

“O tiger's heart wrapped in a woman's hide”¹: Directing and Documenting *Titus Andronicus* in an All-Female Adaptation.

Jenny de Reuck PhD
Associate Professor
English and Creative Arts
Murdoch University

j.dereuck@murdoch.edu.au

Ken Miller
Lecturer
Film, Television & Screen Arts
Curtin University of Technology

k.miller@curtin.edu.au

Abstract

This paper offers a critical evaluation of the challenges we confronted when bringing to the stage in Perth, Western Australia, an all-female production of *Titus Andronicus* in 2011. Aware of the strengths of a group of professional female actors whose gender denied them the powerful roles of the Shakespearean canon and infused with a vision to showcase the group's abilities *Titus Andronicus* was selected for the inaugural performance of *H.I.V.E. (Her Infinite Variety Ensemble)* Perth's first all-female performance group.

The director and filmographer of this production revisit the conceptual and visual material that this complex process generated in order to address some of the significant questions it raised about cultural assumptions within audiences that make up the contemporary theatrical community in Western Australia, specifically regarding the production and circulation of the Shakespearean text. We explore the limits and possibilities of performing against conventional notions of gender and power relations when the iconic Shakespearean text is adapted for audiences today.

The exquisite lyricism and dramatic scope of the lines provide a verbal feast for any actor and in the hands (or mouths) of powerful performers, we suggest, gender becomes immaterial. In this adaptation the actors were permitted to play not just 'the woman's part', but the parts, too, that have traditionally been denied them. The challenges of this experiment in transgressing the conventional boundaries of performance revealed some disturbingly entrenched parameters within which the actors were ostensibly constrained; nevertheless, as this paper demonstrates, the liberating potential of the ensemble's work allowed for a reinvention of (and refocussing upon) the brutality and violence of the dramatic world of this play. The outcomes endorse the view of the "infinite variety" of the Shakespearean text: a fitting insight for the ensemble's inaugural production.

Keywords: Gender, Performance, Trauma, Modality, Adaptation, Shakespeare

Title Image: Demetrius (Sarah Courtis), Chiron (Emma Jermy). Photo by Vivienne Glance.

“O Tiger’s Heart Wrapped in a Woman’s Hide”²: Directing and documenting *Titus Andronicus* in an all-female adaptation.

I am the one who is honoured, and who is praised,
 and who is despised scornfully.
 I am peace,
 and war has come because of me.
 And I am an alien and a citizen [...]
 I am lust in (outward) appearance,
 and interior self-control exists within me.
 I am the hearing which is attainable to everyone
 and the speech which cannot be grasped.
 I am a mute who does not speak,
 and great is my multitude of words.
 Hear me in gentleness, and learn of me in roughness.
 I am she who cries out
 and I am cast forth upon the face of the earth.

(The Thunder, Perfect Mind³)

Preface

This article is the result of a collaborative practice-led research project whose co-authors combined roles to produce the outcomes addressed below. Jenny de Reuck adapted the script, directed the production and designed it; and has written the exegetical text. Ken Miller documented the entire process from rehearsal to production; and has created the documentary segments that form an integral part of the article.⁴

Part 1: Contextualising the Production

In late 2010 I was approached by the Artistic Director of *Class Act*, a professional theatre group in Perth, Western Australia, about the possibility of directing an all-female production of a Shakespeare play as the inaugural project for her envisaged ensemble, H.I.V.E. (*Her Infinite Variety Ensemble*). Powerful roles for talented professional female actors in the local theatre world were few and far between and Angelique Malcolm’s idea was to confront the challenge head-on by subsidising a production that would offer members of the group the opportunity to explore complex characters that are usually the preserve of male actors alone. The andro-centric conventions in Perth’s local professional theatre would

be challenged, further, by the collective's determination to fill as many of the production roles as possible themselves: set-design, lighting, sound, stage management and production management were all undertaken by creative women, excited by a unique opportunity to realise Malcolm's courageous vision.

The play we selected was Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* which is among the comparatively less well-known of the tragedies, but which, as critics (from T.S. Eliot to Jonathan Bate, the editor of the Arden edition⁵) have indicated, is probably his bloodiest. With its origins in popular culture (a 'hit' on the London stage in Early Modern England and the only Shakespearean play illustrated by a viewer at the time⁶) and with its intertextual links to Kyd's enormously popular, *The Spanish Tragedy*, it was among the most performed of all of Shakespeare's tragedies in its day⁷. As critics (Bate, Eisman Maus and Stanley Wells⁸ for example) have noted, the Elizabethans' preference for graphic violence in their dramas was superseded – at least in the late eighteenth century commentaries of Dr Johnson and then by the 'Romantic' critics of the nineteenth century (Hazlitt among them) – by a desire for greater decorum in the representations of violence on stage. The power of this neoclassical critical view held sway well into the twentieth century until Peter Brook's stylised revival of the play in 1955 (with Vivien Leigh in the role of Lavinia) and, later, Deborah Warner's provocative realist production of the 1980s. The late twentieth/early twenty-first century, arguably, has seen audiences schooled by an aesthetics of violence in film where directors such as Sam Peckinpah (*Straw Dogs*, 1971) and Quentin Tarantino (*Reservoir Dogs*, 1992 and *Pulp Fiction*, 1994) as well as director/screenwriters such as Mary Harron (who adapted Bret Easton Ellis' novel for *American Psycho*, 2000) have all contributed to the mainstreaming of depictions of violence. Arguably, this makes contemporary audiences far more receptive (or inured) to the realism in the action of *Titus Andronicus*. Julie Taymor's film adaptation, *Titus* (1999) marshals the power of the moving image to present her extraordinarily evocative reinterpretation of Shakespeare's early tragedy, one of the finest representations of the play, in any medium in the last few decades.

As an adapter and director of the play, my first instinct was to avoid, as far as possible, in selecting the inaugural production for the ensemble, a work with the over-determined critical responses that *King Lear*, *Hamlet*, *Othello* or *Macbeth* might have generated in Perth audiences. The choice of *Titus Andronicus* offered me the scope to edit the script with some degree of license and the actors the scope to explore and invent characters

with some freedom from the constraints of conventionally ‘thick’ (driven?) expectations. It was clearly a risky project in a number of ways, not least because of the erotic and abusive sexuality that, by turns, drives the action of the central female character, Tamora; but the women who embarked on the journey undoubtedly had the courage – and the talent – to realise Malcolm’s vision for H.I.V.E.⁹

The twentieth century modernists were among the most resistant of the many critics of this play. I could, however, never agree with T.S. Eliot, that this was, as he put it: “One of the stupidest and most uninspired plays ever written”¹⁰. For me the play offered more than the parade of a victorious Roman army asserting dominance over a tribe of wilful Goths in the dying days of the Roman Empire.¹¹ Certainly the masculinist tropes of brutality (assassination, decapitation, mutilation and rape among them) saturate the surface action of the drama. But in the extraordinary Andronici and their equally challenging antagonists, embodied in Tamora’s family, it seemed to me there was something more subtly intriguing to be found: the kernel of a dramatic situation that could still speak, hauntingly, to contemporary audiences, despite the more than four centuries separating us from its first production, probably in 1594. The violence in the play that – perhaps surprisingly given their own (so recent) historical experience - appalled Shakespearean scholars in the early 1920s, is drained of its ‘shocking’ impact in this post-modern, post-Absurd, post-Tarantino, moment of ours, and so what I looked for in bringing the play to life with the women in the ensemble was what might be regarded at face value as the ‘feminine’ tropes discernible in the world of this drama; the fragmented ‘truths’ that the young playwright scripted¹² and which emerge in the moments of intimacy, between a father and his daughter, a mother and her sons; a father and his reviled infant. These points of stillness, of emotional connection between complex human beings, seemed worth our extended attention. They offered actors and audiences alike quieter spaces within which to reflect on the human condition even as the fabric of their worlds shred and tear around them, and the wild spurt of the revenge trajectory¹³ carries the action forward to its inevitable, excessive, Senecan conclusion.

The problem, then, was to offer a credible renegotiation of the play from this interpretative perspective and, moreover, to embody the characters in such a way as to render non-intrusive the gender markings that precluded women from the powerful masculine roles that have mostly been off-limits for them.¹⁴ It is interesting to note that in this post-feminist age, and in the interests of social and gender equity, a corresponding limitation is not placed

on all-male representations in Shakespearean productions. The British, all-male company, *Propeller*, for example, under the artistic direction of Edward Hall, are a case in point: their recent double bill at the Perth International Arts Festival (PIAF) in February 2012 met no resistance from critics to their portrayal of the female characters in *The Winter's Tale* and *Henry V*. Nor did the all-male cast of *The Enchanters* at the State Theatre in 2011 come in for criticism on grounds of gender confusion. And, while Queensland theatre companies are taken to task by newspaper critics for what is regarded as “gratuitous” casting of women in the male roles, such ‘gender bending’ (or androgynous casting) is accepted largely without question when the reverse occurs.¹⁵

Part 2: Presenting the Process:

View clip 1

<http://player.vimeo.com/video/43434903>

What informed my adaptation of the script and the casting of women in all the roles in *Titus Andronicus* was the challenge on the one hand of realising in performance such complex characters and on the other the potential for original embodiment they offered to strong professional female actors usually excluded from such presentational possibilities.¹⁶ Titus, the warrior, father, brother, patron, avenger; Aaron, the servant/lover, father, murderer, arch-manipulator of the mutilator/rapists, Demetrius and Chiron, themselves both doting sons and competitive siblings; or Saturninus, king and brother, but weak, malevolent and manipulative; all are characters conveyed in the richly textured language of a writer finding his form. With a powerfully realised Tamora and a Lavinia capable of offering a feisty, yet gentle counterpoint to the sadism and depravity of the Gothic queen, the possibilities for success in making this work resonate with contemporary audiences - despite the risks of the cross-gendered casting - were substantially in place. The potential for an inventive adaptation were there to be explored in the language and the action of this early revenge drama.

In complex dramatic representations, as for other literary forms, modality is key, both for the interpretative engagement of the actor and, subsequently, for the reception by an audience of the realised intention. The dramatic world is, of course, a mediated one, with the language of the text offering the director and the performer the only starting point for the conjuring of the character (or characters) and the world in which they act: the *mise-en-scene*.

The language of the play, thus, provides us with a first-order semiotic encoding which (following Roman Ingarden, whose phenomenological theorising of the literary work of art and its cognition offers the reader/director/actor the notion of the work of art as a stratified intentional object¹⁷) then allows for scaffolded access to the shifting field of modalities that comprise the interpreted dramatic world. Ingarden's layers of meaning-making are useful theoretical starting points for an understanding of the achievement of the performers: working from the first order of modality (the layer of sentences that comprise the basis of the dramatic transmission of the Shakespearean text) towards the second (inflected, literally, by the actor's embodiment of the character¹⁸) and third orders (where movement, voice and gesture allow the actor and director to explore the full reach of potentiality contained within the character). These modal possibilities, the spectrum of potential meaning-making, are a fascinating field for the female performer to traverse: with their distinguishing bodily markers diminished (but, crucially not eliminated) by costume, make-up and hair-styling – the women performing the male roles in this play articulated the unique sense of freedom they experienced, the licence they felt they had been given, to 'concretize' the masculine without any corresponding parodying of the character.

The rehearsal process, during which these shifting modalities were explored (albeit non-reflexively on the part of the actors), revealed, then, a degree of liberation in the development of the characters for the actors that more conventional casting might not have elicited. With both Titus and Tamora, for example, played by exceptional women actors, there was scope for an exploration of second and third order modalities in their interaction (and, likewise in Tamora's with Aaron) that they were subsequently able to articulate, to some extent, in the interviews. The overwhelming feeling that this process engendered in the performers was one of emancipation: theirs was a sense of exhilaration in being able to use language and perform actions – whether violent or tender- from a perspective which tradition has denied them. Yet the sense of 'permission' to push the boundaries of representation was not confined to the actors playing the male roles only. Something very interesting occurs when a rape scene as unpleasant as that occurring in Scene 5 of the adapted script where Tamora unleashes her 'sons' on Lavinia and, in pursuit of her revenge, resists all pleas for mercy from Titus' only daughter:

Lavinia:

No grace? No womanhood? Ah, beastly creature,
 The blot and enemy to our general name
 Confusion fall –

Chiron:

Nay then, I'll stop your mouth
 (TA 2.2.182-184)

This scene was rehearsed more intensely, perhaps, than any other and the performers pushed the limits of the scene – theirs and the script's- in an attempt to bring integrity to the representation. The stage directions in the original (perhaps evidence of the hand, here, of Middleton as some critics believe¹⁹) specify the violence (though the rape and mutilation occur off-stage as in Senecan tragedy): Chiron, in the script, “Grabs her, covering her mouth” (TA 2.2.184); and two lines later, the stage directions indicate: “Demetrius throws Bassianus’ body into the pit, he and Chiron then exeunt, dragging Lavinia” (TA 2.2. 186). The scene developed as an intensely choreographed *dans macabre*, physically and mentally demanding of all four performers as they attempted to represent – literally to embody – the challenging violation at its centre. In this moment in the arc of the action, building towards the act of violation that drives Titus’ subsequent revenge to its gruesome conclusion, the performers are required both to imagine and then to translate themselves into the alien roles of ‘perpetrators of rape’ and ‘victim’; the latter position demanding of the actor an awareness of her character’s layered, multifaceted meaning-making, as she is abused and dragged off-stage.

The actors all commented on the exhilaration and power of the physical theatre-work they undertook in rehearsals: it appeared to be a liberating process for them, freeing them from the constraints of convention. I believe the sense of licence they experienced in this scene derived at least in part from the choices they were able to make at the second and/or third order modalities as they explored ‘being’ male characters (Chiron and Demetrius) and, correspondingly, reacted as female characters (Tamora and Lavinia) to the new possibilities inherent in the shifting forms of identity that the interpretative performance strategies generated. The performances themselves, however, avoided any accusation of a solipsistic,

self-indulgent insularity among the ensemble. They had a powerful effect on the audiences who were shocked and moved, by turns, by this scene (as well as the later one where Titus is duped into self-mutilation only to discover he has been deceived by the sadistic Aaron). But here I am focussing more specifically on the processes that led us to the performances and less on the emotional impact that audiences might have experienced, undeniable though these were.

Part 3: Theorising the Dramatic Situation²⁰

View Clip 2:

<http://player.vimeo.com/video/43434902>

Franz Stanzel as long ago as 1971²¹ argued that mediation (or mediacy of presentation) was what sets the novel apart from the other literary genres, poetry or drama. His typology of ‘narrative situations’ offered the then new discipline of narratology a foundation upon which subsequent theorists and critics have built their informed and informing insights as to the nature of narrative transmissions.²² Less formally theorised, though, has been the ‘dramatic situation’ which contains not only the variables determined by Stanzel and others but, additionally, the mediating bodies of the actors as well as the interpretative interventions of the director and/or the set, lighting and sound designer, among other possible elements in the ‘dramatic transmission’. The precise mechanisms of this dynamic exchange between a performance and the audience are beyond the scope of this paper, but of interest to me in the developing process were, on the one hand, the evident shifting fields of modality that we began to encounter in realising the male characters and the extraordinarily emancipatory potential of this script for the performers, liberated to engage with male roles, on the other.²³ Nicola Bartlett (Titus) confirms this in the interview where she articulates her sense of freedom to act out the violence that, as a woman in a similar situation, she suggests, she would feel unable to, constrained by the expectations (no doubt essentialist and essentialising) of her gender. As in the Gnostic poem that serves as epigraph to this article, acting their roles *as women*, actors are “mute”: they are “...she who cries out/ and [...] cast forth upon the face of the earth”. This abjection is conventionally mirrored back to actors playing Ophelia, Desdemona or Cordelia, for example, but in this version of *Titus Andronicus*, the modalities that our casting generated, allowed them levels of active choice – at the second or third order of meaning construction – that they experienced as profoundly liberating.

An understanding of the play of modalities, then, goes some way towards explaining the sense of exhilaration articulated by the performers embodying Saturninus, Aaron, Chiron, Demetrius and Titus. Even the performers who embodied Marcus and Lucius found themselves ‘liberated’ in their capacities to portray masculine empowerment which few Early Modern female characters (and only a sprinkling of more contemporary female characters) permit. It is interesting – but not a part of the discussion here – to consider Tamora as a powerful, vengeful character: her brutality is of a piece with the great female villains of classical drama – Medea and Clytemnestra for example – and male actors have always had the licence to play them. The novelty for female actors in playing Hamlet, Othello, Lear or Titus lies in the socio-cultural endorsement of the male characters’ complex construction which allows them a kind of freedom to explore possibilities that the less emancipated constructions of female characters usually inhibit, however exciting and challenging such a character might be.²⁴ Tamora, as discussed above, is a case in point where the actor felt she was given permission in the role (and by the role) to push the boundaries of sadistic cruelty and degradation in the scene leading up to Lavinia’s rape. To this she brought experience *as a woman* (her idea of a body memory of what it might be like to be a victim) but she felt exonerated by the character’s construction to function as a perpetrator of violence, to torment Lavinia and then offer her sons maternal sanction for their brutal act: “Therefore away with her and use her as you will? The worse to her, the better loved of me”. (*TA* 2.2.166-7) Such powerful female characters (Lady Macbeth being an exception) are rare in Early Modern theatre: the challenging roles are almost entirely male and women have seldom been given the opportunity to explore the layered, nuanced interpretative possibilities inherent in the great tragic roles, or, for that matter, in the great comic ones (Falstaff, Malvolio or Jacques among them).²⁵

Part 4: Developing the Design

View Clip 3

<http://player.vimeo.com/video/43434901>

The surrealism in the action (particularly its nightmarish qualities of rape, mutilation, beheadings and cannibalism) together with the Absurdist elements that have long been the subject of appalled critique, suggested to me a *mise-en-scene* that would resonate with post-Tarantino theatre audiences. Two co-temporaneous elements converged for me in realising the ‘world’ of this drama: the decadence of the Weimar Republic – Europe between the Wars

– and the gloss of the then burgeoning fashion industry. The gesture to Lisa Minelli's character in *Cabaret* (and by extension to Christopher Isherwood's *Goodbye to Berlin*) is a direct acknowledgement of the informing intertexts of this production²⁶: Chorus, the linking device in the action, is a compilation of a set of literary, cinematic and musical motifs that allowed me to develop the successive, episodic events in the action seamlessly.

In this envisaging of the play, an adaptation of the original, Coco Chanel met Cocteau met Coward met Artaud. And, as the play went up in May 2011, there were contemporary political resonances also that were too painful – and too powerful - to ignore. Libya, under Gaddafi, was then playing out a real-life drama that ended horrifically and continues - though now largely absent from television or internet commentary, superseded by yet another Middle Eastern tragedy in the making - to boil dangerously beneath the apparently smooth political surface. Aaron's presence, costumed as he was to echo the Libyan leader's sartorial excesses, was a signifier of something beyond the specific time and place of the action and in this way suggested a timelessness in our interpretation of Shakespeare's play. The hooded prisoners (Chiron and Demetrius and later Aaron) in their white overalls, referenced Abu Ghraib, and the torture of prisoners there by US guards, destabilising any easy alliance, I hoped, of audiences with either side of the conflict at the core of the play. As a reinvention of Shakespeare's tragic vision of the political landscape of Rome in decline the production both acknowledged the Elizabethan *weltanschauung* of its origins and referenced its contemporary meaning-making potential, especially in the context of the political violence that has continued unabated since the post-Edwardian era of the twentieth century.

In designing this production, though, I made a conscious decision to focus on the domestic realm, leaving slightly less realized the framing space of the public arena that, as the language of the play makes clear, situates much of the action. Saturninus, heir to the recently deceased Emperor, indeed governs crazily and lasciviously in place of his dead father and nobler younger brother, Bassianus, but Rome's public spaces – the forum, the coliseum, the triumphal arches that Taymor's film referenced - were less of a presence in this production than the inner courtyard of the Andronici's home with its tinkling fountain, the space where – in a scene of unbearable intimacy - Titus gathers up Lavinia, his mutilated (and mute) daughter. In our version of their interaction, this becomes an act of consolation that is as much an attempt on his part to keep the hounds of his own mental destruction at bay, as it is to provide her with a desperate comfort. The difficult final scene of the play with

its excess of violent deaths echoed this earlier moment when Titus, rather than killing Lavinia as a matter of ‘honour’ (his *own*, not *hers*, as the sixteenth century text in all likelihood demanded), euthanizes her in an act of mercy, injecting her lovingly in an agonising (for him) attempt (to which she accedes gratefully) to put her out of her misery.

It is something of a truism in the critical literature surrounding the play that in *Titus Andronicus*, barbarism and civilization are iconically represented by the wild Queen of the Goths, Tamora on the one hand, and the valiant general, Titus, whose deeds and triumphal persona are legendary, on the other.²⁷ But the simple binaries of these early constructions are rapidly destabilized in any sensitive reading or production of the play as we soon find ourselves questioning such certainties. Is the public good or civil society as represented by Rome, really served by an ancient ritual that requires the sacrifice of a mother’s son? Tamora’s revenge is certainly ‘uncivilised’ (and inexcusable) but we understand that it is driven by the pain she has felt, as a mother, confronting the hideous death suffered by her eldest child. And so, in the psychological landscape of this interpretation of the play, suffering – of mothers and sons, fathers and daughters, fathers and sons – is key.

But beneath the decadence of the surface of this play, erupting into and shaping the worlds of these tortured characters, is the language of a playwright, feeling his wings. The exquisite lyricism of so many of the lines recalls the narrative poems (*The Rape of Lucrece* and *Venus and Adonis*) that had gained Shakespeare enormous popular support. They are a verbal feast for any actor and in the hands (or mouths) of powerful performers it is perhaps unremarkable that to an extent gender, as we discovered, becomes immaterial. The “tiger’s heart” hidden by the cloak of social expectation, once exposed in the rehearsal process, liberated a volcanic core of interpretative possibilities. In this adaptation, with its intensely realised modalities, the actors played not just ‘the woman’s part’, but the parts, too, that have traditionally been denied them. It was an exciting—and challenging—experiment that transgressed the conventional boundaries of performance, but it revealed, yet again, the “infinite variety” of the Shakespearean text, a fitting insight for the ensemble’s inaugural production.

Endnotes:

¹ This line is from *3 Henry VI* (I.iv.137).

² *3 Henry VI* (I.iv.137). *The Norton Shakespeare*, based on the Oxford Edition, 1997. Stephen Greenblatt, Walter Cohen, Jean E. Howard and Katherine Eisman Maus (eds.), p. 312.

³ Translated by George W. Macrae, <http://www.gnosis.org/naghamm/thunder.html>. Accessed 12/03/2012.

⁴ We would like to thank the following for their contribution to the documentary segments: Alex Cahill (location sound recording); Paul Indaimo (post production audio); Joachim Strand (technical post production advice and assistance). We also thank the cast members for participating in the documentary alongside the theatrical production itself.

⁵ All references to the text are taken from this edition, edited by Jonathan Bate, 2003.

⁶ See Bate's discussion of Henry Peacham's unique drawing which he dates to 1605 and which was discovered in the nineteenth century. (Ibid. pp. 38 -44).

⁷ See the many quarto and subsequent folio publications as discussed by Bate (2003) and www.bl.uk/treasures/shakespeare/titus.html for details.

⁸ Stanley Wells who died in March of this year was among the foremost Shakespearean scholars of the last and this century. His introductory essay to *Shakespeare in the Theatre: An Anthology of Criticism* (2000) offers an excellent analysis of Warner's 1985 production of *Titus Andronicus*.

⁹ For a sound critical exposition of this agenda, see Lizbeth Goodman, 2001, "Women's Alternative Shakespeare and Women's Alternatives to Shakespeare in Contemporary British Theatre, in *Shakespeare, Feminism and Gender*, ed. Kate Chedgzoy, pp. 50-70.

¹⁰ T.S. Eliot, "Seneca in Elizabethan Translation", *Selected Essays 1917-1932* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1950), p. 67.

¹¹ The sources that Shakespeare used for this play and the dates of its first performance have continued to absorb Shakespearean scholars: critics today are exploring the possibility that Shakespeare's play preceded both a poem (a ballad) on the subject and a later prose "lament". Jonathan Bate's detailed and scholarly discussion of the topic in his introduction to the Arden edition (2003, pp. 69-79) is a valuable contribution to the debate.

¹² There is some discussion, currently, that the early *Titus Andronicus*, like *All's well That Ends Well*, a play from Shakespeare's late period (1613?) was a collaborative undertaking with Thomas Middleton. The authorship debate is beyond the scope of this paper: of interest in the argument to follow is the cultural capital generated by the Shakespeare industry which is so jealously guarded by Early Modern 'purists'.

¹³ A reference to Antonin Artaud's "Jet of Blood" (1925) which, in some ways, though fundamentally expressionist/surrealist in kind, paid homage to the earlier Elizabethan and Roman revenge dramas. See Ruby Cohn's translation: www.spurtofblood.org/.

¹⁴ *The West Australian* newspaper critic, David Zampatti's, biased perspective is representative of this widely-held position. In his review of the production (fiercely contested in the blogosphere) he stated: "I am afraid I can't think of a single example where casting a woman in the role of a man served any purpose. And that makes the exercise, however worthy, essentially pointless". (18th May 2011).

¹⁵ See James Harper: "Hyperactive pace puts volume at 'bellow'", a review of Queensland Theatre Company's *Romeo and Juliet*, in *The Australian*, Arts, 30th April 2012, p 15.

¹⁶ In shaping the adapted script I needed a narrative function that would bridge the lacunae in the devised text. To this end, I developed the character, Chorus, who used extant passages from the play to propel the action forward and to function as both commentator upon the drama as well as the link between the events in the dramatic world and the audience. She was constructed, in the Weimar style that informed the design, as a

cabaret performer and was crucial to the accompanying soundscape of the production, providing powerful percussive moments through her array of musical instruments as well as through her tap-dancing choreography.

¹⁷ His important books, *The Literary Work of Art* and *The Cognition of the Literary Work of Art*, were translated from the original Polish in 1973 and have contributed significantly to narratological debates around intentionality.

¹⁸ See Horst Ruthrof, *Semantics and the Body* (1997) for a discussion of the “corporeal turn”, in which he asserts the primacy of the body in semantics.

¹⁹ See footnote 12, above.

²⁰ An adaptation of Franz Stanzel’s notion of “Narrative Situation” (*Narrative Situations in the Novel*, 1971) to theatre performance.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p 6.

²² See Mieke Bal ([1985] 1997); Gerald Prince (1995); Ansgar Nünning, (2003) among others for recent developments in the field.

²³ For my more extended discussion of modality in narrative, see “Etching ‘inconscience’: Unreliability as a function in narrative situations”, *Journal of Literary Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 4, December 1990, 289-303.

²⁴ As the director it was always important to me to maintain, in the actors’ interpretations, their awareness that where the roles were scripted for women they be performed with integrity. The ‘boy’ actors of the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods were consummate performers of the parts, not, if the literature is to be believed, parodic interpreters for the amusement of audiences. See for example, Ann Blake, (1998) “Boy Actors in Women’s Roles” in *Readers, Audiences, Players*, R.S. White, Charles Edelman and Christopher Wortham (eds.) pp121-130, among many other critical discussions.

²⁵ I am aware that there are boundaries to cross-gender casting and that the permutations are not limitless. This production explicitly avoided any attempt to invert the roles: the female cast played all the roles as written, the men as men and the women as women. We were, however, conscious of the fact that in the male roles, there were physically discernible ‘differences’ when women played these parts but the intention (indeed, hope) was that once the characters were engaged with by audiences, these differences would become immaterial and the performance would assume the status it warranted.

²⁶ Isherwood’s novel, *Goodbye to Berlin* (1939) was adapted for the screen and produced in 1972. Directed by Bob Fosse, it starred Lisa Minelli and Michael York. [Cabaret \(1972\) - IMDb www.imdb.com/title/tt0068327/](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0068327/)

²⁷ See for example Harold Bloom, *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human*, 1998. Riverhead Publishing, New York.

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