

The Roaring Girl in Retrospect: the RSC Production of 1983

With its second revival of *The Roaring Girl* now in the Royal Shakespeare Company's repertory, Chi-fang Sophia Li documents in this article the making of the first production, as directed by Barry Kyle in 1983. She reviews the other RSC productions that informed Kyle's directorial approach, and, using the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Library's archival materials and a research interview, she attempts a reconstructive criticism of Kyle's project of 'theatrical archaeology', arguing that what Kyle did was adapt Dekker and Middleton's Jacobean angst about the radical economic changes of the first decade of King James's reign to articulate current anxieties about Thatcherite economic 'reforms'. The revival became compellingly invested with Kyle's critical reflections on triumphalist capitalism and 'Victorian values'. Chi-fang Sophia Li is Assistant Professor of the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature at National Sun Yat-sen University in Taiwan. She has also published in *Shakespeare Bulletin*, *Notes and Queries*, and *English Studies* (Routledge), and in Chinese in *Review of English and American Literature*.

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IN 1611 the Fortune Playhouse staged a sexually provocative play, *The Roaring Girl* by Thomas Dekker and Thomas Middleton. It featured a fictional dramatization of a contemporary cross-dresser and female thief, Mary Frith (c. 1584–1659), alias Moll Cutpurse, whose outrageous behaviour made her the subject of gossip in London's theatrical community. The furore she caused also provoked the Consistory Court of London to convict the historical Mary Frith of the 'dissolute' offences enumerated in the Court's *Correction Book*.¹

As the title page to the 1611 quarto text testifies, Moll's intentional sartorial play is targeted at the gendered norms of the period. For the Jacobean audience who made a trip to disreputable Clerkenwell to watch a male actor play this roaring 'girl' with the prospect of seeing real-life Mary at the Fortune,² the appeal of this site-specific play unquestionably lay in Frith's newsworthiness, and an interest in the unsettling subcultures of (homo)eroticism and transvestism on the all-male early modern stage.

Over the past thirty years, while much critical attention has focused on the issues of

'transgression',³ with its impact on feminist and queer studies, *The Roaring Girl* has also attracted directors' attention. In the second half of the twentieth century, when feminism in its own right had a nuanced cultural lexicon, the Women's Liberation Movement had new claims to make, celibacy was given new definitions, and economic liberalism affected nearly everyone's lives, *The Roaring Girl* had as much to say to the theatre world as to the academic. It tells the story of a virtuous heroine, Moll, attempting to solve moral crises in a Jacobean London that was undergoing drastic economic change.

To resurrect chivalric values in an increasingly mercantile society, Moll's oxymoronic singularity – a female cross-dresser whose deeds imitate those of a 'knight-errant',⁴ worshipping celibacy and individualism – not only subverts gender ideology but also proposes an unprecedented lifestyle. Among seven modern revivals (1951–1983) reviewed by Paul Mulholland in 1985, it is not surprising that most were considered 'feminist' productions.⁵

Among these documented revivals, the Royal Shakespeare Company's *The Roaring*

Girl (1983) – with set designed by Chris Dyer, music by Guy Woolfenden, and lighting by Leo Leibovici – was the most ambitious and significant. First, it was a high-profile ‘risk production’ one of which the RSC allowed itself each year.⁶ Second, this obscure play, ‘unjustly neglected in our theatre for three hundred years’,⁷ finally met its most committed director, Barry Kyle, who, with an abiding passion for Jacobean drama, battled for the project to materialize on the national stage. Third, as we look back from now, actors of different generations – David Waller, Ian Talbot, Helen Mirren, Jonathan Hyde, Alun Armstrong, Sorcha Cusack, and Mark Rylance – all invested this strong-cast revival with historical prominence. Paired with Shakespeare’s *The Taming of the Shrew* (also directed by Kyle), which opened the RSC’s winter season in Stratford-upon-Avon, *The Roaring Girl* had ten performances at the 1,200-seat Royal Shakespeare Theatre in 1983 before transferring to London’s Barbican Centre to open the RSC’s second season.⁸

The Critical Response

The Dekker–Middleton canon was little known in the 1980s, least of all *The Roaring Girl*,⁹ and theatre reviews were positive and sympathetic. Comparing the play’s attitude towards sex and wealth with that of the day, Don Chapman wrote in the *Oxford Mail* that Mirren’s Moll was ‘a feminist Robin Hood preaching equality of the sexes and an end to poverty and corruption’.¹⁰ She ‘vindicated women’s right to smoke’¹¹ and ‘prove[d] female superiority again and again’.¹²

Some critics were impressed by Kyle’s vision in staging this ‘marvellous pageant of colour and excitement’ and the ‘smell and feel’ of seventeenth-century London.¹³ Terry Grimley in the *Birmingham Post* applauded the production’s ‘care and lavishness’, with Kyle unearthing an unknown London – a ‘malodorous haunt of harlots, hoodlums, men-about-town, con men, downtrodden’.¹⁴ Quoting T. S. Eliot’s appraisal of *The Roaring Girl*, Michael Coveney in the *Financial Times* endorsed Kyle’s production as ‘a vindication of Eliot’s assessment’: it was the ‘most per-

suasive piece of full-scale RSC reclamation in this area since Trevor Nunn’s *The Revenger’s Tragedy* [1966].¹⁵

Poet-critic James Fenton in the *Sunday Times* defended Kyle’s ‘good choice’: ‘It impressed Eliot enough for him to reach for his great gong – “great”.’¹⁶ Although Michael Billington found the play ‘no masterpiece’, he wrote in the *Guardian* that the ‘success’ of Kyle’s production ‘lies partly in its central casting and partly in its ability to evoke the teeming variety of Jacobean London’. And he concluded that this ‘enjoyable revival . . . vindicates Kyle’s one-man campaign to explore the byways as well as the highways of English drama’.¹⁷

However, Gareth Lloyd Evans found the revival unjustifiable since ‘neither Middleton nor Dekker had ever heard of Women’s Lib’ and the plots were ‘tediously cumbersome’. Seeing the production as a ‘substitute panto’, Evans opined that it was a play better left to ‘the museum’.¹⁸ And in *Punch* Sheridan Morley declared: ‘So far from being a major undiscovered classic, it is in fact a shambling wreck that our forefathers were well-advised to bury in the British Theatre Museum.’¹⁹

Despite these opinions, thirty years later, as I looked into the RSC’s performance archive of Barry Kyle’s early productions and interviewed him about *The Roaring Girl*, I was informed that not all his directorial decisions were understood. ‘Feminist’ was not a word Kyle ‘ever used much’. What Kyle actually did in the production was adapt Dekker and Middleton’s Jacobean angst about the radical economic changes of the first decade of King James’s rule to articulate modern Britain’s anxieties about Thatcher’s economic liberalism.²⁰

In the theatre of 1983, where the cultural implications of the ‘virgin quean’ and ‘queer virgin’ attached to the 1611 performance text had lost their social resonance,²¹ the RSC’s *The Roaring Girl* has good reasons to deserve reappraisal. In what follows, I contextualize the production in Kyle’s directorial career, tracing the materials of memory of the RSC’s performance archive at the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Library in Stratford-upon-Avon. In the archival space that houses docu-

ments of material remains, I watched the film recordings of Kyle's mutually informing Jacobean revivals – *The Witch of Edmonton* (1981–2) and *The Roaring Girl* (1983) alongside his *The Taming of the Shrew* (1982–3). I also consulted and analyzed the theatre reviews and production records, posters and performance programmes, rehearsal notes and diaries, promptbooks and show reports, floor plans and company calls, and the rehearsal and production photographs by Donald Cooper and Joe Cocks.

The backstories and voices from these material remains²² allow me to attempt a reconstructive critique of Kyle's production. I was also able to interview director Barry Kyle (now honorary director of the RSC and Professor of Theatre Arts at the University of Missouri), who entrusted me to work on this project. He generously talked me through the genesis of his production and what he saw as the cultural parallels between Jacobean capitalism and Thatcher's economic liberalism.²³ As I watch and interpret Kyle's 1983 production from a 2013 perspective, the thirty years' gap also gives me a helpful historical distance to incorporate historical criticism into my work with 'the material traces of performance' to 'remember, reconstruct, and re-perform performance'.²⁴

Barry Kyle and his Background

It is not possible to assess a director's achievements without knowing his background and ambitions in the theatre. Kyle was born of working-class parents in Bow, East London, in 1947, and at Beal Grammar School he showed early interest in theatre.²⁵ Like Trevor Nunn and Terry Hands, who came to theatre from an academic background and have degrees in English, Kyle studied English and Drama at the University of Birmingham. In 1969 he began his career at the Liverpool Playhouse, where his first production was the controversial *Saved* (1969) by Edward Bond.²⁶ Other representative works there were Theatre Workshop's *Oh! What a Lovely War* (1970), Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound* (1971), and Neil Simon's *The Odd Couple* (1972).

As a young director of twenty-four, Kyle was interested in exploring the moral side of social drama. In 1971 he had intended to direct Howard Brenton's thriller *Christie in Love*,²⁷ but the management disagreed. Kyle therefore left Liverpool for the Theatre Royal, York, as associate director. At that point in life, Kyle told the *Times* Arts Editor Jane Ellison that he could have taken a different route and joined the 7:84 agitprop group or a devising theatre company like Joint Stock;²⁸ instead, at twenty-six, he joined the influential Royal Shakespeare Company in 1973 as assistant director to work with the nation's most talented theatre practitioners.

Here he directed at the studio theatre called The Other Place and in the main house with John Barton, Trevor Nunn, and Terry Hands. At the RSC he 'unpicked much of what he had learned at Liverpool'²⁹ and used the RSC's resources to revise and develop the company's repertoire. His first production for the RSC was the dramatization of Sylvia Plath's *Three Women* (1973), followed by a stage portrait of her life, *Sylvia Plath*. Kyle was now more interested in staging Shakespeare's history and problem plays than his romantic comedies. In the 1970s and 1980s his Shakespearean productions included *King John* (1974), *Cymbeline* (1974), *Richard III* (1975), *Troilus and Cressida* (1976–77), *Romeo and Juliet* (1977), *Measure for Measure* (1978), *Julius Caesar* (1979–80), *The Taming of the Shrew* (1982–83), *Love's Labour's Lost* (1984), *The Two Noble Kinsmen* (1986), *Richard II* (1986–87), and *All's Well That Ends Well* (1989–90).

Despite these theatre credits, Kyle found that the RSC's Shakespeare repertoire was 'burning up very fast'. He told Ellison: 'The RSC must not become a Shakespearan turntable, simply recycling the popular work.'³⁰ Alongside Shakespearean productions, Kyle also directed modern socialist drama, including Howard Brenton's *The Churchill Play* (1978–79, 1988), *Sore Throats* (1979), and *Thirteenth Night* (1981); Edward Bond's *Lear* (1983); Angela Hewins's *The Dillens* (1983, 1985) and its sequel, *Mary, after the Queen* (1985); and Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* (1984). All these plays critique contemporary politics and social injustices.

At the RSC, Kyle was keener than any other director to revive seventeenth-century plays, which, he felt, were not just 'part of the English legacy' but would also elicit the audience to rethink Shakespeare's work.³¹ *The Roaring Girl* was not his first Jacobean revival. In 1975, with John Barton, Kyle had directed John Ford's Tudor history play *Perkin Warbeck* (1975), about the pretender who claimed to be the second son of Edward IV, at The Other Place. *Perkin Warbeck* was recognized by T. S. Eliot as 'one of the very best historical plays' in 'the whole of Elizabethan and Jacobean drama', and Michael Billington found the production 'a fascinating study of the mystery of kingship in the manner of *Richard II*', which looked 'back to the Shakespeare history cycle'.³²

Prelude to *The Roaring Girl*

After the success of *Perkin Warbeck*,³³ Kyle ventured into other Jacobean plays that blended hard politics with sympathy for social outcasts. In 1980 he directed Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher's *The Maid's Tragedy* (starring Sinead Cusack as Evadne, John Carlisle as King, and Tom Wilkinson as Melantius) at The Other Place as a pilot project.

This story of an arranged marriage – a cover for the king's illegitimate children – fixed between the lustful king's mistress Evadne and his loyal noble Amintor³⁴ explores the Jacobean motifs of sex, treason, and regicide. *The Maid's Tragedy* fulfilled 'two functions' of Kyle's project. First, it served 'to reintroduce an important play of its period', and second, 'to remind us of how our theatre has . . . refused to investigate its own inheritance and allow it to see the light of day'.³⁵ The grisly emotional depth of Kyle's 'excellent' staging won James Fenton's approval.³⁶

In 1981 Kyle directed Dekker, Ford, and William Rowley's social drama *The Witch of Edmonton* (with Harriet Walter as Winifred, Miriam Karlin as Elizabeth Sawyer, Miles Anderson as Dog, Juliet Stevenson as Susan Carter) at The Other Place in Stratford-upon-Avon and The Pit in London. The main plot concerns the crime and punishment of

the bigamous Frank Thorney, who, having secretly wed servant Winifred, marries and murders Susan Carter for an inheritance.

The subplot portrays the wretched life of a working-class outcast, Elizabeth Sawyer, persecuted as a witch by the villagers. For self-protection, she makes a pact with Black Dog (surrogate of the devil), warning the bullies that she will revenge their abuse with a witch's curse. Kyle's *Witch* received 'excellent' assessments from Michael Billington (*Guardian*), James Fenton (*Sunday Times*), B. A. Young (*Financial Times*), and Gareth Lloyd Evans (*Stratford-upon-Avon Herald*), while Irving Wardle (*Times*) usefully identified Kyle's new approach to theatre, calling it 'more than a piece of pioneering theatre journalism'.³⁷

As we can briefly summarize, Kyle's productions were characterized by his social, political slant and compassion for the marginalized characters who are left to resolve their own fates. Adopting Dekker's dramaturgical approach to social journalism, Kyle questioned the delicate relationships between individuals and society, between their fates and personal struggles.

Reviving early modern drama with historical curiosity, Kyle usually set the plays in their periods rather than retelling the stories through re-contextualization. He collaborated closely with Dyer, with whom he created an anthropological style of 'thick description' to fill the stage with an ambience of history and culture. *Perkin Warbeck* was staged on a black-and-white chequerboard set dotted with historical characters in period costume. Keith Brace noted: 'Wall hangings present family trees, a map of the battle of Bosworth, portraits of Henry and of the early Stuart kings, lit up and pointed out by Henry to explain the feudal complexities of the background'.³⁸

The Witch of Edmonton showcased the working life of villagers. Onstage for the spectators' view was the rural community of Edmonton, with farmers churning, hauling sacks, and tending bees in a straw-strewn barn filled with agricultural implements. Washed linen and clothes were hung across the poles which were used as maypoles in

subsequent scenes. From time to time, there were wolves' cries to accompany the brutal murder in the play.

The production evoked a changing world where superstitious folk beliefs collide with Puritanism embodied in the 'primitive whirling in the shape of a puritan', 'waving its arms and around its head', which looked 'mechanical and threatening'. Such a world, wrote Fenton, supplied a 'prelude to a new England'.³⁹ Both productions were noted for their strong sense of historicity and social realism, whose graphic journalistic portraits constituted the deep structure of Kyle's style. For Neil Taylor, the *Witch* production 'has extended our knowledge of Dekker'.⁴⁰ For Fenton, the *Witch* was 'the best of Mr Kyle's work' he had seen.⁴¹ Unsurprisingly, these successful Jacobean revivals paved the way for Kyle's *The Roaring Girl*.

The Roaring Girl on the Wide Stage

In the RSC's 1982 Stratford season, Kyle, now thirty-four, with solid stage credits behind him, 'was given a free hand to take the company in a new direction' while 'Terry Hands discreetly exercised his chairman's role at a distance'.⁴² Kyle put forward a bold proposal that the RSC should 'do a Jacobean drama on the wide stage'. He told Francesca Simon that he 'would sooner put a play like *The Roaring Girl* on the map than do the five thousandth revival of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* . . . when there is this extraordinary treasure of forgotten plays to be seen'.⁴³

What he found unique about *The Roaring Girl* was that it is 'a documentary', 'a social examination of life, an original plot, not a rehash'. He wanted to lift from the page an economically independent working-class woman – unknown in Shakespeare – and showcase onstage the 'authentic smell and street speech'⁴⁴ of Jacobean London.

Originally, he wanted *The Roaring Girl* to open the season, but the reality was that the play was little known and the RSC needed a large-scale 'popular comedy to fill the theatre'.⁴⁵ The bargain was that Kyle's politically correct *The Taming of the Shrew* – a crowd-pleaser and 'black comedy'⁴⁶ charged

with entertaining verbal gags and visual acrobatics⁴⁷ – opened the 1982 winter season with a 'festive', 'vaudeville' appeal to release the holiday stresses of Christmas,⁴⁸ while *The Roaring Girl* was to be a companion piece or 'trade-off'. The *Shrew's* visual splendour and exaggerated character types were tailored to whitewash 'much of the play's nastiness'.⁴⁹ The production 'flickered smiles from the RSC's beleaguered accountants'.⁵⁰ While Kyle's exuberant imagination in the *Shrew* upset a few Shakespeareans,⁵¹ he wanted to present *The Roaring Girl* 'warts and all',⁵² with full textual authority and seriousness.

The RSC in the 1980s had many theatrical talents contributing to the casts of those seasons. Helen Mirren had been at the RSC since 1967–68, and through the 1970s Mirren played Shakespeare's Cressida, Diana, Hermia, Hero, Julia, Lady Anne, Ophelia, Lady Macbeth, and Queen Margaret. She also performed in Jacobean female roles: Castiza in Cyril Tourneur's *The Revenger's Tragedy* (1967), Win Littlewit in Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair* (1969), besides Harriet in Etherege's *The Man of Mode* (1971) from the Restoration. In 1982, after a five-year break, Mirren rejoined the RSC to play Cleopatra in a studio production with Michael Gambon as Antony, and Kyle invited her to play the role of Moll Cutpurse in the main house.

Helen Mirren as Moll

Moll, as one critic observed from theatre practices, was 'a tremendous challenge' to any actress because it demanded 'a considerable range of histrionic ability' and 'immense physical stamina'⁵³ to enact aristocratic male gallantry (III.i), defend female honour in male clothes (IV.i), and express linguistic virtuosity (V.i). In an interview with Terry Grimley, Mirren talked about the new challenges and admitted that *The Roaring Girl* was 'an extraordinary play . . . much harder than *Antony and Cleopatra*':

It's like taking the script of a *Carry On* film and trying to make it comprehensible to an audience in three hundred years' time. It's all in Jacobean slang with constant sexual innuendo. I couldn't understand a word of it when I first read it.⁵⁴

For Mirren, Moll was radically different from other female characters she played⁵⁵ because she 'pleases herself all the way down the line' and 'is not bounded by any social constraints at all'. When Moll tells the aristocrats, 'I please myself, and care not else who loue mee', Mirren felt Moll was praised for her 'braue mind' (V.i.319–20).

Mirren did not see Moll as proto-feminist because 'to see the character in feminist terms' would 'miss the point that she is someone who has actually gone beyond feminism'. She told Grimley: 'She's simply doing what she wants to do. She's not doing it for the sake of any theory about how life ought to be.'⁵⁶ Finding the 'ideas expressed' in the play 'amazing', Mirren told theatre critic Michael Owen, 'there are some lines there which I certainly enjoy saying', adding enigmatically: 'I was hardly a roaring girl. If anything, I'm more of a roaring girl now – on occasions.'⁵⁷

While Kyle wanted to tap Mirren's stage experience and fame, Mirren welcomed the opportunity to portray a tough-minded woman who wields her sword against the sexists who wrong womankind. Having played *The Age of Consent* (1969) alongside the RSC performances, she was branded as 'Stratford's very own sex queen' by Philip Oakes, an insulting term that haunted her for years.⁵⁸ In an interview with Michael Parkinson (1975), Parkinson condescendingly introduced Mirren as 'the sex queen' of the company: 'Critics spent as much time discussing her physical attributes as assessing her acting ability. . . . The final accolade is she is especially telling in projecting sluttish eroticism.'

During the interview, Parkinson leered at her body and bombarded her with offensive questions.⁵⁹ Parkinson's 'lookism' was just as irksome as that in *The Roaring Girl*. Young Mirren, with a 'trustful romantic nature',⁶⁰ felt strongly about Moll's innocent mind and virtue because, like 'sweet plump Moll', voluptuous Mirren was often regarded patronizingly by chauvinists. Like Moll, who vows never to marry, Mirren wrote in her autobiography: 'I never had any inclination to marry. I couldn't bear the thought. It

seemed to me like voluntary imprisonment.'⁶¹ This echoes Moll's lines when she says to Sebastian,

I have no humor to marry, I loue to lye aboth sides
ath bed and my selfe; and againe ath' other side; a
wife you know ought to be obedient, but I feare
me I am too headstrong to obey, therefore Ile nere
go about it. (II.ii.35–8)

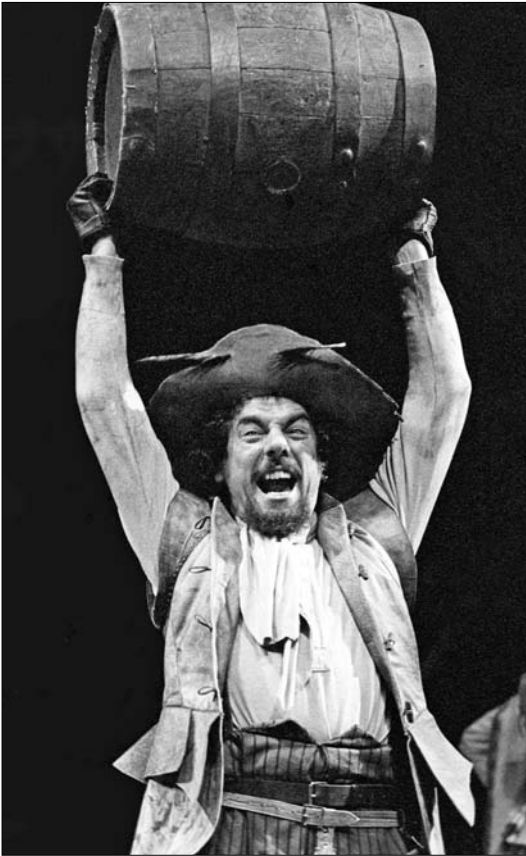
That was the theatrical sympathy constituted between actor and role. In the *Shrew*, having downplayed Kate's rawness, Kyle also downplayed Moll's/Mirren's voluptuousness, to empower her with modern thought, attitude, and character, which gave Moll/Mirren a sharper edge⁶² – a point to which I shall return.

Cross-casting with the *Shrew*

The rest of the cast was also drawn from the *Shrew*. Just as the *Shrew* had featured Alun Armstrong as Petruccio, Ian Talbot as Hortensio, David Waller as Baptista Minola, Mark Rylance as Lucentio, and Stephanie Fayerman as Widow, *The Roaring Girl* cast David Waller as Sir Alexander Wengrave, Alun Armstrong as Trapdoor, Ian Talbot as Master Gallipot, Mark Rylance as Jack Dapper, and Stephanie Fayerman as Mistress Openwork.

During casting, Kyle needed to think laterally between productions to explore associated minds between actors and characters who could intertextually inform one another in partner performances. Waller's Baptista Minola, 'better at business than understanding his daughter',⁶³ was an affectionate but mercantilist father desperate to marry off his troublesome Kate, whereas Waller's Sir Alexander was a loving but rapacious parent deliberating on the 'birth' of Sebastian's bride.

Alun Armstrong, a versatile stage actor of comic brilliance, was passionate about period drama and established his theatre reputation in his notable performance as Wackford Squeers in Trevor Nunn's *Nicholas Nickleby* (1980). In the *Shrew* and *The Roaring Girl*, he played the tamer (Petruccio) and the tamed (Trapdoor). Armstrong's Petruccio was an uncouth 'roaring boy' who 'wreaked



'What strength hast thou?' Trapdoor (Alun Armstrong) demonstrates. Photo © Donald Cooper.

havoc on the household',⁶⁴ whereas his Trapdoor was a foolhardy spy and 'old soldier scrounge'⁶⁵ who takes Moll's words literally when she asks him, 'What strength hast thou?' To show her. Armstrong hefted up the barrel and detonated the laughter. Audiences who attended both productions would have witnessed 'Villain meets match in shapely Moll' in the partner productions.⁶⁶

When Mark Rylance came to the RSC, he was just twenty-three. 'It was his first year. Nobody knew who he was,' said Kyle.⁶⁷ Because of his youth, he was assigned the roles of the callow, pampered Lucentio, and of the profligate son, Jack Dapper. While Rylance's Lucentio travelled to Padua to top up his education but was smitten by Bianca and so abandoned his intellectual pursuits, his Jack Dapper was a hopeless spendthrift lost in London's trendiest frills and fripperies of 'fashion fascism'.⁶⁸ Kyle remembered

that early on during some improvisation on the *Shrew*, Sinead Cusack asked him privately: 'Do you know who the best actor in the Company is? Mark Rylance.' Cusack, Kyle pointed out, saw Rylance's talent a long time before anybody else. Besides, Rylance's penchant for Elizabethan/Jacobean costume made him the right person to play fashionista fascist Jack Dapper.

As for other roles, there was theatrical variance in the stage characterizations of Ian Talbot's flamboyantly dressed Hortensio and the 'apron husband' Master Gallipot (III.ii. 29–30). Stephanie Fayerman's strong-willed Widow was in contrast to devious Mistress Gallipot, which added a dimension to the wifely characters. Jonathan Hyde, who had played upright Edgar in Adrian Noble's *Lear* (1982), was keen to attempt the sinister and vulpine Laxton.

Dickens and the *Nicholas Nickleby* Legacy

To present the teeming life of *The Roaring Girl*, Kyle's Jacobean city drew on Dickensian London. Kyle said: 'While Shakespeare looks inward to his classical sources to retell stories, Dekker looks outside the window to dramatize their contemporary lives', as does Dickens.⁶⁹ Kyle's reimaginings were feasible given the palimpsestic cultural space of Dekker and Dickens with rapid capitalist growth producing crime and poverty, and both writers interrogating capitalist exploitation and social injustice.

Their social visions have a lot in common not only because they were painters of London lives but because both had been in dire straits. Dekker was imprisoned for debt at the King's Bench; so was Dickens's father at the Marshalsea.⁷⁰ In their work, 'there is an underlying sense of justice',⁷¹ which provokes them to attack cold authoritarianism and capitalist logic by using the 'champion-of-the-poor'⁷² characters both to defend the underclass and expose the venality of the ruling class.

The RSC's nine-hour *Nicholas Nickleby*, scripted by David Edgar and staged at the 1,200-seat Aldwych Theatre, London, was a high-risk production that proved a 'triumph'

for the Company in 1980.⁷³ This was a precedent for Kyle. While Trevor Nunn presented Roger Rees's Nicholas Nickleby as the champion of the abused, Kyle introduced Moll as the defender of humanity. The production posters both featured the self-empowerment of a self-reliant hero/heroine surrounded by little characters awaiting rescue, attesting to Dekker and Dickens's shared moral visions.⁷⁴

Just as the success of *Nicholas Nickleby* radically transformed the approach to storytelling in British theatre, especially in *Les Misérables*, it also influenced some of the directorial decisions in *The Roaring Girl*.⁷⁵ For example, a 'collective' narrative, with the story being told by one character and then another in *Nickleby*,⁷⁶ was used in the Prologue of *The Roaring Girl*. The tête-à-tête scene featuring Mistresses Gallipot and Openwork was reminiscent of that between Fanny Squeers and Tilda Price. Just as Nicholas Nickleby contested the authority of Dotheboys Hall, Moll challenges the male privilege of buying sex. And the Catchpoles' chase after Jack Dapper was inspired by the chase scenes of Smike and Mantalini.

Nunn had displayed onstage a mercenary society, and Kyle now evoked a capitalist London. *Nickleby*'s teeming crowds (street children, vendors, baker's boys throwing bread) and Nunn's attention to detail also served as a model for the crowds (merchants, citizens, a beggar, pickpockets, real animals) who thronged the stage in *The Roaring Girl*. As Kyle put it, in 'trying to create in loving detail, almost archaeologically, a society of the day at all levels', *Nickleby* 'did influence *The Roaring Girl*'. However, his production had new visions to offer because *The Roaring Girl* is a play, not a dramatized novel: the narrative devices used in *Nickleby* – 'song, direct address, chorus speech, and summary directly conveyed to the audience' – were not needed in *The Roaring Girl*.⁷⁷

Staging Crisis in a Decade of Change

Reviving *The Roaring Girl* as a project of 'theatrical archaeology', Kyle set the production in the first decade of King James I's rule, when profound changes – Elizabeth's

death and debts, the plague, James's lavishness, and Britain's overseas capitalist ventures – were impacting on economic structures and traditional hierarchies. In that decade many aristocrats were selling their land to wealthy nouveau-riche who had acquired their fortunes through trade, enabling them to buy titles and places within the ranks of the nobility.⁷⁸

Jacobean Britain was thus becoming a capitalist nation privileging profiteering and self-interest over chivalric values and land ownership. Many characters in *The Roaring Girl* typify the fading gentry losing land, the emerging middle class accumulating wealth, and small individuals achieving economic independence – including Moll. For Kyle, 'Lord Noland was the key' because he was the embodiment of the landed gentry disoriented in a world to which he does not belong.⁷⁹ The roaring boys – Laxton, Greenwit, and Goshawk – are the fallen noblemen, who, having lost their estates and privileges, cause disturbances in the streets, thereby creating a new culture of dependency by milking cash from city wives whose husbands – Gallipot, Openwork, Tiltyard – are of the emerging middle-class elite, wealthy enough to shoot problems with cash (IV.ii). In the shadow of the death of Elizabeth I, England's foremost challenge was to adjust to the world of King James and accept new values for better or worse. Kyle saw such signs of change in the text and intended to showcase a London gripped by the capitalist pursuit of money wealth.

To furnish the production with a 'thick description' of Elizabethan nostalgia, Kyle and Dyer presented 'a constructivist set' 'dominated by the disapproving busts of Queen Elizabeth and King James'.⁸⁰ This surmounted the roofs of the tiered, timbered buildings and looked portentously over the changed cityscape. At stage left was a gigantic clock mechanism and a pair of popping eyes watching the citizens. These were extravagant conceits, as Kyle confessed, but indicated a countdown to cultural change. Behind the eyes was a set of 'cog-wheels representing Tudor capitalism that finally starts turning when you have given up

hope'.⁸¹ On centre stage below the head of Elizabeth was a 'skirt arrangement'⁸² from which Mirren, in the Barbican performance, would walk out to meet Laxton 'to symbolize the return of the Virgin Queen'.⁸³

The programme indicated that the story's time frame was '*Rex fuit Elisabeth*' (Elizabeth was King) on to '*Nune est Jacobus Regina*' (James is now Queen). Not only citing Una Ellis-Fermor's *The Jacobean Drama* (1936) and Gamani Salgado's *The Elizabethan Underworld* (1977) to depict the 'dissatisfaction and a feeling of unsteadiness' of King James's rule, Kyle and Dyer also quoted from John Stow's *Survey of London* (1603), Hugh Latimer's *Fruitfull Sermons* (1596), and Peter Clark and Paul Slack's *English Towns in Transition 1500–1700* (1976) to illustrate the drastic changes in the urban environment.⁸⁴

Kyle's decision to forefront cultural concerns about these changes was historically correct and theatrically appropriate. Ever since the death of Elizabeth, the nostalgic Elizabethan Dekker always evoked a strong motherly presence of the old Queen in his plague pamphlets.⁸⁵ This is especially telling in Dekker's 'diptych texts' *The Wonderful Year* (1603) and *The Magnificent Entertainment* (1604), where he sustains the cult of Elizabeth by citing Virgil's political nostalgia for old ruler Caesar (symbolizing Elizabeth) to insinuate England's reluctance to embrace political change.⁸⁶

In *The Wonderful Year*, Dekker laments the passing of the Queen and castigates a rising merchant class now worshipping gold, not God. Dekker and Middleton's *News from Gravesend* (1603), *The Meeting of Gallants* and *The Black Book* (1604), and 1 & 2 *Honest Whore* (1604–05) are full of moral criticisms of Stuart England. In the book of meditations *Four Birds of Noah's Ark* (1609), Dekker uses Elizabeth's royal symbols – dove, eagle, pelican, and phoenix – to invoke her iconographical presence at a time when London was repeatedly assaulted by the Black Death. The uncommon 'roaring girl' was, for Kyle, the 'inversion of the Virgin Queen'.⁸⁷

A first impression of *The Roaring Girl* is of a complex of characters engaging in busy 'costume play'. In Kyle's production, cross-

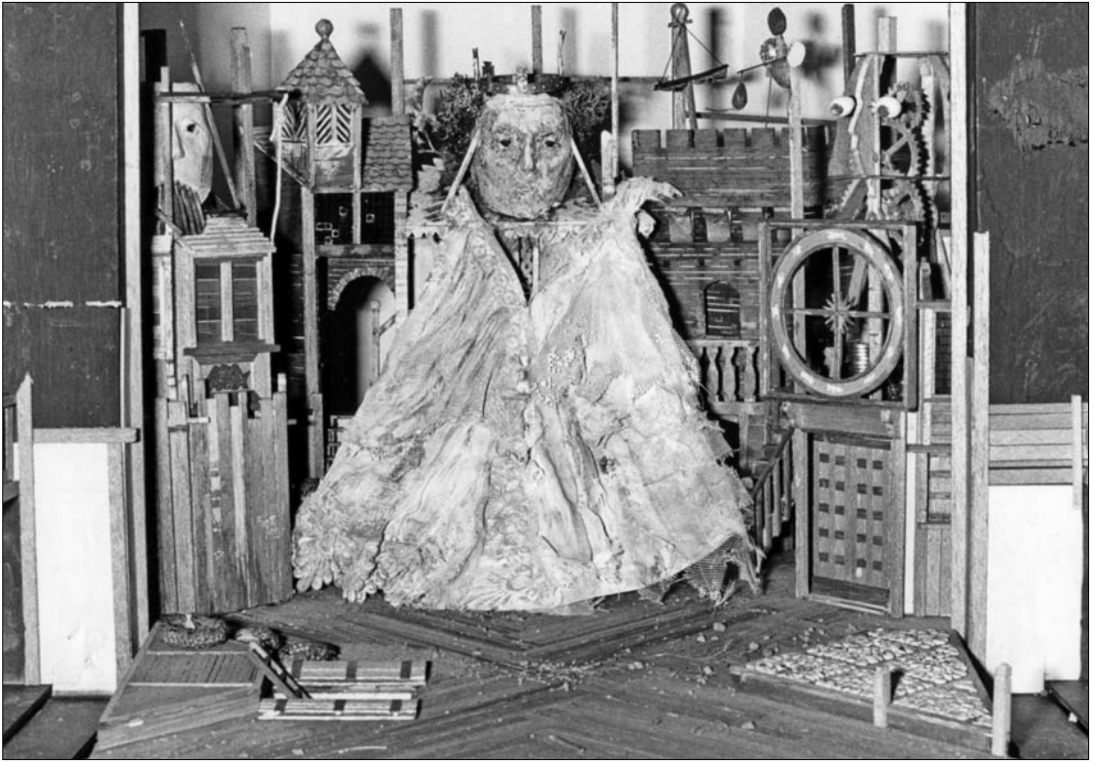
dressing, over-dressing, power dressing, and window-dressing constituted the performative tropes, through which Kyle intended to present the symptomatic evidence of capitalist malaise structured around Jacobean 'fashion fascism' and consumption in a morally nihilistic London where everything had a price: ruffs and bands; feathers and laces; tobacco and medicine; merchandise and pleasure; birth and bride; work and service.

Kyle's Approach to *The Roaring Girl*

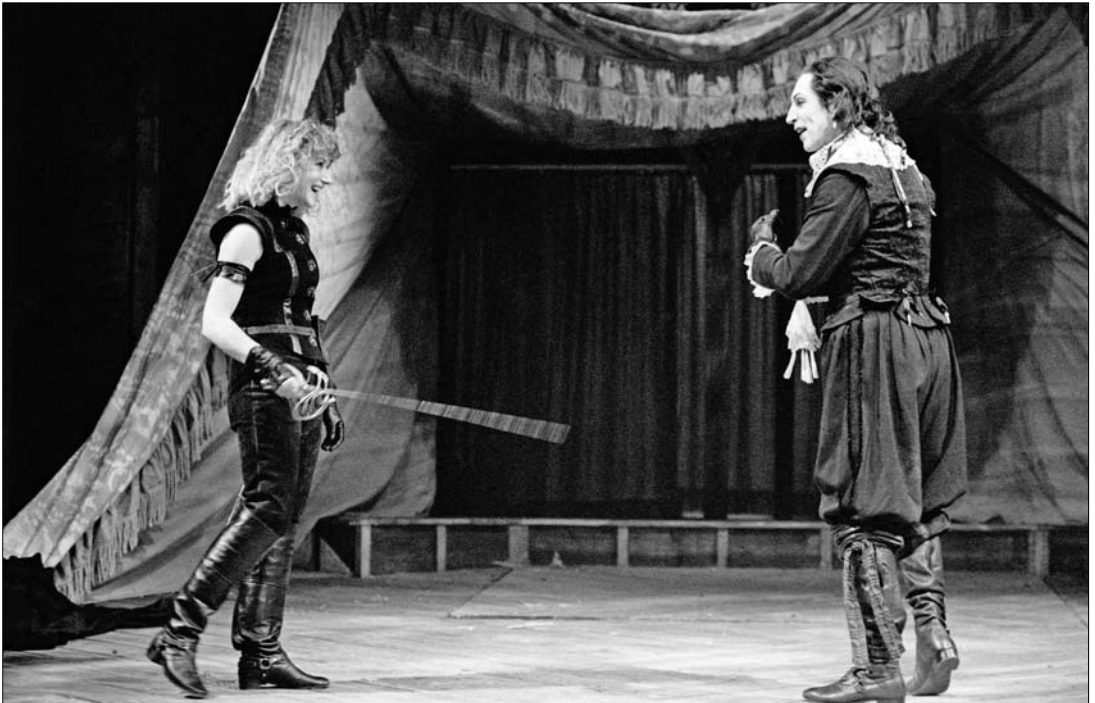
The production's first act opened with Katy Behean's Mary Fitz-Allard dressing down as a sempstress, not a nobleman's daughter. Why? Because Mary has been rejected by Sebastian's father, Sir Alex, who found her 5000-mark inheritance a 'scorn' and thus called her 'beggars heire' (I.i.81–3). Unable to see Sebastian with dignity, Mary has to debase and cross-dress herself, which allows Sebastian and his serving man to play across her body insulting jokes (I.i.1–17) until Sebastian is reminded of their 'bond' (I.i.51). To annoy his father, Sebastian has enlisted another Mary, 'another Moll' (I.i.66) – a cross-dresser and 'strange Idoll' (I.i.112) – to act as his changeling 'bride', in the hope that Moll's glaring monstrosity would mirror Mary's worthiness so that Sir Alex will capitulate.

For Kyle, Sir Alex's rejection of Mary was not built on the 'beggars fit for beggars; gentlefolks for gentlefolks'⁸⁸ ideology, but on the capitalist logic that land and inheritance won't accrue if a marriage isn't well contracted. Worrying that his 'firme foundation' (capital) would be shaken by 'a whirlwind' (investment risk, I.ii.116–20), marriage for Sir Alex is a parental investment. To introduce Sir Alex's capitalist mindset, Kyle presented his domestic space heavily *invested* with his extravagant taste of art.

Onstage Sir Alex's gallery was made of 'a long set of hinged panels with portraits of city dignitaries'.⁸⁹ However, this showplace housed not just his treasures but also a problematic ego. Believing that Sebastian was to marry 'a monster with two trinckets' (II.ii.71) and not knowing how to utter it, Sir Alex in



Above: the set of *The Roaring Girl* designed by Chris Dyer (photo: Joe Cocks Studio Collection © Shakespeare Birthplace Trust). Below: the 'skirt arrangement' resembling the draperies of an erotic bedchamber (photo © Donald Cooper). All commercial use or publication of the photographs in this article is strictly prohibited without the permission of the copyright holder.





Sir Alex's gallery. Photo: Joe Cocks Studio Collection © Shakespeare Birthplace Trust.

front of his invited guests shows off his cabinet of curiosities (I.ii.67–150) like a museum curator and bestows expensive gifts before telling them a poorly disguised tale about an elderly father's fear of the real skeleton in the cupboard.

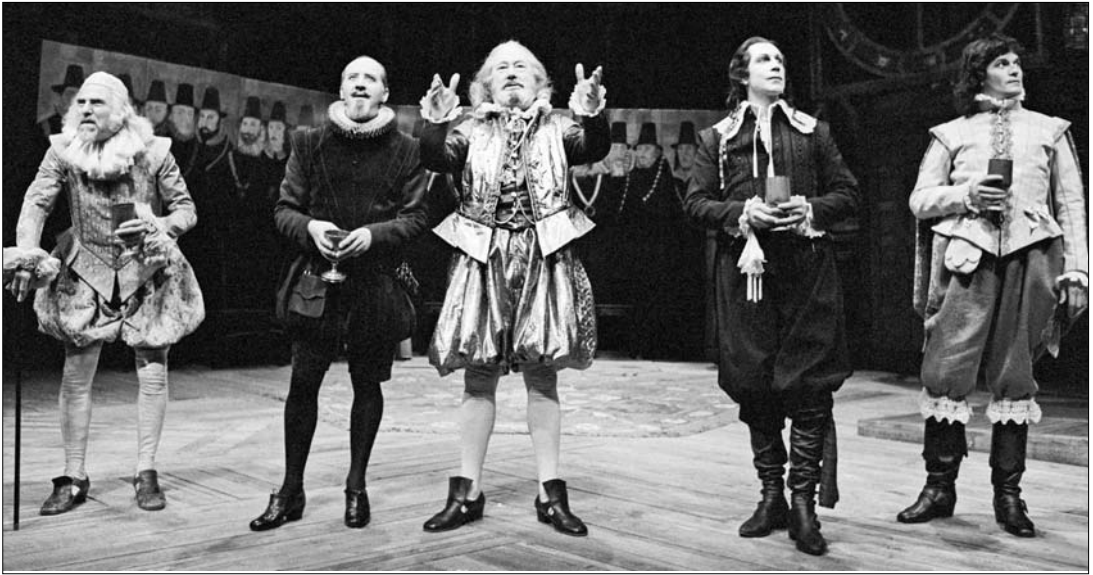
Wealth as Window-Dressing

His insecurity was reflected in Ian Talbot's gold tunic and desperate body gestures. He believes that he can buy anything with 'gold' and 'silver hookes' (I.ii.218–19) with which he bought Trapdoor's service to 'hunt' (I.ii.218) Moll the 'codpiece daughter' (II.ii.87). To create the veneer of a rich, capitalist society, Kyle filled the stage with stage properties to showcase the merchants' trading spaces and the *haute couture* of Jacobean London.

Closely following the text, Kyle presented three shops where the nouveau-riche fronted their businesses with the art of window-dressing. As the rehearsal notes indicate, on

stage right the Gallipots were selling 'tobacco', 'Indian pot-herbes' and 'pipes' (II.i.7, 9, 11) imported from overseas. Gallipot was 'playing around with bottles of coloured liquids', 'making things'. At stage left the Openworks were showcasing their 'fine bands and ruffles, fine lawnes, fine cambricks' (II.i.2–3). On the 'stall', there were also some 'saucy' smocks and 'knickers' beside the 'lace-making stand'.

At centre stage the Tiltyards' shop had 'many boxes of feathers' and 'petticoats' on display.⁹⁰ Kyle had money 'boxes' and 'playing cards' put on the tables, while 'the shopkeepers' aprons should have pockets at the front for money'.⁹¹ Kyle wanted II.i. – with 'bales, boxes, barrels', and 'barrows' 'about boat' lying behind the shops – to look 'like a kind of commodities market'. Gallipot and Tiltyard's 'water spaniels' and 'ducks' (real animals) were brought onstage to delineate the emergent merchant class who had the leisure and wealth for excursions.



Above: Sir Alex showing off his collections. Below: Mistress Gallipot at her wits' end when Laxton returns to inveigle a hundred pounds. Photos © Donald Cooper.

Such beautiful window-dressing was for Kyle a dangerous façade that covered up rampant desires and deceits which were encroaching on the merchants' marriages, creating victims of civic uproar. Onstage with cash and goods on *naked* display, the merchants' properties – wives and merchandise – were fat meat to the impoverished roaring boys.

Using Prudence Gallipot as a milch cow, brazen-faced Laxton tells Goshawk that he was unashamed to use her money to bank-roll other seductions (II.i.70–80). In the text, Prudence '*giues him [Laxton] money secretly*' (II.i.91, s.d.); in the performance, 'money from Mrs Gallipot to Laxton is put in his pipe'.⁹² Finding his opportunity in Rosamond Openwork (who led a lewd pre-marital life), Goshawk sowed discord between the couple, telling her that Openwork 'keeps a whore ith suburbs' (II.i.298–301). He boldly invites her to Brainford (IV.ii.23–5), a proposal she, with face masked, willingly accepts.

Jack Dapper is another victim of London's over-commodified culture from which he finds no way out because shopping is the only therapy that helps him construe the meaning of life. Onstage when Rylance asks for the trendiest feathers to fulfil his self-compulsive indulgence, he 'attach[ed]' 'to

his arm' a 'stuffed bird [pheasant]' with 'lots of coloured plumage'.⁹³ To highlight Dapper's folly, Kyle made Rylance a dolled-up but overdressed narcissistic fop. His costume's cut and folds, laces, fussy sashes, and





The figurative use of mirrors in Kyle's production. In II.i, the looking glass is an instrument used to reflect Londoners' self-indulgent follies, while Moll's honest singularity mirrors Mistress Gallipot and Mistress Openwork's urban decadence. Photo © Donald Cooper.

spangled ostrich feathers more or less embodied his personhood. Kyle also wanted 'all the shops [to] have mirrors'⁹⁴ through which Jack would buy his self-fantasizing charms and self-worth.

This use of mirrors in Kyle's production was to be understood figuratively. In II.i, while the looking glass was an instrument reflecting Londoners' self-indulgent follies throughout the play, Moll's honest singularity mirrored Mistresses Gallipot and Openwork's deviousness, symptomatic of urban decadence. In this overdressed, glittering culture whose currency is gold, Moll's unconventional dressing in the marketplace – Mirren wearing 'a freese Ierkin and a black sauegard' (II.i.156, s.d.) to 'buy a shag ruffe' (II.i.180) from Prudence Openwork – became a glaring anomaly, which provoked immediate ocular judgements and gossips.

Prudence refuses her entry because she considers Moll a whore. Rosamond takes her to be a sexually ambivalent man-woman (II.i.186–7). Seeing Moll as a 'fat Eele' who 'slips' 'between a Dutchmans fingers' (II.i.184–5), Laxton gives her 'ten Angels in faire

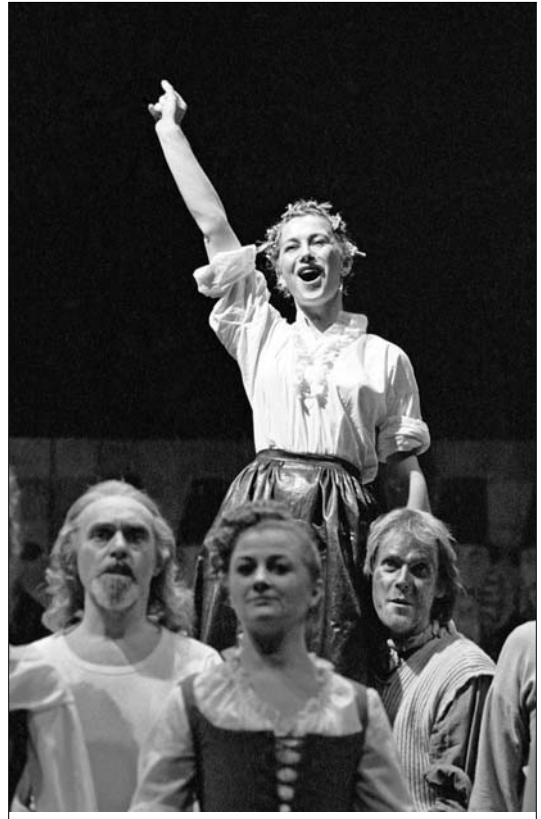
gold' to buy sex (III.i.). Laxton's like-minded sidekick, Goshawk, offers her 'a pipe of good tobacco' (II.i.161) to leer at her 'flesh' and 'nimbleness put together' (II.i.183). Mirren's 'great limbs' turned Armstrong's male gaze inward into an erotic fantasy in which he intended to 'serue her' 'masculine womanhood' (II.i.312–20).

Moll was no 'common woman' in the usual sense of the term. Based on the textual portraits of Moll whose 'masculine womanhood' and vow of celibacy would recall the virtues of Queen Elizabeth, Moll for Kyle was 'the inversion of the Virgin Queen', attempting to retrieve the old moral values of Elizabeth's Old World. Mirren's Moll was given different stage representations of cross-class power-dressing and iconoclastic cross-dressing: as a self-empowered working-class social worker uniting frustrated lovers; as a female knight correcting Sir Alex's warped gaze; as a moral reformer smashing Laxton's sexist assumptions; as a 'godmother' protecting Jack Dapper; and as a guardian of the community protecting the innocent from criminal encroachment.

Mirren's Identities as Moll

Mirren's Moll in the Prologue was a self-empowered working-class 'girl' wearing a linen shirt with sleeves rolled up ready to do work like the woman in J. Howard Miller's *We Can Do It* poster widely recognized as an icon of feminism and women's economic power. Mirren's modernized unconventionality – a reformed social worker – was to offer Sebastian remedies and help. In II.ii, coming to Sebastian's house as a male musician and fully alert to the cultural implications of cross-dressing, she bluntly tells Sebastian that he 'must looke for nothing but thanks' of her. Since she has no intention to marry, he should not 'repent' his 'bargain after' (II.ii.34–40). Moll in this impersonation 'has the art to help them' and 'By her aduise', he and Mary would 'meete, spite of all spies' (II.ii.191–4).

Acting as Sebastian's advocate, Moll was equally iconoclastic in her role as a female thief. While Moll brought Mary to Sebastian in Sir Alex's room, which onstage was set out 'in sight' of some glittering baits – a German watch and a ruff band with a diamond in it (IV.i.7, 28) – and 'money' (like bullets, put in 'a couple of black ammo boxes' 'which Barry



Above: in the Prologue, Mirren's stage representation recalling the woman in the 'We Can Do It' poster. Below: Mirren's first appearance in the marketplace. Photos © Donald Cooper.



likes')⁹⁵ and a lot of 'gold coins in [door] trap'⁹⁶ that Sir Alex thought she would take, she was not caught by Sir Alex's 'Art' (IV.i.200). Instead, she was worried that such an ostentatious display of the 'braue booty' would create victims liable to succumb to these temptations (IV.i.130–8).

In V.ii Mirren's incorruptible Moll performed a sacrificial impersonation of Sebastian's changeling bride, its purpose to mirror Mary's 'ancient' 'worthinesse' (V.ii.179, 204). To achieve this, Mirren/Moll and Paul Webster/Sir Guy Fitz-Allard worked together to enact Sir Alex's double submission to the two women (Mary/Moll) he despises. In this scene, Webster/Sir Guy came to Sir Alex's house to repair the broken contract, telling him the 'news' of Sebastian's marriage to Moll 'are false' (V.ii.50) and promising to endow his 'estate' and 'possessions' to Sebastian to 'entertain fortunes of noble birth' (V.ii.57–80).

Hearing this, Talbot/Sir Alex immediately offers his 'ring' as a 'token' for the resettlement. However, hard upon Sir Guy's exit, who should appear but Moll '*in man's clothes*' (V.ii.98, s.d.). Sir Alex is dumbstruck and angrily points at her: 'Is this your wedding gowne?' (V.ii.99–100). Mirren turned on her heel and vanished (V.ii.102, s.d.). When she re-entered as Sebastian's bride and dropped disguise, Talbot was trembling at the sight of laughing Mirren and wished he were 'blind' (V.ii.142–4).

Onstage while Webster/Sir Guy feigned betrayal and rage, Mirren/Moll told Sir Alex all the benefits that would *accrue* to him if he were the 'father' to this 'roaring girl' (V.ii.155–61). Meanwhile Webster/Sir Guy played the master of ceremonies, announcing the entry of real bride Mary, whose bridal 'brightness' also elicited Sir Alex not only to realize the purpose of Moll's *free* 'simple service' (V.ii.206) but to see his 'wrongs' in his own 'look' (V.ii.22–50).

As Mirren tried to unite the lovers, her role as a godmother and adviser to the naive hedonist Jack Dapper came to the fore. Jack Dapper is a roaring boy squandering his inheritance to sustain his decadent lifestyle. Sir Davy Dapper calls him a 'wild' 'russian

Beare' (III.iii.50) because he doats on 'drab[s]', 'fiddlers', 'tobacco', 'dyce', 'ningles', which 'sucke' him 'dry' (III.iii.56–64). Moreover, Jack dislikes ordinariness, always looking for the most newfangled merchandise to boost his street credibility.

Redeeming the 'Spoiled' Jack Dapper

Kyle saw Jack as a spoiled child not only lacking motherly love and moral tutelage but also needing guidance in the jungle of materialism. To highlight the cause of Jack's problems with directorial sympathy, Kyle wanted Mirren/Moll to play Jack's godmother. Onstage this subtle relationship was reflected in II.i where they were given some moments of emotional intimacy at the feather shop. When Rylance/Jack was choosing his feather, Mirren/Moll commented on his fastidious consumerism like a mother: if 'a fether hold you in play a whole houre, a goose will last you all the daies of your life' (II.i.196–7). Rylance/Jack asked her: 'How lik'st thou this Mol?' (II.i.282). Rather than reproaching him, protective Mirren/Moll laid the blame on London's materialism as contributing to Jack's problem: 'O singularly', 'he lookes for all the world with those spangled fethers like a noblemans bedpost' (II.i.283–4). In this scene, Rylance's Dapper was very much, in Billington's words, 'swamped in effeminate glitter'.⁹⁷

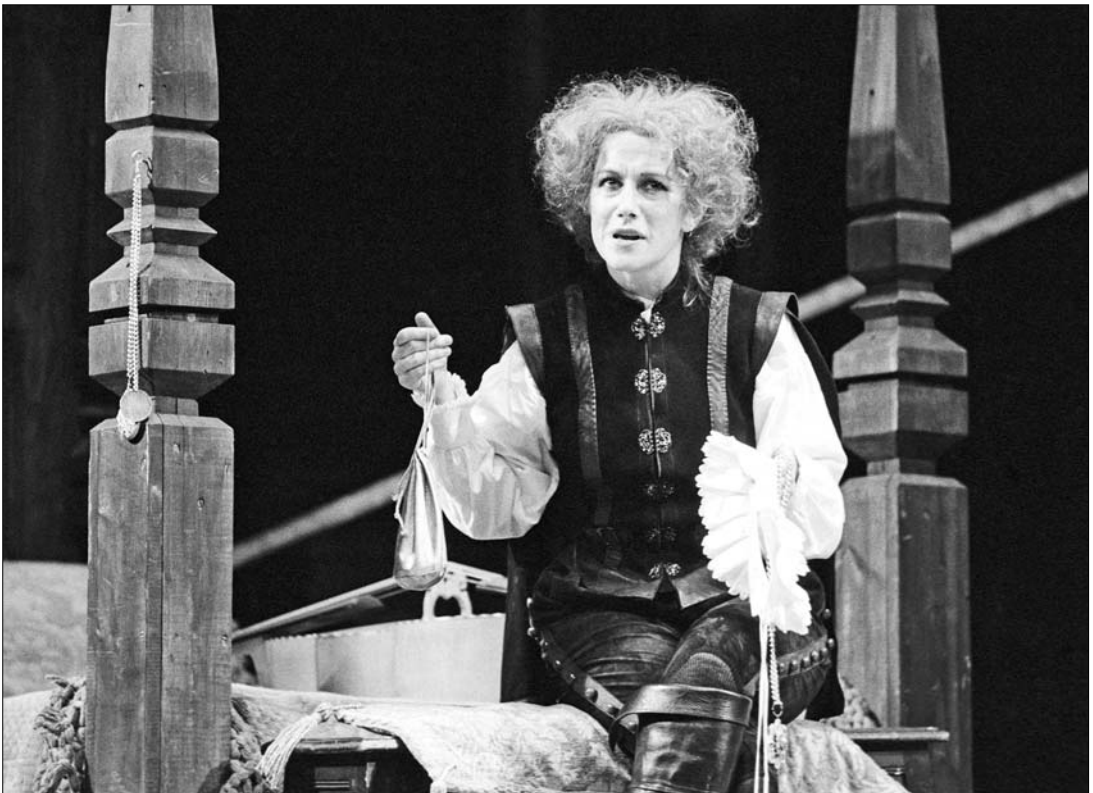
To save his son from ruin, Sir Davy wants Jack to be taught in prison (III.iii.141–57). In III.iii, when Jack loses at dice and finds himself 'an asse' (III.iii.195) on the street, there to be ambushed by the catchpoles, Mirren/Moll entered on the situation like a fairy godmother and warned him to fly (III.iii.200). In this escape scene, Rylance, as the rehearsal notes indicate, was 'wearing . . . only underpants and a feather'. He ran from stage left to stage right, dashing through the three shops. And as he escaped, he 'climb[ed] up rope and hid on roof', refusing to come down until Moll assures his safety.⁹⁸

Offstage the audience witnessed the disrobing of Jack's purchased goods and dignity. Now he can only await his godmother to 'dress him onstage'.⁹⁹ Kyle in this scene



Above: Kyle showcasing the extravagant overdressing of the effete roaring boys, wearing laces to 'entice' and 'ensnare'.¹⁰⁰ Everybody is overdressed, except Moll, who is not 'one of them'. Photos © Donald Cooper.

Below: incorruptible Moll in Sir Alex's chamber declaiming on the world's vices and temptations.



tellingly showcased a capitalist victim's 'bare life'¹⁰¹ incurred by self-inflicted 'follies' (III.iii.66). When warned by Curtilax that she 'shall pay for this rescue' (III.iii.208), Mirren/Moll took pride in her 'perfect' 'good worke': 'If any Gentleman be in Scriueners bands, / Sent but for Mol, she'll baile him by these hands' (III.iii.212–14).

As they saunter along the street after the heroic rescue, Moll endearingly calls Jack 'my little Dapper' (V.i.27) and tells him that her rescue was a self-appointed obligation to save 'desperates' (V.i.4). Onstage, motherly Mirren listened to Jack's anxieties about Sir Davy Dapper's control and surveillance (V.i.32–4, 36–8). As they walk, Lord Noland joins them, proposing a drink somewhere (V.i.50). And the suggestion takes them on an unexpected journey to the city's underworld, alien to the gentry. On the way they meet counterfeit 'maim'd souldiers' (V.i.67) who are conversing in criminal argot about robbery. While the gentry can't understand a word of it, Mirren explains to them the rogues' crytolect and the subculture of their micro-community.

Into London's Underworld

An inquisitive Jack Dapper asks Moll to 'teach' him 'this peddlers French' (V.i.164), and this takes the gentlemen and the audience further down into London's underworld to hear the canting speech of London. At this point, in service to the community and its cross-class cultural translation, Mirren's role gradually shifted from that of Jack Dapper's godmother to guardian of all the city's innocent victims. Onstage the rogues and Mirren sang a canting duet (V.i.196–209), which was then translated into Cockney by Mirren (V.i.233–41).

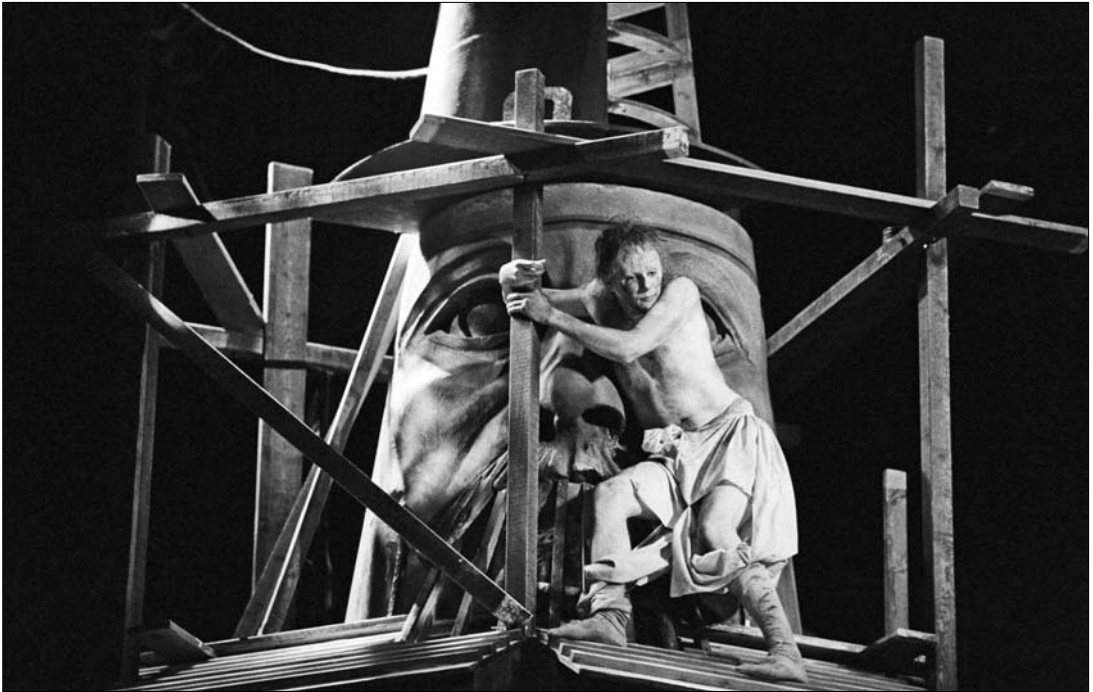
This underworld scene was uncut, and became a stage highlight that lasted for twenty minutes because Kyle thought the subplot was no less socially significant than the main plot. Envisioning Jacobean London in journalistic mode, Kyle added additional characters in V.i. Onstage there was a legless beggar crawling on the street to whom Moll gave an apple. There were also downtrodden

citizens bedding down in barrels to whom Moll gave money and showed respect. Extracting from the text that Moll treats the gentry and the underclass as equals, Kyle gave this scene an egalitarian touch.

The Roaring Girl's greatest theatrical highlight, however, was surely Moll's gallant confrontation with Laxton's sexism in III.i, where Mirren performed a roaring mimesis of a chivalric knight through self-protective power-dressing before Jonathan Hyde's 'pallid, hauntingly epicene' Laxton, who was 'all dirty talk and no action'.¹⁰² Wearing his best clothes (III.i.12–13), Hyde/Laxton was expecting his 'hir'd whoore' (III.1.19). Onstage, as the theatrical fog petered out, jack-booted Mirren exultantly entered the stage from the 'skirt arrangement' with a sword to embody Kyle's notion of 'an inversion of the Virgin Queen' who has returned 'to set things right'.¹⁰³

Judging Laxton in her male clothes, Moll sees 'how his eye hawkes for venery' (III.i.38–9). When Hyde/Laxton realized who she was, Mirren/Moll stared at him with a penetrating look: 'So young, and purblind, you're an old wanton in your eyes I see that' (III.i.47–8). While chalk-faced Laxton/Hyde directed Moll/Mirren to the coach, she drew and threw the 'gold' and his 'Ten angels' (III.i.62–3) to expose the lecher's world. Confounded, Laxton asked her what it meant. On behalf of womankind, Moll fired women's ancient grudge against the misogynist – 'To teach thy base thought manners!' – asking 'How many of our sex . . . / 'Haue their good thoughts paid with a blasted name?' 'What durst moue you sir, / To thinke me whoorish?' (III.i.68–85).

Moll/Mirren in this scene 'defye[d] all men, their worst hates', 'their best flatteries', 'their golden witchcrafts', 'with which they intangle the poore spirits of fooles' and 'Distressed needlewomen and trade-fallen wiues' (III.i.88–9). These were the lines that Mirren would 'certainly enjoy saying'. Giving Laxton no chance to explain, Mirren drew again to perform a dashing swordfight with the male elite in service of Elizabeth's moral values. Onstage Mirren's swordplay – directed by Malcolm Ransom, who also



Jack Dapper on the roof to dodge catchpoles, having been seduced into an overdressed lifestyle that has now disrobed him. Photo © Donald Cooper.

directed the swordfight in the RSC's *Peter Pan* (1982) – was executed with dashing bravura and panache. Cowed and unable to fight this 'noble girl' (III.i.124), Hyde/Laxton begged for forgiveness and left the scene emasculated like a moaning eunuch.¹⁰⁴

Roaring Boy and Roaring Girl

In the comparative framework of *The Roaring Girl* and the *Shrew*, Kyle cleverly added a new intertextual dimension to Moll's roaring. He envisioned Dekker's 'roaring girl' Moll as an antitype to Shakespeare's 'roaring boy' Petruccio, not Kate.¹⁰⁵ While onstage Armstrong used his ranting speech, chauvinistic rage, outrageous wedding gear, fists, and whip to exercise Petruccio's ancient male privilege of control as an exemplum of masculinity, Mirren used her gallant talk, 'mirth', breeches, 'hands', and 'sword' to introduce Moll's version of manhood.

Their roaring had something in common, yet achieved different ends. For example, Petruccio and Moll's first stage contrast was evidenced in their uncompromising pursuit

of the taming business. While in I.ii Armstrong's 'peremptory' and 'rough' Petruccio (II.i.129, 135) was a fortune-seeking roaring boy unabashed about marrying for money ('I come' 'to wive and thrive' 'wealthily' and 'happily' in Padua (I.i.53, 73, 74), Mirren's decisive Moll was a self-reliant 'girl' unembarrassed to opt herself out of marriage because she was 'too headstrong to obey'. Her unwavering female gallantry – 'I please myself, and care not else who loue mee' – could be read against Armstrong's/Petruccio's imperative chauvinism – 'I will be master of what is mine own' (III.iii.100).

Petruccio and Moll's second stage contrast was seen in their provocative cross-dressing in the wedding scene (III.ii in *Shrew*; V.ii in *Girl*), which constituted a kind of power-dressing to tame and teach the unruly. We have known the purpose of Moll's cross-dressing as a male bride from V.ii. In III.ii of Kyle's *Shrew*, where the servant Biondello on Kate's wedding day reports to Baptista that Petruccio and his lackey, 'a very monster in apparel' (III.ii.63), were coming in outrageous outfits (III.ii.41–57), Armstrong/



Two of the ‘fantastically dressed’ characters in Kyle’s *Shrew* – here, Alun Armstrong’s jackbooted Petruccio and John Bowe’s Tranio. Mirren’s Moll was a ‘sexless heroine . . . full of swagger and heart’.¹⁰⁶ She was ‘not a monochromatic bullying virago’.¹⁰⁷ Billington wrote of Mirren’s Moll that she had ‘a sinister-punk appearance and a heart as big as Waterloo Station’.¹⁰⁸ Photo © Donald Cooper.

Petruccio danced to the altar as a mad morris man, holding in his hand a ‘fantastically dressed’ (III.iii.78, s.d.) male bride.

This spectacle is as sacrilegious as Moll’s sartorial provocation. Petruccio’s purposeful cross-dressing – like Moll’s bluffing – is part of his plan because he wants to claim control over Kate. His ‘clothes’ argument and his power-dressed assertiveness – ‘to me she’s married, not unto my clothes’ (III.iii. 110) – were as hard line as Moll’s uncompromising attitude before Sir Alex in V.ii. Performing the taming champions who *politically* made the unruly submit to their rule, Petruccio and

Moll were improvising their theatrical roaring to re-enact the cultural values that they deemed important.

Jacobean Capitalism, Thatcherite Ideology

For Dekker and Middleton, the new clothes of Jacobean Britain were not the theatrical personifications of ‘peace’ and ‘plenty’ as envisioned in the civic pageants of *The Magnificent Entertainment*, but capitalism’s seductive promises. If for Kyle overdressing is an anxious act to disguise greed, self-interest, self-deception, and hypocrisy, then undressing is a blistering critique which lays bare the truths of Londoners’ sick domestic economy and moral chancing.

Kyle in *The Roaring Girl* showcased nearly every textual reference to aspects of London lives, the purpose of which was to reflect upon ‘Thatcherism’, which ‘had a profound effect on both the style and the content of British theatre’.¹⁰⁹ For Kyle, the cultural anxieties about the economic change in Jacobean Britain were similar to the social upheaval caused by Thatcher’s economic imperatives. Historian Craig Muldrew points out that the last decade of Elizabeth’s England was ‘not only one of war and political instability but also one of the most severe economic depressions in English history, which cast a shadow over the first three decades of the new century’.

To ease the financial pressure, the Stuart government implemented various financial measures to increase the nation’s ‘ordinary’ and ‘extraordinary revenues’, the most dynamic of which was to raise revenue through overseas trade, which ‘made up 30–40 per cent of the total revenues throughout the century’.¹¹⁰ The consequences were the rapid growth of a capitalist market, credit expansion and national debt, and a conspicuous disparity between the rich and the poor that destabilized traditional hierarchy. Similarly, Britain’s economy was weak, and when Thatcher became Prime Minister in 1979 Britain had just experienced the so-called ‘Winter of Discontent’. In that year, the inflation rate was 10 per cent and unemployment stood at 1.5 million.¹¹¹

Thatcher took a series of capitalist initiatives and austerity measures to revitalize the national economy, the most radical of which were 'monetarism' (which was 'just another term for free-market economics'),¹¹² privatization of state-owned companies and assets, financial deregulation, and imposition of public expenditure cuts on social services and the state education system. The rise of free markets, free trade, and competition relentlessly replacing protected industries were the results of Thatcher's economic liberalism, which saw unemployment soar to 3.3 million in 1984.¹¹³

In *The Roaring Girl*, the decline in influence and power of the upper classes, the rise of the middle classes and their capitalist ventures, the roaring boys' dependency culture, the underclass struggling to make a living, and criminals exercising capitalist crime were just as culturally relevant and historically informing as those in Thatcher's Britain. Besides, Mirren's stage characterization was invested with 'Victorian values'¹¹⁴ in Moll's social engagement, self-reliance, self-respect, sense of duty, bravery and interest-free voluntary 'work' that aimed to prevent venality from penetrating into the nooks and crannies of the human heart. Anyone attending the performance, wrote Carole Woddis, could feel 'the stench of capitalism' that 'permeates the evening'.¹¹⁵

Kyle's Challenges and Vision

My interview with Kyle and the material archive traces of the production allowed me to watch, reconstruct, and reinterpret it as Kyle envisaged. When I asked him what was the most challenging aspect of the production, he replied that 'It was an absolutely real task' because he was excavating an important 'English legacy' which was little known. His concern, he stressed again, was 'an archaeological project' that aimed to empower the theatre as a museum of memory'. Unlike *Shrew* the crowd-pleaser, *The Roaring Girl* supplied a cultural fabric of historical reimaginings and a cabinet of curiosities by appropriating an English past that still matters to modern Britain.

This project, said Kyle, along with Trevor Nunn's productions, actually accelerated the establishment of the 430-seat theatre called the Swan – an approximation of a Jacobean indoor playhouse with a thrust stage surrounded on three sides by three tiers of galleries – where Kyle continued to direct non-Shakespearean plays with different historicist approaches. Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* (1987–8) and *Doctor Faustus* (1989) and James Shirley's *Hyde Park* (1987–8) continued to attest to his commitment to the drama of the 'long' seventeenth century.

For some time after these revivals, Kyle was hoping to direct Richard Brome's play, *A Jovial Crew*. However, after he moved to America for three to four years, there was *A Jovial Crew* being directed by Max Stafford-Clark (1992–3).¹¹⁶ The fundamental directorial difference was that while Kyle had wanted to do a faithful historical interpretation, Stafford-Clark brought in playwright Stephen Jeffrey to adapt the play.

'The assumption then was that these [Jacobean] plays were interesting but they're gonna need dramaturgy and writers to adapt them,' said Kyle. He reckoned what was precious about the Jacobean plays was that 'the plot moves forward but cannot be described as light and swift'. He was 'trying to find the dramatic seed in the centre that would energize the event at a national theatre. That sometimes was very difficult.' One critic said the subplot of *The Roaring Girl* was 'sprawling'. Kyle admitted: 'It probably is, but the problem is the joy. When you are an archaeologist, you're gonna pick a lot of mud along with the gold that you find. I think that was true about *The Roaring Girl*.'

Kyle remembered Trevor Nunn talking about those Jacobean plays when he revived Thomas Heywood's *The Fair Maid of the West* (1986) at the newly launched Swan: 'The problem often is they all end up looking dark brown. When you visually try to put that onstage, sometimes the look, the desire, and the joy don't quite have what we need.' As a result, Kyle's *Hyde Park* was recontextualized into eighteenth-century Bloomsbury. This had a stellar cast featuring Fiona Shaw and Alex Jennings. Kyle said: 'It worked beauti-

fully . . . That was the one that the public took to most and we sold a ton of tickets.'

The *Roaring Girl* revival was historically important not only because Kyle rescued the play from obscurity but also because it catalyzed the nation's awareness through theatrical archaeology. In 1986 the Swan was built. Three years later, with the discovery of the remains of the Rose Playhouse on Bankside in 1989,¹¹⁷ the 'Save the Rose' campaign led by Peggy Ashcroft and Laurence Olivier started to direct more critical attention to Henslowe's playhouse and his stable of playwrights. At the same time, Sam Wanamaker's urge to build a replica of the Globe Theatre close to its original site on Bankside was at last receiving national recognition.¹¹⁸

In the next decade, Mark Rylance, styling himself actor-manager, was appointed first artistic director of the reconstructed Globe (1995–2005), where he fulfilled Kyle and Wanamaker's vision to 'follow historically researched early modern theatre practices' to show his 'museum-piece reverence for "authenticity"' of Renaissance drama.¹¹⁹ At the reconstructed Globe, Rylance continued to collaborate with Kyle in 2003 on an all-male production of *Richard II* (co-directed by Tim Carroll and Rylance, who played the title role) and an all-female production of *Richard III* directed by Kyle.

In the theatre climate of the 1980s, when Kyle described the mood as 'public money bad, private money good',¹²⁰ *The Roaring Girl* had the luxury of a six-week rehearsal. Kyle said today's theatre is 'all about arts management' and 'philanthropy': 'We're now back to Shakespeare's day. We're back to the wealthy individual, Southampton. It's very different.' Thirty years after the revival, I asked Kyle, 'If you could do it again, would you adopt the same approach or do it differently?'

The Roaring Girl was a very demanding play. I did it because we had a fantastic cast. No one could find a better cast than that. If I value my health, I wouldn't be going back to *The Roaring Girl*. . . . It was only possible because it was part of the season. Anyone wishes to do it, I wish him good luck!

In applauding Kyle's work, as I write we wish good luck to the second *Roaring Girl*

revival by the RSC, directed by Jo Davies, opening at the Swan Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon in April 2014.

Notes and References

The first draft of this essay was read at the Literary London Conference on 5 July 2012 where I received positive feedback from Professor Brycchan Carey (Kingston), Professor Robert Stanton (Boston College), Dr Adele Lee (Greenwich). This piece would not have been possible without inspiration from various people. Professor Carol Rutter (Warwick) encouraged me to look into the RSC's performance archive. Art historian Dr Gillian White gave me her childhood collection of *The Roaring Girl*'s poster and programme. Dr Susan Brock advised me to interview director Barry Kyle, and my greatest debt is to Professor Kyle himself, who pioneered this archaeological project. He generously shared with me his ambitions, aspirations, difficulties, and the circumstances of reviving Jacobean drama. I thank him for entrusting me to document a history of his brainchild. The National Science Council of Taiwan sponsored my research trips (100-2410-H-110-061) to the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Library, where Helen Hargest, Madeleine Cox, and Victoria Lawston provided expert assistance. I'm grateful to the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Library and to photographer Donald Cooper (Photostage.co.uk) for permitting me to reproduce the legendary photos.

1. See *The Consistory of London Correction Book* (London Metropolitan Archives, DL/C/310, folios 19–20) for November 1611 to October 1613. Quotations from *The Roaring Girl* are cited from Vol. III of Fredson Bowers, ed., *The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958). Quotations from *The Taming of the Shrew* are from Stephen Greenblatt, ed., *The Norton Shakespeare* (New York; London: Norton, 1997).

2. Mark Hutchings, 'Mary Frith at the Fortune', *Early Theatre*, X, No. 1 (2007), p. 89–108.

3. David Cressy, *Transvestites and Transgressions in Tudor and Stuart England: Tales of Discord and Dissension* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 97. See also Lisa Jardine, *Still Harping on Daughters: Women and Drama in the Age of Shakespeare* (Brighton: Harvester, 1983); Marjorie Garber, *Vested Interests: Cross Dressing and Cultural Anxiety* (New York; London: Routledge, 1992); Stephen Orgel, *Erotic Politics: Desire on the Renaissance Stage* (New York; London: Routledge, 1992); Jean E. Howard, 'Women as Spectators, Spectacles, and Playing Customers', in D. S. Kastan and Peter Stallybrass, ed., *Staging the Renaissance: Representations of Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama* (New York; London: Routledge, 1991), p. 68–74.

4. Havelock Ellis, ed., *Thomas Middleton, the Best Plays of the Old Dramatists* (London: Mermaid Series, 1888), Vol. II, p. vii–viii.

5. See Paul Mulholland, 'Let Her Roar Again: *The Roaring Girl* Revived', *Research Opportunities in Renaissance Drama*, XXVIII (1985), p. 15–27.

6. Christopher Warman, 'Moll who Took Her Role Seriously', *Times*, 23 April 1983. Theatre reviews on Kyle's productions are cited from the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Library's 'Theatre Records: Royal

Shakespeare Theatre', Vols. 92, 107–118. The dates of the reviews are also taken from this source. A few dates are registered as 'unknown'.

7. 'The Roaring Girl, RSC, Stratford', *Oxford Times*, 21 January 1983.

8. 'Roaring Girl Next at RST', *Stratford-upon-Avon Herald*, 7 January 1983.

9. Not until the late 1980s did Cyrus Hoy's four-volume *Introductions, Notes, and Commentaries to Texts in The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980) start to have an impact on Dekker–Middleton research. Jonathan Dollimore and Peter Stallybrass's influential works on sexual dissidence postdated the RSC's *The Roaring Girl*. Theatre critic Neil Taylor pertinently commented in his review: 'Barry Kyle's *Witch of Edmonton* [1981–2] has extended our knowledge of Dekker, but few people visiting the Barbican will have heard of *The Roaring Girl* . . . let alone read it or seen it.' See 'The Roaring Girl, Barbican', *Plays and Players*, July 1983.

10. Don Chapman, 'Feminist Robin to the Rescue', *Oxford Mail*, 15 January 1983. See also 'A Heroine of our Times – from the 17th Century', *Rugby Advertiser*, 20 January 1983; 'Helen is a Racy Moll', *Gloucester Citizen*, 18 January 1983.

11. 'Roaring Helen Mirren', *Bucks Examiners*, 8 January 1983.

12. Norah Lewis, 'Much Ado about a Roaring Girl', *Birmingham Evening Mail*, 17 January 1983.

13. 'Gangster Moll?', *Newcastle-upon-Tyne Journal*, April 1983.

14. Terry Grimley, 'The Roaring Girl', *Birmingham Post*, 17 January 1983.

15. Michael Coveney, 'The Roaring Girl, Barbican Theatre', *Financial Times*, 28 April 1983.

16. James Fenton, 'Roaring Girls and Passionate Trends', *Sunday Times*, 1 May 1983.

17. Michael Billington, 'Nothing like a Dame', *The Guardian*, 27 April 1983.

18. 'As Helen Mirren plays her, fetchingly putting down the assembled male talent in a Jacobean jump suit, she has little more dramatic substance than a principal boy.' See Irving Wardle, 'Distant Echo of Jacobean Mirth', *Times*, 27 April 1983.

19. Sheridan Morley, 'Theatre', *Punch*, April 1983.

20. Barry Kyle, interviewed by the author online, 26 April 2013. All subsequent quotations from Kyle are drawn from this source.

21. See especially IV.i, where two men kissing (Sebastian and Mary 'like a page') and Moll's 'excellent fingering' (167) lost homoerotic implications in Kyle's production.

22. My own 'archive fever' is indebted to Derrida's argument that 'the question of the archive is not . . . a question of the past . . . it is a question of the future . . . the question of a response'. Therefore 'the archive opens out of the future'. See Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: a Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Presnowitz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 36. See also *Shakespeare Bulletin*, XXVIII, No. 1 (2010), where Peter Holland, Carol Rutter, and Barbara Hodgdon put forward a new critical approach to archival research on performances.

23. Barry Kyle, interviewed by the author.

24. Carol Rutter, 'Introduction', *Shakespeare Bulletin*, XXVIII, No. 1 (2010), p. 2.

25. Jane Ellison, 'Interview: Barry Kyle: a Case for Flexibility and Passion', *Times*, 18 October 1982.

26. Bond's *Saved* was initially censored because of the 'baby stoning' scene.

27. The play was part of Brenton's group of 'Plays for the Poor Theatre'. See 'Brenton, Howard', in Dennis Kennedy, ed., *The Oxford Companion to Theatre and Performance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 82.

28. The name '7:84' was taken from a statistic published in *The Economist* (1966), indicating that 7 per cent of the population controlled 84 per cent of the nation's wealth. 'Joint Stock' proposed a new methodology, which used company research and enlisted writers (e.g. David Hare, Howard Brenton, and Caryl Churchill) to engage in workshops with the actors. See R. Ritchie, ed., *The Joint Stock Book: Making of a Theatre Collective* (London: Methuen, 1987).

29. Jane Ellison, 'Interview: Barry Kyle'.

30. *Ibid.*

31. Barry Kyle, interviewed by the author.

32. Michael Billington, 'Perkin Warbeck', *Guardian Weekly*, 16 August 1975. Michael Coveney in *Financial Times* (9 August 1985) wrote: 'Ford's play was obviously written in part as a response to Shakespeare', especially the 'striking theatrical imagery for that "idea" in *Richard II*, *King John* and, indeed, *Cymbeline*'.

33. See Coveney, *ibid.*, in which he applauded Barton and Kyle's sophisticated interpretation of *Perkin Warbeck* as an 'alienated symbol of monarchy incorporating elements of both Player King and Lord of Misrule. . . . The evening is thoroughly enjoyable and yet again confirms the value of this small theatre.'

34. Upon the discovery that Evadne has been used, Evadne's brother Melantius (Amintor's friend) enacts a coup d'état by coercing her to murder the king in bed and usurp the fort. Evadne does what she is told, only to discover that the loyal, horrified Amintor refuses to love a woman who's committed regicide. Evadne thus kills herself, whereas distressed Aspatia in disguise as her brother pre-empts her self-destruction in a provocative duel with Amintor, who later stabs himself. Michael Billington wrote that the production's eclectic style created 'a consistent world of soft-core decadence' and faithfully produced 'the right feel of unveiled sybaritism'. See Michael Billington, 'The Maid's Tragedy', *Guardian*, 16 May 1980.

35. Nicholas de Jongh, 'The Not-Quite-Forgotten Jacobean Double Act', *Guardian*, 13 May 1980.

36. James Fenton, 'The Maid's Tragedy', *Sunday Times*, 18 May 1980.

37. In 'A Jacobean Airing' (*Daily Telegraph*, 17 May 1980) the writer could not understand why the RSC put on a non-Shakespearean play. He saw Dog as Shakespeare's Caliban. James Fenton wrote that *The Witch of Edmonton* was Kyle's best production: see 'When the Devil Drives', *Sunday Times*, 20 September 1981.

38. Keith Brace, 'Perkin Warbeck', *Birmingham Post*, 8 August 1975

39. James Fenton, 'When the Devil Drives', *Sunday Times*, 20 September 1981.

40. Neil Taylor, 'The Roaring Girl, Barbican', *Plays and Players*, July 1983.

41. James Fenton, 'When the Devil Drives', *Sunday Times*, 20 September 1981.

42. Jane Ellison, 'Interview: Barry Kyle'.

43. Francesca Simon, 'The Honest Cutpurse at the Play', *Sunday Times*, 24 April 1983. Kyle also told Christopher Warman that the RSC 'needs to extend its repertoire. . . . Shakespeare has tended to obliterate other people's work, and a number of Jacobean works are as

good as the worst ten of Shakespeare' (*Times*, 23 April 1983). Fenton pointed out that the word 'passionate' 'is part of the argot of the directorial underworld' in *Sunday Times*, 1 May 1983: 'No director gets to work on any place of his choice at Stratford unless he can say "I'm passionate about it"'. In fact, when a season is planned, 'passion is the only perceptible organizing principle'.

44. Christopher Warman, 'Moll who Took her Role Seriously', *Times*, 23 April 1983.

45. Jane Ellison, 'Interview: Barry Kyle'.

46. B. A. Young, 'The Taming of the Shrew, Barbican', *Financial Times*, 3 May 1983.

47. Kyle's *Shrew* received mixed reviews. For the content of the visual acrobatics performed in the *Shrew*, see Stanley Wells, 'Lout into Gentleman', *Times Literary Supplement*, 22 October 1982, where Wells presents a fair review and describes audience response. See also Nicholas Shrimpton, 'Shakespeare Performances in Stratford-upon-Avon and London, 1982–3', *Shakespeare Survey*, XXXVII (1984), p. 166–8.

48. Kyle's decision referenced C. L. Barber's belief that "a 'festive' or 'holiday' pattern in which the process of restraint and release embodied in such social institutions as Candlemas, May Day, Midsummer Eve or Halloween was re-enacted in the design of Shakespeare's plays". See Nicholas Shrimpton, *ibid.*, p. 163, and <www.alun-armstrong.net/theatreRSC.html> for production photographs.

49. Michael Billington, 'Shakespeare in Crampons', *Guardian*, 14 October 1982, which provides an incisive analysis of Kyle's tack and directorial decisions.

50. Gordon Parsons, 'Riotous Shrew', *Morning Star*, 18 October 1982. Michael Coveney's review, 'The Taming of the Shrew, Stratford', in *Financial Times*, 14 October 1982, was also positive.

51. Sheridan Morley ('RSC's *Shrew* Is Very Tame', *International Herald Tribune*, 11 May 1983) and Jack Tinker ('A Funny Way to Tame the Shrew', *Daily Mail*, 14 October 1982) disparaged the show's style.

52. Barry Kyle, interviewed by the author.

53. 'Helen Mirren at Her Peak', *Wantage and Grove Herald*, 20 January 1983.

54. Terry Grimley, 'Getting Close to Legends', *Birmingham Post*, 8 January 1983.

55. Mirren in 1980–1 also played the title role in John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* (1981) at Royal Exchange Theatre, Manchester, and the Roundhouse, London.

56. Terry Grimley, 'Getting Close to Legends', *Birmingham Post*, 8 January 1983.

57. Michael Owen, 'Return of the Roaring Girl', *Standard*, 24 September 1982.

58. Helen Mirren, *In the Frame: My Life in Words and Pictures* (London: Phoenix, 2008), p. 114, where Mirren wrote: 'I shall never forgive Mr Oakes.'

59. See 'Helen Mirren – the Sexist Parkinson's Interview'. Part 1 is available from <www.youtube.com/watch?v=gmlP_cFOoAM> and Part 2 from <www.youtube.com/watch?v=qRVuqjbrj4k>.

60. Helen Mirren, *In the Frame*, p. 84.

61. *Ibid.*, p. 35.

62. Despite the fact that Kyle and Mirren had reduced Moll's sexiness to a minimum, the branding of 'sluttish eroticism' could not be shaken off from her portrayal. Val Greaves wrote that Mirren was recently seen 'modelling erotic underwear in *Sunday Times*' ('The Roaring Girl by Middleton and Dekker, RSC, Barbican, London', *Spare Rib*, June 1983). Praising the performances of male actors (David Waller, David Troughton,

and Jonathan Hyde), Gareth Lloyd Evans thought that Mirren's Moll 'spends a good deal of time flinging her provocative body around – a circumstance which rather takes the edge off her militancy' ('Museum Piece', *Stratford-upon-Avon Herald*, 21 January 1983). By contrast with Mirren's passionate, erotic Cleopatra, her unisex, self-empowered Moll, was not provocative at all.

63. Jackie Levitas, 'Traditional – But not Tame', *Stanley News*, 3 March 1983.

64. Barry Kyle, interviewed by the author.

65. 'The Roaring Girl, RSC, Stratford', *Oxford Times*, 21 January 1983.

66. 'Villain Meets Match in Shapely Moll', *South London Press*, 29 April 1983.

67. Barry Kyle, interviewed by the author.

68. 'Fashion fascism' is modern parlance indicating an extreme cultural attitude in pursuit of the visually attractive regardless of costs and ethics.

69. Barry Kyle, interviewed by the author.

70. For Thomas Dekker's life, see Chapter 1 in Chi-fang Sophia Li, *Thomas Dekker and Chaucerian Re-Imaginations*, PhD dissertation, University of Warwick, 2009, p. 6–82. For Dickens's autobiographical description of John Dickens's imprisonment, see Paul Schlicke, *The Oxford Companion to Charles Dickens* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 346.

71. Barry Kyle, interviewed by the author.

72. Dickens was hailed as 'the champion of the poor' by the Chartist paper *Northern Star*. See Michael Slater, 'Introduction' to *The Chimes*, in *Charles Dickens: The Christmas Books* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), Vol. I, p. 140.

73. Leon Rubin points out in *The Nicholas Nickleby Story: the Making of the Historic Royal Shakespeare Company Production* (London: Heinemann, 1981) that tight money at the British Arts Council meant that the company could mount only one production in 1980 rather than the usual five (p. 13–14).

74. Digital images of the posters are available from <www.rsc.org.uk/about-us/press/50th-birthday-media-tools/production-posters-1980s.aspx>.

75. I asked Kyle whether *The Roaring Girl* was in any way influenced by Trevor Nunn's *Nicholas Nickleby*. He replied: 'Yes. . . . *Nickleby* changed what the RSC thought about storytelling. It influenced huge numbers of things, including, obviously, *Les Misérables*, which I don't think would have happened or could have happened without *Nicholas Nickleby* in advance of it. One lets the other.'

76. Leon Rubin, *The Nicholas Nickleby Story*, p. 59.

77. Barry Kyle, interviewed by the author.

78. See Craig Muldrew, 'Economic and Urban Development', in Barry Coward, ed., *A Companion to Stuart Britain* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2009), p. 148–65.

79. Barry Kyle, interviewed by the author.

80. John Barber, 'Decent Old Mirren, the Feminist Transvestite', *Daily Telegraph*, 28 April 1983.

81. Irving Wardle, 'Distant Echo of Jacobean Mirth', *Times*, 27 April 1983.

82. In the production records, there is a handwritten note annotating the purpose of the 'skirt arrangement'.

83. Barry Kyle, interviewed by the author.

84. *The Roaring Girl* programme, p. 10–11.

85. Chi-fang Sophia Li, 'John Stow's *Survey of London* (1603) as the Principal Source for Dekker's *Dead Tearme* (1608)', *Notes and Queries*, LVIII, No. 2 (2011), p. 274–8.

86. Chi-fang Sophia Li, 'Finding "Voices" in Virgil: Dekker's Virgilian Approach to *The Magnificent Enter-*

tainment (1604)', *Notes and Queries*, LIX, No. 1 (2012), p. 560–7.

87. Kyle said the connection between Queen Elizabeth and Moll 'is very important and specific', but it was not always perceived by theatre critics, most of whom call her a 'feminist Robin to the rescue!' (*Oxford Mail*, 15 January 1983), 'a square Jacobean libber' (Michael Billington, *Guardian*, 27 April 1983), 'the feminist transvestite' (John Barber, *Daily Telegraph* 28 April 1983), or a 'Jacobean feminist' (Christopher Warman, *Times*, 23 April 1983). Coveney found Moll a 'tomrig and rumpscuttle' (*Financial Times*, 28 April 1983). Sarah Gristwood observed that 'Barry Kyle has discovered some fascinating seventeenth-century sidelights on feminism' (*Ms London*, 25 April 1983).

88. *Patient Grissil* (I.ii.317–18) in Fredson Bowers, ed., *The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker*, Vol. I, p. 225.

89. Paul Mulholland, 'Let Her Roar Again: *The Roaring Girl*', *Research Opportunities in Renaissance Drama*, XXVIII (1985), p. 20.

90. This note was dated 9 December 1982 by 'Monica'. See also the rehearsal note dated Monday 13 December 1982, reference RSC/SM/2/1983/64.

91. *Ibid.* See rehearsal notes for 20 December 1982. Reference: RSC/SM/2/1983/64.

92. '*The Roaring Girl*: Rehearsal Notes, 2nd Batch, P1' 13 December 1982. Reference RSC/SM/2/1983/64.

93. *Ibid.*

94. *Ibid.*

95. See rehearsal notes for 20 December 1982.

96. *Ibid.*, '2nd Batch, P1', dated 13 December 1982.

97. Michael Billington, *The Modern Actor* (London: Hamilton, 1973), p. 70.

98. See rehearsal notes, 4 January 1982.

99. *Ibid.*, 20 December 1982.

100. According to the *OED*, when the Latin root of 'lace' is used as a verb, 'laciare' means 'to ensnare'; as a noun, 'laciium' is 'a noose'.

101. My idea of 'bare life' is indebted to Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

102. Michael Billington, 'Nothing Like a Dame', *Guardian*, 27 April 1983.

103. Barry Kyle, interviewed by the author.

104. For an explanation of Laxton's name, see Marjorie Garber, 'The Logic of the Transvestite: *The Roaring Girl*', in D. S. Kastan and P. Stallybrass, ed., *Staging the Renaissance: Reinterpretations of Elizabethan and Jacobean*

Drama (London; New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 224.

105. For Petruccio as Shakespeare's 'roaring boy', see Harold Bloom, ed., *Bloom's Modern Critical Views: William Shakespeare* (Broomall: Chelsea House, 2004), p. 60. Kyle said that many theatre critics and audiences of the time thought he was comparing Kate the misunderstood rich girl with Moll the equally misunderstood independent girl, but he saw Moll as a girl who could roar like Petruccio.

106. Francis King, 'The Rumpscuttle', *Observer*, 1 May 1983; Jack Tinker, 'Heroine of the First Sex War', *Daily Mail*, 28 April 1983.

107. Paul Mulholland, 'Let Her Roar Again: *The Roaring Girl*', *Research Opportunities in Renaissance Drama*, XXVIII (1985), p. 24.

108. Michael Billington, 'Nothing Like a Dame', *Guardian*, 27 April 1983.

109. Michael Billington, *State of the Nation: British Theatre Since 1945* (London: Faber, 2007), p. 293.

110. Craig Muldrew, 'Economic and Urban Development', in Barry Coward, ed., *A Companion to Stuart Britain* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2009), p. 148–65.

111. <www.politics.co.uk/reference/unemployment>.

112. Richard Vinen, *Thatcher's Britain: the Politics and Social Upheaval of the 1980s* (London: Simon and Schuster, 2009), p. 108.

113. <www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/unemployment-among-young-workers-hits-15-per-cent-1645728.html>.

114. For Thatcher's speech on 'Victorian values', see the radio interview for the IRN programme *The Decision Makers* at <www.margarethatcher.org/document/105291> and the TV interview for London Weekend Television's *Weekend World* at <www.margarethatcher.org/speeches/displaydocument.asp?docid=105087>

115. Carole Woddis, '*The Roaring Girl* by Middleton and Dekker', *City Limits*, 20 May 1983.

116. Barry Kyle, interviewed by the author.

117. Carol Chillington Rutter, *The Documents of the Rose Playhouse* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999).

118. Nicholas Shrimpton, 'Shakespeare Performances in Stratford-upon-Avon and London, 1982–3', *Shakespeare Survey*, XXXVII (1984), p. 201.

119. Bridget Escolme, 'Mark Rylance', in John Russell Brown, ed., *The Routledge Companion to Directors' Shakespeare* (London: Routledge, 2008), p. 407, 409.

120. Barry Kyle, interviewed by the author.