

## “There is no measure in the occasion that breeds”: Distorting Genre and Time in Shakespeare

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In the final scene of *King Lear*, Edmund declares to Edgar that “the wheel is come full circle” (5.3. 187). This visual image is a particularly telling one: the circularity, indicated through reference to “the wheel”, is vital to this paper’s exploration of endings in Shakespeare’s works. The rhetoric of time is commonly used with reference to ending. As twenty-first century Westerners, we commonly hear phrases such as “his time had come”, or “it was time”, intimating the reaching of an ultimate destination, or the completion of a journey such as, in these instances, death. There is a distinct correlation of time and ending that is particularly noteworthy in Shakespeare’s works. To consider, briefly, the relevance of the wheel or circle, this shape suggests continuity, fluidity, and infinity; there is no *end* to this circle. This is particularly highlighted through Edmund’s use of the present tense “is”, rather than the past tense “has”; his reference to this wheel strongly invokes the progression of action and movement and, more importantly to this paper, dramatic *time*. This wheel imagery is especially important in my consideration of the mutable nature of time in Shakespeare’s works, and how this appertains to the destabilising of genre as a governing structure of dramatic criticism. This paper engages in antifoundationalist and Kantian theoretical approaches to advocate a cyclical process of analysis, focusing on the influence of female characters within such a formulation of dramatic time. In offering an alternative to what I term a “linear” approach to dramatic criticism, this paper explores how the manipulation of time and endings in *As You Like It* (AYL) and *Much Ado About Nothing* (Ado) can promote more performance-oriented scholarship. Throughout my exploration, I consider varying devices employed by Shakespeare that have implications for how critics perceive time and genre in dramatic works, including the construction of epilogues.

Spatial configurations – in their various states of either space or time – play significant roles in the construction of dramatic works; space and time are employed and manipulated with such apparent simplicity that their existences can be identified as mutable and dramatically-contingent. Exposing the dramatic course of a play’s time demonstrates the natural, dramatic progression of the play itself; time is such an integral part of a dramatic work – take, for example, the function of the Chorus in *Henry V*, where time is accelerated and represented in alternative, non-conventional ways. At the beginning of Act 3, the Chorus states that “Thus with imagined wing our swift scene flies / In motion of no less celerity / Than that of thought” (3.1-2). This seamless indication of time’s rapid manipulation can be contrasted with the Chorus’s imperative instructions in Act 5, where the audience is

essentially granted the power to influence the direction of the play: “Now we bear the king / Toward Calais: grant him there: there seen, / Heave him away upon your wingèd thoughts” (*Henry V* 5.6-8). In this quotation, there is no distinction between the actors and the audience; this is a very interactive process, where the audience members appear to be involved in the very constitution of the play they witness, with the most evident example of this collusion is found in the prologue to *Henry V*. The most telling feature of Shakespeare’s manipulation of time, here, is the abundance of tense-related words and phrases, such as “then”, “and now”; rhetoric commands time itself.

The ease with which time is employed, distorted, and utterly *manipulated* seems to beg the inevitable question which I also use to trouble genre’s primacy as a defining method of dramatic analysis: if *time* is essentially mutable and changing, can we, as part of an audience, rely on it to guide us through such a dramatic setting as *Henry V*? And further, can we trust the connotations of apocalypse or eschatology which accompany time, or is it a culturally, even *individually* contingent device that can be altered and mutated for an individual’s end game? Dramatic works abolish such images of stability and reliability, illustrating that, in this theatrical world, *everything* is mutable, and capable of evolving and changing; why should the generic method of analysis, therefore, be granted this strange position of privilege and solidity?

### Cycles and circles

This paper focuses on the concept of cyclical time, and the vital importance of the performative *cycle* of the plays, where plays do not just “stop”; they are continually re-imagined and altered in subsequent performances. In, most notably, the Royal Shakespeare Company’s promotional material, a course of plays – for want of a better term – is referred to as a “cycle”; in 2008, the RSC’s run of “history” plays was termed a “cycle”, just as a group of plays currently being advertised for the World Shakespeare Festival also adopts this term.<sup>1</sup> Such rhetoric permeating not only critical works and specialised texts, but also promotional material for the lay audience, can indicate something important about the way in which plays are perceived in relation to *time*. As discussed earlier in the paper, there is no sense, in performance, that plays just “stop”; the reason that many audience members will have seen *King Lear*, for example, more than once is that *every* production is different. An audience witnesses certain points of the dramatic “process of becoming” (Kristeva 3). Shakespeare’s existence on a page has often problematized its *dramatic* state; however, the play-text as a vessel also enables successful transference to an infinite number of stage productions, where *Much Ado About Nothing* can be simultaneously performed in Stratford, Manchester, Hong Kong, Washington, and Asia.

The concept of cyclical time is an important one, and Julia Kristeva’s work on “women’s time” – where time can be perceived as operating in a cyclical fashion – fits in neatly with my rejection of the linear progression of time as favoured by many critics, where time follows a strict cause and effect trail within formulations of genre.<sup>2</sup> This trail, by its very nature, leads to a certain destination or point of attainment, such as “comedy” or “woman”. To divert, briefly, from Shakespeare to a twenty-first century television series, David Tennant’s Doctor, in *Doctor Who*, makes a particularly pertinent statement on the nature of time: in the Season 3 episode “Blink”, the Doctor states:

People don't understand time, it's not what you think it is [...] People assume that time is a strict progression from cause to effect, but actually, from a non-linear, non-subjective viewpoint, it's more like a big ball of wibbly-wobbly, timey-wimey stuff.

While, through incorporating this quotation, I fast-forward from the late sixteenth-century through to the early twenty-first, the sentiments here are especially relevant. First, the Doctor's reference to this non-linear viewpoint precisely encapsulates the approach I offer to dramatic criticism; furthermore, he identifies the common assumption that "time is a strict progression from cause to effect". His preferred description of time as "a big ball of wibbly-wobbly, timey-wimey stuff" helps to clarify that time is not necessarily a strict, dependable configuration. Rather, time is a mutating, circular structure that – evidently – resists definitive classification, as, in its execution, the Doctor's sentence slows down, and he searches for a word for "time", and settles on "stuff". The relevance of this quotation to the focus of my paper is to demonstrate the – perhaps surprising – amount of non-specialised material that may hint at the subversion of the linear perception of time. This is not the territory of seasoned Shakespearean scholars alone.

To consider, briefly, another circular theme in Shakespeare's works, the "ring" is used throughout the Shakespearean canon to indicate both female sexuality and marital restriction. The staging of the nuptial ceremonies are always omitted from the Shakespearean play-text; the consequences of the giving and the receiving of rings, however, are investigated on several occasions. Shakespeare regularly grants more dramatic space to the object *signifying* marriage, than to the marriage itself. As audiences can see, in Shakespeare's works, "ring" and "nothing" have been predominantly used to indicate female sexuality and genitalia; conversely, "thing" is strongly associated with men and their genitals.<sup>3</sup> The empowerment inherent in the relationship between the male "thing" and the corresponding female "lack" is inverted in the use of "ring". "Ring" can be seen as an expansion and an improvement on "nothing": *something* is there, though it is not known as a "thing". "Ring" enters into a self-substantiating motif where women's "nothing" has been defined and explicated. While "ring" is certainly not plural, it is a noticeable improvement on the phallogocentric, abstract "nothing": "ring" declares the existence of female genitalia in a way that does not trivialise them, nor recognise them only in relation to male genitalia.

The physical implications of the ring's shape have been much debated in critical works on Renaissance drama, most intensely by Alison Findlay: the general consensus that it is linked inextricably with the female genitals still holds strong.<sup>4</sup> Criticism locates sexuality in this object, giving prominence to physical connotations: likening the ring's shape to the "hole" of the vagina, and its ability to be penetrated; as Irigaray writes, it is "a body open to penetration [...] in this "Hole" that constitutes its sex" (24). The constitutive "hole" of the vagina, and the similarly conspicuous hole of the ring, explicitly reconcile female sexuality and the shape, and connotations, of the ring. This representational quandary binds female genitalia up in this image of "nothing". The marital ring, as symbolic object, is in itself one and everything: the conspicuous "hole" in its centre pulls "nothingness" into its identity, making it imperative to its constitution. One hole, one band, serves as both one and plural. The wedding ring as signifier for the restriction of female sexuality and autonomy is fitting. The ring exists, as Findlay has observed, as a tangible reminder of female sexuality (87-127).

When we consider the shape of the object that holds so much intricate meaning, full of commitment, we can locate significance in the fashion of a band surrounding an, albeit minimal, but identifiable space. When Shakespeare portrays marriage by focusing on the ring, the *symbol* of marriage, the focus is on the consequences of the union. This problematizes the concept of marriage as finite conclusion signifying a restoration of social order: consequences are inherently linked in with the place that the ring holds in Shakespeare's plays. So, in this manner, the ring – in its circular nature – epitomises the problems associated with applying generic prescriptions upon Shakespeare's comedies.

To relate the image of the ring to the cyclical nature of dramatic works that I demonstrate in this paper, the cyclicity of dramatic time and, to extend this beyond just one particular work, the plays *themselves*, can be aligned with the female, in addition to contributing to the important destabilisation of genre as a critical tool. In applying this thing/nothing imagery to this discussion of time in relation to endings and genre, the cyclical and linear modes of time are contrasted in a similar manner where the less linear structure of time is one that does not automatically “stop” once an assumed point of destination has been reached. In championing this cyclical nature of time, furthermore, an antifoundationalist method of analysis is used; Butler writes that “[The] antifoundationalist approach to coalitional politics assumes neither that “Identity” is a premise nor that the shape and meaning of a coalitional assemblage can be known prior to its achievement” (62). Both gender and genre are examples of coalitional practice, where social, contextual, geographic, and cultural influences coalesce in the construction of the processes of becoming. This antifoundationalist premise denies concepts of origin and derivation; similarly, it challenges the notion of entities travelling towards a marked point or destination, whether that be, for example, “male” or “female”, “tragedy”, “comedy”, or “history”.

Applying the cyclical concept of time to analysis of dramatic works, therefore, removes theories of origin – “foundation” – and destination, demonstrating the plays’ potential to reinvent themselves, to continue in performance, and not to have the static notion of a sudden “end” inflicted on them. This, in turn, calls into question the critically-established method of “suitable” endings; critics such as Juliet Dusinberre, Richard Dutton, Jean E. Howard, and Angela Pitt adopt the linear style of analysis, where they perceive that the plays move from beginning to end, whether that be – in the “romances” – the father daughter reunion, or marriage – in the “comedies”. Kristeva writes that

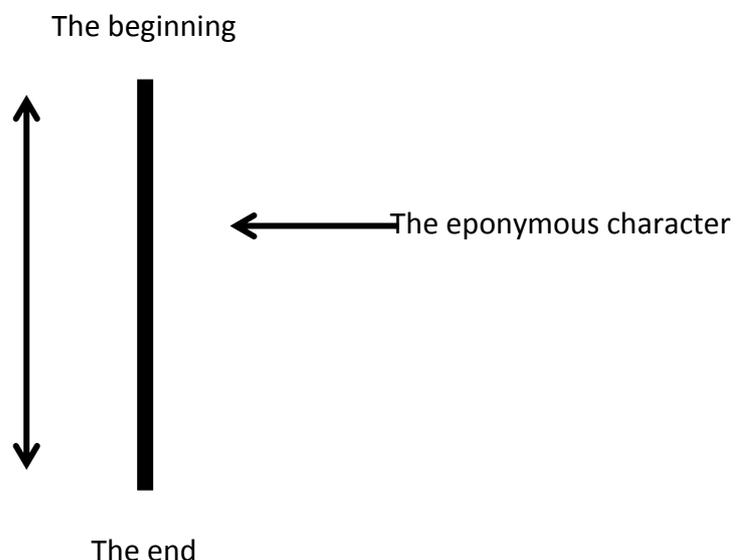
As for time, female subjectivity would seem to provide a specific measure for that which essentially retains *repetition* and *eternity* from among the multiple modalities of time known through the history of civilizations. On the one hand, there are cycles, gestation, the eternal recurrence of a biological rhythm which conforms to that of nature and imposes a temporality whose stereotyping may shock. (“Women’s Time” 16).

Kristeva’s “Women’s Time” provides a wealth of intriguing ideas; this quotation effectively summarises the author’s proposition that women may, perhaps, experience time in a wholly different manner to men. At this point in the paper, I would like to clarify that, although time itself is not a specifically female configuration, the manner in which we – as either audience members or readers of Shakespearean drama – *experience* the dramatic illusion of time as a

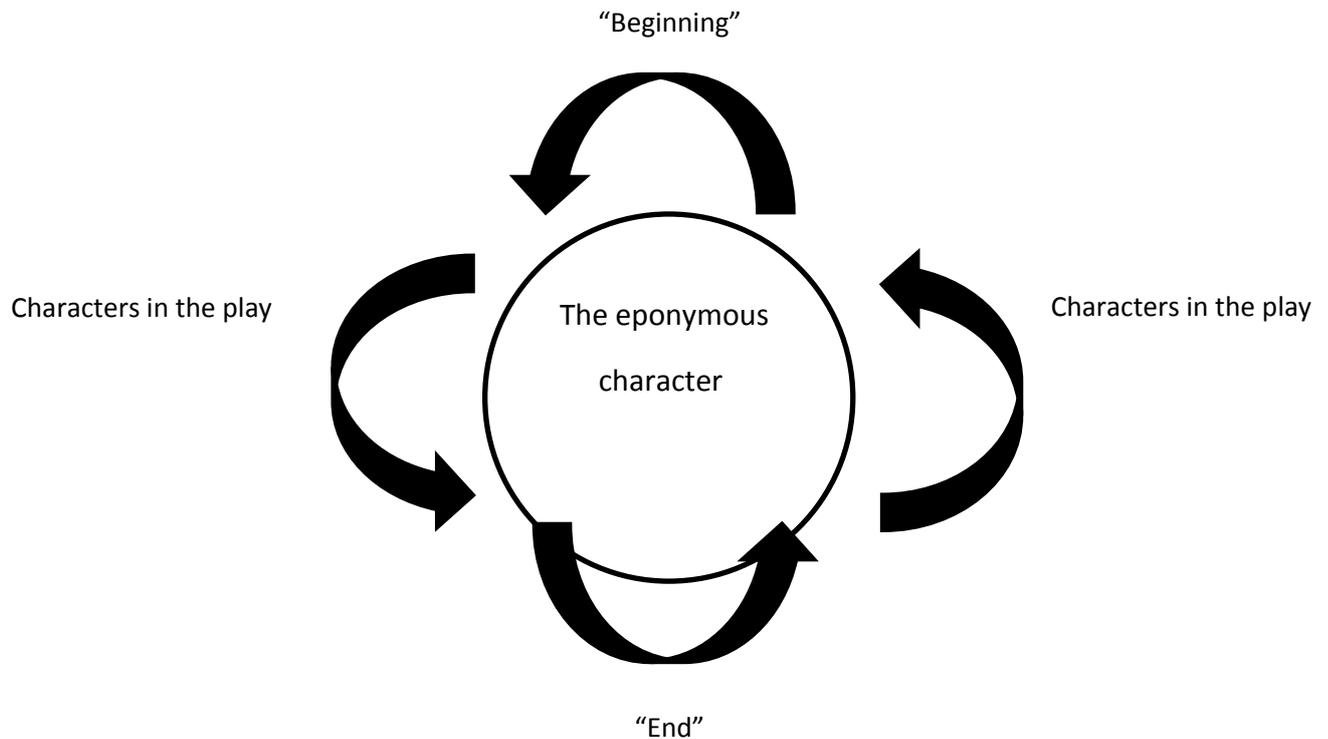
reinventing and regenerative construction, can have important implications for literary criticism, and how characters' influences within these cyclical formulations of time can be identified. The female characters exert influence, *dramatically* challenging those mores of criticism that threaten to subsume their autonomy and anaesthetise the plays.

As discussed with reference to the wedding ring neither the ring nor cyclical time is a tangible, *strictly female* empowering mechanism; the symbolic relevance, in addition to its dramatic relevance, enables an audience to recognise the multifaceted and dynamic processes of constitution, where the play is being constructed, with the world inside the play, and all the individual characters all subject to the same processes of becoming. The natural potential of women – such as their transition from “woman” to “mother” – does not necessarily restrict their dramatic performance and vigorous processes of becoming, but actually contributes to their dynamic and influential states. The rhetoric of cyclicity intimated through Kristeva’s use of terms such as “eternity”, “repetition”, and “recurrence” brings to mind this image of a ring, whereas her reference to this “biological rhythm” and its alignment with “nature” is a particularly interesting concept, when we invoke Foucauldian “natural categories” work. For example, the linear form of analysis is questioned in Foucault’s *The Order of Things*, when he writes that “all designation must be accomplished by means of a certain relation to all other possible designations” (58). This concept of relative distance, for the purposes of self-identification and identification of others, strongly plays into the foundationalist train of thought that my exploration of cyclicity endeavours to destabilise.

In defining my reference to linear and cyclical modes of analysis, the analogical comparisons between the phallic-shaped line and the vaginal-shaped circle explicitly link these two different forms of analysis to the gender of the character they seek to privilege. When I say that the circular form of analysis privileges the female, I mean this more in the sense that characters' contributions are actually *recognised*, whereas in linear forms of analysis, focus is purely on the male character as the central point – the “Self”, in Linda Bamber’s terms – of the play. To put this in a diagrammatic manner, so that the aesthetics of these comparisons can be truly recognised: the line in the first diagram represents the linear approach to dramatic criticism; whereas the circle demonstrates the more dramatic method of analysis:



Where, as this line indicates, there is a “start” and an “end”, these points of relative distance can also be perceived as “self” and “other”, utilising the critical concepts – as quoted in my introduction – that all entities are perceived and *known by* their distance to other objects. To move on to the cyclical form of analysis, this can be represented thus:



As visually represented, here, it is clear to see that, through adopting the circular mode of analysis, dramatic works for performance are not so much “caught up”, but are *intrinsically* formulated, within a continually evolving and developing process. Furthermore, this diagram indicates the potential influence of *all* characters, and the dynamic of the play as a whole. The cyclical form of analysis demonstrates, here, that while the eponymous character – Lear, for example, or Othello – may be seen as occupying the dramatic centre of the play, forces around him – such as the vital presence and influence of the female characters – contribute to the progress and the eventualities of the play itself. The beginning and ending are, furthermore, just points in the plays that are continually re-glimpsed and provide a number of avenues for other plays to pursue; where one play “ends”, another may begin. from that same point. For example, where marriage – one of the continually cited “features” of “comedy” – is woven into the plots of Shakespeare’s plays, such depictions feature different stages of married life. *The Merchant of Venice* depicts the anticipation of marriage and the process of wooing; *Othello* presents a new marriage; and *Macbeth* an established marriage; one can perceive marriage as a timeline; where in various plays a different point is marked off on the marital lifespan. Utilising the cyclical mode of analysis in exploration of the “comedies”, this “happy ending” motif– as championed by critics such as Lawrence Danson– is depicted as not a conclusive means of ending, but a single element in the cyclical timeline; just one piece of the “comic” puzzle.

## Jewels in cases

Linda Bamber, in *Comic Women, Tragic Men*, writes that

The avoidance of choice is at the heart of Shakespearean comedy; the very genre can be defined in these terms. Shakespearean comedy avoids not only the choice between the philosophical options within the plays; it avoids the fundamental dramatic choice between realism and convention, between moral fiction and pure pattern-making. Fully to understand the importance of the feminine Other in comedy we must understand that her prerogatives here are those of the playwright himself.(121)

This idea of choice is interesting: Robert Watson postulates that death and marriage are the only two possible “endings” for plays (411-432). It is when the “tragic” and “comic” elements are present in one play that the opportunistic “problem play” label appears; however, many of Shakespeare’s “comedies” have parts of both dark and light in them, but are not seized upon as representative of the problem play “type”. For example, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* begins with Egeus demanding that his daughter be executed for not wishing to marry the man of his choice, and ends with the light-hearted performance from the Mechanicals; elsewhere, Katherina suffers a variety of emotional and physical abuse prior to marriage in *The Taming of the Shrew*. The generic device of marriage-as-ending will be addressed in a different manner in this paper.

Primarily, this paper engages with the “comedies”, in addition to setting up comparisons with critical theoretical approaches to means and ends, such as those depicted by Immanuel Kant. This interactive focus, within the wider framework of the cyclical mode of analysis, enables successful depiction of the ways in which time is utilised in Shakespeare – as means – which impacts upon the reception, or even the validity, of the endings seized by critical texts. To turn, first, to the “comedies”, there is a sense that in plays that end with a wedding or the promise of nuptials that supposedly ‘rogue’ elements – mostly female characters – are ends that “need” to be tied up, to enable the conclusion of the play. “Comic” works themselves appear to follow a strange type of course, where we see an arc-style formation: for example, there is the initiatory setting-of-the-scene, which leads on to the building, and establishing, of the action itself, and then there is a very sudden “wrapping up” of the story which, to some critics, indicates the power of genres to contain the dramatic action within this kind of structure. However, an *arc* of this formation neatly fits in to the premise of cyclical analysis: a semi-circular arc is half of a *full* circle; therefore, when critics’ attention remains firmly trained on the top half alone, they fail to acknowledge the regenerating and continuing *whole* play wherein the female characters exert their influence. There is, however, one aspect of this critical arc that is of use, here: in using this as a shape by which the plays’ formulations can be measured, the downwards movement of the arc, the dipping into the less-discussed shadowy other half of the circle, has a much steeper shape than the slow progression of the point of the arc that indicates action. This acceleration can represent the rapid tying up of loose ends that critics appears to seek, which can be employed and disproved in this paper, demonstrating the more suitable approach of cyclical analysis.

In 1.3 of *Much Ado About Nothing*, Conrad questions why Don John, “the bastard” is “out of measure sad”; in response to this, Don John states “There is no measure in the occasion that breeds” (*Ado* 1.3.1-2). The use of a “bad” character to make such an insightful observation could, perhaps, explicate why this has not previously been seized on for analysis. This instance can be aligned with Edmund’s observation on the wheel “com[ing] full circle”, the sentiment with which I began this paper; why such pertinent remarks are made by two such flawed characters – both, tellingly, “bastards” – is most intriguing. Imagery of time and destiny resounds in *Much Ado About Nothing*; Don John, in this statement, encapsulates the futility of attempting to “measure” those responses or indeed *existences* which contribute to their identities evolving and changing. The “breeding” relates well to the cyclical form of analysis, where one entity leads on to another (in the circular fashion as depicted in diagrammatic form earlier in the paper), and relates, too, to the variety of interpretations arising from one dramatic work. Furthermore, this un-measurable quantity of emotion – which can extend to human nature itself – is also suggested in Shakespeare’s Sonnet 116, where it is articulated that “Love’s not Time’s fool [...] Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks”; love is not dependent on time, nor does time dictate how love should be experienced. The interlinking relationship between time and emotion reflects the futility in attempting to constrain dynamic processes within external strictures. This identification of futility can, likewise, be applied to the insufficiencies of dramatic genre as a categorising mechanism, where its inability to accommodate performative dynamism requires that this system of analysis be replaced by a method that caters to the performative nature of the subject it tries to classify. The very title of this play, *Much Ado About Nothing*, indicates a flurry of action which is ultimately futile, it is about *nothing*.

Interestingly, in the relationship between Beatrice and Benedick, destiny is referred to in a manner that appears to escape the RSC editors’ normally incisive and revealing notes; Benedick decrees that Beatrice should “keep in that mind” of swearing off love, for fear that the hypothetical man that she might love should “scape a predestinate scratched face” (*Ado* 1.1.92). “Predestinate” could imply that the scratched face comes before “the time”, as it were; in this instance, however, Bate and Rasmussen qualify this with “inevitable”, alone (396). This idea of “pre-destiny”, a destiny as fore-told and already decided upon, could be applied to critics’ judgements upon a dramatic work in the generic mode. Just as people have been judged on gender alone, not engaging in what Butler terms “*post-genital politics*”, where the biological features are removed from the process of identification, and the person concerned is taken at face value, in their *performance* of gender, but using the blinkered concept of “pre-gendering” (4).<sup>5</sup> This cyclical process can be embedded, still deeper, into the imagery of genitalia and power-structures within Shakespeare’s works.

In *Much Ado About Nothing*, Claudio – upon becoming infatuated with Hero – demands of Benedick “Can the world buy such a jewel?” to which the “professed tyrant of [their] sex” responds, glibly, with “Yea, and a case to put it into” (*Ado* 1.1. 113, 120-121). Reading this response in the light of Benedick earlier admission of his “tyrant” status, it is meant in an inflammatory manner, making this a very sexual image, which also either trivialises or conveys anxiety over female power in the sense that their sexuality, the “jewel”, must be encased. Kenneth Branagh’s presentation of Benedick – in the 1993 production, also directed by Branagh – speaks this line, relishing the underlying meaning, similarly to David Tennant’s Hamlet’s pronunciation of “country matters”; phonetically “cunt-ry”. Benedick’s

reluctance to “hang [his] bugle in an invisible baldrick” is a further suggestive remark, particularly representative of the female genitalia in that it is “invisible” – as Irigaray states; it “represents the horror of nothing to see” (26). This image of the jewel and its case strongly resonates with the imagery of female genitalia; an analogy can be drawn, here, between the relationship of time and the events unfolding within the play. If we see the action of the play as the “jewel”, in this instance, the “case” can be read as the dramatic time, which encircles – in both senses of the word – the events taking place. Time’s place, in dramatic works, as a vital element of configuration can be seen as an encircling presence, within the bounds of which the action unfolds.

### **“A good play needs no epilogue”<sup>6</sup>**

Shakespeare’s works regularly break the confines of what may be considered dramatically ‘conventional’ by literary critics; with regard to dramatic *time* and the imposed *frame* of plays, Shakespeare’s employment of epilogues and prologues resists a generalisation of dramatic frameworks, and extends the plays’ times. A particularly intriguing avenue of inquiry is to see which characters’ voices end the plays: in *As You Like It*, it is Rosalind imploring the audience for applause; a female character’s voice is granted the opportunity to end the play. In a reference to convention, Rosalind declares, “It is not the fashion to see the lady the epilogue, but it is no more / unhandsome than to see the lord the prologue” (AYL5.4.173-4). In *As You Like It*, questions are begged of Rosalind’s “comic closure” through marriage. In using Rosalind as a self-conscious epilogist, it can be argued that her fate transcends simply the “comic” marriage-as-ending scenario, and her real redemption is located in the prominence afforded her, as a *single* entity – in the sense that she is important in her own right, rather than merely being recognised through marriage – in her autonomous delivery of the epilogue. This action challenges the critical opinion – expressed by Lawrence Danson, among others – that a wedding is a suitable conclusion to a play, as it is the character who has suffered the most in the play that has the final words. This breaking of the confines of the dramatic frame through a *female* voice, highlights the insufficiencies of this mode of ending from the perspective of the female characters; Rosalind claiming autonomy through this action can be seen as a rare glimpse of a female character’s perspective, as she transcends the dramatic frame and Renaissance dramatic conventions. Rosalind asserts, in this epilogue, that “a good play needs no epilogue” (AYL5.4.175). This amusingly self-deprecatory statement, which indeed challenges Rosalind’s presence on the stage at this very moment, while most probably written to be taken as light humour, can still give us insight into the use of epilogues. So, by this logic, why are epilogues included in, for example, *As You Like It*, and *The Tempest*? Are they, by direct implication, “bad” plays? Or is it the manner in which they end that implicates them as unsatisfactory conclusions? And does “a good play” necessitate ending in a manner in which a Renaissance audience or a twenty-first-century critic might deem “satisfactory”? Epilogues, by their very existence, break the boundaries of the stringent play structure as sought by many a critical work; the intimation is there that current beginnings – where applicable – and ends of the plays are not functioning in the ways in which they should, and a character needs to step outside their roles within the play to conclude the conclusion, so to speak.

In the second scene of *As You Like It*, Monsieur Le Beau, in responding to Rosalind’s demand that he “tell [them] more of the wrestling”, states that “I will tell you the beginning, and if it please your ladyships, you may see the end, for the best is yet to do: and here,

where you are, they are coming to perform it”, to which Celia adds “Well, the beginning that is dead and buried” (AYL1.2.79-83). Le Beau’s statement provides some interesting views on the relationship between beginning and end, as he is willing to verbally provide the context – the beginning, in this instance – but will require Celia and Rosalind to see the ensuing action, if it pleases them. This can also be applied to the play itself, as very near the beginning of the play, where Rosalind is banished for no reason other than she might take some of the court’s favour away from her cousin, Celia, by possessing similar virtues to her, and Orlando is preparing to fight Charles the Wrestler, matters appear very grim. If the play *begins* in this manner, is there any real hope that these situations might improve? This appears to be an ironic, introspective comment, where the play seems to be warning against judging matters on their beginnings alone, before experiencing the rest where perhaps, “the best is yet to do” (AYL 1.2.81). Furthermore, an interesting opposition is set up, here, by the use of speech and action: Le Beau may tell his ladyships the beginning, but the end must be witnessed; speech alone can be static and non-dramatic, but it is required that the end be actually *experienced*. Celia’s pronouncement that the “beginning is dead and buried” is one that is not – either textually or dramatically – relevant, but that indicates the insufficiency of Le Beau’s present recounting; after his story has begun, she interjects with “I could match this beginning with an old tale” (AYL1.2.85). Bate and Rasmussen gloss this remark with “tale: puns on ‘tail’ (as opposed to beginning)”; the oppositions, here, set up between end and beginning, and the beginning being “dead and buried” are particularly relevant within the formulation of the play, and also with regard to Rosalind’s concluding epilogue (480). Duke Senior demonstrates the required faith and willingness to experience events before judging: in 5.4. he declares that “We’ll begin these rites, / As we do trust they’ll end, in true delights” (AYL5.4.171-2).

Kenneth Branagh’s insightful adaptation of *As You Like It*, of 2006 starring Romola Garai, draws the viewer’s attention in particular to matters of time and ending. Branagh makes some fascinating directorial decisions, such as staging the play in late nineteenth-century Japan, the culture of which permeates the entire play through music and some costuming. This setting is particularly relevant, as the context which precedes the action states that the merchants in Japan “created private mini-empires where they tried to embrace this extraordinary culture”.<sup>7</sup> So, it is not only the use of the configuration of time that is up for debate in this production; space, too, is employed in a manner that situates the action within a strictly microcosmic environment, particularly emphasised by reference to such “mini-empires”. Branagh’s production offers a particularly interesting take on how the epilogue is performed: the dance following Jacques’s exit is prolonged, and morphs into a piece of oriental artwork, which continues the Japanese theme as used throughout the production. Presenting this image to the viewer through DVD might indicate the end of the production, particularly with the production credits following so swiftly on; furthermore, after this artwork is presented, a striped curtain is pulled across the screen, playing into the theatrical tradition of drawing the curtain across the stage once a play has concluded. However, after these credits have been shown, the viewer then sees Rosalind in a backstage scene, with actors’ trailers and production and cast members. This is a very laid back sequence, as Bryce Dallas Howard’s Rosalind – still in character, it appears – sheds her coat, giving it to a waiting assistant, is handed a plastic cup of water, and makes her way to her own trailer; the last glimpse we have of her is when she steps into her trailer, and shuts the door that has a sign declaring “*As You Like It* – Rosalind”.

The power balance is, in this sequence, firmly in Rosalind's/Howard's favour: in siting the epilogue outside both the confines of the play – by default, when an epilogue is written – and outside the boundaries of the standard film – where, ordinarily, the production credits indicate the end of the DVD – Rosalind occupies a space all of her own. The hand-held camera follows her throughout her walk from the set itself to her trailer, and she is passed cups of water and looked at, by her fellow cast members, throughout this progression. The final, lingering image of the play is the door shut by Rosalind. This can be noted to echo the use of doors in Zefirelli's *The Taming of the Shrew*, which physically designate the restrictive territory of wifhood; they are thresholds over which neither Bianca, nor Hortensio's new wife, seem willing to step. In this instance, such thresholds intimate restriction; they are liminal, designated points where one enters a certain territory, and that territory can be assumed to be wifhood. Conversely, Branagh's use of the trailer door actually suggests an element of freedom: Rosalind is neither "contained" by the dramatic limits, nor even the filmic limits of the play. She has a double barrier in the sense that the curtain indicates the end of the play, and then the production credits are shown; she alone occupies this space, and she also decides when to bar the camera entry to her private trailer, by shutting the door. This presents a dramatically innovative use of the epilogue, and one which Branagh acutely picks up on the clues in the play-text itself, which indicate Rosalind's grasps for autonomy and sole focus. In this example, "the end" is twice subverted in this DVD production, with both tactics from the stage and the screen in play to indicate a false end, outside of which Rosalind steps.

The unusually successful execution of a play-text to be performed on the stage into a filmic version on DVD is particularly impressive: Branagh's references to both stage and screen conventions of concluding behaviour are unusual and effective. Rosalind's subversion, therefore, is doubly powerful. Time as a linear construct – where rhetoric such as "the end" pervades – reflects the critical "goal" of defining plays through their genres; both systems are engaged in a pursuit of destination, a desire to render dynamic processes static through employing a strict formula of "start" and "end", "origin" and "destination". In the case of *As You Like It*, Rosalind's apparent refusal to remain within the linear dynamic of designated "start" and "end" points demonstrates the futility of containing plays within even such a mutating frame as time, and the absolute irrelevancy of dramatic genres. *As You Like It* as a valid "comedy" would surely end with a wedding, as in plays such as *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, or *The Merchant of Venice*, but the way in which it actually concludes could make an audience wonder whether, in Rosalind's terms, "good plays prove the better by the help of good epilogues". One could observe that an underlying dissatisfaction with the ending necessitated this character to step outside of the dramatic confines to comment on the play's structure, and indeed muse upon the use of epilogues.<sup>8</sup>

In a somewhat introspective manner, Shakespeare infuses *All's Well That Ends Well* (AWW) with the image of the ending as a goal, a point where all confusions and previous animosities are eradicated in concluding. As Helena states "Whate'er the course, the end is the renown". She later points out that "All's well that ends well yet,/ Though time seem so adverse and means unfit"(AWW 5.1.25-26). This calls to mind Kant's prescriptions on the relationship between means and ends, where the means must be acknowledged as a vital part of the journey, not relying upon ends alone. The rather ironic title of the play makes no

attempt to gloss over Bertram's behaviour throughout, but rather offers a somewhat tongue-in-cheek comment on how marriage is assumed to restore everything to a satisfactory state. *All's Well That Ends Well* focuses largely on the image of the wedding ring, both as indicator of female power, and used as a bartering mechanism by Helena for Bertram's unwilling succumbing to marriage. Helena invokes the imagery of bartering where a ring is assumed to facilitate sexual relations between husband and wife. As the King recalls: "[Helena]call'd the saints to surety/ That she would never put [the ring] from her finger/ Unless she gave it to yourself in bed" (AWW5.3.108-110). As discussed in the first section, this ring transcends its physical appearance alone, operating as a symbol of female sexuality. Diana, when called upon to give evidence in the presence of the King, states that "Mine honour's such a ring;/ My chastity's the jewel of our house" (AWW4.2.45-46). She uses Bertram's exact pattern of speech, inserting "honour" and "chastity" to create an abstraction of Bertram's family's ring – her virginity. This echoes the jewel/case conversation between Benedick and Claudio in *Much Ado About Nothing*, where Benedick bawdily asserts that a "case" can be purchased into which to put this ring. This circular imagery, again, operates in the manner in which female power and sexuality are privileged.

This idea of the "good play need[ing] no epilogue" also transfers to *The Tempest* (*Tmp.*) where, in contrast to *As You Like It*, the epilogue is executed by the mighty magician, Prospero. One of the references to time in *The Tempest* has already been picked out in this paper, to contextualise how the "tragedies" and "histories" are constituted, when a non-fictional character is dramatized. Prospero's soliloquy in 5.1 acutely demonstrates the powerful and wholly regenerative aspect of time: "Graves at my command / Have waked their sleepers, oped, and let 'em forth / By my so noble art". The image that "art" – in its various formats – has the potential to breathe life into corpses and resurrect them to "let 'em forth" intimates the relationship between time and dramatic works. Furthermore, the use of one genre – in this case, the "romance" – to comment pertinently on another – the "histories" in particular – is intriguing, and demonstrates this interactive relationship which is stifled by critics adopting a "one genre at a time" method of analysis. Earlier in the play, Antonio, in conference with Sebastian, asserts "what's past is prologue" (*Tmp.* 2.1.255). This reference to this technical feature demonstrates a metatheatrical awareness of dramatic tools on which Shakespeare draws in a variety of his works; the use of prologues invites analysis of the potency of endings, where it appears so simple just to "add" an epilogue to the conclusion of the play. This, furthermore, implies that the current ending is not satisfactory means to conclude the play, and that a character has to "step out" of their role to speak a final part; in the terrain of the epilogue, it is often quite ambiguous as to whether it is the character speaking these lines, the actor, or whether another voice is indeed coming through one of the actors.

The use of an epilogue – for example in *The Tempest*, or in Puck's plea to the audience at the end of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* – occupies an interesting space *between* play and metadrama; a multi-partite relationship between character, actor, playwright, and audience member. Obviously as important theatrical constructs, had prologues and epilogues been employed in *all* of Shakespeare's plays, one might assume that they would simply operate as functional dramatic devices; but the fact that only nine of Shakespeare's 38 plays – including the two collaborative works, *Two Noble Kinsmen* and *Cymbeline* – employ an epilogue, demands questions of the "endings", and the "realness" or artificiality

of such methods of closure. Puck draws our attention to such artificiality: “if we shadows have offended, / Think but this, and all is mended, / That you have but slumbered here / While these visions did appear”. In this instance, Puck steps outside the microcosmic world of the play, acknowledging the audience for the first time in this theatrical event, and speaking words which may not, entirely, be attributed to his character alone. Of course, as critics we can’t say that this is *Shakespeare’s* voice, but in certain cases an audience might glimpse the author’s influence: for example, Prospero’s decision to “break his staff” and “drown his books” can be read – by some critics – as symbolic of Shakespeare retiring from sole-authorship, as *The Tempest* was his last play. In the varying uses of the epilogue – both in the case of *The Tempest* and *As You Like It*, as previously discussed – many types of theatrical boundaries, including the fourth wall, are disrupted; in *As You Like It*, the epilogue was used to present an autonomous, female perspective, whereas in *The Tempest*, the voice – both of the character, the actor, and the author himself – can indicate a surrendering of the quill, and the concluding of an era. While Prospero demonstrates a remarkably self-absorbed manner of conclusion, in the sense that in the nineteen-line epilogue, he uses “me” or “I” – including their variants – thirteen times, it is hard for the reader or an audience member to take this epilogue purely at face value. The epilogues are, therefore, reserved for those statements or sentiments that need to be picked out and displayed in their own “frames”, rather than being subsumed by prose or blank verse in other parts of the plays.

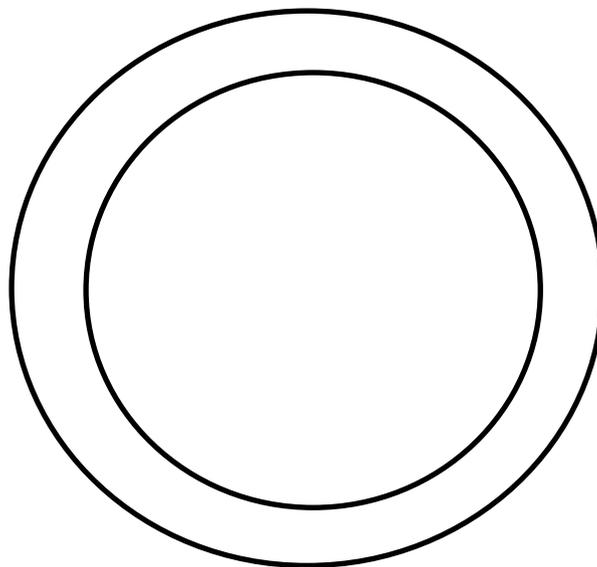
### **“The wheel is come full circle”**

Time and genre both function as structuring systems in drama; the primary difference is that time – unlike genre – is not employed in a way in which dramatic dynamism is stifled and repressed. Rather, it is the manner in which we – as audience members – *experience* time in plays – that is, in the cyclical sense – that most reflects the ever-changing and developing nature of dramatic works. Time is a pervading element of life, most things that people do are governed by time; its importance and relevance are not questioned but, rather, I analyse how championing a different *form* of dramatic time can reveal important details about how plays are constructed, in the most dramatic sense. Rather, time in Shakespeare’s works is repeatedly highlighted as a mutating, temporal structure, which is not ordinarily explored by critics; the opposite can be said of genre, where its unstable state is often ignored by critics, and its pervading presence is still adopted in many monographs and studies on drama. Butler’s theory of antifoundationalism holds as much relevance in my exploration of time in Shakespeare’s works, as it does to exposing the processes of *construction* in gender and genre; in dismissing thoughts of origin and destination, analysis is more focused on the dynamic constitution – for example, of the person or play – concerned. This links, furthermore, to Kristeva’s pioneering statement that literature is “always in the process of becoming” (*Powers of Horror* 3). To refer back to Edmund’s statement that “the wheel is come full circle”, critical attention should be placed more on the “is” than the “has”, to avoid acting as – in Megan Becker-Leckrone’s terms – “scientists of the dead”: “archivists, archaeologists, and necrophiliacs” (7).

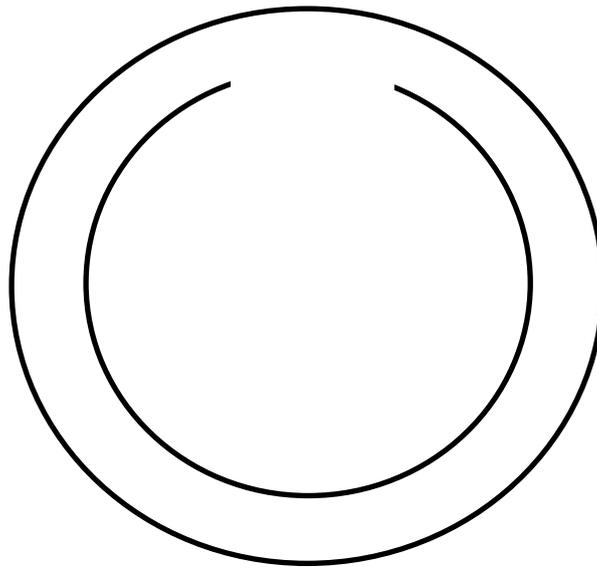
The affinities between the processes of gender and genre and time are many: analysing Shakespeare’s plays in a linear fashion results in such works as Linda Bamber’s *Comic Women, Tragic Men*, where the eponymous character is seen as the central figure, with every other character that differs in sex, being outcast as “other”, invoking the abject

and the unwanted. This correlation between linear analysis and a critical persistence in adopting the rhetoric of generic analysis and prescribed gender roles cannot be accidental, as the dramatically-inhibiting foundationalist approach both echoes and reaffirms such an approach. So the ways in which female characters exert influence, within these formulations of dramatic time, demonstrate that Shakespeare's works do not reach an ultimate "destination", but continue in this cyclical process of reinvention and reimagination. In the Kantian sense, this dramatic relationship between means and ends results in the focus, as expressed by Kant, being more trained on the processes of becoming, rather than the perceived "end". Many critical works reaffirm the foundationalist mode of analysis, which – in a sense – subverts Kant's prescriptions that the "true" function of duty "must be to produce a *will* which is *good*, not as a *means* to some further end, but *in itself*"(62). Of course, this appertains to Kant's pronouncements on the obligations of duty; however, the sentiment that the means should be appreciated for their own worth, not as a necessary passage on to an end is relevant to my focus in this paper.

Foundationalist criticism continually bears in mind the origins and ends; all wills and means, as such, are experienced in a facilitative manner, in that they are necessary to take to reach the end goal. As one can observe in the plays explored in this paper, through the cyclical method of analysis, the plot trajectory results in the "ends" – whether this be a wedding, or a familial reunion. The mode of analysis that I put forward, the cyclical form, relates directly to the aims of this paper, in exposing the inherent performativity in both gender and genre, and how they interact with each other. This cyclical approach to time can be perceived in a microcosmic/macrocosmic manner, where dramatic time forms the micro-structure, and the play itself – complete with both dramatic frames and applications of genre – is the macro-structure. To portray this in a visual manner, to conclude this paper, the current structure of the time-play dramatic system can be represented as such:



In this diagram, neither circle has been disturbed or altered to indicate unease or even dissatisfaction with the two types of frames in play, here; however, after time has been identified as enabling dramatic dynamism and permitting the plays’ regenerative and evolving capacities, the structure above might, then, look like this:



The gap in the inner circle is intended to represent the identified insufficiencies of dramatic time as a subsuming mechanism of structure; its mutability and changing nature has been demonstrated throughout this paper, a part of its structure has been chipped away. Once the inner circle’s seemingly infallible structure has been compromised, attention can then be turned to the outer circle: the “frame” of genre. In his “Law of Genre”, Jacques Derrida complicates his earlier insistence that “as soon as genre announces itself, one must respect a norm, one must not cross a line of demarcation, one must not risk impurity, anomaly or monstrosity” through his suggesting an alternative, a “principle of contamination”:

What if there were within the heart of the law itself, a law of impurity, or a principle of contamination? And suppose the condition for the possibility of the law were the *a priori* of a counter-law, an axiom of impossibility that would confound its sense, order and reason?(57)

Derrida continues in his suggesting of a counter-law through hypothetically proposing that the law of genre is

Affected *straight away* by an essential disruption that [...] I shall let you name or qualify in any way you care to: as international division of the trait, impurity, corruption, contamination, decomposition, [...] generous proliferation or degenerescence.(57)

This “division of the trait” or contamination can be identified as the chip in the outer circle of genre; an inherent susceptibility to its seemingly impervious status being compromised. Instilling a mode of analysis that appreciates dramatic works for their regenerative and cyclical natures and processes of becoming enables the plays to evolve and develop in a truly dynamic and *dramatic* manner; there is, truly, no way in which, nor even any need to, in Don John’s words, “measure the occasion that breeds” (*Ado* 1.3.2). Shakespeare’s plays are dynamic, they resist definitive classification and are dramatically, in Julia Kristeva’s words, always in “the process of *becoming*” (*Powers of Horror* 3).

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup>For examples of a course of plays being referred to as a “cycle”, see David Jays. “Are the RSC Ensemble’s Glory Days Over?” *The Guardian Online*.N.p. 1 Feb. 2011. Web. 15 Nov. 2011.

<sup>2</sup>Such as Linda Bamber, in her *Comic Women, Tragic Men*, which I discuss later in this paper.

<sup>3</sup> For further consideration of the implications of “ring” and “thing” in Shakespearean drama, please see Anna Mackenzie. “‘Identity politics’: Dramatic genres, Shakespeare’s plays, and the Butlerian framework”. *The Problems of Literary Genres* 54.1 (2011)5-24.

<sup>4</sup> See Alison Findlay. *A Feminist Perspective on Renaissance Drama*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1999.

<sup>5</sup> My italics.

<sup>6</sup> William Shakespeare. *As You Like It. Complete Works*. Ed. Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2007. 5.4.175.

<sup>7</sup>*As You Like It*. Dir. Branagh.

<sup>8</sup> For further consideration of the use of marriage in “comedies”, please see Anna Mackenzie. “‘Identity politics’: Dramatic genres, Shakespeare’s plays, and the Butlerian framework”. *The Problems of Literary Genres* 54.1 (2011): 5-24.

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