THE FUNCTION OF BOY ACTORS IN THE DRAMA OF SHAKESPEARE

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BOY ACTORS IN SHAKESPEARE

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PREFACE

Following upon a detailed and close examination of the feminine parts in Shakespeare's plays which yielded indications that not all of his female parts were acted by boys of between 13 to 15 years of age, it will be the aim of this thesis to shew which of his women's parts would have been acted to greater advantage by boys (13 to 15 years of age) and which by youths (16 to 20 years of age). The order in which I have examined the plays in this study is the chronological order approximately established by modern scholars as appended to the 1955 reprint of the Oxford Standard Authors Edition of Shakespeare's complete works edited by W. J. Craig.

I was enabled to consult Mr. Robertson Davies's Book Shakespeare's Boy Actors only after I had reached a number of conclusions from the text of the plays, which I found were confirmed in this work. However, in my first chapter, I have drawn much valuable information, deriving from sources other than Shakespeare's text, from his study. In the examination of the plays I have not followed Mr. Davies's system of dividing them into Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies, but have taken each play separately believing this to be a more orderly method.

It was inevitable that, dealing with a subject such as
the present, I should have constant recourse, among other sources, to Sir E.K. Chambers' work on the Elizabethan stage; I have frequently delved into it and have freely made use of the information he has collected therein and of many of his opinions.

The numbers of the acts, scenes, and lines given for quotations from Shakespeare refer to the Globe text because of its universality. Quotations from Jonson are taken from the edition of his works by Herford and Simpson, using the punctuation of those editors but with modernised spelling for purposes of standardisation with the quotations from Shakespeare. The same applies to quotations from John Lyly, for whose works I have used Bond's edition.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge very gratefully a heavy obligation to my advisor, Professor C. H. O. Scaife, without whose understanding care and attention, this work would never have been achieved.

G.T.
ABSTRACT

Amongst the many undecided subjects in Shakespeare, one in which critics have lost themselves in innumerable conjectures is the allotting of the parts to different actors known to have lived in his time. But as no documents indicating who played the different parts have come to light, no solid progress can be achieved. As things stand at present, we can only grope about in the darkness and try to draw some light from the documents we do possess. Of course, detailed information concerning the actors and the parts they interpreted would have been of the greatest value and would have enabled us to understand these parts in a far better manner. However, all that is left to us is to draw what conclusions we can from the documents available and be satisfied with what we have. The most important of these is, of course, the text of the plays themselves.

Closely connected with this problem is another about which even less is known, that of the actors who acted Shakespeare's women's parts. The only thing writers are certain of is that the women's parts were not acted by women.¹ However, there are other proved facts about the question. Choir boys did learn how to act and often acted at Court.

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At different times they were very highly popular and such
dangerous competitors to adult companies that the latter had
to buy them off.¹ These boys, when they grew up and were no
longer useful as singers, were often drafted into the adult
companies² where it is known, that they were made to act wo-
men's parts, a fact which caused great disturbance amongst
the Puritan moralists.³ This arrangement obviously had a
great advantage for the adult companies who thus found child-
ren fully trained as actors. There seems to have been no
doubt as to the acting ability of these boys and Mr. Davies
states that "there is no evidence that Shakespeare or his
contemporaries found the boy actors unsatisfactory interpret-
ers of their work, but there are passages which show that they
were well pleased by them."⁴

However, as the question of boy actors still presents
curious aspects, Shakespeare's plays were examined more clo-
sely to find what light they could throw on the subject. So-
me of the plays indicated with a fair amount of clarity that
certain female parts require a more varied and consummate act-
ing capacity than is possible in a boy of 15 years of age,
shewing that boys of between 16 to 20 years, whom we will
henceforth call youths for the sake of clarity, must have
acted these more difficult and complicated female parts.

¹. Ibid, v. 2, 22
². Ibid, 59
³. Davies, William R., Shakespeare's Boy Actors,
   p. 8, (1939)
⁴. Ibid, 22
Mr. Cuthbert Kelly's research in Jacobean music and Elizabethan voice-training methods, some of the results of which are mentioned by Mr. Davies, supports the above opinion by showing that the boys could preserve their unbroken voices for speaking purposes, at least, till the age of 20 with careful training.

Useful light was thrown on the subject by a comparison of Shakespeare's female characters with those of John Lyly who wrote specifically for children of 12 to 16 years of age on the one hand, and with those of Ben Jonson on the other. Mr. Davies does not seem to have turned his attention to this aspect of the problem and it is now hoped to supplement his work.

So much has been done on the different technical aspects of the presentation of Shakespeare's plays that it is surprising that a classification of the women's parts in the different plays such as is attempted in this thesis has not been undertaken before this. Although the present essay does not pretend to settle which parts were acted by boys, youths, or men, nevertheless it is hoped that their classification has thrown some light on the matter. Until some documentary evidence, as to who the individual actors of the particular roles were, becomes available, it seems as if there is little likelihood of our extending our knowledge of the subject much further.

1. Ibid, 35
TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preface</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter I</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Position of the Boy Actor</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in the Elizabethan Theatre</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter II</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plays in which the Chief Women's Parts could</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>be Easily Acted by Boys</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter III</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plays in which the Chief Women's Parts would</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>be Acted to Greater Advantage by Youths</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter IV</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Comparison between Women's Parts as</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Created by Shakespeare and as</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Created by some Dramatists in his Time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I

The Position of the Boy Actor in the
Elizabethan Theatre

Accustomed as we are to the influence of the cinema, it is difficult for us to accept fully the convention of boys acting women's parts. We are willing to accept the statement - half-heartedly perhaps - that no women were known to have been on the stage in Shakespeare's time without realising its extent and its full meaning. Hence the suspicion that Shakespeare was limited and irked by such a convention which leads to a justification of the varied, and often fantastic, interpretations which three centuries and more of actresses have insisted on superimposing on Shakespeare's original feminine parts. And while writings such as Mary Cowden-Clark's The Girlhood of Shakespeare's Heroines, can be very popular and fascinating, it is nevertheless the scholars's duty to bring to light such facts as he can and to draw from these any suitable conclusions, even though in the process of so doing, he may discredit works as popular as the one mentioned above.

In spite of the attempts of actresses and even of some eminent critics to consider Shakespeare's heroines as women,

1. Chambers, op. cit., v. 1, p. 371
"no valid opinion can be reached unless the fact is kept in mind that all these roles were written to be acted by boys, and that no English women are known to have performed in the public that no English women are known to have performed in the public theatre of his time. Shakespeare's women whatever characteristics may be attributed to them in the void, were conceived to suit the peculiar talents and limitations of the boy actor, for it is only reasonable to suppose that the convention whereby women, on the Elizabethan stage, were always represented by male actors had an influence on the technique of the dramatic authors of the time."¹

As early as the Middle Ages, when the Church sponsored the mystery plays, we find choir boys assisting in their presentation. We also find boys accompanying the lay minstrels in their tours around the country, playing, singing, performing acrobatics, and serving the minstrels. It is from these boys that the boy actors take their origin.² However, closer to Shakespeare's time is the tradition of the choir boys such as "The Children of St. Paul's Cathedral" and "The Children of the Chapel Royal" who were used for the presentation of plays before the court. The children were pressed into the service of the Royal Chapels by Royal Letters Patent, were taught grammar, Latin, and especially music by qualified masters. They were used as choristers in the different Royal Chapels. They do not seem to have received any wages, but were lodged, fed, and educated, a privilege not easily obtainable by lower-class families. When their voices had broken the King would make some sort of provision for them at the

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¹ Davies, op. cit., p. 3
² Ibid.
University or otherwise and "until this could be done, the
Treasurer of the Chamber sometimes paid allowances to the
Master or some other Gentleman for their maintenance and
instruction."^1

The Children of St. Paul's Cathedral who can be taken
as an example are said to have prepared a play of the History
of the Old Testament for public presentation as early as
1378. A century and a half later they contributed interlu-
des in the humanist fashion, to the entertainment of the
court and in 1527 are found giving an Anti-Lutheran play be-
fore the King and the Ambassadors of Francis I, and a year
later the Phormio before Wolsey.^2 They do not reappear un-
til 1552 when they gave a play at Hatfield before the Prin-
cess Elizabeth.^3 From then on their appearances at court
under their master Sebastian Westcott are quite regular.

The career of the Children of the Chapel is very simi-
lar to that of the Children of Paul's except that it began
rather earlier.^4 They presented plays regularly at court un-
til 1576 when, under the direction of their new master Richard
Farrant, they appeared in performances open to the public in
their own theatre, the Blackfriars.^5

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1. Chambers, op. cit., v. 2., p. 27
2. Ibid, 11.
3. Ibid, 12.
4. Ibid, 24
5. Ibid, 36
This was the most important development in their career as it marked the beginning of the boys' professionalism. However, boys did not act solely in their own companies. They were to be found in the adult professional companies as well, where they were used in the acting of pages', children's, and women's parts, and offstage as servants to a player or to the whole company. The boys would probably, according to Mr. Davies, be made to play the parts of pages and children before those of women as the former were easier. As regards the women's parts, the tradition is that no women were on the stage in Shakespeare's time, and while Sir E. K. Chambers would not go so far as to say that a woman never appeared on a public stage, yet he states that none is known to have acted in any of the official companies.\textsuperscript{1} Supporting such a belief is Corryat's surprise at seeing women on the stage in Venice, about which he writes in his "Crudities" (1611):

"I saw women act, a thing that I never saw before...... and they performed it with as good a grace, action, gesture, and whatsoever conuenient for a Player, as ever I saw any masculine actor." (p. 247)\textsuperscript{2}

The standard by which he judges acting capacity is the male standard.

Furthermore, the players seem to have been particularly proud of the fact that their companies included no women as

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textit{Ibid}, v. 1, p. 371
  \item Davies, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 34
\end{itemize}
on the continent and Thomas Nashe's defense in his "Pierce Peniliesse, his Supplication to the Diuell" (1592) is very expressive and conclusive:

"Our players are not as the players beyond sea, a sort of squinting baudie Comedians, that have whores and common Courtizans to playe women's parts, and forbear no immodest speech or vnchast action that may procure laughter, but our Scene is more stately furnisht than euer it was in the time of Roscius, our representations honorable, and full of gallant resolution, not consisting like theirs of a Panta-loun, a Whore, and a Zanie, but of Emperours, Kings and Princes: whose true tragedies (Sophocleo cothurno) they doo vaunt." (p. 27)¹

Lastly, the innumerable attacks of the Puritans in themselves would be enough to convince us that women's parts were taken by boys. Their fierce attacks were based on the fact that change of apparel by the sexes was forbidden by Mosaic law; but had women been used on the stage they would have been even more shocked and outraged than they were by the use of boys, and the fact that they never speak of these at this time is proof enough. The controversy which raged at that time and over which so much learning and scholarship was wasted, is of no interest to us in this study for itself, but for the significant light it throws upon boy actors. The most vehement attack came with William Prynne's "Histrio-mastix, The Player's Scourge or Actors Tragedie", a compilation of 1000 pages of all the Puritan arguments against the theatre. His accusations are often without basis and vituperative, but he comes nearer to the mark at times, especially when stating

¹ Davies, op. cit., p. 9
that female attire made the male actors of women's parts unduly attractive to his companions and to the audience. This argument is logical and cannot be rejected out of hand.

Prynne said:

"Lastly, this putting on of woman's array (especially to act a lascivious, amorous, whorish, Love-sick Play upon the Stage, must needs be sinfull, yea abominable: because it not onely excites many adulterous filthy lusts, both in the Actors and Spectators; and draws them on both to contemplative and actual lewdnesse,..... which is evil, but likewise instigates them to selfe-pollution, (a sinne for which Onan was destroyed): and to that unnatural Sodomiticall sinne of uncleanesse, to which the reprobate Gentiles were given over; (a sinne not once to be named, much lesse then practised among Christians;)," (p.208)\(^1\)

However, the fact that the stage might have led to sin, is no condemnation of it, but rather of those who attended it. Amongst the many lovers of fine arts such as acting, ballet dancing, and painting, are to be found persons with abnormal sexual instincts. These throw the Fine Arts into disfavour with the moralists and were it not for the fact that there are still people who can separate the pure art from its impure practitioners, it is very probable that not a single form of art would have existed today. A look at some of our modern poetical circles can convince us of this truth. It is something we must face. In such gatherings there are always to be found people who are attracted not by the art itself but by the implications they can draw from it for themselves, because the function of art is to display beauty deliberately and to

\(^1\) Davies, op. cit. p. 15
give pleasure. It is only when such pleasure is turned into a source of sexual excitement that it becomes harmful. But this is an aberration of the function of art and is the guilt solely of those who practise it, not of the art itself. This is, after all, one more example of the age old habit of men to turn things beautiful in themselves into sources of unlawful pleasure.

The boys with sufficient acting capacity in their own companies were taken into the adult companies when grown up. "In processe of time," say the Burbadges in the Blackfriars Sharers Papers of 1635, "the boyes growing up to bee men, which were Underwood, Field, Ostler, and were taken to strengthen the King's service" and Halliwell-Phillips says to the same effect: "some of the chapel boys, when they grew men, became actors at the Blackfriars, such were Nathan Field and John Underwood."¹ The advantage in this arrangement is that these boys had already been trained for the stage and had had sufficient experience in performances. They would obviously not need a long time to adapt themselves to the conditions of the new stage and impersonate difficult characters in adult plays. It is also very probable that boys who had not acted in boy companies but had been apprenticed to an actor would pursue their careers when grown up and act the parts of young soldiers, and young gallants, all of which parts would require actors

¹ Chambers, op. cit., v. 2, p. 59
of between 16 to 25 years of age. Also, as mentioned before, the boys would act the women's parts.

A consideration of Shakespeare's plays in relation to the question of boy actors, undertaken for the purpose of this thesis, seemed to shew that some women's parts could not very well have been acted by boys of between 13 to 15 years of age, as was previously generally believed, but would have been acted to greater advantage by youths of between 15 to 19 years; also a comparison of these parts with women's parts in the plays of Kyly and Jonson confirmed this. However, a difficulty presented itself in the question of the boys' voices, which would break at any time between 13 and 15 years, and the only solution seemed to be that young men acting female parts must have used falsetto or counter-tenor voices. Mr. Davies's book Shakespeare's Boy Actors which later became available confirms this opinion, stating that "careful training will preserve almost any boy's voice unbroken for speaking until the age of 17."¹ His opinion is based on the modern presentation of Peter Pan and Where the Rainbow Ends by youths of 16 to 19 years using 'treble or very light tenor voices', and also on Mr. Cuthbert Kelly's researches into Elizabethan and Jacobean music and into the voice training methods of the time. Mr. Kelly is of the opinion that boy actors would be able to preserve their voices for singing until 16 at least, and for speaking

¹ Davies, op. cit., p. 35
until 19 or 20. Mr. Davies concludes that "the voice both in
singing and speaking might become less brilliant but it would
not necessarily become harsh or artificial".1 As regards the
numerous references in the plays to the soft low voices of wo-
men, Mr. Davies thinks that this cannot be understood literal-
ly because "to speak in a soft, low tone in the open air is
to be inaudible, but a well trained voice will give precisely
the effect of beauty and careful modulation which is required."2

I attended one day a performance of the choir 'La Sirene'
in St. Joseph's University, Beirut. The choir is composed
solely of young men and the voice of the principal singer, a
young man of about 20 years of age was so light and high a te-
nor that is was almost indistinguishable from a woman's voice.
The performance being over, I asked the Jesuit Fathers for the
tape on which it had been recorded in order to ascertain whether
my first impression was correct. I played the tape several
times to a group of 15 people who had not attended the con-
cert. Almost all of them were ready to swear that the voice
they heard was a woman's. Also, anyone, who will have liste-
ned carefully to the singers of Spanish Flamengos will realize
that when they rise from the low nasal notes into the high te-
nor keys, it is impossible to say whether a man or a woman is
singing. A carefully preserved voice then, coupled with the

1. Davies, op. cit., p. 35
2. Ibid, 35
grace and even charm which a youth would gain from his previous training, would enable him to act with the greatest ease any ordinary female parts and would further help him to act those parts which need a depth of passion not to be found in a boy.

A direct reference to youths in women's parts is to be found in Jonson's *The Devil is an Ass* where Richard Robinson is spoken of as the actor of female parts:

Meer. Why this
Is well: The clothes we have now: But, where's this
If we could get a witty boy, now, Engin; Lady?
That were an excellent crack; I could instruct him,
To the true height. For any thing takes this dottrel.
Eng. Why, Sir, your best will be one of the players!
Meer. No, there's no trusting them. They'll talk on't
And tell their Poets.
Eng. What if they do? The jest
Will brook the Stage. But, there be some of 'em
Are very honest Lads. There's Dick Robinson,
A very pretty fellow, and comes often
To a gentleman's chamber, a friend of mine. We had
The merriest supper of it there, one night,
The Gentleman's Land-lady invited him
T' a Gossip's feast. Now, he, Sir, brought Dick Ro-

by

Drest like a Lawyer's wife, amongst 'em all;
(I lent him clothes) but, to see him behave it
And lay the law; and carve; and drink unto 'em
And then talk bawdy: and send frolics! O!
It would have burst your buttons, or not left you
A seam.

Meer. They say he's an ingenious youth!
Eng. O sir: and dresses himself, the best! beyond
Forty o' your very Ladies! did you ne'er see him?
(II viii 56/77)

Obviously, Robinson, if capable of such things could not very well have been less than 17 or 18. A boy would certainly be able to play such a part on the stage, but before he could improvise it and act it in the real world, it would take a
great deal of experience. Pepys has in his Diary a record of a performance of *Epicoene* given by Kynaston in 1660/1 when, according to Mr. Davies, Kynaston was about 20 years old, that runs as follows:

"Among other things here, Kynaston, the boy, had the good turn to appear in three shapes; first as a poor woman in ordinary clothes, to please Morose; then in fine clothes as a gallant, and in them was clearly the prettiest woman in the whole house, and lastly as a man; and then likewise did appear the handsomest man in the house."

Sir E. K. Chambers is not of the opinion that the boys were attached to the actors under the apprentice law which stipulates that an apprentice must serve a term of seven years and become a master only at the age of 24. He believes that they were apprenticed to the actors under an agreement between the actor himself and the parents of the boy. This opinion fits better the requirements of the stage. A boy would be apprenticed to an actor around the age of 12 and would be trained for about a year before appearing on the stage. Naturally, during his period of training, as well as after, he would be expected to serve the actor or the company, to help in putting up the stage, in carrying stools and pipes to the gentlemen sitting on the stage, and in the general work. This was only natural in an age when boys were expected to work hard for very long hours. However, the relation between actors and apprentices seems to have been a less formal and more pleasant one than the relation between masters and apprentices in other trades. This is to be expected as the boy would draw quite a

1. Davies, op. cit., p. 20
great deal of pleasure from acting and, if he were a successful actor, he would be adulated by the audience, applauded, and certainly treated quite well be his master in view of his financial importance. He would continue as an apprentice for 2 or 3 years and these would do much to develop the talent which he would have and, with his training in speech and gesture, he would at the age of about 15 be capable of playing important roles very satisfactorily. He would then probably begin to receive wages directly from the company or receive a share of his master's wages.

Mr. Davies quoting a book called "The Rich Cabinet Furnished with Varietie of Excellent Discriptions" (1616) says that "the Elizabethan actor was noted for 'dancing, activitie, musicke, song, eloquition, abilitie of body, memory, skill of weapon, pregnancy of wit',"¹ and the master would, of course, seek to develop these qualities in the boy actor. Actors at that time were often called upon to dance in the plays as is seen in Romeo and Juliet, Henry VIII etc., and after the plays to perform a jig for the benefit of the lower classes present in the audience. Even if not required to do so in the play, the boy would still practise dancing as this would teach him grace in his actions. The training in activitie or gesture was certainly exhaustive.² The Elizabethan stage was very

¹. Davies, op. cit., p. 31
². Ibid.
different from our own where restraint in action is so meaningful. The full-blooded Elizabethans demanded and received an almost exaggerated style in acting. Today, we judge of an actor's quality by his ability to copy real life. The Elizabethans went to the theatre for amusement and would never have accepted a performance showing them ordinary 'real' life. Thus the acting of the time was much more formal than ours and a boy actor would be taught all the scale of gestures for the expression of the different emotions in different degrees. Because, at a time when plays were produced in abundance and rehearsals few in number, an actor would need to have absolute command of his gestures and be ready to use them almost unconsciously when required. A study of the Comedia Del'Arte will show how varied and adequate formal gestures can be for the expression of widely differing emotions.

Management of the elaborate heavy dresses worn by Elizabethan Ladies - and the companies are known not to have economised on the quality of the materials they used for such costumes - could not have been acquired without special training. ¹ Besides, a boy had to be taught to walk with chopines before appearing on the stage, which, together with the dress would give him the outward semblance of a woman perfectly. This sort of training enhanced immensely the impression made by a boy. The rich dresses with so many folds gracefully managed

¹. Ibid, 32
helped the boy tremendously and had a power of expression completely lacking in modern dresses.\(^1\) Pepys's words about Kynaston, mentioned before, are very much to the point here.

Music and singing were obviously a particular capacity of the Choir Boys, hence the advantage of incorporating these into the adult companies when grown up. But, even boys who had not been in the choirs of the Royal Chapels had some kind of musical knowledge. According to Thomas Morley, famous music composer and editor of the time, everyone was expected to be able to read a part without any difficulty at first sight.\(^2\)

Allowing for a little exaggeration on Morley's part it appears nevertheless that the Elizabethans were extremely fond of music and that they all had in greater or lesser degrees some musical knowledge. They loved music and, according to Mr. Davies, "most Elizabethans were able to sing after a fashion."\(^3\)

Elocution was certainly already developed in boys who had acted in their own companies as, even the plays written by John Lyly specifically for children do contain numerous long and often difficult speeches. The Elizabethans delighted as much in their language as they did in their music and it is not out of place for a man as educated as Hamlet to enjoy a speech even if it does not have too much meaning. Recitation had to be quite rapid if the actors wanted to complete a five

\(^1\) Ibid,
\(^3\) Davies, op. cit., p. 36
act play in the two hours customary for the ordinary performance. 1

The art of fence was another point in which all actors, boys as well as adults, had to be experts. 2 In any audience, a dramatist could be certain of finding connoisseurs of the art and these expected to have their taste gratified. Dramatists never avoided fencing scenes, but often did all they could to include one in their plays in order to satisfy that portion of their patrons who were experts at it. But, even ordinary persons knew a great deal about the art and would never have accepted anything less than good swordsmanship. They delighted in battle scenes and fights and these were often "realistic to a dangerous degree." 3 Furthermore, skill in the use of weapons would be particularly beneficial to a boy because of the agility and self control it would teach him. It would also help him in his performance of the acrobatics required in such parts as 'Puck' and 'Ariel'.

The final impression was made perfect by the use of cosmetics. There is no doubt that it was as elaborate—if not more so—in those days as it is at present. Ben Jonson, who was always criticising the follies of the time has a very long passage in The Devil is An Ass (IV iv 18/56) where Wittipol

1. Ibid, 29
2. Ibid, 33
3. Ibid,
mentions the different ingredients used in make up and their effects on women's faces, from which we realize that the art was developed to an amazing extent even in those early times. Any ordinary normal boy, trained as explained above, dressed in the fashion of the time, and retouched with cosmetics would render the outward appearance of a woman to the greatest satisfaction of all concerned.

After the Restoration, critics took it for granted that Shakespeare and his contemporaries were annoyed by the limitations imposed upon them by the convention of having the female parts acted by boys. However, no evidence has been found to justify such a belief while, on the other hand, internal evidence from certain plays clearly indicates that the dramatists were well satisfied with the interpretation of their female characters given by the boys. Such a passage is the reference to Dick Robinson in Jonson's The Devil is an Ass, reproduced here earlier in another context, and the Induction to Shakespeare's The Taming of the Shrew. Both passages are quoted by Mr. Davies in this connection.

The dramatists did not throw any doubt on the capability of the boy actors to present the outward appearance of women and at times of women of great beauty; in this connection John Downes's words in his Roscius Anglicanus about Kynaston's performances at the Cock-Pit in Drury Lane in 1659 are very much to the point:
"Mr. Kynaston acted Arthiopæ, in the Unfortunate Lovers; The Princess in the Mad Lover; Aglaura, Ismenia, in the Maid in the Mill; and several other Women's Parts; he being then very young made a Compleat female Stage Beauty, performing his Parts so well, especially Arthiopæ and Aglaura, being Parts greatly moving Compassion and Pity; that it has since been Disputable among the Judicious, whether any Woman that succeeded him so Sensibly touch'd the Audience as he."¹

However the outward appearance alone is not enough because, "acting is more than mimicry and doubt might reasonably be entertained as to the boy's capacity to express the emotion demanded of such characters as Rosalind or Juliet."² For parts then of greater difficulty and more complex characteristics it would be far more advantageous if the dramatist used a youth of between 17 to 20 years of age who, with a carefully preserved voice, the experience he would have already acquired from his training and acting of lesser parts, and the more expressive show of emotion that comes with a mature understanding of the parts would certainly have given the greatest satisfaction possible. If we add to this the fact that some of the dramatists trained their actors as mentioned by Jonson in the Induction to Cynthia's Revels and as shown in the Journal of John Downes, stage manager of Lincoln's Inn Theatre in 1662:

"The tragedy of Hamlet; Hamlet being performed by Mr. Betterton, Sir William (Davenant) having seen Mr. Taylor of the Blackfriars Company act it, who, being instructed by (Mr. Burbadge, who was instructed by) the author Mr. Shakespeare, taught Mr. Betterton in every particle of it; which by his exact performance of it, gained him esteem and

¹. Davies, op. cit.; p. 20
². Ibid., 24
reputation superlative to all other plays.¹

Then we have no longer any reason to suspect that they deplored such a convention, but we can be sure that they used it to great advantage.

As regards the audience's opinion of the subject, Colley Cibber's words about Edward Kynaston - quoted by Mr. Davies - are a sufficient proof that they too never thought of deplo-ring the custom.

"In a word Kynaston at that time was so beautiful a Youth, that the Ladies of Quality prided themselves in taking him with them in their coaches to Hyde-Park, in his Theatrical Habit after the Play;...."²

¹. Adams, Joseph Quincy, ed. Hamlet; (1929) p. 180
². Davies, op. cit.; p. 19
CHAPTER II

Plays in which the Chief Women's Parts could be Easily Acted by Boys

It is necessary to remind the reader here of the distinction already drawn between boys and youths. The former group includes boys between the ages of 12 and 15 years, and the latter those between 15 and 20 years. Let us now pass to a consideration of those female roles which would gain most in performance from the qualities of a boy, taking each play in the chronological order approximately established by contemporary scholarship. 1

The training which the boys and youths received qualified them for the acting of women's parts which they would undertake as long as their voices permitted it. The dramatists on their side wrote the parts in such a manner as to bring out fully the technical capabilities of the boys as well as their store of superficial emotion without laying too heavy a demand upon an individual or personal expression of emotion. This point will be clarified in the course of our discussion of each play. This is very often the case with Shakespeare and a great number of his heroines and fema-

1. Vide, Preface p. iv
le parts are written in this vein. However, more than any other dramatist he has also written more difficult women's parts; parts which would call forth all the technical abilities of the youths of from 16 to 20 years of age, and still make a great demand for a deep and personal expression of emotions, which cannot be achieved except with age and maturity. Hence, the conviction that youths were used for such parts. However, these parts are fewer in number than the former and we will now be concerned to establish how the former women's parts conform to the general standards, how the latter differ, and the particular demands which each makes of its actor.

**Love's Labor's Lost:**

The parts of the Princess, Rosaline, Maria, Katharine, and Jaquenetta are all well within the range of any competent boy actor. The first four are comedy parts making a greater demand for formal wit than any emotion, and Jaquenetta's is a broad comic part still within the scope of a boy actor. The only objection to having all the parts acted by boys could be that it was rather difficult to find five boys for one single play, there being no indication that any adult company ever included such a number of boys. There, is, moreover, the part of Moth, the Page, which required a boy actor too. If, as Prof. Dover Wilson believes, the play was first given at the house of the Earl of Southampton at Christmas 1593, then the problem could have been solved by
obtaining the cooperation of one of the children's companies. As regards public performances, it is not known how the difficulty was met. It might be that some of the parts were given to youths instead of boys, in Jaquesnetta's part, for instance, a lanky youth would serve to make Don Armado's passion all the more ridiculous.

The Comedy of Errors

In this play the plot is of far greater importance than the characters. The women, in particular, tend to be types rather than individuals and throughout the play tell us very little of themselves. The parts of Adriana, Luciana, and Luce could very well have been acted by boys, as they require no special show of emotion. Adriana, being something of a shrew does not attract the audience, but Luciana on the other hand does gain some individuality and attractiveness from her sweet disposition, and forgiving spirit. The parts of Aemilia and the Courtezan could have been acted by youths if an insufficient number of boys was available.

The Two Gentlemen of Verona:

Shakespeare having begun to draw more elaborate female characters now needs to use a convention in order to help his boy actors perform the parts to the greatest satisfaction. He does not allow his heroine to appear alone, the first time

(I i), but presents her with her confidant discussing the
different lovers who seek her hand. He thus gives her the
chance of establishing her character by narrative rather
than by acting before sharing in the action in any way. The
Elizabethan audience knew very well what to expect of a he-
roine. Generally she was to be beautiful, accomplished, and
of more than human fidelity and such scenes, as the one men-
tioned above, are introduced by Shakespeare to allow her to
fill in the details of the picture as regards her personality
and to impress herself fully upon the mind of her audience.
A Shakespearean heroine almost never appears first with the
hero of the play. It would be too difficult for a boy or a
youth to have to hold his own in front of the hero - always
the best actor of the company - and impress the audience fa-
vourably enough at the same time.

In this play, we find much more emotion than in the
first ones, but it still does not lay a heavy burden upon
the boy actor, because it is expressed in a formal manner.
The emotion of a young lady who thinks it her duty to tear
up her lover's letters without reading them and then regrets
her rash action is very fit matter for a well trained boy
actor. The emotion is expressed in the poetry and in the
way she picks up the torn pieces and holds them to her bosom.
It is formal, but beautiful, poetical, and impressive. La-
ter on however, when the boy acting Julia's part is disguised
as the page, he has to act the part in a restrained manner.
Now in his own shape as a boy, his acting must be much more natural. The formal, elaborate gestures he had used when dressed in a lady's full round skirt and heavy trimmings would be ludicrous when he appears on the stage in his hose and doublet. His style has to be more natural and there is now place for what Mr. Davies calls 'silent business' or restraint in action as the following lines will show:

"Here is her picture; let me see; I think
If I had such a tire, this face of mine
Were full as lovely as is this of hers;
And yet the painter flatter'd her a little,
Unless I flatter with myself too much.
Her hair is auburn, mine is perfect yellow:
If that be all the difference in his love
I'll get me such a colour'd periwig.
Her eyes are grey as glass, and so are mine!
Ay, but her forehead's low, and mine's as high:
What should it be that he respects in her
But I can make respective in myself,
If this fond Love were not a blinded god?
Came, shadow, come, and take this shadow up,
For 'tis thy rival. O thou senseless form!
Thou shalt be worshipp'd, kiss'd, lov'd and ador'd,
And, were there sense in his idolatry
My substance should be statue in thy stead.
I'll use thee kindly for thy mistress' sake,
That us'd me so; or else, by Jove I vow,
I should have scratch'd out your unseeing eyes,
To make my master out of love with thee." (IV iv 189/210)

There is as much emotion, if not more, in this passage as in the previous ones. But, it is emotion that needs to be shown very naturally and directly and here, the boy acting Julia's part draws profit from another technicality. On a stage where the women are dressed in the heavy fashion of the time and the men are all mature, he is the only small slender delicate being and he, therefore, draws all the sym-
pathy of the audience. Having done so, all he needs is to deliver these lines with a sad face and a few quiet gestures in order to achieve the highest effect.

Romeo and Juliet:

It is surprising to find Shakespeare in this play taking pains to set down exactly Juliet's age as less than 14 years. He generally divides his characters into young or old only, thus allowing himself the freedom to use time to his best advantage. There must have been a reason for breaking this rule in Romeo and Juliet and it was probably due to the fact that the boy acting Juliet's part was very young and small in stature.¹

Juliet, like other Shakespearean heroines whose parts are acted by boys, is helped as much as possible by the dramatist in performing her part. She has the advantage of being presented to the audience most impressively through the words spoken by Romeo about her. Her first short appearance with her mother (I iii) gives her the opportunity to impress the audience with her breeding, beauty, and charm of gesture. This scene, followed shortly by the one of the banquet where Romeo at first sight forgets his previous passion and falls madly in love with Juliet, and his flaming description of her completes the picture and the audience is now ready to accept her as a peerless beauty.

¹ Davies, op. cit., p. 112
Shakespeare then continues to help the boy actor of Juliet's part by technical means as much as he can. In the next scene (II ii), where Romeo confesses his love, she has all the advantage. She is standing on the balcony or upper stage, and her declaration of love is straightforward but expressed in beautiful poetry. It gains in power from her modesty, from the great concern for Romeo's safety which she shows, and from the way she retires and then returns again to talk to him, thus suggesting incapacity to tear herself away from his presence.

After their secret wedding, Juliet has another demanding scene and again Shakespeare comes to the rescue of the boy actor. It begins with Juliet's "brilliant bravura":

"Gallop space, you fiery-footed steeds, Towards Phoebus' lodging............" (III ii)

affording a great opportunity for the boy actor to give an impression of passion by his power of elocution. When she learns of the duel and the subsequent banishment of her husband, the change of emotion to grief is still kept within the range of a boy's capacity by being expressed formally in the play on the words "I", "Ay", and "Eye" (III ii 46).

The conflict between her great love for Romeo and her sorrow at her kinsman's death, and Romeo's banishment would appear almost too difficult for a boy. But this is not the case. A great share of the emotion is expressed in the antithetical

1. Ibid, 115
"0 serpent heart, hid with a flowering face!
Did ever dragon keep so fair a cave?
Beautiful tyrant! fiend angelical!
Dove-feather'd raven! wolvish-ravening lamb!
Despised substance of divinest show!
Just opposite to what thou justly seem'st;
A damned saint, an honourable villain!
0, nature! what hadst thou to do in hell
When thou didst bower the spirit of a fiend
In mortal paradise of such sweet flesh?
Was ever book containing such vile matter
So fairly bound? O! that deceit should dwell
In such a gorgeous palace. (III ii 73/85)

These lines accompanied by a boy's ready superficial emotions can be rendered powerfully without demanding too much emotion from the boy actor. Indeed, Juliet draws so much sympathy and pity from the audience because of her fragility and vulnerability in the face of the overwhelming blows which fate inflicts on her, that a deep and more mature show of emotion while rendering these lines would spoil their effect.

In the scene where the lovers part, (III v) the expression of emotion is again formal and Juliet is allowed to pour out her grief in the long lines assigned to her, while Romeo has to act his grief and concludes with:

"More light and light; more dark and dark our woes." (III v 36) Which being brief needs a great depth of expression if it is to be poignant and effective. In the next two scenes, Juliet's emotion is still within the range of a competent boy, its predominant quality being violence. While speaking with her mother, of her grief at Tybalt's death, she really speaks of her love for Romeo and manages to introduce his name into all the statements so that, the more powerful her hatred of
him appears to her mother, the stronger her love for him appears to the audience. And when in Friar Laurence's cell (IV i) he suggests to her a way of avoiding a marriage with Paris, her acceptance of it is so direct and immediate as to leave the audience no doubt whatever about her passion.

Then, when drinking Friar Laurence's potion (IV iii), the boy acting Juliet's part achieves the greatest effect no longer now by violence, but by the mention of all the horrors which will encounter her should she awake too soon in the grave, and which she is still willing to suffer for her Romeo's sake, concluding with:

"Romeo, I come! this do I drink to thee." (IV iii 58) and then falls dead upon the bed. In this scene, the boy actor is all alone on the stage, always a great advantage, as the audience has no standard by which to compare him and measure his capacity.

Contrasting Juliet's part with Romeo's will help to bring out fully how much Shakespeare helped his boy actors to express the required emotions by purely technical means, Romeo's part consists of almost nothing but conflicting emotions which require an experienced and mature actor. The first technical difficulty facing the actor is to show the difference between his two loves, his love for Rosaline and his love for Juliet. Upon seeing Juliet he forgets his first passion for Rosaline and this apparent fickleness is accounted
for by the highly poetical description of the two maidens.

The description of Rosaline:

"She'll not be hit
With Cupid's arrow; she hath Dian's wit;
And, in strong proof of chastity well arm'd,
From love's weak childish bow she lives unharmed.
She will not stay the siege of loving terms,
Nor bide the encounter of assailing eyes,
Nor ope her lap to saint-seducing gold:
O! she is rich in beauty; only poor
That, when she dies, with beauty dies her store."

(I i 214/222)

beautiful as it is, gives us the picture of a cold icy fortress to which she is compared and shows Romeo’s passion to have been a first infatuation with the idea of love usual in young men of his age. Juliet's description on the other hand:

"O! she doth teach the torches to burn bright.
It seems she hangs upon the cheek of night
Like a rich jewel in an Ethiop's ear;
Beauty too rich for use, for earth too dear!
So shows a snowy dove troping with crows,
As yonder lady o'er her fellows shows.
The measure done, I'll watch her place of stand,
And, touching hers, make blessed my rude hand.
Did my heart love till now? Forswear it, sight!
For I ne'er saw true beauty till this night."

(I v 46/55)

almost sets us on fire and we are immediately convinced of the reality of Romeo’s love and its great power.

Romeo's passion for Rosaline follows closely the pattern of the erotic convention of that time whereby a young man was expected to be desperately in love with a woman whose heart he would never attain and for whom he was expected to undergo all sorts of martyrdoms.
But Juliet who is immediately taken by Romeo's appearance, falls in love with him, and marries him secretly, breaks the accepted code of her time and in so doing draws to herself the sympathy of the audience. It is from this trait that a great deal of her charm springs. She stands out as a rebel against the conventions of her time and suffers for her love, a situation which makes her most appealing to the audience. But when these characteristics are also accompanied by honesty, uprightness, a strong will, charm, and delicacy, then she becomes an almost supernatural character sweeping away everything before her.

Later (III i 126/136) Romeo has to show the conflict raging in him between his refusal to fight Tybalt, Juliet's kinsman, which is finally overcome by his rage at Mercutio's useless death. Again when in Mantua he prepares to leave for Verona and is bubbling over with expectation of seeing Juliet again, he is struck with the news of her death and says simply:

"Is it even so? Then I defy you, stars! (V i 24)"

He is not allowed to express his tormented emotions in a long poetical speech, but is given only a short line which, if it is to be effective and touching, needs to be accompanied by experienced and highly skillful acting:

"Well, Juliet, I will lie with thee tonight." (V i 35)

Juliet's part supported by all the technical devices at the dramatist's service is admirably fitted for a boy ac-
tor with beauty, charm, and a little emotion. Romeo's part, more elaborate, more demanding, requires an actor with great experience, capable of expressing his emotions through his acting and not merely through the dialogue assigned to him.

The parts of Lady Capulet and Lady Montague, although neither is very old, are those of matronly types. They could have been acted by either boys or youths with the same effect. However, it would be a real disadvantage if the nurse's part were played by a boy of approximately the same age as that of the boy acting Juliet's part. The nurse is a coarse, unprincipled person showing cynicism, a quality which a boy would not, by nature, find easy to express since it develops with mature experience. The nurse moreover serves a great purpose in the play as she helps to bring out Juliet's delicacy and beauty by contrast and also gives her the opportunity to show a certain maturity. When Juliet asks her for advice on the question of her second marriage and the latter unhesitatingly advises her to accept, then Juliet sees through her and understands her character thoroughly, saying:

"Is it more sin to wish me thus forsworn,
Or to dispraise my lord with that same tongue
Which she hath prais'd him with above compare
So many thousand times? Go, counsellor;
Thou and my bosom henceforth shall be twain."

(III V 236/240)

showing that she has now attained maturity and that henceforth any decision she takes will be her own.
Titus Andronicus

The whole play is a study of suffering set in a barbarian atmosphere. Although it takes place in Rome, the centre of all civilisation, the conflicting passions unleashed in it are those of barbarians. In the midst of this setting, Lavinia's part is perfectly straightforward. She is first spoken of as:

"Gracious Lavinia, Rome's rich ornament." (I i 52)

and in a play in which the main characters' lowest, basest passions are given full sway, she is an inherently virtuous person, thereby gaining tremendous importance and value in the eyes of the audience. Her one quality is her chastity and this is so strongly impressed upon the audience that she becomes the symbol of the virtue. As a part it is not at all demanding and requires no particular skill. Her appearance, after she was ravished, with mutilated hands and tongue draws the utmost pity and surrounds her with a halo of martyrdom suffered for her virtue and leads the audience to abhor Tamora and her sons all the more intensely.

Tamora's part also has no complexity and is not above a boy actor's capacity. In the first scene, where she appears with Titus Andronicus pleading for her son's life, she draws pity to a certain extent but even here we feel that the character is not sympathetically drawn and the emotion expressed is not very profound. Titus who appears as a merciless tyrant is far more appealing and though he sends her eldest son to
death, thus giving her a reason to hate him and a logical foundation for all her future acts, yet he does so in obedience to a code which, barbarous as it may seem, is nevertheless held sacred by himself and his countrymen and, after the first act, we feel that Tamora's acts spring much more from the natural perversity of her character than from any exterior cause. Although a boy actor could portray such a character, yet lust being one of her attributes it would be easier for a youth to act her part convincingly.

The nurse has a small but appealing part. She shows great concern for the queen and yet she is foully murdered by Aaron an act which, because of its uselessness, makes him all the more loathsome in our eyes. She was probably an elderly woman and as her part makes no demand for the peculiar talents of a boy or youth, it would be more effective to have it acted by a man.

King Richard II

The part of the Queen in King Richard II is a very small one, its only function being to excite the sympathy of the audience for Richard himself and this she does masterfully when waiting for Richard on the road to the tower, but the emotion is all in the words. She gains a very great deal in the scene with the gardener in the duke of York's garden. The gardener had just been speaking to his companions of Richard's deposition when she overhears him. Her outburst at the news is very direct but the way the gardener pities her and speaks...
of her makes her more effective:

"Poor queen! so that thy state might be no worse,
I would my skill were subject to thy curse.
Here did she fall a tear; here, in this place,
I'll set a bank of rue, sour herb of grace;
Rue, even for ruth, here shortly shall be seen,
In the remembrance of a weeping queen."

(III iv 102/7)

It is surprising how a short scene like this one can affect a character; indirectly, it raises the queen and perpetuates her sorrow. However, if one may use the term, she is acted upon by the gardener, that is, she remains passive while he is active, and the better he performs his part the more she gains. Throughout, she tells us nothing of herself and Richard's outburst at being separated from her:

"Doubly divorc'd! Bad men, ye violate
A twofold marriage; 'twixt my crown and me,
And then, betwixt me and my married wife."

(V i 71/5)

increases the audience's pity for Richard and not for her.

The parts of the Duchesses of Gloucester and York, being those of old women, would have been acted more impressively by youths. As the Duchess of Gloucester appears in Act I only and the Duchess of York in Act V, the same youth could have acted both parts, there being enough time for him to change from one dress into another.

**A Midsummer-Night's Dream**

Neither Hermia's nor Helena's part lays any undue burden
on a boy actor. The love scenes are highly poetical and very formal; as Mr. Davies says, "the scene in which Hermia and Lysander go to sleep in the wood protesting their love has the formal beauty of a dance."¹ The scene of the quarrel, (III ii 282/343) however, between Hermia and Helena after Lysander has rejected the former and is courting the latter, is vivacious and full of humour. It is exactly the sort of thing two boys would do to perfection. There are a great many words thrown about by either party but very little passion or hatred. Had they not been given this scene, Hermia and Helena would have remained two perfect examples of conventional, modest, and rather insignificant heroines. But this scene infuses into them the blood that makes their hearts to beat and their limbs to move. Hippolyta being the queen of the Amazons and having very little to say might have been acted more effectively by a youth, as her appearance is more manly.

A point of interest is the presence of the fairies in this play. Their names, Pease-Blossom, Cobweb, Moth, and Mustard-Seed seem to indicate that they were all children. The finding of such a number of boys would have presented some difficulty, except that if A Midsummer-Night's Dream was written for a court occasion² as is presently believed, the dramatist would have been allowed the use of choir boys in such parts.

¹ Davies, op. cit., p. 52
² Chambers, op. cit., v. 2, p. 194
How this difficulty was solved when the play was presented on the public stages is, however, still unknown.

Puck is something of a problem in this play. He is called Hobgoblin, Robin Goodfellow, and Puck. This is believed by Sir A. Quiller-Couch and Prof. Dover Wilson to be due to revisions of the play in 1594 and again in 1598 on the occasion of the wedding of the Earl of Southampton to Elizabeth Vernon. They believe that the play was definitely presented for a wedding either at court or in some nobleman's palace, and that Shakespeare revised it, for the last time, on the occasion mentioned above to change the charm which Oberon uses from a juice, which it seems to have been in the earlier version of the play, to the "little western flower" he speaks of in Act II ii 166. This they think could have been a direct allusion to Elizabeth Vernon herself and it would, obviously, have constituted a very delicate compliment from Shakespeare to his patron. 1

Whatever changes may have taken place and whatever inconsistencies are found in the text, in the final version that has come to our hands, Puck is consistently depicted. He is not represented as an elf, like Pease-Blossom or Mustard-Seed for instance, but gives the impression of being rather bigger and, of course, with great agility and rapidi-

ty of movement, so that his part could have been effectively presented by either a boy or a man with the right physique, while Ariel's part seems to have been designed specially for a boy. This point will be discussed separately in the consideration of The Tempest.

The Taming of the Shrew:

The Taming of the Shrew is a comedy in which wit is more prominent than any other quality. Katharine, the shrew, is as usual spoken about after a very short appearance in which almost her very first words to Hortensio are:

"I' faith, sir, you shall never need to fear: I wis it is not half way to her heart; But if it were, doubt not her care should be To comb your noodle with a three-legg'd stool, And paint your face, and use you like a fool." (I i 61/5)

thus giving the audience an impression of her bad temper which no practical display could have conveyed as well. The impression is then strengthened by the conversation carried on after the above scene between Grumio and Hortensio.

Shakespeare was careful to avoid having Katharine come to blows with any of the suitors on the stage. Such a display by a boy actor would have been overacted and would have appeared ridiculous rather than comic. However, it is within the boy's power to act down another boy actor and so we have the scene where Katharine brings Bianca in, hands bound behind her back, and strikes her because the former refuses to con-
fess which one of her suitors she likes best (II i 1/36) then, when the father comes in and upbraids her for her conduct she still insists on pursuing Bianca. This clever device, while avoiding the difficulty of a boy actor having to act down an adult actor serves the purpose equally well, if not better. Then when Hortensio comes on stage with the report that Katharine has broken a lute on his head, (II i 143/60) the character is indeed complete and, if one may apply the term, 'perfect'.

In the next scene where Petruchio first courts her, all the burden is on Petruchio himself and she has only to speak her lines well to give the desired effect. She cuffs him once, but throughout the scene it is he who dominates and, from then onwards, she is given a lower position warranted by the development of the plot. However, even when her resistance is broken down and she is finally subdued Katharine must still show that she retains some spirit otherwise her character will lose its comedy and its appeal. This is supplied by her manner of immediately agreeing with anything her husband says, not losing an instant in changing her mind in accordance with his pretended lunacy (IV v).

Bianca's part is much easier than Katharine's as she is shown constantly subordinated to her sister's will and suffering from her sister's overbearing behaviour. She is consistently virtuous; and obedience respect and timidity are not
difficult to portray; in fact much easier than shrewishness and strong-headedness. Bianca comes to life in the last scene where she does not obey her husband and rebukes him for his foolishness in betting on her obedience. A boy actor of any ability would act her part effectively.

The widow's is a small part. She seems to have been introduced to provide a wife for Hortensio and a third woman in the wager, thus bringing out more forcefully the taming of Katharine and her part could have been acted by either a boy or a youth equally well.

King Henry IV (Parts I and II)

The women of the histories, with some rare exceptions, are of secondary interest. Their role lies mainly in supporting and bringing out the characters of the men. "Now and again they flash into life through a few lines of fine verse which is given them, but in the main they are unimportant in a type of play which was written to provide parts for the Ned Alleyns of the Elizabethan stage". However, one must not dismiss them summarily because, after all, helping to show the characters of Kings, Lords, Dukes, etc... is important and is warrant enough for their being an integral part of the plays even if they are not given a more important part to fulfil.

Lady Percy, wife of Hotspur, has a short scene with her

1. Davies, op. cit., p. 91
husband where she shows her sorrow at parting from him and which serves to reveal her husband's character not her own (III i). Lady Mortimer who speaks no English was probably acted by a boy who could both speak and sing in Welsh. Possibly by Robert Goffe who was a member of the Lord Chamberlain's company.1

Lady Northumberland, in the second part, is of very little importance and being elderly her part could have been acted more effectively by a youth. Mistress Quickly— in both parts— and Doll Tearsheet are parts that could be acted satisfactorily by youths or even men. Being rough and vulgar, they do not require at all the fineness and delicacy of a boy.

King Henry V

The women, here too, conform to the general standard of the women in Shakespeare's history plays, and it is only right that they should do so, as this is the story of a king newly enthroned giving proof of his wisdom, ability, and courage.

Katharine appears with Henry and the others only in Act V, during most of which she hardly speaks any English, and her only characteristic here is coyness. She has a brief though charming and lovely appearance with her Lady-in-waiting earlier to give the audience some information about herself, but nothing in her part requires skill above a boy's

1. Ibid, 90
capabilities. Isabel, her mother, and Alice, her Lady-in-
waiting, are parts that could have been acted to equal advan-
tage by either boys or youths. The Hostess of the Boar's
Head, formerly Mistress Quickly, was probably acted by a
youth or a man for the reasons mentioned in the previous play.

The Merry Wives of Windsor:

In The Merry Wives of Windsor, the parts of Mrs. Ford
and Mrs. Page would be presented to greater advantage by youths.
They are matronly women, not in the prime of youth, and it
would be incongruous to have boys on the stage to give the
counterpart to Falstaff.

Anne Page would certainly have been a boy, more beauti-
ful than talented, her part requiring no particular qualifica-
tions. Mistress Quickly could, once again, be acted by either
a youth or a man.

It is interesting to notice how, again in a play written
for the Court, Shakespeare does not hesitate to introduce mu-
sic and a dance by fairies which would require a larger num-
ber of boys than could have been available in the professio-
nal theatres. Sir E.K. Chambers is of opinion that the play
was probably prepared for performance with the aid of the boys
of Windsor Chapel at the Garter Feast on April 23rd, 1600.¹
In such a play the value of music, singing, and dancing as en-
tertainment for a more refined audience is very great. We ha-

¹ Chambers, op. cit.; v. 2, p. 204
ve no indication however, of how it was presented on the public stage and how the problem of having so many boys was solved.

**Much Ado About Nothing:**

Hero is of lesser importance than Beatrice, who is the real heroine of the play, and her part could have been acted by a boy of no remarkable ability. Her lines are always straightforward expressing a very plain emotion. In the scene of her wedding where she is slandered (IV i) the trick of swooning is used to show her emotion.

Beatrice's part is far more demanding. However, she is helped by the wit which predominates in the play. Even her love scenes with Benedick (IV i) are set in witty repartee thus relieving the boy of the necessity of showing any deep emotion. Her outburst in the church (IV i 291/333) is violent but it expresses nothing but anger and here Benedick takes the second place. He is able to say practically nothing in reply, and simply submits to her will. However, she remains one of the most attractive of Shakespeare's heroines and her part is cast for a boy with great technical skill.

Of the two waiting gentlewomen, Margaret is the more appealing. She is a broad comic character as opposed to Beatrice who is witty. Both her part and Ursula's, which needs very little skill, could have been performed equally satisfactorily by either boys or youths.
Julius Caesar:

Both Portia's and Calphurnia's parts are very small. In the former's case, the impression of great beauty and devotion is given by Brutus's tender solicitude for her. In the scene with her husband (III 1 234/308) she definitely holds the minor position and helps him to show how deeply his worries were disturbing him. In the scene with Lucius (II iv), the excitement she creates about Brutus's welfare serves to give an impression of her deep love for him.

Calphurnia serves as a foil to Caesar in bringing out his strong headedness and conceited opinion of himself:

"............... Danger knows full well That Caesar is more dangerous than he." (II ii 44/5)

more than his courage and boldness. Both parts could be discharged with ease by competent boy actors.

All's Well that Ends Well:

Helena's part is not an attractive one, but then all the characters, including the hero, hardly appeal to the audience with the possible exception of the countess and her fool. The plot holds a more prominent position than character throughout the play. Helena's soliloquy (I i 91/117) serves to give the audience the necessary information about herself, and the part makes a very small demand of its actor. The countess and the old widow are parts obviously acted to better advantage by youths or men. Violenta and Mariana appear simply as little more than ciphers.
Troilus and Cressida

Cressida's part cannot be discussed without reference to Troilus. The two are so interdependent that one can be understood only in relation to the other.

The greatest burden in the play falls on Troilus. He is the hero and he has, therefore, to set the tone of the play. He is also the first to appear on the stage during those vital first minutes in which an actor's task is to captivate the ears and attention of the audience, apart from acting his part which, here, is a very difficult one. He is not furthermore supported at all in his task by a minor character. On the contrary, he appears with Pandarus, a part that would certainly have been acted by a very experienced member of the company, who mocks him and makes light of his affection for Cressida. And yet, almost the very first lines spoken by Troilus are full of passion and require a great deal of skill to sound convincing in the face of Pandarus's bantering tone.

On the other hand, we notice that Cressida does not appear until Troilus has praised her so much that she is established as a paragon of beauty. She then appears in a brief scene in which she has little more to do than to complete the already powerful impression of her physical appearance. She does not reappear until Act III where she finally accepts Troilus's love and confesses, rather ambiguously her own. But this whole scene (III ii) is set in a formal mould and Cressida does not
give the impression of a powerful emotion at all. Her tone is as superficial as her nature is shallow. She loved Troilus as much as she could have loved anyone, but it is far from being as deep a love as his. This makes it easy for a boy to act the part.

In the scene before her departure from Troy (IV iv), her expression of grief rises far more from irritation than from sorrow at parting with her lover. This scene which would have required great skill in other cases does not do so here because it is essential that her protestations of fidelity sound unconvincing. In the very next scene she is going to give flagrant proof of her fickleness and depravity and therefore it is necessary that the previous scenes, by not sounding too true, prepare the audience for such a change. Thus a boy's superficial emotion would serve far better than an adult's mature, deep, feeling. Her final scene with Diomedes (V i 7/109) is placed a little in the background and her part here, that of a perverse unfaithful woman needs no show of any particular emotion but rather a display of sensuousness which is not beyond a boy's possibilities. The physical gestures, especially as reported by Troilus:

"She strokes his cheek!" (V ii)

are quite sufficient to suggest this and to establish firmly in the audience's mind her infamous character.

Thus no great burden is laid on the boy actor; rather is
it laid, and very heavily too, on Troilus. In a play where inconstancy and cynicism are the norm, he has to remain faithful. He has to give a very strong impression of his love for Cressida from the start, otherwise her whole character will fail. She appears bad in our eyes, in the exact proportion that Troilus's love is betrayed, consequently if it is not powerful enough, she will not appear as depraved as she is supposed to do. Troilus's part is not made easy in any way, not even in the lines assigned to him. His expressions of grief or of love are set in brief exclamations that need maturity to be effective, such as:

"O Pandarus! I tell thee, Pandarus -
When I do tell thee, there my hopes lie drown'd,
Reply not in how many fathoms deep
They lie indrench'd."

(I i 48/51)

His emotion at parting is far more powerful and, of course, more truthful hence more difficult to express.

In the scene with Ulysses (V ii), he has to give the picture of a man faced with a horrible truth, tormented by it, trying not to believe it, and yet holding himself in check not to spoil the action between Diomedes and Cressida. Here again, unless the actor of Troilus's part is able to express his passion very forcefully, the scene between Diomedes and Cressida loses a great deal of its significance.

Helen's is a simple part requiring only one trait in the boy, beauty. Cassandra and Andromache are even less signifi-
cant and could be performed equally effectively by either boys or youths.

Hamlet:

The importance of Ophelia's part lies in the extent to which it serves to bring out Hamlet's tragedy. Her part is not very demanding because it is cast in such a way that she has to appear as rather colourless and weak. She is shown as the model young maiden who obeys her father even where her love affair is concerned. He commands her not to see Hamlet any more nor to receive any of his messages and she complies without discussion, and it is this trait in her which made her an unfit companion for the sensitive Hamlet. At a time when his whole world was crumbling around him - his father was dead, his mother whom he had worshipped he discovers to be lustful and adulterous, his uncle he finds to be a murderer - when he needed tender understanding and loving care, the one person who would have given these to him, Ophelia, fails him miserably in obedience to her old father, Polonius. Hamlet's tragedy would not have been as complete as it is if Ophelia had not been as weak as she is.

The one scene which gives her vitality is the scene before her drowning (IV v), and here the difficulty which a boy would have in expressing the necessary emotions is overcome by technical devices the first of which is her dishevelled flowing hair and the second her singing. Her appearance on the stage with flowing hair would immediately be taken by an
Elizabethan audience as an indication of her madness, and the pathos of the scene results from the masterly use of contrasting songs, thus making very little demand of emotional expression:

"Ophelia's first song is a love-song, with a haunting sad air in the minor, the second is a bawdy rollicking song which so gently bred a lady would not be expected to know. The contrast is both terrible and pathetic, and shows the repulsive inconsequence and untimely mirth of insanity. The coarseness of the second song is also characteristic of madness; actresses or producers who cut it because they think it unseemly or harmful to the general character of Ophelia show lack of insight..... If this song is sung loudly and shamelessly the effect is shocking to the audience, and the interjection of 'He answers' into the second verse increases this effect as it stresses the brutality of the song and gives a disquieting glimpse of the fancies concerning herself which occupy Ophelia's moithered brain.

When next Ophelia appears she sings snatches of a sad song and soon afterwards what seems to be part of a spinning song, very different in character, and after her play with the flowers breaks into the song of Bonnie Sweet Robin, only to change to:

And will a' not come again?
a song which begins slowly in the minor, only to quicken in tempo and to change abruptly to major at:

No, no, he is dead,
the most unsuitable part of the song; no better air could have been chosen to accompany madness."

Nor did the boy actor taking the part need to be an experienced singer, for the songs are all easy, well-known folk songs, requiring little more than a clear correct voice to be presented effectively.

Gertrude's part is much more difficult than Ophelia's. She is presented as a matronly woman, mother of a young man,

1. Davies, op. cit.; p. 120
so that it would appear ridiculous if her part were taken by a boy of about the same age as the boy acting Ophelia's part. Hamlet clearly states that:

"............... For at your age  
The hey-day in the blood is tame, it's humble,  
And waits upon the judgment;"
(III iv 68/70)

and she has to appear as concupiscent to the audience to account for the great sorrow which her second marriage causes her son. The scene in her closet with Hamlet (III iv) requires skill and maturity. If Hamlet's words and acting are to be effective, then she must appear tormented and overwhelmed by the picture he draws of her and, if her emotions are not brought out with full force, then both Hamlet's character and her own fail to give the adequate impression. Therefore, it would have been more advantageous if her part were acted by a youth which fact would also help to establish the correct distinction between herself, a middle aged woman, and Ophelia, a young maiden.

**Measure for Measure:**

The parts of Juliet and Isabella present little difficulty. The first is almost insignificant and seems to have been introduced simply for the plot which requires that she be pregnant. The latter keeps one pose from the beginning to the end, that of a maiden defending her virginity against the attacks of men. She is cold and distant, far more a type than an individual. Her outburst of violence (III i) when her
brother, then in prison, asks her to accept Angelo's advances is direct and requires no particular show of emotion, there being no subtlety in it. She is not an appealing character, appearing much more as a fanatic fighting for some point of faith which she hardly understands rather than as a young woman defending a valuable possession.

Mariana is an even less important character and falls very easily within a boy's scope. The parts of Francisca, the Nun, and Mistress Overdone could very well have been acted by youths or even men, as they require no particular qualification. The plot, here again as in All's Well that Ends Well is of greater importance than the characters.

Othello:

Desdemona's part fits perfectly a boy's capacities. Her function is to show tenderness, delicacy, and beauty, without any particular emotion. Her first scene has a formal setting, that of a young maiden torn between her duty to her father and her duty to her husband. She takes the bolder attitude, one which endears her to the audience, and recognises her duty to her newly-wed husband to be above that she owes her father, thus showing her love for Othello more forcefully than any acting could have done.

Her next scene in Cyprus (II i) is a light one designed to impress her appearance and charm upon the audience. It is not until Act III that she gains in importance and here it is
due to the fact that she begins to commit herself unconsciously by pleading for Cassio, thus falling in exactly with the designs of the cunning Iago, a scene for which the latter had previously prepared Othello. The scene (III iii) is not difficult, requiring no emotion but straightforward acting and the more innocent Desdemona appears to the audience, the more perverse she appears to her husband and thus, the interest is upheld by the development of the plot. From Act III Scene iv, where Othello has discovered the loss of the handkerchief, onwards Desdemona is manifestly subordinated to Othello allowing him to fill the stage and herself to be acted upon rather than to act. She has a rather difficult scene after Othello has accused her of infidelity (IV ii) and here the boy actor is helped by seeming to be indeed "half asleep" as she says to Emilia. She has just suffered a horrible shock and the more stunned she appears, the more effective and the easier her part.

In Act IV Scene iii, she is given a very pathetic scene, one that raises her tremendously and here, once again, Shakespeare comes to the help of the boy actor with a stage device. He is on the stage with another female character only, thus he does not have to measure up to any high, mature standard of difficult acting such as that practised by men actors. Desdemona's short abrupt sentences, interrupted by her words to Emilia, are very effective and she also gains a great deal in contrast with the latter. The latter is sensual, worldly, and for material advantages, would be ready to make "her husband
a cuckold", while Desdemona is tormented by the thought of betraying her husband. Innocence is always appealing to the audience, and much more so when it is as forcefully presented as in this passage.

A difficulty occurs when the boy actor has to convey to the audience emotions such as those felt by Desdemona, an innocent woman falsely accused of adultery by her husband. Here, as in Ophelia's case, Shakespeare uses singing to the greatest advantage and still without laying too heavy a burden on the boy actor; for the songs in both plays are simple, well known ones requiring only a clear voice to be rendered effectively and making no demand of great musical ability.

By giving the boy this song, Shakespeare enables him to convey the necessary emotions as effectively as could be done by a mature actor. Moreover, the choice of the song was fortunate in that its words express the mood of the scene so fittingly:

"The poor soul sat sighing by a sycamore tree,
Sing all a green willow;
Her hand on her bosom, her head on her knee,
Sing willow, willow, willow.
The fresh streams ran by her, and murmur'd her moans;
Sing willow, willow, willow:
Her salt tears fell from her, and soften'd the stones;
Sing willow, willow, willow."
(IV iii 41/7)

The picture of a melancholy girl whose tears soften the stones contrasted with Othello's destructive cruelty makes Desdemona pathetic, pitiable, and highly appealing.
It is interesting to note that this is the second time Shakespeare makes use of this device before the death of a heroine, the first being in Hamlet. The two plays having been produced at an interval of about two or three years the boy acting Ophelia's part might have also acted Desdemona's but, here again, no scrap of evidence has come down to us, and, as research into Elizabethan music indicates that musical knowledge was rather the rule than the exception, it cannot have been very difficult to find boys with trained singing voices at that time.

Emilia has little importance at the beginning, but gains more and more as the play unfolds. Her part demands vigour, more than anything else, as in the last scene she stands opposed to Othello himself, whose part must have been acted by the best actor in the company, and to her husband. Hence, her part would have been acted to more advantage by a youth because, although she displays a strong character, yet she is appealing for the tenderness she shows towards her mistress and for her faith in her husband, villain as he is; so that her murder at his hands appears as the crowning act of his baseness and makes him loathsome in the sight of the audience. She is allowed some of the pathos that surrounds Desdemona's death by the very effective device of making her repeat the last line of the song which Desdemona had sung.

Bianca's is a comic part and yet she too appeals to us
by the concern shown for Cassio and when, vexed by Iago's and Emilia's taunts, she shouts:

"I am no strumpet, but of life as honest
As you that thus abuse me."
(V i 122/3)

we believe that there must have been a great deal of honesty in her although she had been Cassio's mistress. Hers is a part that could have been acted equally effectively by either a boy or a youth.

**Coriolanus:**

As in **Julius Caesar**, the function of the women here is to bring out the characters of the men, except for Volumnia.

Virginia has a very small part and practically nothing to say throughout the play. Valeria is slightly comic, a gossip. Both parts present no difficulty for any boy actor.

Volumnia, on the other hand, an elderly woman who has to be the counterpart of Coriolanus would have been acted to greater advantage by a man. She is the matronly type and, at first, the embodiment of the Roman belief in the honours of war. However, in the scene where she pleads with her son for the safety of Rome (V iii), she has a very difficult part, because she must show enough emotion to move Coriolanus himself and to make him break the oath he had sworn to the Volscus. Indeed if she does not appear deeply touching, even heart-rending I should say, yet always dignified in her pleadings then Coriolanus's character will be lowered tremendously in the audien-
ce's sight, which is certainly not what the dramatist intended. This is a difficult part requiring the maturity and experience of a man.

**Timon of Athens:**

The women here, Timandra and Phrynia, seem to have been introduced merely for decorative purposes. They have practically nothing to do in the play and their parts require no particular skill.

**Pericles:**

The only prerequisite in the boy acting the part of Antiochus's daughter is a certain amount of beauty. She is praised so highly by Antiochus and Pericles that no doubt exists about her beauty. However, the part has no other requirements as she speaks exactly two lines and then disappears completely from the play.

Dionyzia's part is as undemanding as the previous one. Her first scene is a very simple one in which the situation is of more interest than the character. In the scene where Pericles leaves his daughter to her and where she plans to kill her (IV 1), she has no emotion to express and the part would, therefore, require no more than a boy of ordinary acting ability.

Thaisa comes more to life than the other two women mainly because of her wilfulness. It is charming to see how she immediately falls in love with Pericles and decides to marry
him irrespective of her father's opinion. This kind of wilfulness is always very charming in a boy, much more so than in an adult and it presents no special difficulty. In her last scene, when Pericles finds her again, the device of swooning is used to express the emotion and after her return to consciousness the play moves very rapidly to its conclusion and is taken up by the introduction of Marina and Helicanus.

Marina's part is admirably fitted for a boy actor. She first appears after Gower has praised her to heaven and after we have seen Dionyzia plotting to murder her because of her virtues and accomplishments. By the time she appears, she is already established as a paragon. Her first appearance is one of sadness for the death of her nurse and then she has the exchange with Leonine which serves to draw still more pity from the audience. Her character and her beauty having had their full effect upon the audience, her acting is from now on quite direct. In the brothel scenes, she gains tremendously simply from the nature of the situation in which she finds herself without needing to show any particular emotion. Surrounded by the villainous and depraved Pandar, Bawd, and Boult who are all trying to have her ravished and constantly assaulting her virtue, she, frail and delicate as she is, valiantly defends herself and becomes a symbol of maidenly modesty and virginity. This impression is made more powerful by the way she affects Lysimachus and still more by the way she changes Boult,
and the better these two act their parts, the more she gains. In the last scenes with her father, all the burden is on Pericles and she basks in the sunshine of his glory.

The parts of Lychorida, an elderly woman, and the Bawd would be acted to more advantage by youths. All the women's parts are quite simple and more thought seems to have been given to the plot rather than to the characters in this play.

_Cymbeline:_

Imogen's part, like Rosalind's and Viola's, requires a mastery of technique and charm; unlike Rosalind who dominates the play by her constant presence and by overcoming everyone in her discussions including Jaques, Imogen does not dominate the play physically but her spirit is always present before us. Unlike Viola, there is no conflict in her character and there is no technical difficulty in her disguise such as Viola's resemblance to her brother Sebastian.

Imogen's characteristic attitude throughout the play is one of staunch fidelity to her husband, in spite of the latter's lack of trust in her. Her parting scene with Posthumus (I i) is very brief and does not allow her any time to express her emotions of love and grief. From then on, she is shown as the sufferer under her father's ire, the victim of her stepmother's falsehood and cunning, and a martyr for her supposed unfaithfulness. Imogen suffers much more than even Posthumus does. She is constantly the victim of some hideous plot and
the injustice of her situation draws forth all the pity of the audience. Then, her appearance disguised as a boy wins still more pity and sympathy for her. Moreover, the actor of Imogen's part gains a great deal from the acting of the other persons in the play. Whether in the presence of Cymbeline, or in the presence of the Queen, or later in the seduction scene by Iachimo, or in the scene with Belarius, Guiderius, and Arviragus, Imogen always takes a passive part. There is one exception when she wakes in the forest to find what she believes to be Posthumus's body near her (IV ii), and then she has a long and difficult speech. But she has the advantage of being alone on the stage and the boy acting the part can set his own pace without suffering from a comparison with more mature actors.

It is remarkable that Shakespeare has given the actor of Imogen's part several short poignant speeches which would seem to require a good deal of experience in order to be effective. However, these are not grouped in one scene, but are distributed throughout the play, thus not laying a heavy burden on the boy in any one scene, and at the same time gaining importance by their cumulative effect. Such lines are those spoken after the King orders Posthumus to leave his court at once:

"There cannot be a pinch in death
More sharp than this is."
(I i 130/1)
and when Iachimo tells her of her husband's faithlessness:

"My lord, I fear
Has forgot Britain."

(IV i 113)

When Pisanio tells her that he has not slept a wink since he received the order to kill her, she says:

"Do't, and to bed then."

(III iv 104)

Such lines are scattered throughout the play, thus not making a great demand of acting from the actor, but, at the same time, drawing a great deal of pity by their pathos.

A point worth noticing is that Guiderius and Arviragus, although spoken of as being 23 and 22 years of age respectively, are conceived by Shakespeare as being youths of about 17. When they bury Imogen they cannot sing, their voices having cracked since the previous year, when they buried their mother. If this be the case, they cannot very well be more than 17 and it would not at all be possible for Imogen, especially when disguised as a boy, to appear older than them. Imogen's part requires great elocutionary skill and charm, but lays no impossible burden on a boy actor in the expression of the different emotions.

The Queen who is cunning, deceitful, and cruel, would be better presented if her part were acted by a youth. Helen's is a minor part, and being presumably an older woman, she would also be presented to greater advantage by a youth.
The Winter's Tale:

None of the women's parts in this play is very elaborate or difficult. Hermione in her first scene shows charm but no particular emotion, so that Leontes's suspicions appear to be unjust, and charm is one of the particular aptitudes of a boy actor. Her second scene (II i) where she is playing with her son and is then accused of adultery by Leontes is designed to draw the pity and admiration of the audience and she does so very effectively here by the quiet dignity with which she receives the accusation. She is totally unlike Hero, in Much Ado About Nothing who, in the church scene, swoons when accused of infidelity to her prospective husband. Here, Hermione's attitude is so dignified that her integrity stands out very forcefully and Leontes's accusations appear all the more absurd. After that she disappears to be shown again only in the last scene of the play where she is revealed as a statue and then revives. This scene is very effective in raising Hermione's character to an almost unattainable height and, here again, Shakespeare makes use of music to create the required atmosphere while Hermione herself is static. It is astonishing how much her character gains from this device and from her appearance as a statue which serves to raise her from the level of a mere mortal to that of a goddess. After her return to life, her only words are the blessings she calls down upon her daughter and the questions she asks her.

Perdita's part also lies well within the scope of a ta-
lented and beautiful boy. Her main attributes are charm, modesty, and beauty. Her love scene with Florizel (IV iii) is set in formal verse and has the beauty of a dance. Her grief at the discovery of Florizel by his father and the prohibition of the marriage is very direct and expressed in beautiful images, all the more effective because the thoughts are left unexpressed:

"I told you what would come of this; beseech you, Of your own state take care: this dream of mine- Being now awake, I'll queen it no inch further, But milk my ewes and weep."

(IV iv 458/461)

Paulina's part would be acted to greater advantage by a youth. She is not presented as much older than Hermione herself, and yet she is the only one in the play who stands against the King, even amongst the men. Her part needs strength and violence to oppose the King in the heat of his jealousy as she does when she brings his newborn daughter to him. Her expressions of grief for the Queen and for herself at the end require a maturity and depth of expression not easily found in a boy:

"......I, an old turtle, Will wing me to some wither'd bough, and there My mate, that's never to be found again, Lament till I am lost."

(V ii 132/5)

Therefore a youth, 3 or 4 years older than the boy acting Hermione's part, would present Paulina's part effectively without showing too big a difference in age.
Emilia's is a small part requiring only a capacity for elocution; she is shown as an older woman, Perdita's nurse, and her part would be acted to greater advantage by either a youth or a man. Mopsa and Dorcas are also minor parts formally presented in the pastoral convention which could be acted equally well by either boys or youths.

The Tempest:

It is to be noted that in this play Shakespeare does not make use of his usual device of introducing the heroine through the speech of his other characters, but this is due to the nature of the plot. Here again, as in Romeo and Juliet, the age of the heroine is set down minutely as 15 years of age and the boy acting the part could not have been much older. The one emotion demanded of the actor in the first scene is compassion for the wrecked ship and compassion can be very charmingly expressed by a boy. Miranda's love for Ferdinand is also expressed through compassion, compassion at the sufferings imposed upon him by her own father. In the love scene (III i) Miranda is praised very highly by Ferdinand and her declaration of love is direct and straightforward but beautiful and charming because of her innocence and modesty thus laying no great burden upon the boy acting the part. Thereafter, Miranda disappears leaving the stage to Prospero to carry out his plans. She reappears in the last scene and here, as it were, the last touch of the master is given to her character. She is discovered playing chess with Ferdinand and her wonder at seeing so many
men, expressed in her exuberant praise of human nature:

"How beauteous mankind is! 0 brave new world,
That has such people in it!" (V i 394/5)

by stressing her freshness and innocence, completes an already enchanting picture. Indeed, Miranda partakes of the enchanted atmosphere of the island, of the heavenly music and singing of the spirits, and yet by this cleverly introduced scene of the chess-playing, a very homely one, Shakespeare gives her reality and life.

As mentioned before, Ariel's part appears to have been designed for a boy. Apart from his great agility and swiftness, he gives the impression of being a small spirit and he has a luminous quality, moving like a ray of light from one task to the other, as well as more freshness and innocence than Puck, all of which would be presented to great advantage by a boy.

**King Henry VIII:**

Queen Katharine is traditionally an elderly woman even at the beginning of the play. Her part has passages of great strength especially when face to face with the two Cardinals, Wolsey and Campeius, to defend herself and it would be played to greater advantage by a youth.

Anne Bullen's part has one chief prerequisite and that is beauty. When at Cardinal Wolsey's dance the King sees her, he is immediately taken up by her appearance and his descrip-
tion of her helps to impress the audience and to justify, partly at least, his hot-headed decision. She becomes very appealing because of the kindness and concern she shows for Queen Katharine and also because of the innocence which is apparent in her conversation with the Old Lady (II iii). The latter's part, consisting essentially in giving Anne Bullen a little practical advice would be acted to greater advantage by a man, being presented as old.

Thus, it was not just to fill a gap that most of Shakespeare's women's parts were acted by boys of between 12 to 15 years of age. The parts, written intentionally to be acted by such boys, made use of their particular talents and abilities to the best advantage and, where these did not suffice in the interpretation of the part, the dramatist then helped the boy by technical devices and stage tricks to give a satisfactory performance and, there is no indication, in any of the documents of the time which have come into our hands, that a character was either distorted or failed to be effective because acted by such boys.
CHAPTER III

Plays in which the Chief Women's Parts would be Acted to Greater Advantage by Youths.

The custom of using boys in women's parts has not prevented Shakespeare from creating more difficult and elaborate female characters which require mature and experienced acting to convey the necessary emotions. When this has happened, Shakespeare probably called upon youths of 16 to 20 years of age who, through constant practice, would have preserved the unbroken voice, the charm, and delicacy of a boy and who would yet possess maturity. It is always a source of surprise to adults how quickly boys change and the amount of maturity which they seem to acquire overnight between the ages of 16 and 19. Anyhow, such parts are written in a basically different manner and present difficulties and problems not found in the previous group of plays, and these will now be examined.

King Henry VI - Pts. I, II, III:

Joan La Pucelle is obviously made intentionally unappealing. Hers is a coarse, rough character drawn with neither subtlety nor delicacy, hence not requiring any of the peculiar qualifications of a boy actor. Her part requires great strength and violence to oppose such powerful characters as Talbot, and to act parts such as the denial and cursing of her own father.
thinking that, by pretending to be of noble birth, she would avoid death. When this fails, she resorts to an even baser stratagem and pretends to be with child, all of which serves to make her a very low character, and yet, she is not unlikeable; she has the attraction of being a fighting spirit and, of course, that of being a forsaken woman with all the world against her.

The part of the Countess of Auvergne would be equally well acted by a boy or a youth. She appears in only one scene with Talbot who takes upon himself most of the burden of the acting.

Margaret's is a small comedy part - in the first part of the trilogy - which requires no special capacity and lays no burden on a boy. However, in the second part, she appears as an elderly woman and her lines are full of violence, as is shown in her words to Suffolk when abusing the King's weakness (I iii), and in the way she accuses Gloucester (I iii). On a stage crowded with a King and the highest Peers of the land, a boy in her part, standing in opposition to them would be ludicrous. The impression of the strength of her character and cunning is made all the stronger by the way she slaps the Duchess of Gloucester who has refused to pick up her fan. In the scene of the Parliament (III i) she has a long speech equal in power to that of Suffolk and, after Gloucester has been accused of treason and removed under guard and the King has left the Parliament, she presides over it and shares actively in the
decision to murder Gloucester. All this springs from her hatred of Gloucester and his wife and the great power which he exercises over the King. And hatred is not one of the sentiments which Shakespeare generally assigns to boy actors probably because it presented some difficulty in being expressed.

Another of her characteristics is hypocrisy. She pretends all the time to be what she is not in reality especially at the announcement of Gloucester's death which she herself had planned with the Peers. In this scene (III ii), her lines are as long and as difficult as the King's. In this scene too, when the Commons demand Suffolk's banishment and the King grants their request, her lines are obviously stronger than those of the weak King and full of hatred:

"Mischance and sorrow go along with you! Heart's discontent and sour affliction Be playfellows to keep you company! There's two of you; the devil make a third, And three fold vengeance tend upon your steps!"

(Part 2 III ii 300/4)

Her whole character, in this and the next part of the trilogy, is that of a strong violent woman, a constantly "wrangling queen" which a boy actor would have found difficulty in presenting effectively. Her part, notably lacking in delicacy and virtue, and requiring primarily strength and violence would be far more advantageously presented by a youth.

Eleanor, the Duchess of Gloucester, is presented as an old woman without any of the attractions of youth. Her soaring ambition would be better presented by a youth. Margery and the
wife to Simpcox, being broad vulgar characters, would also benefit if acted by men.

Lady Grey's is a small part, requiring no particular show of emotion; Bona's part is smaller, and requires still less so that both could be discharged without any difficulty by boys.

Richard III:

The part of Queen Elizabeth, twice a widow, mother of three men, and presented as an elderly woman would be acted to greater advantage by a youth. The parts of Margaret and the Duchess of York, both very old women would, for reasons mentioned in previous plays, be acted to greater advantage by men. I cannot agree with Mr. Davies's statement that these characters were designed to make no great demand of the actors probably because of the mediocrity of the boys available at the time of the first presentation of the play.¹ This explanation does not sound very plausible. Even if we take it for granted that these parts were designed for boy actors it is very doubtful that Shakespeare would have had enough boys in his company to act the parts of these three women as well as those of Lady Anne, Lady Margaret, the Prince of Wales, the Duke of York, and Clarence's son. Furthermore, Shakespeare could not very well have given these three women more to do, even if he had the most competent boys available, without harming the balance of the play. In a play centered around a character such as Richard's who is almost a demon, who fills

¹ Davies, op. cit., p. 88
the stage and hypnotises everyone by his genius for evil, the Queen of a deposed king, the Queen of a dead one, and an old Duchess, could not surely have been given bigger parts. Their function is to bring out Richard's character, its hypocrisy, ambition, and evil, and any greater share of the action would give them an importance not warranted by the plot. As mentioned before, they are parts requiring adult actors and they do not at all reflect adversely on the quality of the boy actors available at the time.

Lady Anne's part is a simple one. Although she appears as having a great deal to do, yet she is as static as the others. In her first scene (I ii), her appearance and words are sufficient to convey her bereaved condition and, as soon as Richard comes on the stage, they fall into antithetical formal speeches and she is gradually subordinated to him until she finally appears as hypnotised, and gives in to the strange power that the repulsive being before her wields. Throughout the rest of the play, she appears as though she were walking in her sleep and this serves to strengthen the atmosphere around Richard. Her speech after her marriage, and just before her coronation, is very strong and powerful but its strength comes from within. It is very direct and it gains in power because all the horrible curses she had called down upon Richard and his wife have now fallen upon herself, which serves to draw the pity of the audience very forcefully, enabling the boy to act the part which has been included in this chapter to avoid duplication.
The weaker, the more subdued, the more defenseless the characters around Richard appear, the more devilish and evil does he loom before us. The burden of the whole play is certainly upon his shoulders and, the better he acts and the more passive the women and others are, the more effective and powerful is the play. Lady Margaret's is a very minor part, merely a 'figurante' obviously acted by a boy.

**King John:**

Speaking of the history plays, Mr. Davies says:

"There is little in these plays of tenderness, or of relief from the highly rhetorical style of delivery and action, and in such an atmosphere the boy actor must necessarily take a very inferior place, as he could not hope to compete in violence and noise with the actors of Kings and warriors."

So that whenever there would be a powerful female character in such plays, these would be presented better if acted by either youths or men but not by boys. The part of Constance in *King John* is such a one. Constance appears all the time as defending her son's rights and fighting the injustice that has deprived him of the throne. In the scene before Angiers (II i), she keeps answering Queen Elinor; then, after the peace between John and the King of France (III i), she becomes more and more violent until finally, in the scene after the wars (III iv) when she has lost her son, her violence knows no bounds. And here she is not alone on the stage but in the presence of a King and a Cardinal, and she is in no way subor-

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1. Davies, *op. cit*; p. 82
ominated to them. Hence, the desirability of having her part acted by a youth. Also, from an aesthetic point of view, the play would be more effective if her part were acted by a youth, that of Queen Elinor by a man, and that of Blanch by a boy, thus showing very pointedly the gradation of the different ages.

Queen Elinor, as just mentioned, would be better presented by a man, being quite an old woman. Blanch, on the other hand, was probably acted by a boy. She has very little to say except at the time of her marriage, when she shows the obedience expected of a maiden to her father at that time. When King Philip denounces his agreement with King John, her emotions are all expressed in a formal antithetical speech:

"The sun's o'ercast with blood: fair day, adieu!
Which is the side that I must go withal?
I am with both: each army hath a hand;
And in their rage, I having hold of both,
They whirl asunder and dismember me.
Husband, I cannot pray that thou mayst win;
Uncle, I needs must pray that thou mayst lose;
Father, I may not wish the fortune thine;
Grandam, I will not wish thy wishes thrive:
Whoever wins, on that side shall I lose;
Assured loss before the match be play'd."

(III i 326/36)

Lady Faulconbridge is a minor comic character, a part which would be acted to better advantage by a youth, as there is no call for charm or delicacy, but rather for a certain coarseness which appears also in her son Philip.
The Merchant of Venice:

Portia is first introduced to us by Bassanio's words and very effective words they are. She is compared to Cato's daughter, Brutus's Portia, and this calls forth in the minds of the audience all the qualities associated with the ideal Roman maiden, nobility, chastity, and beauty, and then Bassanio continues:

"............. And her sunny locks
     Hang on her temples like a golden fleece."

(I i 169/170)

Following immediately upon the description which has already established her as a paragon of beauty and virtue, she herself appears, not with the hero of the play, but with her waiting woman, her confidant, who thus gives her the opportunity to display her character and to supply the necessary information about her position. In this scene, (I ii) Portia speaks with such modesty and wisdom that she gains still more the audience's sympathy and is firmly impressed on its minds. The report of the numerous noblemen who have come to seek her hand serves to strengthen this impression.

The setting of the scenes in the play enhances her importance greatly. The scenes in which the suitors appear to choose the casket containing Portia's portrait alternate with other scenes in such a manner as to keep the audience in suspense. In Act I Scene ii she is seen discussing the numerous high ranking men who are seeking her hand. Scene iii proceeds with the plot of the play. Act II scene i shows a Prince of
Morocco ready to swear anything before trying his luck at the caskets. Scene ii is a comic one between Launcelot Gobbo and his father. Scene iii is extremely short and serves to introduce Jessica together with the sub-plot of the play. Scene vii again shows the Prince of Morocco now risking all, choosing the wrong casket, and departing in despair. Scene ix shows another Prince staking his future, also choosing the wrong casket, and departing to lead his lonely life. In Act III scene ii Bassanio is finally shown coming to choose and by this time the audience is at the height of expectation, having heard of so many noblemen come to woo her, having seen two Princes swear themselves to celibacy and depart, and accept Portia as unmatched in beauty, virtue, modesty, and wisdom; thus not laying any very great burden upon the actor taking her part. During the next scenes (III ii) her love for Bassanio is expressed in the way she tries to delay his choosing for fear of being deprived of his company if he should choose the wrong casket. Her expression of love is direct and, as she says herself, her maidenly modesty will not allow her to say more. Both Bassanio's and her love are well shown in their light play upon the words 'confess' and 'live'. These lines are formal and do not call for any great show of emotion. Here again, Shakespeare makes use of music to heighten the atmosphere and Portia is made to express the emotions which must have been storming within her breast in lines which leave nothing to the imagination, being very powerful in themselves:
"How all the other passions fleet to air,
As doubtful thoughts, and rash-embrac'd despair,
And shuddering fear, and green-ey'd jealousy,
O love! be moderate; allay thy ecstasy;
In measure rain thy joy; scant this excess;
I feel too much thy blessing; make it less,
For fear I surfeit!"

(III ii 108/114)

And, after Bassanio has found her portrait in the leaden casket, she has a beautiful speech in which she modestly thinks herself unworthy of him and wishes she were much better for his sake not her own, all of which serves most fittingly to express her emotions:

".......... though for myself alone
I would not be ambitious in my wish,
To wish myself much better; yet, for you
I would be trebled twenty times myself;
A thousand times more fair, ten thousand times
More rich;
That only to stand high in your account,
I might in virtues, beauties, livings, friends,
Exceed account; but the full sum of me
Is sum of nothing; which, to term in gross,
Is an unlesson'd girl, unschool'd, unpractis'd;
Happy in this, she is not yet so old
But she may learn; happier than this,
She is not bred so dull but she can learn;"

(III ii 151/164)

which lines end by the total surrender of herself and all that belongs to her into his hands, a very dramatic convention for expressing love.

Up to this point in the play, Shakespeare has helped, with all the technical devices at his command, the boy acting Portia's part. However, there now arises a difficulty, that of the boy's appearance as a learned advocate. If that part were acted by a boy of, say 14 years of age, then Shylock would
certainly become a ridiculous figure. Although Shakespeare makes fun of Shylock and causes us to laugh at him at times, nevertheless it seems very improbable that he intended him to be ridiculous. Not only this, but the whole scene of the trial would become a farce. Portia, in this scene the advocate, speaks of the justice of the laws of Venice, their fairness, the impossibility of not applying them, and what is more she has a long speech about mercy, which is certainly not intended to be taken lightly:

"The quality of mercy is not strain'd,  
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven  
Upon the place beneath: it is twice bless'd;  
It blesseth him that gives and him that takes:"

(IV i 184/187)

Comparing her two speeches, the one about the madness of youth in her first scene which is prompted by the fact that she cannot choose her husband, and this second one about an abstract quality 'mercy', one immediately realises that the former is composed of reflections which a love-sick boy or maiden often make, while the latter - in which Portia is no longer herself but a lawyer concerned with the condemnation of a man to death - is on a totally different level. It must of necessity be more serious or else the audience will feel that all the laws of Venice are a big joke, and all the suspense built around Antonio's danger false, and designed simply to lead to an anticlimax, by which Antonio's character would suffer in retrospect and his friendship for Bassanio diminish in value. The audience, after the play, will remember simply the excel-
lent trick played at the end upon Shylock to deprive him of all his property, and not the seriousness of the beginning of the play. Indeed the balance of the whole play would then be upset.

On the other hand, if Portia's part were acted by a youth of about 18 Years of age, his carefully preserved voice, his well learned gestures, accompanied by maturity, would add a great deal to the beauty and modesty of the character and would at the same time raise the scene of the judgment to the height which it rightly deserves. The words written in Bellario's letter to the Duke:

"I beseech you, let his lack of years be no impediment to let him lack a reverend estimation, for I never knew so young a body with so old a head." (IV i)

would still apply perfectly to a youth of 18, for who would expect so young a man to be a doctor at law? Whilst if they were applied to a boy of 14 or 15 years, especially dressed as a man, it would require too fertile an imagination which, I do not believe even the conventional Elizabethans could have possessed, to be accepted. A youth who would be capable of producing all the effects which a boy can produce, together with a little maturity which a boy would not possess - and at the same time avoid turning the trial into a farce - would certainly be much more useful and effective in Portia's part.

Nerissa contributes a great deal to Portia's character by giving her the opportunity to express her feelings, and at
the same time gains by appearing at her side. Her part is quite simple and much of her love making is a mere repetition of Portia's sentences, following very closely the pattern of formality and beauty set by the former, but more toned down. This, of course, strengthens the impression of Nerissa's fidelity to Portia, but the part lays no burden on a boy actor and would have been played by one.

Jessica who is really the second lady of the play, has a rather more demanding part. She appears without introduction and the fact that she is Shylock's daughter does not help to make her popular. But, as her very first words are expressions of grief at her state and as they serve to show her intense dislike of her father, and the difference in their characters, she succeeds in drawing a great deal of sympathy. Lorenzo's praise serves to establish her completely as a favourite. When disguised as a boy, her expression of modesty and the fact that she escapes from her father's house because of his way of life, make her part easy and well within a boy actor's scope.

As You Like It:

It is quite true that Rosalind is helped by technical devices in the play. She is first seen with her cousin and confidant, thus allowing her to establish her position as a well-bred, virtuous, deserving young lady who has fallen into misfortune. Her expressions of love are direct and without
too much cunning, as when she gives the chain to Orlando saying:

"Sir, you have wrestled well, and overthrown
More than your enemies."

(I ii 266/7)

and, in the forest of Arden (III ii), she is made to express her passion in her discussion with Celia. It must be noted that the verses written by Orlando also serve to raise Rosalind tremendously in our eyes. Then, when she hears of Orlando's fight with the lion (IV iii) she swoons, an easy but very effective device for the expression of a deep emotion.

Although helped by such devices, yet Rosalind is the principal character of the play and she has to hold the stage most of the time. She puts everybody down, including Touchstone and Jaques who had never been put down by anyone. In the forest scenes, even Orlando is subordinated to her, being shown as a love-sick youth. Now, in these scenes the boy acting Rosalind's part is not in woman's apparel, but in his own hose and doublet, so that, if he were a boy of between 13 to 15 years of age, his upbraiding of Orlando at first, then the bantering tone used with him, the abuse of Phoebe and of Jaques will all appear out of place for, when a boy abuses his elders it always appears coarse and rough in him which is just what Rosalind is not. Should she, when disguised as a boy, appear so it would spoil her character and reduce the charm and lightness, which are her greatest attributes. To avoid
such a danger it would have been to Shakespeare's advantage to have a youth of about 17 years act the part. Such a youth would still possess all the fresh and lively charm of a boy, plus a more developed wit, gained by experience and maturity which would make him much more attractive than a boy.

Rosalind also makes it very clear that she is "more than common tall". Had her height been due to the fashion of wearing chopines by the boy actors, then, when she resumed the guise of a boy, she would have removed them and there would have been no problem. But this is obviously not the case because she finds it necessary to mention specifically the question of her height and to make the point that, therefore, it will become her better to "suit me all points like a man." This would sound ludicrous if she appeared in the next scene as a boy of 14 or 15. Moreover, Mr. Davies admits that Rosalind is a part "admirably suited to the capacity of a boy actor of more than ordinary skill".¹ It being improbable that such a boy would have been available at all times in the company, there would have been no reason for not entrusting the part to a youth whose experience and maturity would have made up for the 'more than ordinary skill' of a younger boy.

Celia's part is very attractive and easy because she is shown faithful to Rosalind to such a degree that she voluntarily exiles herself from her father's court to follow her be-

¹. Davies, op. cit. p. 63
loved cousin. Also, she is always gay and trying to make Rosalind forget her griefs. The fidelity of the fool to her and his readiness to "go along o'er the wide world" with her, serves to raise her even more in our eyes. However, hers is a part which does not require a great show of emotion and it, therefore, falls well within the range of a boy actor.

Audrey's is a simple part, giving Touchstone the opportunity to display his foolishness. As she is not spoken of as beautiful or with any of the peculiar talents appertaining to a boy, but is described as clumsy and rafish by Touchstone, then her part could have been acted equally well by either a boy or a youth. Phoebe, on the other hand is shown as peevish and proud and she is abused by Rosalind for this. Her part too could have been acted by a boy or a youth. However, as boy actors seem to have been scarce it would be reasonable to suppose that such parts making no demands for a boy's peculiar talents would have been given to youths.

Twelfth Night:

In none of his previous plays has Shakespeare interwoven the main plot with a sub-plot so masterfully as in Twelfth Night. The sub-plot is as interesting as the main one, but Shakespeare has very cleverly succeeded in striking a balance and in keeping it subordinated. The burden for keeping this balance falls upon the shoulders of Viola. No such burden is ever laid on any of the other heroines, showing that the actor of Viola's part must necessarily have been one with far great-
er experience than a boy would generally have.

The characters in the sub-plot, Maria, Sir Toby, Feste, Malvolio, Fabian, Sir Andrew, – are very pleasant comic characters with great appeal to the audience and Viola has to cut out a place for herself amongst them and to keep it through the action, failing which the whole play would disintegrate. Now, Viola is not helped in her part by any supporting characters and, unlike Rosalind in *As You Like It*, the other characters are not at all subordinated to her. Furthermore, she does not enjoy the advantage of being in women’s clothes which would have given her the opportunity to use elaborate, formal gestures. She appears as a woman for a few minutes in her first very short scene and throughout the rest of the play is disguised as a boy having, consequently, to give a realistic interpretation of the part.

Viola is a witty heroine; she is more serious than Rosalind because of the nature of the plot but she is far from being dull; and while a comic part is generally quite easy to interpret, Viola’s is not. She has to be very careful and never fall into self-pity or melodrama, otherwise her appeal to the audience will diminish. On the other hand, she must not appear as a shrew totally careless of what the world has in store for her; she has, at all times, to appear serious, sober, intelligent, and well balanced, and it is exactly this balance which it is difficult to portray particularly for a boy – that
is so very appealing to us in Viola's character.

Olivia's sudden love for Orsino's messenger during his first appearance before her would indeed appear ridiculous if Viola were a boy. The convention of love at first sight for a boy of 14 years of age by a fully grown noblewoman is not acceptable even on the stage. Olivia's love is certainly not the kind of fond liking a young lady could develop for a young charming boy, neither is it an elderly woman's passion for a younger man, but is rather the type of emotion which a young woman would have for a young man of marriageable condition. And for Viola to appear as a fit companion for Olivia, whose part would have been acted by a boy of about 14 years of age dressed in the elaborate feminine fashion of the time, then the boy acting the former's part must have been at least 18 years of age. Furthermore, if Olivia's love for Viola appeared ridiculous, then the love she offers Sebastian would appear as ridiculous and would reduce Sebastian's character in the audience's view.

Another point that would seem to indicate that her part was played by a youth is the extremely close resemblance she bears to Sebastian. A close resemblance between two characters would be shown on the stage by similarity in attire and similarity of stature. These two would suffice to suggest resemblance without there being a necessity for the features of the two actors to be exactly alike, but without these the play-
wright would find it difficult to make his audience believe him. Now, Sebastian is spoken of as a strong, bold, young man, "the very devil" and his attitude during the duel with Sir Toby shows him in no other light. How would this look if his part were acted by a boy of 14 or 15 years of age of about the same height as the boy who would be taking Viola's part? The Duke does not leave a shred of doubt in our minds about the resemblance between Viola and Sebastian:

"One face, one voice, one habit, and two persons."
(V i 223)

And Antonio exclaims:

"How have you made division of yourself?
An apple cleft in two is not more twin
Than these two creatures. Which is Sebastian?"
(V i 228/231)

Such a close resemblance would never be accepted by the audience without some strong visual suggestion which would be that the actors of those parts were of, at least, very similar build. It must be kept in mind here that the boy acting Viola's part is in his own male attire, so that his stature cannot be increased at all by any devices as could have been the case if he were in female attire, all of which supports the idea that both Viola's and Sebastian's parts were played by youths of almost the same age.

Although Viola, in the beginning, tells the captain that she can sing, yet, she never does so and all the songs in the play are given to Feste. This transfer of songs has given ri-
se to discussions which are by no means ended. Certain critics hold the theory that the play was revised in 1602 and the songs assigned to Feste due to, either the breaking of the voice of the boy taking Viola's part, or to the unavailability of a boy with a good singing voice. Professor Dover Wilson was of the opinion at first that the revision took place in 1602 and the songs assigned to Armin because of his capacities as a singer. However, as Mr. Richmond Noble showed that Shakespeare's company possessed a leading boy with a good singing voice between 1600 and 1604 and as neither the clown in Hamlet nor Touchstone in As You Like It (both probably acted by Armin) have songs of the type given to Feste, Professor Wilson believes the most economical hypothesis to hold at present is that Twelfth Night was originally drafted with Robert Armin as Feste and with the boy singing the songs, except for the catches in II iii and "Hey Robin, jolly Robin" in IV ii. However, when the play was needed again in 1606, it had to be adapted to the changed conditions of the cast (either that the boy's voice had cracked or he was unavailable) and "Armin who had perhaps recently scored a success as a singing fool in Lear took the songs, with some new ones added, and changes in the dialogue were made accordingly."2

Olivia's part is a simple one requiring more beauty than

2. Ibid, 101
talent. She is introduced to us by the Duke first very effectively and then she is shown in her household among her servants forgiving the Fool for his misbehaviour and upbraiding Malvolio for his "self-love". It is surprising how much this short scene does for her character. She appears as a young lady, wealthy, noble, melancholic over the loss of her father and her brother. She is serious, just, and fair with the members of her household and then, when Caesario comes in, she immediately falls in love with him but still retains her dignity and is as clever in her answers as he is pressing in his questions. He lavishes his praise upon her and succeeds in raising her from the level of a mere mortal to that of a Goddess. Her expressions of love are very direct but poetical, requiring expressive recitation:

"Caesario, by the roses of the spring,  
By maidhood, honour, truth, and everything,  
I love thee so, that, maugre all thy pride,  
Nor wit nor reason can my passion hide."

(III i 161/4)

Maria's is a broad comic part concerned with the rollicking fun provided by Feste, Sir Toby, Sir Andrew and Fabian. She has a great advantage, that of a boy shown as the only intelligent, kind person in the whole group with the exception of Feste himself, which raises her to the latter's level. She is obviously very small in stature, and there being no particular emotions to be expressed in her part, except sheer devilry, it is one that would suit admirably a boy with a lively buoyant personality.
King Lear:

King Lear is a play in which Shakespeare has shown the lowest depths of human nature rising to the surface and being given full sway, through the unwise act of an old king, and the catharsis needed to restore things to their normal order. In such a play, there would be no place for a boy actor except in a part such as Cordelia's. She is shown as a model of virtue, filial adoration, and sincere love, that suffers from exposing itself to public view, even when this is necessary to save her own life. For the restraint needed in the acting of this part no one would be fitter than a boy who would give it a normal interpretation. She then disappears from the stage yet, strangely enough, she still occupies a central position in the audience's minds. The contrast between her sisters and herself, which we cannot help but think of all the time, keeps her ever present in our minds. In the scene where she meets her father, (IV vii) all the burden is on Lear himself and the boy needs to be passive here, because any attempt at impressing the audience through his own acting would be disastrous to the whole scene. Cordelia here gains a great deal from Lear's acting, just as Desdemona does from Othello's and Ophelia from Hamlet's. Thus, in the final scene, when she is brought on the stage dead in her father's arms, her appearance in that manner and her father's grief complete the impression of her being a supernatural creature whom anyone would be ready to adore.

Regan and Goneril are vigorous parts far beyond the capa-
city of a boy actor. They are personifications of villainy and nowhere before has Shakespeare made women so hideous and spiritually deformed. Even Tamora, in Titus Andronicus, does not reach the degree of villainy depicted in these two. They are nowhere subordinated to the main characters, but have to dominate and often share the stage with Lear - whose part would certainly have been acted by the best player in the company - Gloucester and Kent - whose parts are quite powerful - and what is more they are not helped in this by any technical devices. It is just their ability that has to come into play and, were it not very great, they would fail dismally. Virtue, gentleness, wit, are all simple enough for a boy but cruelty, viciousness, and depravity, are generally too difficult to be successfully depicted by him.

Their first appearance shows their hypocrisy and from then on they take no pains to hide their motives. When they refuse to let their old father keep his retainers and allow him to go out unprotected into the raging storm, they dominate the stage and "together they seem to form an evil force" which nothing can soften and oppose.1 The scene of physical cruelty (III vi) is very difficult too. Regan plucks Gloucester by the beard, and in order to keep this from appearing ludicrous, she has to do it with a great deal of seriousness and malice. Then she stabs a servant to death and puts out Gloucester's second eye. A boy could rarely perform such a

1. Davies, op. cit., p. 127
scene without turning it into a ridiculous farce, which it is far from being. Finally the jealousy between the two sisters over Edmund which is shown to arise from mere lust, and which leads to their deaths, completes the picture of their depravity and baseness. Here again, a boy would find it very difficult to interpret such a passion.

It is very interesting to notice how Regan and Goneril appear in connection with their husbands. As mentioned before, they are not at all subordinated to them and while Cornwall, Regan's husband, who takes an active share in the blinding of Gloucester also appears as very cruel, yet both women are more powerful, satirical, and perverse than even he, a man, appears to us. They form a strong contrast to Lady Macbeth; the latter cruel and ambitious as she is, shows great concern, love, and devotion to her husband so that her ambition is redeemed by not being egoistic but centered round her husband. Regan and Goneril on the other hand appear as devoid even of love for their husbands. They are not at all concerned with them and their devilish cruelty has only one end in view the gratification of their own base lust. Both characters require a maturity and breadth of experience which a boy would rarely have and, being particularly powerful, their parts would be far more effectively presented by youths.

**Macbeth:**

Lady Macbeth is not presented to us as a carefree, light,
'debutante' just setting out in life, there being no call for such a part in a play like Macbeth which deals with the characters and fates of great soldiers. Although not old, she is shown as a mature woman possessing a certain charm, gentleness, and poise as proved by Duncan's praise of her, "gracious hostess", and her fitting direction of the banquet.

She appears on the stage without any previous introduction - not a usual practice with Shakespeare where female characters are concerned - but she is allowed to have the stage all to herself in order to show her character without too much difficulty. In the following scenes when she appears with Macbeth and urges him to commit the crime, (I vii) the latter - whose part would have been acted by the best actor in the company - remains passive and facilitates her task by refraining from exhibiting all the power of his character, thus not laying too heavy a burden on the actor of his wife's part. However, a real difficulty arises in the banquet scene. Here, there is a clash between the acting technique used by Lady Macbeth and that used by Macbeth himself. Macbeth has to draw the audience's attention to himself and his violent reaction to the apparition of Banquo's ghost, yet this apparition would lose part of its significance if its relation to the banquet taking place around it were not clearly established. It is the duty of Lady Macbeth to establish this relation, to give plausible explanations to her guests for her husband's queer behaviour, and to upbraid him for his weakness without, at the same time, di-
verting the audience's attention from the conflict going on within him. This is a difficult task which Shakespeare rarely assigns to the actors of his female parts.

Regan and Goneril, as shown in *King Lear*, are very powerful characters requiring no subtlety in acting but simply directness, as they hold one attitude throughout the whole play. Lady Macbeth, on the other hand, does not hold one attitude at all; she shows tenderness and love for her husband while at other moments her overpowering ambition masters her. It is true that the transition from one attitude to the other is never abrupt, but it is there nevertheless in the opening scenes. Macbeth also, on his side, shows great love and concern for his wife and this would have been completely out of place if she appeared as a monster, which would be the case if her ambition only were set out during the play. In the sleepwalking scene (V i), Lady Macbeth is helped as much as possible by technical devices, by the dumb show she has first, then by the presence of the doctor and the waiting woman who carry on a running commentary on her actions and state of mind. The lines written for this scene although in prose have as powerful a rhythm as any verse and they help the actor a great deal in the performance. In Mr. Davies's opinion, the actor of the part should "dance this scene following the carefully planned rhythms of the prose", in order to be successful.¹ In this scene Lady Macbeth draws the audience's sympathy by the pitia-

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¹ Davies, *op. cit.* p. 131
ble suffering caused by her conscience and redeems her character from sheer monstrosity.

Her part, except for the banquet scene, does not include difficulties which would be beyond the capacity of a competent boy actor but the impression created on the whole, that of a mature woman strong enough to hold her position among Kings, Lords, and soldiers, and to influence a character as powerful as Macbeth, requires a sobriety, balance, and experience, which it would be difficult to find in a boy. This being the case, it seems advisable to place Lady Macbeth in the second category of Shakespeare's female characters namely, those which would have been acted to greater advantage by youths.

Lady Macduff's is a small part intended only to draw a great deal of pity from the audience, to show us to what depths Macbeth had fallen and to make us abhor the expedients to which he resorts in order to safeguard his unstable crown. The part requires little skill and a boy would be very effective in it, drawing the audience's sympathy from its knowledge of Lady Macduff's impending doom. Her son's part could have been acted by a younger boy, and the conversation would be carried out in a formal superficial manner, with a certain air of detachment about it, otherwise it would be far too overpowering emotionally.

The gentlewoman's part is essential in supporting Lady Macbeth in her sleep-walking scene and, as her part has no re-
quirement for the peculiar talents of a boy, it seems probable that Shakespeare would not have wasted one on it, but would have given it to a young man. The parts of Hecate and the witches are something of a problem. They are never spoken of by Shakespeare as 'witches' but they are far from being the august and auspicious figures which appear as great Ladies in Holinshed's illustration. The answer is supplied by Professor Wilson in his introduction to the play:

"Too witch-like to be Norns, too Norn-like to be witches, what then are they? The answer is that, borrowing from both conceptions, Shakespeare made something new of his own, as truly his own, Coleridge observes, 'as his Ariel and Caliban'. They had to be sufficiently like witches at first view for his audience to accept them as creatures within their ken; they had to seem increasingly mysterious and forbidding on further acquaintance to be recognised as creatures more terrible than witches. The Weird Sisters in Macbeth are the incarnation of evil in the universe, all the more effective dramatically that their nature is never defined."¹

This being the case it seems very likely that their parts would have been acted by men as tradition points out.²

**Antony and Cleopatra:**

Cleopatra's main characteristic is her majesty and royal dignity. Her sensuousness and fickleness, although strongly impressed, do not spring from any action but from the words, as will be shown later. In her first appearance with Antony, she is splendidly royal and her whims and caprices in no way

². Davies, *op. cit.* p. 170
detract from her majesty; even when she strikes the messenger, hales him up and down, and is about to stab him, her overbear- ing behaviour is accepted as a royal prerogative. The balance is firmly re-established when, a few scenes later, the messen- ger confesses that Octavia has no majesty in her gait saying:

"..................... She creeps;
Her motion and her station are as one;
She shows a body rather than a life,
A statue than a breather."

(III iii 22/25)

All of which characteristics are exactly the opposite of what we have been noticing in Cleopatra herself and which are made even stronger a few lines later by Charmian's exclamation:

"Hath he seen majesty? Isis else defend;
And serving you so long!"

(III iii 46/7)

In this scene, if Cleopatra's part were acted by a boy, the striking of the messenger would appear as a shrewish act.

The question of Cleopatra's outburst after she is taken captive:

"..................... Saucy lictors
Will catch at us, like strumpets, and scald rimers
Ballad us out o' tune; the quick comedians
Extemporally will stage us, and present
Our Alexandrian revels. Antony
Shall be brought drunken forth, and I shall see
Some squeaking Cleopatra boy my greatness
I' the posture of a whore."

(IV ii 213/20)

is very interesting. It has been supposed that this was a direct reference to the voice of the actor taking Cleopatra's
part. But, even if his voice were really squeaking, there would be no interest whatever in drawing the audience's attention to it at such a point in the play, after the latter has accepted the said actor as Cleopatra for four acts. This would destroy the balance and spoil the whole play. As the audience would have very little time to think of this sentence, being taken up with the intensity of the action, it seems that no more significance should be attached to these lines than as a bitter expression of Cleopatra's irritation, especially as the actor of her part was probably a youth with anything but a squeaking voice, as will be shown further on. A very acceptable explanation is provided by Sir E.K. Chambers: He thinks that this might be a direct reference to Samuel Daniel's Cleopatra which was in the repertory of a rival company and which appeared in 1594. Sir E.K. Chambers thinks that Shakespeare may have wanted to ridicule this play and bases his idea on the fact that Daniel's play was altered in 1607 following this reference in the former's play.¹

A great number of recent presentations of Antony and Cleopatra show Cleopatra in the posture of a highly sensuous woman, almost a whore, whose one aim is to entrap Antony in the meshes of her voluptuousness. This a misrepresentation which spoils and debases the whole play. It is very true that, while reading the play, a strong impression of her sensuousness is given but, if the play is examined closely, it will be no-

¹ Chambers, Sir E.K., op. cit. v. 3, p. 275
noticed that this is conveyed almost exclusively in the words and not in the action. During the whole of Act I she appears as playful, fickle, taunting Antony for his subservience to Caesar and Fulvia. It is only in Act II, after Enobarbus's glowing description of her, that she is fully established as the personification of sensuality and voluptuousness. And little wonder that the impression should be so powerful after one has heard or read words such as the following:

".................. From the barge
A strange invisible perfume hits the sense
Of the adjacent wharfs. The city cast
Her people out upon her, and Antony,
Enthron'd i' the market-place, did sit alone,
Whistling to the air; which, but for vacancy,
Had gone to gaze on Cleopatra too
And made a gap in nature."
(II ii 216/223)

".................. I saw her once
Hop forty paces through the public street;
And having lost her breath, she spoke; and panted
That she did make defect perfection,
And, breathless, power breathe forth."
(II ii 235/239)

"Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale
Her infinite variety; other women cloy
The appetites they feed, but she makes hungry
Where most she satisfies; for vilest things
Become themselves in her, that the holy priests
Bless her when she is riggish."
(II ii 240/48)

Furthermore, there is no ground for believing that Cleopatra would have been presented on Shakespeare's stage in the extremely tightfitting dresses with the plunging necklines which she is often given today. An illustration of Mrs. Hartley as Cleopatra (1776) shows her wearing the feminine costume
of 18th-century England, and Prof. A. Nicoll believes this
illustration as well as eighteenth-century theatrical condi-
tions to have been "largely traditional and consequently that
they throw considerable light on the earlier theatre."¹ Evidence
supporting Prof. Nicoll's opinion is to be found in the
drawing of Act I of Titus Andronicus made by Henry Peacham in
1595 and which shows Tamora in a very loose gown, with long
sleeves, open at the throat wearing a crown and pleading with
Titus for her son's life.² Hence it would not be far from the
truth to assume that Cleopatra, in the original productions,
must have appeared in a costume similar to Mrs. Hartley's and
to Tamora's, both of which are far from being as suggestive as
the costumes given her in modern productions. The impression
of sensuality is enhanced by Cleopatra's own words about the
revels she had had with Antony:

"That time - O times! -
I laugh'd him out of patience; and that night
I laugh'd him into patience: and next morn,
Ere the ninth hour, I drunk him to his bed;
Then put my tires and mantles on him, whilst
I wore his sword Philippian."

(IIv20/25)

And by the numerous references made to the strange, almost
hypnotic, hold she has over Antony. As, when the disrupted
state of Rome demands his immediate departure, yet his "full
heart remains in use with" her and Antony confesses:

2. Wilson, John Dover, ed. Titus Andronicus, Cambridge (1948)
"Our separation so abides and flies,
    That thou, residing here, go'st yet with me,
And I, hence fleeting, here remain with thee."
    (I iii 103/3)

The impression is fortified when, during the first battle,
Cleopatra withdraws and Antony immediately follows her, aban-
donning his whole fleet to the enemy:

    "She once being loof'd,
The noble ruin of her magic, Antony,
Claps on his sea-wing, and like a doting mallard,
Leaving the fight in height, flies after her."
    (III viii 18/21)

Now, the picture is complete and Cleopatra appears indeed as
a charmer, enchaining all the faculties of her lover with her
voluptuousness. But all this has been conveyed by words and
there have been hardly any actions on the stage that actually
show it.

In the scenes between Cleopatra and Antony, the burden
is divided equally between the two and neither is subordina-
ted to the other. There is no question here, as in Hamlet
for Ophelia or in Othello for Desdemona, of Cleopatra's remain-
ing passive while Antony is acting. She has as much to do as
he has and his part being certainly acted by the best actor in
the company, it would take an actor of no mean talent and ex-
perience to act before him, without appearing inadequate. The
first scenes are light and allow Cleopatra to express her va-
rious, playful, whimsical moods. But, as the play progresses
the emotion increases and reaches its zenith in the scene of
Antony's death where it is very deep and exacting. But here,
it is helped - to a certain extent - by the poetry:

"O! wither'd is the garland of the war,
The soldier's pole is fall'n; young boys and girls
Are level now with men; the odds is gone,
And there is nothing left remarkable
Beneath the visiting moon."

(IV xiii 64/68)

After which Cleopatra swoons. However, she swoons only after she has given full vent to her sorrow so that the swoon does not really replace all the emotion, as it does in Imogen's and Rosalind's cases, but serves to heighten it.

A little relief is then brought by the action. Cleopatra submits to Caesar, is tricked into opening her tower, and is prevented from taking her own life. The emotions then rise again to a climax to which they had never risen before and culminate in the death scene which is one of the most difficult scenes in Shakespeare. Here, Cleopatra is quiet and dignified and she has to convey to the audience the intensity of her feelings. She is helped in this, to a certain extent, by the poetry and the setting of the whole scene. Having been prevented from stabbing herself she arranges to have asps brought to her in a fig basket and prepares to die. The effect is heightened terribly by the way she puts on her royal robes before death, and the great calm and courage she shows, before applying the asps to her bosom and arms. Here she has no long speeches in which to pour out her feelings but a brief moment, poignant to the extreme, half sentences and exclamations packed with emotion:
"............... Peace, peace!
Dost thou not see my baby at my breast,
That sucks the nurse asleep?"
(V i 311/13)

In these few words the frivolous, fickle, sensual picture previously given of her is completely blotted out and her dignity and calm in the face of calamity raise her to the sublimity of heroism.

It is Mr. Davies's opinion that "Shakespeare never trusts a boy actor with a death scene"1. This statement is not entirely true and needs a little modification. Shakespeare has given death scenes to boy actors in Juliet's, Desdemona's and Cleopatra's parts; whenever he has done so, he has helped the actors with all the devices at his command. In Juliet's case, when she wakes up in the tomb, she is not alone but with Friar Lawrence who informs her of Romeo's death and tries to take her out of the tomb with all speed. She refuses and has only a very short moment when she kisses Romeo hoping to wet her lips with the poison he had drunk and then she immediately stabs herself having heard the watch approaching. In Desdemona's case, she draws a great deal of pity by her pleas for life and, after Othello has smothered her, she speaks only three short sentences; the first stating that she had been murdered unjustly:

"O! falsely, falsely murder'd." (V ii 113)

1. Davies, op. cit., p. 118
The second proclaiming her unstained innocence:

"A guiltless death I die." (V ii 122)

And concluding with the third which is an answer to Emilia's "O! who hath done this deed?" and which constitutes a supreme act of forgiveness for her murderer whom she still loves:

"Nobody; I myself; farewell:
Commend me to my lord. O! farewell!"
(V ii 124/5)

In Cleopatra's case, the atmosphere is created by the wearing of her royal robes and crown and by the lines already quoted above. The scene is concluded with the words:

"As sweet as balm, as soft as air, as gentle,
O Antony! -"
(V ii 315/16)

The sweetness of balm, the softness of air, the gentleness of contrasted with the bitterness of defeat, the harshness and finality of death surrounding Cleopatra, are overwhelming.

In all the cases mentioned above, Shakespeare has helped his male actors of women's parts to perform their death scenes effectively without making too heavy a demand for difficult acting. This will appear more clearly if we remember the death scenes given to male characters such as, for instance, Lear, Antony, and Othello in which all the emotion has to be conveyed by the actor himself unaided by any technical devices or by an atmosphere created by the dramatist.

Octavia's part is an ungrateful one serving only as a deep
contrast to Cleopatra, and fitting very well a boy actor's capacities. Although she appears as virtuous, noble, beautiful, and intelligent, yet her virtue and nobility remain cold being contrasted with the glory which surrounds the sensuous, pleasure loving characters of the play. She appears also as something of a victim first because Caesar himself does not appear to be very sincere in his love for her; secondly, of course, because of Antony's infidelity to her which she does not appear to deserve. This has made her sympathetic to the audience.

Charmian and Iris are indeed very charming characters upon whom Shakespeare has lavished more attention than he usually does give to secondary characters. They are playful, gay, frivolous maidens, ideal companions for a queen such as Cleopatra. But, in the moments of defeat and grief, they show a nobility and unselfishness which raises their characters to unexpected heights so that their deaths appear as minor catastrophes, second in importance only to Antony's and Cleopatra's. They are parts that are admirably fitted to the charm and lightness of boy actors.

Although the larger part of Shakespeare's heroines were acted by boys of between 12 to 15 years of age, yet Shakespeare did not limit himself to such actors. He created more difficult women's parts, such as the ones examined in this chapter, in which a boy's charm, beauty, and power of elocution would
never suffice to convey the adequate emotions. These are all parts in which the complexity of the emotions shown, the strength required by the parts, and the technical difficulties presented would require actors of greater experience, maturity and depth of expression than a boy could generally have. Knowing, as we do, that dramatists often wrote with their actors in mind, it is very probable that these parts were created when youths of between 16 to 20 years of age, still possessing unbroken voices and the charm of boys together with the maturity and experience with which their age would have furnished them, were made available to Shakespeare.

In spite of the absence of actresses from the stage, Shakespeare has succeeded in creating, through youths, such masterpieces of femininity as Viola, Rosalind, and Cleopatra, which no later dramatist has yet equalled. Women have come to the stage to stay - time will tell whether for better or for worse - but it is a point worth pondering that since their arrival, three centuries ago, no woman's part has gained the immortality of some of Shakespeare's heroines.
CHAPTER IV

A Comparison Between Women's Parts as Created by Shakespeare and as Created by some Dramatists in his Time

Shakespeare's more difficult and complex heroines requiring, over and above technical skill, a depth of emotion and maturity which a boy would rarely have were as I have tried to shew very probably acted by youths of between 16 to 20 years of age. However, even the women's parts definitely acted by boys of between 13 to 15 years of age required more technical skill for effective performance than the women's parts created by other dramatists of his time so that his actors must have received a special coaching from him. It will, therefore, be interesting to make a comparison between Shakespeare's plays and the plays written specifically for children's companies to bring this point out more clearly. The most typical of the dramatists who wrote for children's companies is John Lyly and a comparison of his works with Shakespeare's will prove most useful.

All of Lyly's plays written between 1579 and 1599, except one, deal with the fantastic legends of Greek mythology and history which appealed to the audience as a new fashion does, for
a certain time and then falls in forgetfulness being too fanciful. Out of eight plays, five - Sapho and Phao, Gallathea, Endimion, Midas, and Love's Metamorphosis - deal with Gods and Goddesses and supernatural events that have no relation whatsoever to the lives of ordinary men; one is about Greek history, Campaspe; one is a pastoral, The Woman in the Moon; and only one, Mother Bombie, is about actual Elizabethan characters.

Shakespeare's plays, on the other hand, deal with Kings, their fortunes and misfortunes, presenting to the audience a whole period of English history, at a time when there was a very close connection between the monarchy and the people and when almost any event in the former's lives affected the latter. They deal with lovers and their adventures, merchants and their lives, soldiers and their wars and, above all, with persons who in spite of their foreign names, garbs and sometimes colour of skin, are typically Elizabethan and react in a manner which any Elizabethan could understand.

Drawing a parallel between the characters created by both dramatists may seem absurd as they wrote on totally different levels, and it might seem to express a condemnation of Iyly. However, this is not at all the aim of such a comparison. But some characters have to be compared simply to clarify the statements made above. Shakespeare, bent mainly on depicting men and women with their emotions, feelings, and passions, invents incidents suited to bring these out and he creates a Hamlet, hesitating to avenge his father's death until he has sufficient
proof of his uncle's guilt; a Lear driven insane by his daughters' ingratitude and cruelty; an Othello torn between his love and his jealousy; a Petruchio who cunningly and wittily tames the most shrewish woman of her time; a Benedick who in spite of his wit and firm intention to remain a bachelor, falls into the trap, is in love, and marries; an Autolycus, a rogue and thief, yet attractive and delightful; a Falstaff, cowardly and deceitful, yet immensely lovable. Lyly, on the other hand, bent on providing refined and delicate amusement through highly sophisticated plots, invents characters to fit his action and creates an Alexander whose main traits are generosity, mercy, delight in philosophy, and love of adventures and war; a Phaedra tormented by the beauty and eternal youth Venus has bestowed upon him; Tyturus and Melebeus interested in saving their daughters from the dragon; Endimion, hopelessly in love with Cynthia and who, after years of suffering, accepts to go on loving her without the remotest hope of ever having his love requited; Midas endowed with the curse to turn all he touches into gold because of his greed; Erisichthon, a farmer jealous of the honours paid to a goddess by her nymphs.

The contrast is even more striking where women are concerned. Lyly creates Campaspe, Timoclea, Cynthia, all personifications of virtue; Sappho whose main attributes are beauty and pride; Gallathea and Phillida personifications of modesty and fidelity; Sophronia and Caelia, prodigies of filial love and devotion; Protea sold by a cruel father to a merchant who remains
faithful to her father and saves him from the dangerous fascinations of a siren. Shakespeare, on the other hand, creates a Juliet modest yet wilful enough to love the greatest enemy of her house and to marry him secretly; a Rosalind, virtuous yet strong enough to put on the disguise of a boy and travel in a forest; Viola, a modest, young and beautiful maiden disguised as a page and torn between her love for her master and his love for another woman; Portia, wealthy and beautiful who, disguised as an advocate, decides a matter of life and death in a court; Maria, a serving woman, witty, debonair, and intelligent; Cleopatra, the essence of voluptuousness and sensuousness, yet rising to great heights of nobility.

Such comparisons could go on and on. They are not drawn here as has been said, with the intention of disparaging Lyly, but simply to bring out the striking difference between his characters and Shakespeare's. Lyly, writing for boy companies, avoided giving them complex characters with different and conflicting emotions to portray, for these would have been above their abilities. Shakespeare, writing for adult actors and, at that, the best to be had in his time, could permit himself any length of freedom. However, this discussion has been undertaken with a view to comparing the women created by both dramatists. From the comparison drawn above, it will be clear that Lyly's women, one and all, are personifications of either a virtue or a vice. They are static, holding one attitude throughout the whole play and never changing it, so that they
are not required to portray changing emotions, and they remain mere abstracts never rising into real life or gaining the dignity of flesh and blood. They have no conflicts to show and only very superficial emotions which can be expressed adequately in their speeches without calling for any elaborate acting. Compare, to this end, Campaspe's confession of love to Apelles:

"Well, I must be gone: but this assure yourself, that I had rather be in thy shop grinding colours than in Alexander's court following higher fortunes."

(IV iv 15/17)

With Juliet's confession:

".................... O gentle Romeo!
If thou dost love, pronounce it faithfully:
Or if thou think'st I am too quickly won,
I'll frown and be perverse and say thee nay,
So thou wilt woo; but else, not for the world."

(II ii 93/97)

And when Romeo offers to swear:

"Do not swear at all;
Or, if thou wilt, swear by thy gracious self,
Which is the god of my idolatry,
And I'll believe thee."

(II ii 113/15)

The expressions of love in Lyly are set in highly formal scenes resembling far more a ballet than a declaration of love and leaving no place for any display of feeling. Sapho's declaration to Phao is an example of this:

"Phao: Indeed I know no herb to make lovers sleep but Hearts ease, which because it groweth so high, I cannot reach; for -"
Sapho: For whom?
Phao: For such as love,
Sapho: It groweth very low, and I can never stoop to it, that -
Phao: That what?
Sapho: That I may gather it: but why do you sigh so,
Phao?
Phao: It is mine use Madam.
Sapho: It will do you harm, and me too; for I never hear one sigh, but I must sigh! also.
Phao: It were best then that your Ladyship give me leave to be gone: for I can but sigh.
Sapho: Nay stay: for now I begin to sigh, I shall not leave, though you be gone. But what do you think best for your sighing to take it away?
Phao: Yew Madam.
Sapho: Me?
Phao: No Madam, Yew of the tree.
Sapho: Then will I love yew the better. And indeed I think it would make me sleep too, therefore all other simples set aside, I will simply use only yew.
Phao: Do Madam: for I think nothing in the world so good as yew.

(III iv 61/84)

and yet, in a similar scene in Shakespeare's The Tempest, also set in formal style, Miranda's declaration to Ferdinand is far more real and far more living:

Mira: Alas! now, pray you;
Work not so hard: I would the lightning had
Burnt up those logs that you are enjoin'd to pile!
Pray, set it down and rest you: when this burns,
'Twill weep for having wearied you. My Father
Is hard at study; pray now, rest yourself:
He's safe for these three hours.
Fer: O most dear mistress,
The sun will set, before I shall discharge
What I must strive to do.
Mira: If you'll sit down
I'll bear your logs the while. Pray, give me that;
I'll carry it to the pile.
Fer: No precious creature:
I had rather crack my sinews, break my back,
Than you should such dishonour undergo,
While I sit lazy by.
Mira: It would become me
As well as it does you: and I should do it
With much more ease; for my good will is to it,
And yours it is against.
........................................
You look wearily.
For: No, noble mistress; 'tis fresh morning with me
When you are by at night. I do beseech you -
Chiefly that I might set it in my prayers -
What is your name?

(III i 15/35)

Lyly's women develop, when they develop at all, in a horizontal line. Thus when he wants to depict a woman's changing moods, he shows her as affected by the changes of the moon, a completely exterior event and a convention as old as man himself, requiring no demanding emotion and producing a Pandora. Shakespeare, with the same end in view, portrays a woman whose changing moods are caused by her own interior character and not by any exterior events, producing a Cleopatra whose very defects and vices appear as qualities and virtues.

A direct result of this is that Shakespeare's language alternating between prose and poetry is always powerful having something to convey, an emotion, a feeling, an idea. Lyly's, having only superficial emotions to convey is highly formalised and has taken its name from his famous book, Euphues. Another point of interest is the frequency of songs, music, and dancing in Lyly's plays. Shakespeare introduces these when necessary to create the atmosphere or to enhance the beauty of one of the characters. However, Lyly arranges things in such a way that music, singing and dancing are introduced into each one of his plays irrespective of whether they are required to help the play or not, but it
is only natural that in plays intended for the amusement of a learned, cultured class music and singing be given a prominent part. Thus Lyly's women's parts demand from their actors skill in elocution and music, both of which were basic subjects in the education of the choir boys of Paul's and the Chapel; a knowledge of courtly manners which they would gain from their surroundings and training; and no more. Shakespeare's women's parts, even those meant to be acted by boys, often require greater skill in elocution and gestures, an adequate expression of feelings, as well as more charm and warmth than Lyly's and these qualities must have been developed by the actor or the dramatist to whom the boys were apprenticed, being noticeably lacking in Lyly's parts.

Having seen the difference between Shakespeare's women's parts and those in plays written specifically for boy companies, it will be useful now to compare them with women's parts created by another contemporary dramatist. Ben Jonson was chosen because, like Shakespeare, his plays are about actual everyday people who could be understood by the Elizabethan public at large. However, the likeness ends here. While Shakespeare's aim was not primarily to satirise society but to create characters as he imagined them, Jonson's main purpose, one might say, lay in bringing to life the follies of society and in ridiculing them. This makes it very difficult to draw a parallel between any particular plays by the two dramatists. Jonson's characters are endowed with great dramatic vigour and vitality; they are alive and power-
ful but they lack something which Shakespeare's characters possess to a very high degree. Unfortunately, this something with which Shakespeare endows his characters, raising them from the level of common mortals and making them unique, is indefinable. All his characters possess it and it springs from his deep understanding of human beings; Shakespeare was first and foremost interested in men and women as human beings and he presents each one of his characters with the understanding which love alone can yield. Jonson not so much interested in human beings for their own sake presents his characters as types of the faults commonly found in people and it is this that establishes the great difference between Jonson's comedy of humours and Shakespeare's romantic comedy.

Thus, all of Jonson's plays, apart from Catiline and Sejanus are variations of practically the same theme. Such themes by their very nature, portray no deep emotion, nor conflicting passions which are the most difficult to act and thus, lay no particularly heavy burden upon the boy actors. Jonson excels in depicting male characters such as Volpone, Morose, Subtle, Epicure Mammon, Touchstone, Sir Petronel Flash, all satirical parts meant to display the folly, hypocrisy, greed, and deceit of men. But the women tend to be much more types and they always remain subordinated to the men. We never find a Rosalind, a Viola, a Beatrice, a Katherine, around whom the interest of the whole play revolves. Jonson's women fall into two very distinct categories: the elderly matronly women together with the coarse co-
mic ones; and the young ones. The former's parts would have been acted to better advantage by youths or even men. Examples of these are numerous:

Dame Purecraft, Dame Overdo, Joan Trash, Ursula (the pig woman), and Punque Alice in *Bartholomew Fair*; The Nurse, Prudence, Pinnacia Stuffe in the *New Inn*; Madam Haughty, Madam Centaure, Mrs. Mavis, Mrs. Trusty, Mrs. Otter in *The Silent Woman*; Lady Tub and Dame Sibil Turfe in *A Tale of a Tub*; Tib (wife of Cob) in *Every Man in His Humour*; Lady Loadstone, Keep (Nurse), Mother Chair, Mrs. Polish in *The Magnetick Lady*; Dol Common in *The Alchemist*; most of these display certain vices, follies, and incongruities, in society and their principal purpose is to appear contemptible in the eyes of the audience and thus lead the spectators to avoid such faults, which was Jonson's aim. Thus, the elderly women could very well have been represented by youths, and the coarse low ones, such as the pig woman, by men.

The parts of the second category, Jonson's young women, all fall well within a boy actor's capacity: such are Bianca and Hesperida in *Every Man in His Humour*; Fallace and Saviolina in *Every Man Out of His Humour*; Celia in *Volpone*; Epicoene in *The Silent Woman*; Plaesance and Placentia Steel in *The Magnetick Lady*; Laetitia and Frances in *The New Inn*. All of these parts require no more than superficial emotions. None portrays conflicting passions or deep feelings which require maturity and skill to be performed effectively. They are the parts of a young Lady of about 14 years of age (Placentia Steel) whose uncle will not al-
low her to marry in order to keep her portion in his hands; that of a married woman (Celia) whose husband is willing to prostitute her to an old bachelor in the hope of gaining a share of his inheritance; that of a supposed woman (Epicoene) who rarely speaks, and that in an extremely low voice until she is married and who, after her marriage, never stops talking. Obviously, such parts compared to even the simpler women's parts in Shakespeare lay practically no burden at all upon a boy actor.

However, there are a few technical points in Jonson of great value to the present study. In The Devil is An Ass, Wittipol is disguised as a woman and introduced into the company of several wealthy ladies with whom he carries on a long and elaborate discussion about fashions in Spanish feminine society, and the ladies never for one moment suspect that the person who is speaking to them is a young man. Again, Wittipol, in the play, is a young man who has travelled for some time on the continent all alone in order to forget his first love but without much success and he, therefore, could not very well have been less than 17 or 18 and yet, he does impersonate a woman's part and as close a friend as Manly does not recognise his voice for quite a long time. It is only later in the scene that he begins to suspect something. This shows that his voice was the same when acting a woman's part as, when in his normal capacity as a young man.

In the play there is also a direct reference by Engine to Dick Robinson as a highly competent actor of female parts and
Meer-Craft accepts to employ him in impersonating the Spanish Lady. However, in act III iv, Engine fails to bring Dick Robinson and presents Wittipol as the gentleman who will undertake the task. Meer-Craft is not satisfied and asks Engine why he disclosed the plot to Wittipol upon which Engine replies: "Why, Robinson would ha' told him, you know," hinting that they are close friends. When Meer-Craft objects to Wittipol's height, Engine says "Robinson's as tall as he." Finally, the reference made in the play to a performance of 'The Devil' as a new play, to the Blackfriars as the house, being all true, then it is very probable that Dick Robinson himself did act Wittipol's part as well as the Spanish Lady's. If then Jonson would employ Dick Robinson or an actor as old as he, to impersonate the Spanish Lady there seems to remain very little doubt that Shakespeare would have taken advantage of the same possibility and used youths in such far more difficult and demanding parts as Cleopatra, Goneril, Regan, Viola and others.

It is interesting to note that both Jonson and Shakespeare use the device of a boy disguised as a woman in the play very rarely. Jonson has used it three times in The Devil is An Ass, The Silent Woman, and the New Inn where Frank, in reality a girl who is disguised as a boy in the play, is again redressed as a lady in order to trick Beaufort and Latimer. Shakespeare uses the device twice, in the Induction to The Taming of the Shrew and in The Merry Wives of Windsor. The reason for the rare use of such a device as compared to the frequent use of the young
woman disguised as a boy cannot be known with certainty. It might be due to the fact that very few boys would ever find the need to go about disguised as ladies except in a highly artificial plot for which neither Shakespeare nor Jonson would have had any particular liking.

On the other hand, the device of the girl disguised as a boy recurs time after time in Shakespeare; in As You Like It, The Merchant of Venice, Twelfth Night, All's Well that Ends Well, and in Cymbeline, while Jonson uses it only once in The New Inn where the boy Frank is in reality Laetitia, Lord Frampul's younger daughter. Again the reason for the recurrence of the device in Shakespeare and its rarity in Jonson cannot be known. It might be that the former's plots being centered round adventures of one kind or another permitted the use of such a device, while the latter's, aimed at satirising society, could not find much place for it.

A final point to be discussed is that of physical love making. There is no reason for us to believe that the Elizabethan dramatists refused to include it in their plays or that they shunned scenes which required it. However, Shakespeare worked out these scenes in such a manner that he "never set the boy to do anything ridiculous or embarrassing."1 Mr. Davies, assuming that Mr. Granville-Barker included kissing under the

heading of ridiculous and embarrassing things which Shakespeare would not have required his boy actors to do states that "the amount of kissing and by-play which may be inferred from the text is sufficient to arouse doubt as to the correctness of Mr. Granville-Barker's opinion on this aspect of Shakespearian drama"\(^1\), and goes on to mention the kissing in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona, The Merchant of Venice, Much Ado About Nothing, Romeo and Juliet; Othello, Troilus and Cressida, Antony and Cleopatra, and Titus Andronicus*, in support of his opinion.

However, it is unsafe to assume that a man as experienced as Mr. Granville-Barker in stagecraft would consider kissing as ridiculous or embarrassing. He must have realised that any squamishness in the boy actors would have been removed by their training, but the ridiculous things would be what he calls "cruder phases of the emotional traffic between male and female"\(^2\) which, according to him, Shakespeare's audience must have taken for granted for Shakespeare "could make no effective play with them."\(^3\) The text of Shakespeare's plays does not justify this opinion fully. In plays in which the women's parts would have been acted to greater advantage by boys, Shakespeare has avoided almost always the show of physical passion, but in plays in which the women's parts would have been acted to greater advantage by youths he has not done so.

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1. Davies, *op. cit.*; p. 189
2. Granville-Barker, *op. cit.*; p. 56
Thus, in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, the only kiss between Julia and Proteus is set in a formal scene (II ii). They are saying goodbye to each other, exchanging souvenirs, and they seal the bargain as Julia says "with a holy kiss". There is nothing of passion here, and although neither Julia nor Proteus are great heroic characters, yet a farewell kiss can be performed most realistically without causing a boy any embarrassment whatever. The kiss with which Bassanio claims Portia as his betrothed wife, although quite different, would be no more embarrassing than the former. Mr. Davies in his examination of the play states that "Portia in this scene, exhibits the characteristic verbosity of the Shakespearian comedy heroine, revealing her emotions through subtle and expressive poetry"; if then her style of acting is formal, why should the embrace "be naturalistic in technique" as he states in his last chapter? It would doubtless be naturalistic on Bassanio's part who would accept the actor before him as Portia but it would require no change of attitude on Portia's side.

In *Much Ado About Nothing*, it is true that the kiss is given special importance by what Mr. Davies calls the device of the "disappointed climax whereby a composer gives added value to a resolution or modulation by approaching it once without completing it, only to return later to achieve a satisfactory conclusion"; but it can hardly be called a passionate kiss;

1. Davies, *op. cit.*, p. 54
3. *Ibid.*, 188
rather is it used to put an end to the exchange of pointed 
repartee between Beatrice and Benedick and to show that she 
could not be overcome in anyway except by kissing, as Bene-
dick himself exclaims "Peace! I will stop your mouth." (V iv) 
Here it is much more the symbol of the male's final victory 
over the female, and it is the only fitting victory because 
it leaves us with the impression that Beatrice was still not 
totally subdued.

Romeo kisses Juliet once during the feast but, here again, 
(I v) one does not expect a great display of passion on a crow-
ded stage. In the balcony scene, "the play's pre-eminent love 
scene"\(^1\), the lovers are kept well apart. At the time of their 
parting when it is obvious that Romeo had spent the night with 
Juliet the scene must necessarily be set in a formal mould to 
allow the boy acting Juliet's part to express the emotion ade-
quately and so the kissing on Juliet's part would be as formal 
as the rest of her acting. Before their respective deaths (V 
iii) the kisses have no passion but all the grandeur and solemn-
nity of a final, and irrevocable parting. The kiss given by 
Othello to Desdemona can hardly be supposed to have anything 
embarrassing for the boy acting her part as she is shown asleep 
(V ii); similarly Iachimo's kissing of Imogen, (II ii). The 
kisses require great experience on the part of Othello and Ia-
chimo to be effective but do not make the least demand of the 
actors of the women's parts. The same is true of the actor un-

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\(^1\) Granville-Barker, \textit{op. cit.} p. 54
undertaking the part of Richard II's Queen. They kiss twice but, throughout the scene (V i), the stress is laid on Richard's tragedy and sorrow not on the kisses and these appear as the symbol of the final division between Richard and all that had belonged to him. They are parting kisses and we have no reason to suppose that a boy would need special training to perform them adequately. Finally in King Henry V (V ii), we have the one kiss which Henry gives Katharine when he takes her as his wife and here the scene, being centered around magnificent historical figures and great dramatic characters, has no place for any pronounced physical passion.

*Troilus and Cressida* is the one play that differs. Cressida is the only female character - acted to greater advantage by a boy - in which Shakespeare has given primary importance to physical passion and even lust. This was necessary because of the nature of the plot. Her kisses with Troilus are passionate and must appear so to the audience in order that her faithlessness later appear all the more repellant. Her kisses to the Grecian generals can hardly be called innocent or pure and later still the scene with Diomedes must include a certain amount of caressing otherwise Troilus's feverish and tormented commenting would seem absurd. Cressida, unlike the other women, does have to show sensuality and it is significant that none of the women's parts examined above have the same characteristics, so that she appears to be the exception that proves the rule.
On the other hand, because a young actor of between 16 to 20 years would be able to dissimulate very well any embarrassment caused by more pronounced physical contact, Shakespeare has introduced passion freely into the plays in which the women's parts would have been acted to greater advantage by youths. Two examples of this are Cleopatra and Tamora. As mentioned before, a great deal of the former's voluptuousness is brought out by the dialogue; however, more passion is needed in her part than in a part such as Portia's in *The Merchant of Venice*, for instance. The difficulty could be easily overcome if a youth acted the part. Tamora's part, as well as the parts of Regan and Goneril, need to show not only passion but lust. This is more explicit in Tamora whose embraces with the Moor are shown as arising from sexual appetite.

However, it is interesting to note that Shakespeare, even in the second category of female characters mentioned above, never goes as far as Jonson, for instance, in depicting love making. The scene in the latter's *The Devil is an Ass* where Wittipol is wooing Mrs. Fitzdottrel has the following stage directions:

"He grows more familiar in his courtship, plays with her paps, kisseth her hands, etc."

And the words which it accompanies suggest elaborate caresses:

"That since love hath the honour to approach
These sister-swelling breasts; and touch this soft,
And rosy hand; he hath the skill to draw
Their nectar forth, with kissing; and could make
More wanton salts, from this brave promontory,
Down to this valley, than the nimble Roe;
Could play the hopping Sparrow, 'bout these nets;
And sporting Squirrel in these crisped groves;
Bury himself in every silk-worm's kell,
Is here unravel'd; run into the snare,
Which every hair is, cast into a curl,
To catch a Cupid flying: Bathe himself
In milk, and roses, here, and dry him, there;
Warm his cold hands, to play with this smooth, round,
And well-turn'd chin, as with the Billiard ball;
Roll on these lips, the banks of love, and there
At once both plant, and gather kisses."

This has no counterpart in any of Shakespeare's plays.
Shakespeare rarely gives any stage directions and in the play
centered around the most passionate of women, Cleopatra, where
one would have expected some stage direction to show her voluptuous character, he leaves physical contact rather subdued.
Only in special cases, where it is essential to his plot such as in Cressida and Tamora is there any indication in the dialogue of pronounced physical contact. But even in these, there is nothing as exaggerated as the scene quoted above from Jonson. This was probably due to the difference between the two dramatists' characters and to Shakespeare's greater delicacy and more understanding approach to his characters. This has not led him to exclude all physical contact but, in plays where the women's parts would have been acted by boys, he subdued physical passion as much as possible and, in most cases raised it to a higher level whilst, in plays where the women's parts would have been acted by youths, he allowed greater physical contact without stepping beyond the boundaries of decency.
It would have been very useful to include here a comparison of this aspect of Shakespeare's plays with other contemporaneous dramatists but, as this would form a study of great length in itself, it was found advisable to leave it out of the present work being beyond its scope. Whatever the case, it appears that Prynne's words quoted by Mr. Davies to show that physical love making on the Elizabethan stage was obscene are hardly justifiable when applied to Shakespeare:

"Survey we but a while, those venomous unchaste, incontinent kisses (as the Fathers stile them:) those wanton dalliances, those meretricious embracements, complements; these enchanting, powerful, overcomming solicitations unto lewdness; those immodest gestures, speeches, attitudes, which inseparably accompany the acting of our Stage-playes; especially where the Dawdes, the Panders, the Lovers, the Wooers, the Adulterers, The Womans or Love-sick persons parts are lively represented, (whose poysouous filthnessse I dare not fully anatomize, for feare it should infect, not mend the Reader,) must needs at first acknowledge, the very action of our Stage-Playes to be execrably obscene."¹

Shakespeare, in creating female characters who portray deep feelings, conflicting passions, and in general, more elaborate sentiments than those created by either Lyly or Jonson had to make use of several technical devices, already mentioned in the examination of the plays, to help his boy actors convey the required emotions adequately. Lyly's and Jonson's female parts, although wholly unlike each other, require a direct and straightforward style of acting which presents very little difficulties to boy actors and hence does not call for any of the technical

¹. Davies, op. cit. p. 194
devices used by Shakespeare to help the actor.

Whatever the reasons for using or not using such devices, it is quite clear that boy actors in adult companies had a much more pronounced versatility than the boy actors in their own companies, probably because of the training the former received. In adult companies, they were probably used to act women's parts even after reaching the age of puberty, sometimes till about the age of 20, on condition that they had preserved an unbroken voice which seems to have been quite possible with adequate practice. Shakespeare, as well as his fellow-dramatists, far from resenting having to use such boys and youths to act their women's parts, made the utmost use of their talents and capabilities and turned their minor deficiencies into qualities, producing women who have become immortal names, and such as no later dramatist has yet been able to produce. The boys and youths, in their double capacity as boys, in real life, and attractive girls, on the stage, exercised a fascination and reaped a popularity - from both the male and female audience at the same time - such as no modern actor or actress can hope to reach.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


