrogate the development of normative devices employed to represent this historical political woman.

Concluding Remarks

In closing, I return to Aleks Sierz's statement which I contested in my introduction. In his focus on new writing, Sierz argues that plays with a historical setting 'are costume dramas with little relevance to today,' and goes on to claim that, 'what makes new writing special is that it is written in a distinctive and original voice that speaks of the here and now. And that it does hold a mirror up to the nation' (2011: 64-65). I do not deny that new writing 'speaks of the here and now' but, in stark contrast to Sierz's categorisation, this thesis has demonstrated that plays with a historical setting hold a significant position within that dialogue and the genre of new writing as a whole. The works addressed in this project go beyond Sierz's notion of mirroring the nation; rather, the process is one of active doubleness whereby the contemporary setting shapes a playwright's engagement with the past, while the representation of such on stage guides an audience on how to respond to the historical narrative.

As representations of the past on stage become normative, it is then that the process needs disrupting, and in the act of disruption a feminist lens illuminates the politics of such recurring modes of representation on contemporary gender debate. A multitude of historiographic perspectives destabilises the patriarchal norm in dramaturgy, exposing how such structures reduce the female narrative. This process opens playwriting to complex, varied and dynamic reimaginings of the past, where history becomes a powerful tool to intervene in contemporary feminist debate.

Swale reminds us, through her representation of the past, of theatre's dialogue with the contemporary moment and the power of feminist dramaturgy within this discourse. As the character of Nell declares, 'We're their voice! And if not that, then what are we? [...] A tuppenny fairground peep show? I can speak, Dryden, for God's sake give me something to say' (Swale, 2016: 103).

Conclusion

Appendix One – Surveyed Theatre Archives

Theatre	Location	Archive Years Researched	Relevant Productions
Almeida	London	1999-2015	Yes
Bristol Old Vic	Bristol	1998-2015	No
Citizens Theatre	Glasgow	1998-2015	No
Donmar Warehouse	London	1998-2015	Yes
Everyman	Liverpool	1999-2015	No
National Theatre	London	1998-2015	Yes
New Vic Theatre	Newcastle-under- Lyme	1999-2015	Yes
Orange Tree Theatre	London	1998-2015	Yes
Royal Court	London	1998-2015	No
Royal and Derngate	Northampton	2000-2015	No
Royal Exchange	Manchester	1998-2015	Yes
Royal Lyceum Theatre Edinburgh	Edinburgh	1998-2015	No
Royal Shakespeare Company	Stratford-upon- Avon	2000-2015	Yes
Shakespeare's Globe	London	1999-2015	Yes
The Dukes	Lancaster	2000-2015	No
Traverse Theatre	Edinburgh	2000-2015	No
Tron Theatre	Glasgow	1998-2015	Yes

Appendices

In addition, theatres researched which did not have archive records spanning all of the 2000-2015 project boundaries:

Theatre	Location	Archive Years Researched	Relevant Productions
Arcola	London	2003-2015	No
Birmingham Repertory	Birmingham	2000-2014	No
Dundee Repertory Theatre	Dundee	2014-2015	No
National Theatre of Scotland	No fixed premises	2006-2015	No
National Theatre of Wales	No fixed premises	2010-2015	No
Old Vic	London	2003-2014	No
The Bush	London	2003-2015	No
The Gate	London	2003-2015	No
The Library Theatre	Manchester	2006-2014	No
Theatre Royal and The Drum	Plymouth	2008-2015	Yes
Tricycle Theatre	London	2001-2015	Yes
West Yorkshire Playhouse	Leeds	2001-2015	Yes
Young Vic	London	2009-2015	No

Appendix Two – Archive Data

Year Set ↓	Year Produced →	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
1882																		1
1883																		
1884																		
1885																		
1886																		
1887																2		
1888																		
1889																		
1890																		
1891																		
1892																		
1893																		
1894																		
1895																		
1896	3															4		
1897																		
1898																		
1899																		
1900															5			

Appendices

Year Set ↓	Year Produced →	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
1901																		
1902																		
1903												6						
1904					7													
1905																		
1906																		
1907																		
1908																		
1909								8										
1910						9	10			11								
1911																		
1912																		
1913											12				13			
1914												14	15				16	17
1915																	18	
1916		19										20						
1917																		
1918																		
1919																	21	
1920											22							

Appendices













Year Set ↓	Year Produced →	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
1921											23							
1922																		
1923																		
1924																		
1925																		
1926																		
1927																		
1928																		

Play titles

1	Scuttlers	13	The Dark Earth and the Light Sky
2	The Empress	14	The Promise
3	The Riot	15	The Milliner and the Weaver
4	Blue Stockings	16	An August Bank Holiday Lark
5	Travelling Light	17	The Christmas Truce
6	Grand Guignol	18	Doctor Scroggy's War (approx. year set - playtext states WWI)
7	The Talking Cure	19	To the Green Fields Beyond
8	Monkey's Uncle	20	Sea and Land and Sky
9	Coming Around Again	21	Versailles
10	Whistling Psyche	22	Afterlife (set 1920-1943)
11	A Disappearing Number	23	Fram
12	Her Naked Skin		

Appendices

Theatre Key

	Almeida
	Donmar
	National Theatre
	New Vic Theatre
	Orange Tree Theatre
	Royal Exchange
	Royal Shakespeare Company
	Shakespeare's Globe
	Theatre Royal and The Drum
	Tricycle
	Tron Theatre
	West Yorkshire Playhouse

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