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Electronic version

URL: <https://journals.openedition.org/shakespeare/7723>

DOI: [10.4000/shakespeare.7723](https://doi.org/10.4000/shakespeare.7723)

ISSN: 2271-6424

Publisher

Société Française Shakespeare

Electronic reference

Dympna Callaghan, “My Tongue Will tell the anger of my heart’: Revisiting Female Speech and Silence in Shakespeare”, *Actes des congrès de la Société française Shakespeare* [Online], 41 | 2023, Online since 19 December 2023, connection on 09 February 2024. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/shakespeare/7723> ; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/shakespeare.7723>

This text was automatically generated on February 9, 2024.



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'My Tongue Will tell the anger of my heart': Revisiting Female Speech and Silence in Shakespeare

Dympna Callaghan

- 1 "Some of Shakespeare's plays, where history has overtaken them, should just be buried." So opined the renowned Shakespearean actor Juliet Stevenson in *The Times* of London on January 16th 2022 in a piece entitled: "Juliet Stevenson's manifesto to keep Shakespeare alive –let's cancel *The Merchant of Venice*: The actress gives her five rules for successful revivals of the Bard – and the two plays that should never be performed again."¹ Stevenson argued that along with *The Merchant of Venice*, on grounds of its alleged anti-Semitism, *The Taming of the Shrew* should be barred from the stage and no longer staged because of its ostensible misogyny. Taking this circumstance as its context, this essay is not about silence as such, but rather about *being* silenced and especially about two of Shakespeare's characters, the loquacious Kate in *The Taming of the Shrew* and that modest yet proficient female rhetorician, Lucrece, in *The Rape of Lucrece*. Female silence, or more accurately the stifling of women's speech that, paradoxically, gives rise to significant instances of an urgent female vocality in these texts, merits urgent revisitation in light of the energies of our own cancel-culture moment.
- 2 Although she professes no desire to remove *Shrew* from libraries and bookstores, Juliet Stevenson wants to see the play cancelled in performance: "You can't do *The Taming of the Shrew* now – the spine of its so-called comedy is that a man marries a woman he doesn't love and enjoys using his patriarchal authority to crush her. I've seen several directors try to negotiate it, but you can't make it acceptable."² The view that in modern performance *Shrew* fails to become morally acceptable surely invites disagreement. Certainly, there are likely as many productions showing Petruchio defeated and outwitted by his wife as there are those depicting him as a victorious brute. Attempts to stage the knotty issues presented by the play by the Royal

Shakespeare Company have included Gregory Doran's 2004 production, which Paul Taylor writing in *The Independent*, declared:

blows like a fresh, restorative breeze through the play, drawing your attention to the unexpected layers of humanity in its subtext [...]. This *Shrew* dramatises a genuine love-match [...] it convinces you that this pair of misfits become fellow-conspirators who manage to outwit the system.³

- 3 Similarly in 2012, Lucy Bailey understood the play to be “really affirmative at the end [...]”. And once Petruchio says ‘Come, Kate, we’ll to bed’, I think you have to imagine that they’re going to have the best sex ever. Life is going to be turbulent, but compared to the small-minded people around them, in finding each other they’ve found freedom.”⁴ On the other side of the issue, Michael Bogdanov's *Katherina* (played by Paola Dionisotti) in his 1978 production “delivered her speech of wifely duty in a toneless, lifeless voice,”⁵ while Conall Morrison's 2008 production saw that infamous final speech delivered “in a submissive and robotic way, leaving no doubt that the play's misogyny is no longer *palatable* to modern audiences” (my emphasis).⁶ The Royal Shakespeare Company is now, it would seem, unshakably committed to the idea that *Shrew* does not just represent misogyny but *is* misogynist, and this despite the history of performances and appropriations by its own actors and directors that would seem to challenge such a view because they have variously explored the play's ambiguity about patriarchal domination or simply exposed its starkest delineations. Elsewhere and on screen, the rom-com *Ten Things I Hate About You* starring Julia Stiles and Heath Ledger in 1999, for instance, and the BBC's delightful Shakespeare Retold *Taming of the Shrew* of 2005 with Rufus Sewell as Petruchio and Shirley Henderson in the title role, took the positive view of the play as a comedy with a happy ending. Of course, these productions inhabited an era prior to the outcry from the movements #Me Too and #Balance ton Porc against the male sexual abuse of women. However, it is too ironic that speaking up and speaking out rightly urged by these movements should incite demands such as Stevenson's to shut down *Shrew*.
- 4 The issues inherent in *Shrew* around the battle of the sexes, known in the early modern period as the *querelle des femmes*, have been long-enduring features of both elite and popular culture. Most importantly, of course, John Fletcher's *The Tamer Tamed* or *The Woman's Prize* (1611)⁷ also utilized the inversion of the power hierarchy of Shakespeare's play. That Fletcher's version of the shrew story was written and performed in Shakespeare's lifetime as a riposte and sequel to its Shakespearean predecessor suggests the degree to which the gender dynamic was a topic of social interest and cultural controversy. In *The Woman's Prize*, Kate has died, and the widower Petruchio is now remarried. His second wife, Maria, is far from docile, and this time around, she succeeds in taming him. At the other end of the temporal spectrum, in Éléonore Pourriat's 2018 Netflix movie, *Je ne suis pas un homme facile*, “I am not an Easy Man” (2018), the male protagonist wakes up in the street after an accident to find himself in a world where women are in charge and offers a recent instance from popular cinema of the cultural game of reorganizing and reimagining gender roles and dynamics.
- 5 An important and highly creative 2019 production, once again from the Royal Shakespeare Company, by Black British director, Justin Audibert, incorporated a critique of patriarchy by reversing the play's gender roles. Donned in orthodox, if ostentatious, male Elizabethan dress, Joseph Arkley played Katherine. Claire Price, also dressed in elaborately ornate Elizabethan female clothing, played “Petruchia,” whose name was rendered with a feminized ending. Audibert chose to eliminate the Induction

scenes featuring the page Bartholomew's impersonation of a sexually desirable woman as a key element in the trick played on the drunken tinker Christopher Sly by the Lord and his servants. This omission necessarily erased the emphasis on the intrinsic theatricality of the main plot as an Italianate comedy performed for Sly's entertainment. Audibert's cuts to the text are defensible creative choices, but the absence of the play's frame and intertextual references necessarily results in a rather different play than the one that Shakespeare wrote.

- 6 More importantly, dispensing with the Induction scenes served to erase the Ovidian context of Shakespeare's play, and while many directors before Audibert have taken the same tack, the omission becomes much more significant and impactful in a production whose foundation is gender inversion. Ovid is the poet to whom Shakespeare makes most recourse in his career, and the stories contained in the *Metamorphoses*⁸ all concern transformations that are nearly always connected to gender and sexuality. Like *Shrew*, Ovid's tales consider whether and to what degree change is initiated from without or within, or from some complex interaction between internal drives and external forces. Ovidian stories of metamorphoses also question whether and to what extent human beings can assert their will or exert control over themselves, their desires, or their circumstances.
- 7 In relation to the everyday power dynamics of gender in the familiar world of a Warwickshire village, the Induction scenes depict the hostess's exercise of power over the drunken Sly when she summons the constable: "I know my remedy: I must go fetch the thirdborough" (Induction 1.9).⁹ Further, these opening two scenes represent both powerful and powerless women from Ovidian mythology. Among those mentioned, Io, a rape victim, as we shall see in due course, is of particular significance. She appears repeatedly in Ovid's works: in the *Metamorphoses*, the *Heroides*, and the *Amores*. Io is juxtaposed with the powerful and sensual Assyrian queen, Semiramis who is mentioned in both Ovid's original text (*Amores* 1.5.11),¹⁰ and in Christopher Marlowe's translation titled "Elegia 5," in *All Ovid's Elegies*:¹¹ "We'll have thee to a couch, / Softer and sweeter than the lustful bed / On purpose trimmed up for Semiramis" (Induction 2. 35-7). Without any sense of the contrast between Io and Semiramis, in Audibert's rendering, all "women" are the same, so that gender identities have less texture and dimension once stripped of their mythological depth.
- 8 The production also changed nouns, names, and pronouns so that they conformed to the play's topsy-turvy representation of gender while still rendering the plot coherent. Audibert's production, the RSC website claims, "turns Shakespeare's fierce, energetic comedy of gender and materialism on its head to offer a fresh perspective on its portrayal of hierarchy and power."¹² Ella Hawkins in her astute review for the *Shakespeare Bulletin*, noted that "*Shrew* has arguably become Shakespeare's most unpalatable text due to its troubling combination of domestic abuse, gaslighting, and comedy"¹³ (my emphasis). Hawkins felt that Audibert's gender reversal was effective in so far as "The sheer absurdity of a network of women negotiating for ownership of men highlighted how strange it is that the opposite practice is generally not presented as being correspondingly outrageous."¹⁴ For her, however, this could not fully remedy the play's unpalatability:

Exchanging the play's patriarchy for a matriarchy did not fix the problems inherent in *The Taming of the Shrew*. Rather than attempting to explain, erase, or problematize the structures of control and abuse represented in Shakespeare's text, this production simply transferred all accountability to women.¹⁵

- 9 Another reviewer, Alexander Thom, in the journal *Shakespeare*, confessed a “personal contempt for *Shrew*” but nonetheless judged the production successful: “I felt I glimpsed Petruchio and his dramatic appeal for the first time, without feeling the production was complicit in the misogynistic tradition within which he emerged.”¹⁶ The clips available online suggest that the production was lively and immensely engaging in terms of performance. However, it was not clear to me that a male Katherine was in fact defeated by Petruchio, in part because the cultural weight and depth accorded to the male voice did not seem to be – and perhaps could not be – reversed by the shift in roles. While Audibert’s attempted gender inversions were commendably innovative, reversal in this instance merely confined misogyny within the limits of the same patriarchal problematic.
- 10 Audibert’s RSC production is but the most recent attempt, as Juliet Stevenson put it, to “negotiate the play’s misogyny.” To be clear, her determination that the play does not simply represent misogyny but actively endorses and even promotes the sexual abuse of women is an entirely legitimate interpretation. However, at a moment when in fact cases of femicide have increased alarmingly, to suggest that in the theatre we should not examine violence against women, patriarchal structures, and the woeful history of misogyny – all of which *The Taming of the Shrew* permits us to do – is itself an egregious assault on freedom of expression. Ironically, the issue of control over expression is at the very core of the play’s interrogation of the uses and abuses of power and is especially evident at the pivotal moment in Act 4 when Katherine decides to concede that the moon shines in broad day when Petruchio says so: “And the moon changes even as your mind. / What you will have it named, even that it is, / And so it shall be so for Katherine” (4.5.23-5). Importantly, here Kate does not cede her reality or her full name, but rather the language she uses to describe it. That “the moon changes even as your mind” suggests that Kate is humoring her husband, not abjectly submitting to him. Nonetheless, she makes an enormous and enforced concession by agreeing to name the world in accordance with Petruchio’s decree.
- 11 Despite all the arguments that canceling *Shrew* is a way of resisting and denouncing misogyny, those like Stevens who advocate it also succeed in ignoring and even dismissing that substantive body of women’s theatrical and scholarly work that has engaged with Shakespeare’s writings. As Barbara Hodgdon, the editor of the Arden 3 text observes: “Although there is little or no sense of women’s community within the play, a wide-ranging network of present-day ‘shrews’ talk shrewdly about the play amongst themselves, with their students and in print.”¹⁷ Importantly, this scholarship, does not toe any feminist-party line and offers considerable diversity of interpretation, often subtle and nuanced. Frances E. Dolan, for example, argues that what is at issue in the play is not simply misogyny but the violence women were authorized to commit against their servants.¹⁸ In “*The Taming of the Shrew: Women, Acting and Power*,” Juliet Dusinberre attends to the hierarchy and subordination in the theatre itself where a master actor played the male roles, and his apprentice played the female ones. This historical fact about the division of labor in the theatre, Dusinberre argues, renders Kate’s long final speech as his master’s comeuppance because this is the moment when the boy actress gets the starring role.¹⁹ Alison Findlay examines the role of public ritual in performance, specifically betrothal and wedding, in shaping and managing audience reaction to the hierarchical structures depicted in the play.²⁰ Further in her *Women in Shakespeare: A Dictionary*, Findlay points out that:

However dubious the politics of Petruchio's taming, it does have the effect of detaching meaning from signifiers, and so self-consciously disrupts the very authority on which male dominance is based. [...] For the female protagonist, the text certainly offers the possibility of a marriage in which she can still be her own woman.²¹

12 Patricia Parker examines Bianca's subversiveness and capacity for mastery in her Latin lessons,²² while most recently Urvashi Chakravarty's feminist-anti-racist reading addresses the gender-inflected hierarchy of the master-slave dynamic inherited from ancient drama and reenacted with a twist in the relationship between Tranio and Lucentio.²³ The range of interpretive and performance possibilities available in Shakespeare's *Shrew* suggests that the play is less amenable to the type of tub-thumping pronouncements and rote denunciations currently demanded of art in a world of cancel culture.

13 Juliet Stevenson's insistence that there is an irredeemably nefarious ideological project of coercive control inherent in the play is highly ironic because, if that play were to be canceled by theatres everywhere, we would never again hear uttered from a stage one of the most powerful arguments for women's free speech in literature:

Why, sir, I trust I may have leave to speak,
And speak I will. I am no child, no babe.
Your betters have endured me say my mind,
And if you cannot, best you stop your ears.
My tongue will tell the anger of my heart,
Or else my heart, concealing it, will break,
And, rather than it shall, I will be free
Even to the uttermost, as I please, in words.
4.3.78-85

14 Editors typically remark here only that Kate's speech is proverbial. "Grief pent up will break the heart" is indeed, as Brian Morris notes, "one of the great commonplaces of the age" and appears often in early modern drama.²⁴ In *Macbeth*, for example, mourning the state of his country, Malcolm says: "The grief that does not speak / Whispers the o'erfraught heart and bids it break" (4.3.246). This derives from Seneca's *Hippolytus*, 2.3.607: "*Curae leves loquuntur, ingentes stupent*", translated by John Studely in Thomas Newton's *Seneca's Tragedies* (1581) as "Light cares have wordes at will. But great doe make us sore agast."²⁵ "Grief pent up will break the heart" and its adjacent proverbial sentiments are, however, a very pale shadow of Kate's explosive line: "My tongue will tell the anger of my heart." Indeed, while grief can refer to troubles in general, in *Macbeth*, grief is specifically about mourning, and grief and anger are very different sentiments. Further, none of the proverbs enjoin any social superiors, "betters," who might silence the aggrieved to go plug their ears. There is, then, a resistance inherent in these lines that may faintly echo proverbial wisdom but which cannot be comprehensively enveloped by it.

15 In the profoundly patriarchal world of early modern England, no matter one's gender, to be silenced was surely, if problematically, a condition of feminization and disempowerment. While silence was at times understood to be the most perfect form of eloquence, the choice, especially a woman's choice to exercise silence is very different from being forbidden to speak or prevented from doing so, or conversely, being so traumatized that speech is impossible. As Laetitia Coussement-Boillot and Christine Sukic rightly recognize: "For the Renaissance humanists, silence was [...] sometimes seen as preferable to speech, but the spoken word was still the highest form of human

expression.”²⁶ In Ovid’s *Amores*, the poet, now remorseful, reports that he assaulted his mistress in a rage and how now, with “*lingua retenta*”, with literally “restrained tongue”, she is unable to speak. This is Christopher Marlowe’s translation in *All Ovid’s Elegies*: “She nothing said, pale fear her tongue had tied; / But secretly her looks with cheeks did trounce me, / Her tears, she silent, guilty did pronounce me” (I. vii. 20-3).²⁷ Ovid’s mistress is here reduced to silent looks, and they are the consequence of incapacity, not choice. Similarly, when Ovid himself resorts to signs in the fourth elegy of Book 1, it is only because his mistress is at a dinner with her husband so that the poet cannot speak to her openly. He contrives a series of gestures to signal his meaning: “Words without voice shall on my eyebrows sit” (I. iv. 19). Indeed, in the Renaissance “dumb eloquence,” was often the last resort of the incapacitated who had no other means of communicating. It is precisely this “alphabet” that Titus famously hopes to wrest from Lavinia’s gesticulations with her stumps and tongueless mouth in *Titus Andronicus* (3.2.44).

- 16 Depending on the interpretive slant in early modern productions, the boy actress playing Kate might “speak between the change of man and boy” with “a reed voice” that Portia declares she will adopt in *The Merchant of Venice*²⁸ when she goes to court to defend Antonio. A shrill squeak is after all what is associated with the long-nosed domestic pest, the actual animal “shrew.” Petruchio’s dismissal of her protests may be either an accurate assessment of her speech or, conversely, it may be entirely plausible: “Think you a little din can daunt mine ears? / Have I not in my time heard lion’s roar?” (1.2. 196-198). Crucially, that roar speaks precisely to volume and not just volubility. Kate’s final submission speech, as several previous commentators have observed, is the longest in the play and is a recitation of *The Book of Common Prayer* and the “Second Homily on Marriage.” When Kate urges that women “are bound to serve, love and obey,” she is essentially telling the other women that they must adhere to their wedding vows. “The Form of Solemnization of Matrimony” from the *Book of Common Prayer* reads: “Wilt thou obey him and serve him, love, honor, and keep him, in sickness, and in health?”²⁹ By the end of the play in this speech, I would argue, Kate opts for volubility, that is for a full and fluent expression, as opposed to a simply amplified one. George Puttenham in *The Arte of English Poesie* (1589) writes: “Which flowing of wordes with much volubility smoothly proceeding from the mouth is in some sort harmonical.”³⁰ Kate’s final pronouncement is an inauthentic rehearsal of orthodoxy, no doubt; but then authenticity was not one of the requirements of early modern rhetoric.
- 17 How Kate speaks, and the tone but especially the volume of her voice, is absolutely critical in determining the audience’s interpretation of the play. In the case of that exemplary female parrhesiastes, Cordelia, in *King Lear*, who speaks truth to power at enormous cost, when her father declares over her corpse that “Her voice was ever soft, / Gentle, and low, an excellent thing in woman” (5.3. 328-9), are we meant to believe him? In a magnificent production of the play Korean director, Lee Hyonu, performed in Seoul in 2022, Cordelia’s voice was one of the most arresting aspects of the performance, which I saw on video. Lee has pointed out in private conversation that Cordelia’s first words in the play, “Nothing my Lord” have to be strong because they are so few. Further, this first utterance was signally important because his production followed the First Folio, the only text in which Cordelia (not Gloucester) introduces her

own suitors – as Lee has said, “Why not?” – and in which she leads the French army at the end of the play.

- 18 To return to *Shrew*, of course, we do not know whether the marriage of Kate and Petruchio was consummated on their wedding night. We are told only that “last night she slept not, nor tonight she shall not” (4.1. 178), and it is for us to decide whether marital rape might have been one of the taming strategies to which Petruchio had recourse, though this seems unlikely given that his Machiavellian scheme has been “to kill a wife with kindness” (4.1.187). Petruchio does not strike Kate, though he does use physical violence on others to the degree that his bride “Trembled and shook” (3.2.169) at the wedding. Importantly, she is not finally reduced to silence, which is in Shakespeare and early modern culture more generally, persistently associated with rape, the most extreme expression of misogyny, as the tongueless figure of Philomel, the victim of her rapacious brother-in-law Tereus, everywhere exemplified. Kate’s long final speech would, however, seem to require a degree of fluency, a sense of the “harmony” described by Puttenham, combined with sufficient audibility in its pronouncement rather more than the robotic expression favored in many productions. This is significant because *Shrew* incorporates the Ovidian tale of Io, which, as I noted earlier, is referred to in the play’s second Induction scene: “We’ll show thee Io as she was a maid / And how she was beguiled and surprised, / As lively painted as the deed was done” (IND 2. 52-54). Ovid’s transformations are more typically a one-way ticket to a diminished animal or vegetable state. In Ovid, Io is possibly the rarest of rape victims in that, even though transformed into a cow, she finally recovers her human identity. Crucially, however, she never fully recovers her voice: “[S]he gladly would have spoke: yet durst she no so do, / Without good heede, for feare she should have lowed like a Cow” (*Metamorphoses*, I, 935-6). That rape is used to silence women was thus well recognized in Renaissance culture. In *Twelfth Night*, the line “But silence, like a Lucrece knife, / With bloodless stroke my heart doth gore” (2.5.109) associates silence not only with suicide, but also intimates that the penetrative instrument recapitulates rape and makes speech impossible.
- 19 Shakespeare’s second epyllion, *The Rape of Lucrece* (1594) is the text which I take as my second example of Shakespeare’s representation of forceful female utterance.³¹ That the texts I have chosen are from different genres is, of course, significant. It goes without saying that *Lucrece* is a narrative poem and not a play and, though it has been publicly staged most recently in Elena Pellone’s dramatized recitation at the Venice Festival in 2022,³² it was not written as a theatrical performance. This is especially significant since the nature of the genre of the epyllion means that Lucrece was never ventriloquized by a male actor on the early modern stage, but the poem nonetheless raises similarly vexed questions about the preconditions of female speech. While the focal point of my analysis in *Shrew* has been Kate’s impassioned plea for free expression, my focus in *The Rape of Lucrece* will be on the fact that despite all obstacles to doing so, Lucrece succeeds in denouncing Tarquin. Rape may be intended as an act of silencing, figured so gruesomely in Ovid when Tereus cuts out Philomel’s tongue, but it is also an impetus to expression. As a consequence of the oft-cited injunction that women should be chaste, *silent*, and obedient, (that was the theory at least), persuasion, speaking up and speaking out, which constitute the key cultural functions of rhetoric, were not fully available to a subjugated population. Thus, “Tarquin’s ravishing strides, towards his design” (*Macbeth*, 2.1.55) remain unimpeded by Lucrece’s eloquence:

Her modest eloquence with sighs is mixed,
Which to her oratory adds more grace.
She puts the period often from his place,
And midst the sentence so her accent breaks
That twice she doth begin ere once she speaks.

Lucrece, l. 563-67

- 20 Importantly, Lucrece's chaste speech is hesitant, her expression at times suspended with emotion, but these pauses serve only to enhance rather than detract from her rhetorical performance. Such broken utterance constitutes an aspect of what, in another context, Carla Mazzio has termed "the inarticulate Renaissance."³³
- 21 Importantly, it is not just Lucrece who is given a voice in this poem. Lynn Enterline reads the central voice of *The Rape of Lucrece* as that of its male narrator, and she argues that he first identifies with Tarquin so that *he*, the narrator, can rape Lucrece, after which, through his subsequent identification with Lucrece as a victim, he can have sexual access, not to her, as we might expect but to Tarquin.³⁴ Catherine Bates concurs in this reading: "The shameful but erotic sub-text of this poem [...] whispers a desire for homosexual rape."³⁵ These ingenious and compelling readings are significant indicators of the degree of latitude Shakespeare's poem allows in relation to interpretive freedom, and this is not an avenue that I would wish to foreclose in arguing, as I do, for the poem as one of forceful female protestation and resistance to Tarquin's crime. Contra cancel culture, literary interpretation is, after all, about opening the text up, not closing it down.
- 22 From the very beginning, Lucrece as the good wife is kept in the confines of this domestic interior. There is no sense that there is anywhere else she might go either before, or even more significantly, after the rape. In early modern England, there was a certain transgressive status attached to women, especially those from well-to-do households, who ventured out, or went "abroad," by themselves. "Abroad" carried the connotation of all that was foreign to the household and suggested the breadth of a wider, more expansive horizon than the narrow confines of the domestic sphere. Complete with the linens and needlework that put *The Rape of Lucrece* in thematic relationship with the household that Kate enters upon her marriage in *Shrew*, Shakespeare also gives voice to inanimate objects within the poem's domestic situation:

[...] [B]y the light he spies
Lucretia's glove, wherein her needle sticks.
He takes it from the rushes where it lies,
And gripping it, the needle his finger pricks,
As who should say, "This glove to wanton tricks
Is not inured. Return again in haste.
Thou seest our mistress' ornaments are chaste".
316-22

- 23 In this imaginative fantasy of animated, speaking objects, the needle fights back, wounding Tarquin and not only protesting its mistress's chastity but also urging him to return from whence he came.
- 24 In contrast to Ovid, whose stories of rape tend to show pursued women in motion in the attempt to flee an attacker,³⁶ Shakespeare stresses that virtuous Lucrece is at home, where she serves as a fixed target for her predatory assailant.³⁷ Commentators invariably remark that Tarquin's incursion on the domestic space suggests sexual penetration. However, the description of his progress, simultaneously conveys a sense

also that Lucrece is confined in the farthest reaches of the household behind a series of latched and locked doors. Like the needle, the portals and thresholds also have something to say about Tarquin's unauthorized entrance:

But as they open they all rate his ill,
Which drives the creeping thief to some regard.
The threshold grates the door to have him heard;
Night-wand'ring weasels shriek to see him there:
They fright him, yet he still pursues his fear.

As each unwilling portal yields him way,
Through little vents and crannies of the place
The wind wars with his torch to make him stay [...].

302-11

- 25 The portals make sounds that are especially associated with women in the verb to "rate." This is the rasping vocal pitch associated with the animal, the shrew, and the woman who is said to be one, and it makes the harsh, discordant sound that grates the ear just in the same way as the "threshold grates the door" (304). Similarly, shrieking is almost never associated with men and is reminiscent of the "often shrieking undistinguished woe" of the clamorous maiden in *A Lover's Complaint*.³⁸ Far from silent acquiescence to Tarquin's invasion of the female domestic space, the objects he encounters function as performing articles and entities that offer a shrill cacophony of resistance: "[A]s they open they all *rate* his ill" (304, my emphasis).
- 26 The harrowing description of the rape itself also focuses on Lucrece's attempts to utter her resistance as Tarquin stifles her protests and screams:
- The wolf hath seized his prey, the poor lamb cries,
Till with her own white fleece her voice controlled,
Entombs her outcry in her lips' sweet fold.
- For with the nightly linen that she wears
He pens her piteous clamors in her head.
Lucrece, l. 677-81
- 27 Tarquin's violence reduces Lucrece's eloquent language to "piteous clamors" of an animal about to be slaughtered (679). For all that "her lips' sweet fold" intimates not only the sheepfold in which lambs were kept but also the vulva, the most important element in the above lines is not this paronomastic reference to female genitalia but the idea that controlling and silencing a woman is a key function of rape. When later she prepares to send her letter to Collatine: "Here folds she up the tenor of her woe" (1310; 732), we are reminded of that earlier "outcry in her lips' sweet fold" (679; 718) that Tarquin stifled when he raped her.
- 28 Yet, in direct contravention of the cultural injunction that women remain silent, Lucrece talks a lot. Indeed, her complaint against Night, Opportunity, and Time constitutes the longest part of the poem: "Sometime her grief is dumb and hath no words; / Sometime 'tis mad and too much talk affords" (*Lucrece* 1105-6). What Shakespeare describes is the way in which both the inability to talk and the loss of control over speech reflect the internal state of emotional turbulence. When she gazes upon a painting of the fall of Troy and claims the right to speak for Hecuba, Lucrece deploys the genre of female complaint: "And therefore Lucrece swears he [the artist] did her wrong / To give her so much grief, and not a tongue" (*Lucrece*, 1462-3). The

numerous times when the poem depicts Lucrece alternating between periods of speech and moments of silence demonstrate the paradox of female enunciation:

Here with a sigh, as if her heart would break,
 She throws forth Tarquin's name. 'He, he', she says
 But more than 'he' her poor tongue could not speak;
 Till, after many accents and delays,
 Untimely breathings, sick and short assays,
 She utters this, 'He, he, fair lords, 'tis he
 That guides this hand to give this wound to me'.
Lucrece, 1717-22

29 There is once again, as there is in *Shrew* the idea that repressed speech causes heartbreak and an emotional pressure that eventually erupts as speech. There is a certain irony that, while she does eventually reveal the identity of her assailant at line 1717, at this moment, Lucrece does not actually speak the name Tarquin: she just says "He, he." Indeed, this account of naming the perpetrator contrasts starkly with that of Collatine's some lines later: "Yet sometime 'Tarquin' was pronounced plain, / But through his teeth, as if the name he tore" (1786-7). The revelation of her rapist's name does not come easily to Lucrece's lips, and her initial revelation of his identity is hesitant and faltering. Shakespeare thus manages to convey both the exposure of the crime *and* simultaneously, its unspeakability. She has earlier resolved that: "My tongue shall utter all" (1076), but like most victims, speaking out comes at a huge cost, and in this case, the cost is her very life itself.

30 I began by thinking about cancel culture in our own moment, and I want to end by briefly considering how it functioned in Shakespeare's time, not so much as part of the Elizabethan state apparatus of censorship, but in terms of the constant pressure on cultural discourse as it manifests in the volume to which Shakespeare had so much recourse in the span of his career, namely Arthur Golding's 1567 translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and specifically in Golding's Preface to the Reader which begins as follows:

Too the Reader.
 I would not wish the simple sort offended for too bee,
 When in this booke the heathen names of feyned Godds they see.
Metamorphoses, Preface, 1-2

31 Golding worries about causing offense. When I first read these lines in the early nineties, I found them merely amusing – a naïve prolegomenon to Calvinist Golding's allegorical interpretation of the *Metamorphoses* in the tradition of Ovid *moralisé*. The idea of the reader of the vernacular English text being unable to grasp the fictional nature of Ovid's mythology used to seem quaintly risible. However, in our own moment, I read Golding very differently; I hear his caution, his defensiveness; his "sensitivity check," as it is now called in publishing:

Some naughtie persone seeing vyce shewd lyvely in his hew,
 Dooth take occasion by and by like vices too ensew.
 Another beeing more severe than wisdome dooth requyre,
 Beeholding vice (too outward shewe) exalted in desyre,
 Condemneth by and by the booke and him that did it make.
 And willes it too be burnd with fyre for lewd example sake.
 These persons overshoot themselves, and other folkes deceyve:
 Not able of the authors mynd the meaning too conceive.
Metamorphoses, Preface, 143-151

- 32 There is a certain prescience about Golding's fears of Book burning because the Bishop's Ban of 1599 saw the incineration of, among other books, Marlowe's translation of *All Ovid's Elegies*.
- 33 Plays like *The Taming of the Shrew* and poems like *The Rape of Lucrece* necessarily reflect the values of their time, but they do not necessarily do so uncritically. Suppressing what seems to be, at least on the surface, misogyny and sexual abuse throws the baby out with the bathwater and ends up silencing some of the most powerful representations of female expression in early modern literature. While individual productions or critical interpretations may be ideologically inflected in any number of useful and interesting, and often diametrically opposed ways, Shakespeare is not in the business of telling us what to think. Like those of his Roman predecessor, Ovid, Shakespeare's works offer a means of considering some of the most difficult problems around patriarchy, gender, and power that beset his own day, and that, alas, continue to beset ours. As we grapple with them, however, we would do well to take Golding's advice and not "overshoote" ourselves.

NOTES

1. Juliet Stevenson, "Manifesto," in *The Times of London*, January 16, 2022, n.p., accessible online at: <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/juliet-stevensons-manifesto-to-keep-shakespeare-alive-lets-cancel-the-merchant-of-venice-lwt6gmr5t>, last accessed 14 July 2022.
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7. John Fletcher, *The Tamer Tamed or The Woman's Prize*, ed. Celia Daileader and Gary Taylor, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2006.
8. All references to the English translation of the *Metamorphoses* are to *Ovid's Metamorphoses: The Arthur Golding Translation 1567*, ed. John Frederick Nims, Philadelphia, Paul Dry Books, 2000.
9. All quotations from this play refer to William Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew*, ed. Dymrna Callaghan, New York, Norton, 2009.
10. Ovid, *Heroides, Amores*, trans. Grant Showerman, revised. G. P. Goold, Loeb Classical Library, Ovid I. LCL. 41, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1977, p. 334.

11. Christopher Marlowe, "All Ovid's Elegies," in *Christopher Marlowe: The Complete Poems and Translations*, ed. Stephen Orgel, New York, Penguin Books, 2007, p. 107.
12. "Justin Audibert 2019 Production", Royal Shakespeare Company, accessible online at: <https://www.rsc.org.uk/the-taming-of-the-shrew/past-productions/justin-audibert-2019-production>, last accessed 14 July 2022.
13. Ella Hawkins, Review of *The Taming of the Shrew*, dir. by Justin Audibert, *Shakespeare Bulletin*, 38.1, 2020, 156-160. It is notable that the word "unpalatable" comes up frequently in reviews of the play.
14. Hawkins, *op. cit.*, p. 159.
15. *Ibid.*
16. Alexander Thom, "Review of Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* (directed by Justin Audibert for the Royal Shakespeare Company) at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, 5 April 2019," *Shakespeare*, 15.4, 428-430, p. 430.
17. William Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew*, ed. Barbara Hodgdon, Arden Shakespeare, London, Methuen, p. xvii.
18. Frances E. Dolan, "Household Chastisements: Gender, Authority, and Domestic Violence," in *Renaissance Culture and the Everyday*, ed. Patricia Fumerton and Simon Hunt, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999, p. 204-225
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26. Laetitia Coussement-Boillot and Christine Sukič, 'Silent Rhetoric,' 'Dumb Eloquence:' *The Rhetoric of Silence in Early Modern English Literature*, Cahiers Charles V 43, Paris, Université Paris Diderot, 2007, 185-220.
27. Orgel, *op. cit.*, p. 107.
28. Unless otherwise noted, all references to Shakespeare's works are from Folger Digital Texts, accessible online at: <https://shakespeare.folger.edu/>, last accessed 14 July 2022.
29. "The Form of Solemnization of Matrimony" from the *Book of Common Prayer* reads: "Wilt thou obey him and serve him, love, honor, and keep him, in sickness, and in health?", quoted in *Shrew*, ed. Hodgdon, *op. cit.* p. 292.
30. George Puttenham, *The Arte Eng. Poesie* (1589) STC 20519, II. v., p. 64.
31. For extended analyses of this poem from a rather different point of view, see Dymphna Callaghan, "Shakespeare," in Catherine Bates and Patrick Cheney eds., *The Oxford History of Poetry in English*, vol. 4, Sixteenth-Century British Poetry, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2022, 535-554 and Dymphna Callaghan, Chapter 2, "The Rape of Lucrece" in Dymphna Callaghan, *Reading Shakespeare's Poetry*, Oxford, Wiley Blackwell, 2022, 82-128.
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36. Enterline, op. cit., p.181.
37. Enterline, op. cit. p. 233.
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ABSTRACTS

In one of many recent instances in which Shakespeare has become the target of cancel culture, actor Juliet Stevenson argued that some of his ostensibly offensive plays should "just be buried." She includes among them the allegedly misogynist *The Taming of the Shrew*. This seems ironic since the social condition of women is so often thematically central to his works, while women's opportunities for speech and, conversely, their enforced silence, are especially significant in *The Taming of the Shrew*. This essay is not about silence as such, but rather about *being* silenced and especially about two of Shakespeare's characters, the loquacious Kate in *The Taming of the Shrew* and that modest yet proficient female rhetorician, Lucrece, in *The Rape of Lucrece*. I argue that female silence, or more accurately the stifling of women's speech, paradoxically gives rise to significant instances of an urgent female vocality in these texts, which merit serious revisitation in light of the energies of our own cancel-culture moment.

Dans l'un des nombreux cas récents où Shakespeare est devenu la cible de la culture de l'annulation, l'actrice Juliet Stevenson a soutenu que certaines de ses pièces ostensiblement offensantes devraient « simplement être enterrées ». Elle inclut parmi elles la pièce prétendument misogyne *The Taming of the Shrew*. Cela semble ironique puisque la condition sociale des femmes est si souvent au centre de la thématique des œuvres de Shakespeare, tandis que les possibilités de parole des femmes et, à l'inverse, leur silence forcé, sont particulièrement significatifs dans *The Taming of the Shrew*. Cet essai ne porte pas sur le silence en tant que tel, mais plutôt sur le fait d'être réduit au silence, et plus particulièrement sur deux personnages de Shakespeare, la loquace Kate dans *The Taming of the Shrew* et cette femme rhétoricienne pudique mais compétente, Lucrèce, dans *The Rape of Lucrece*. Je soutiens que le silence féminin, ou plus précisément l'étouffement de la parole des femmes, donne paradoxalement lieu à des exemples significatifs d'une vocalité féminine urgente dans ces textes, qui méritent d'être sérieusement revisités à la lumière des énergies de notre propre moment de culture de l'annulation.

INDEX

Keywords: cancel culture, Lucrece, Ovid, performance, rape, rhetoric, Shakespeare, silence, *The Taming of the Shrew*, women's speech

Mots-clés: culture de l'annulation, discours des femmes, Lucrèce, La Mégère apprivoisée, Ovide, performance, rhétorique, Shakespeare, silence, viol