

THE MIRROR UP TO NATURE: A THEATRICAL EXPERIMENT IN THE DRAMATURGY
OF GENDER

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INTRODUCTION

Recently, I was involved in a modern-dress production of Shakespeare's *Henry IV Part One* in which the irresponsible heir to the throne Prince Hal was to be played by and as a woman. Explaining this to a friend, she expressed enthusiasm and interest, then added, "It'll be hard not to make her seem like..."

She trailed off. I offered, "A slut?" Yes, exactly.

Entirely separately, she and I, plus the director of the play, plus several other people I spoke to all came to the conclusion that to transplant the actions of the reckless, verbose, daddy-hating Prince Hal into a modern female body would automatically create the kind of party girl that everyone would assume was sleeping around. One of the interesting facets of Hal is his completely masculine world, where women exist neither for romance nor for political purposes until the closing scene of *Henry V* (when, of course, a single woman becomes both). But Princess Hal, with no change to the story at all except the time period and her gender, is assumed to be a little bit slutty; for a woman, this implies, irresponsibility of course equates to sexual promiscuity. This was not the direction the production took, and in fact we found it fairly easy to circumvent this initial expectation once we decided it would be the wrong choice for us. But I was fascinated by the idea that changing a character's gender and nothing else alter a fundamental aspect of that character. Social expectations alone transformed something essential about what these people saw in Prince Hal.

This experience fed fairly directly into the creation of this project. Are male and female characters really created equal? Or is there baggage attached to these ideas that a dramaturg needs to be alert to, and prepared to question and compensate for? I found these questions especially interesting in light of what seems to be the theatre buzzword of the season: parity. Specifically, the question of gender parity onstage,

backstage, in the office, and basically everywhere else in the theatre, where women are chronically underrepresented. Numbers (many of them truly disheartening) make up an important piece of this conversation. What percentage of artistic directors are female? What percentage of playwrights on Broadway? What percentage of roles are written for women? These are undeniably important questions. But the Princess Hal story is one of many incidents that made me realize that, in terms of the representation of women onstage, just equalizing the numbers would only solve half of the problem.

Interesting and specific work on gender and representation is being undertaken in other entertainment fields, including film (I quote in this paper from work by the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media), video games (notably, a widely-watched YouTube series by Anita Sarkeesian, as well as other online conversations), and comic books (including studies by Christina Blanch and Maryjane Dunne). But while recent events have reignited discussion about representation of female playwrights and directors, (including 2014 Tony Awards and a *New York Times* piece by Lynn Nottage and by LA-based group The Kilroys and their release of *The List*), actresses feature less prominently in the conversation, and when they do, talk rarely extends beyond the idea that there should be more of them. But more mothers, wives, and lovers will not solve the problem of gender inequality onstage, except in the most literal, numerical way. I hope that this project can begin a conversation about questions of gender representation to complement those being undertaken in other media. One way to do this would have been to assemble a survey of the types of women depicted in recent plays, like the studies performed by the Geena Davis Institute and quoted in the next section of this paper. This would be a useful and informative study, and likely should be undertaken at some point. I wanted, however, to examine not only what the text of a play allowed its female characters to do, but to bring in the 'Prince Hal factor' and see

what audiences were bringing to the table in terms of understanding female characters.

In the next section, I quote from a fascinating thesis by Emily Glassberg Sands on differing perceptions of male and female playwrights by producers and literary managers. Sands, an economics student, conducted her study in an admirably mathematical fashion. I am a dramaturg, not an economist: I cannot provide equations and statistics. This project relies on observation and survey responses, and therefore must be accompanied by the usual caveats about self-reporting. I only know what my respondents told me, and must assume that they were telling the truth. However, to quote from an otherwise unrelated essay by Christie Carson and Farah Karim-Cooper about work at Shakespeare's Globe Theatre in London and their defense of their use of the word 'experiment' when describing that work, "The methods of theatrical experimentation are not taken from the science laboratory but from centuries of theatrical practice. The workshop, the staged reading, the rehearsal process, the design process, all have established methods that take a creative approach to the practical, yet critical, problem of developing a theatrical interpretation of the plays. To negate this history of practice by eliding it, as funding bodies have, with the scientific method, is to misunderstand the tradition that is under discussion" (Carson). In this spirit, I believe that this project can be safely called an experiment, even though it lacks the trappings of the scientific method: there is no hypothesis I seek to prove or disprove, only a conversation I hope to start and patterns that I have observed in the professional world and hope to clarify in a more specific context.

In the next section of this paper, I provide some cultural and critical context, including the previously mentioned analyses by the Gina Davis Institute and Emily Glassberg Sands. I also draw heavily on the writings of Jill Dolan, a feminist critic who

has at the forefront of the movement since the 1980s and whose blog won George Jean Nathan Award for Dramatic Criticism in 2011. Though the book I reference, *The Feminist Spectator as Critic*, was written in 1991, it was reissued in 2012 with an updated introduction. Dolan's long presence in the world of theatrical feminist criticism, and her newer insights as a current leader in educational and critical circles recommended her text as a practical glimpse into what is obviously a vast field of scholarship. The reissue of the book reveals the enduring nature of these questions, and Dolan's subsequent ability to offer insight on how they have changed, which I briefly discuss below, also proved particularly interesting. By establishing this critical context, I hope to raise more specific questions and trends to investigate within the experiment itself.

The experimental portion takes place in two phases, both centered around the production of a fifteen-minute play. In the first phase, I sent this play (which contains no gendered pronouns and all gender-neutral character names) to a group of directors to read. I asked them to respond with their impulses about who they would cast in each role and why. I also asked them to provide a brief summary of the play. By tracking patterns in their responses, I began to form a baseline of outsider assumptions about the characters, and could begin to see what kinds of traits and behaviors directors instinctively assumed belonged to characters of a certain gender.

In the second phase, the play was produced. Without altering any of the dialogue or staging, the play was performed with four different casts, each with a different configuration of male and female actors in the roles. Afterwards, the audience was given a survey that asked them to respond to each character, and to describe their understanding of and response to their actions, motivations, and relationships to the other characters onstage. Through these responses, I explore

whether these understandings change with the gender of the character, and if so, if they in turn change the audience members' interpretation of the narrative itself.

Ultimately, I turn to the practical implications of these results, and what they may mean for a theatre artist committed to not only to gender parity onstage, but equality of opportunity.

A note about gender:

For the purposes of the project, I'll deal with cisgender actors and characters, and will define "gender"/"sex" at least in the case of the characters onstage, as a biological binary (male and female). A majority of people (and therefore, majority of audience members) understand gender as a binary, and, more importantly, it is within this binary that they form gendered assumptions about appropriate behavior. There is a long and interesting conversation to be had about trans* and intersex actors and characters, and depicting queerness onstage, but that's for another project.

PART ONE: THE CONVERSATION

In *The Feminist Spectator as Critic*, Jill Dolan proposes three strands of feminist theatre critique: liberal feminism, which is interested in making changes from within to existing social and artistic structures; cultural feminism, which insists upon the existence of a specifically and universally female perspective that should be differentiated from male storytelling and elevated to be its equal; and material feminism, which draws upon Marxist theories and suggests that because power and ideology are irrevocably linked to form, feminist theatre must leave behind traditional structures. When the book was published in 1988, Dolan came down firmly on the side of materialist feminism, a bias she readily acknowledged in the book itself. But in her preface to the second edition, published in 2012, Dolan acknowledges a

developing appreciation for liberal feminism and its attention to mainstream and pop culture in light of the advance of third-wave feminism. “I have come to believe that we should look within, as well as outside, the mainstream for our critical and creative pleasures and profits,” she writes. She acknowledges the fears that downtown artists who cross over into the mainstream are selling out, and that forms and content that are truly transgressive likely will never move to Broadway. “But more plays by women should be produced on Broadway, regardless of their content or styles,” she concludes, “because gender equity (not to mention racial equity) has not yet been achieved for women laboring in the theatre” (Dolan xxix). Dolan, like many of the critics and practitioners talking about gender issues in the theatre, turns to the question of artist representation. The relative dearth of female playwrights on Broadway and major regional stages is currently a hot topic, especially in the wake of a gathering of Washington, DC artistic directors called The Summit. The gathering inspired social media outrage after an artistic director commented that he could not produce more women and writers of color because there weren’t enough in the “pipeline” of development, and that the feminism of playwrights like Caryl Churchill was now dated and too difficult to remount (Abelman). The latter comment points to a conflict that Dolan discusses in her chapter “Feminism and the Canon: The Question of Universality.” As several Twitter users pointed out in the wake of this comment, why should Caryl Churchill’s politics be considered dated, but Shakespeare’s—or perhaps a fairer example, Churchill’s near contemporary Harold Pinter’s, recently revived on Broadway—are not? As this paper was being written, the conversation continued with the LA-based group The Kilroys, who released “The List,” a curated collection of works by female playwrights, intended to challenge artist directors who insist on the idea of a “pipeline” that somehow contains no new works by women.

Last year, I inadvertently started an internet debate when Portland Center Stage announced the three playwrights who had been selected for their annual JAW New Play Festival. I commented on Facebook, "Pity that they're all men," then left for class. When I returned, I saw that a debate had exploded in my absence surrounding the comment that the theatre (or whoever runs their social media accounts) had left in response: in essence, that they had reviewed the plays blindly and selected the best, and gender was not (and by implication, should not be) a factor in their decision-making. It does seem like a fairly iron-clad excuse, the forces of artistic integrity fighting off restrictive demands for political correctness and arbitrary quotas. But Dolan proposes that the problem runs deeper than that in her discussion of Marsha Norman's play *'night, Mother* and the discussion after its premier of whether it would come to be included in the theatrical "canon" of great works: "The traditional canon that *'night, Mother* was measured against has certain explicit rules. First, a play must conform to the rule of universality by transcending the historical moment and speaking to a generic spectator [...] Since women's concerns are not seen as generic to theatre, in which the active dramatic agents and the spectators to whom they play have historically been men, some critics doubted that the play qualified for the canon" (Dolan 20-1). Dolan goes on to describe how, "In a clear example of reception filtered through gender biases, the male critics' responses to Jessie [a suicidal central character, played on Broadway by Kathy Bates] were based almost uniformly on her physical appearance onstage [...] Although the fatal, tragic flaw in Norman's text is epilepsy, the production's received flaw, which provides the cause of Jessie's ultimate demise, is fat" (Dolan 30). Critics trivialized and gendered the core conflict of the play in defiance of the text of the play itself. It seems more than likely that artistic directors suffer from a similar critical disconnect. Though the insistence on choosing *the best plays* rings of objectivity, of course art is always subjective, and an inability to see

women's stories as universal denies them of the reach and scope that generally typify "great" works of theatre.

Dolan and others seem to equate offstage representation with onstage representation. If critics and artistic directors can't quite grasp how to tell female stories, surely female playwrights, directors, artistic directors, and critics can. In 2012, Vicky Featherstone, then the newly-appointed head of London's Royal Court Theatre, spoke to *The Guardian* about questions of female representation on and offstage in England. The announcement of a particularly female-light season that year prompted a response from UK Actor's Equity, which wrote to 43 artistic directors of state-subsidized companies "highlighting the need for better employment of women in the theatre and asking for their plans to improve the situation. But despite contacting the theatres twice, the union received a 'disappointing' response": eight replies (Topping). Featherstone, too, linked work for female actors with work for other female creatives, "point[ing] to a new generation of women playwrights, including Lucy Prebble who wrote *Enron*, Chloë Moss, author of *The Gatekeeper*, and the Bafta-award winning Abi Morgan – and a concomitantly shifting landscape for female actors that will, she hopes, increase as more women come to run theatres and work as directors" (Higgins).¹ Dolan echoes this view in regards to critics, and their ability to make or break a mainstream play's success: "Theatre won't change until the critics' corps in the United States diversifies and critics of any race or gender start writing from a broader perspective on the myriad stories that deserve to be told and embodied in performance" (Dolan xxxvi). But this assumed correlation between greater diversity in

¹ This conversation came, incidentally, a year after Charles Isherwood of *The New York Times* published a "Theatre Talkback" column titled "Women on the Verge of Disappearing from the Stage," which described a season in which only four women were nominated for Tony Awards as leading actresses in a musical, presumably because the traditional fifth could not be found. "Given the evidence of the past couple of seasons," he wrote, "I worry that Broadway has come to share [Hollywood's] unspoken bias against the idea of women's stories and defining women's roles as commercially viable" (Isherwood).

writers, directors, and artistic directors and greater diversity in onstage storytelling does not actually seem to be accurate.

A study by Emily Glassberg Sands, written when she was a Princeton undergraduate, found that plays with a majority of female parts, no matter the writer's gender, were far less likely to be produced. Sands quotes an unnamed artistic director, who offered an explanation for why female playwrights were less frequently produced than male ones, and an apparent confirmation that artistic directors, along with critics, suffer from the biases that Dolan proposes: "women tend to write about other women, who are harder for men to relate to. Men have always had more difficulty relating to female characters than have women had difficulty relating to male characters; little boys will not watch stories about girls, but girls will watch stories about boys" (Sands 30). Female playwrights who want to be produced seem to take this to heart: Sands found that only 33% of plays by female writers have major female roles. This is much better than the comparable 19% for male writers, but it is a major challenge to the assumption that more female playwrights will create a comparable number of opportunity for actresses; in fact, the odds are that a given play by a female writer *will not* include opportunities for a leading actress. Sands also found that plays featuring major female roles—already a minority of plays—were 6% less likely to be produced (Sands 41). Vicky Featherstone would likely suggest that this last statistic can be ameliorated by increasing the number of female artistic directors. In fact, the opposite seems true. After submitting the same four scenes to artistic directors under different male or female pennames, Sands found that female respondents gave the scenes with a female penname "markedly lower" ratings than their male counterparts did. Sands suggests that because her survey included questions about a play's produceability and possible reception, the female respondents may have been displaying a "heightened awareness" of "the barriers faced by female playwrights," as

female respondents tended to match male respondents when ranking the play's overall quality (Sands 77). But on categories such as "character likeability," and whether or not the play would be a "good fit" with the theatre company, women were still much more critical of other women.

Sands does not discuss the genders of the characters in the samples she submitted, as that is outside her purview. But her data seems to disprove two assumptions held by Featherstone, Dolan, and a myriad of theatre critics and bloggers: first, that more productions by female writers will lead to more female roles; and second, that more female artistic leaders will lead to more productions by female writers. Though it would be very convenient for the issues of female representation onstage to be drawn along neat gender lines, that is clearly not the case. And given these biases, should we necessarily assume that when women are writing major roles for other women (which they are only doing a third of the time), those roles are somehow more feminist, or better female representations? If female artistic leaders aren't free from gendered bias against female stories, why should we assume female playwrights are?

Jill Dolan, quoting one of her own articles from 1983, suggests that "feminist plays [can be] defined as those that show women in the painful, difficult process of becoming full human beings" (Dolan 35). If major female roles are already in the minority, how often do they fulfill this definition? The consensus seems to be, not often. In another response to London's 2012 debate about roles for women, *The Guardian* interviewed actor Janet Suzman and several artistic directors about their perceptions of available female roles. Suzman said she longed for someone to write "an autonomous woman who isn't someone's auntie, mother or lover; who is truly a free spirit" (Higgins). In another *Guardian* article, Suzman elaborated: "And there's the rub: autonomy. Women have never been, perhaps never will never be, autonomous

creatures, unshackled” (Suzman). Anecdotal evidence seems to prove this true: three of the five 2014 Best Play Tony Award nominees (all of which were written by men) feature male protagonists. *Act One* highlights the secondary roles of a batty aunt who inspired the young protagonist to go into the theatre, and the encouraging wife of playwright George S. Kaufman. *All The Way* gives a cameo-sized nod to LBJ’s wife. *Casa Valentina*, about heterosexual cross-dressers, features a single wife described by the *New York Times* as “infinitely accommodating” and “the thankless part of a disapproving daughter” (Brantley). *Mothers and Sons*, centered around the eponymous mother, is theoretically about her struggles with being defined only by her relationship to her now-dead husband and son... but offers her no alternate means of self-definition.

For a more specific survey of the types of female roles being written, we must turn to the film industry. Actress Geena Davis founded the Institute on Gender in Media, “the only research-based organization working within the media and entertainment industry to engage, educate, and influence the need for gender balance, reducing stereotyping and creating a wide variety of female characters for entertainment targeting children 11 and under.” Their website collects of 20 years worth of research, including projects focused not only on gender parity in the creation of films, but the types of female characters being presented, as in their report “Gender Roles & Occupations: A Look at Character Attributes and Job-Related Aspirations in Film and Television” and “Gender Stereotypes: An Analysis of Popular Films and TV.” The latter study, conducted by Dr. Stacy L. Smith and Crystal Allene Cook, surveyed films, organized by rating, to analyze the number and type of female roles they depicted. From 1990 to 2006, females characters were found to be more likely than male characters to be depicted as parents and/or in a committed relationship. Female characters were also five times more likely than male characters to be shown in

“sexually revealing clothing.” In a survey of thirteen G-rated films with female protagonists, the study found common ideas across the films. First, all of the protagonists were primarily, if not exclusively, valued for their physical appearance, and over a third of the characters underwent a make-over or similar metamorphosis during the film to bring her more closely in line with conventional standards of beauty. Second, researchers found that the characters’ goals could be categorized in three ways: “the daydreamers,” who “possess no particular goal or dream only of romantic love” and are largely passive; “the derailed,” who begin with one desire but are “broad-sided by romantic love” and often ultimately “make unimaginable sacrifices in the name of love”; and “the daredevils,” who have distinct goals and may encounter romance, but do not let it distract them from their object. The third category was the least common. “Gender Roles & Occupations” (by Dr. Stacy L. Smith and others) found that female characters in film and television are distinctly less likely than male characters to have jobs or be shown working at them. Men are also much more likely than women to be shown in powerful positions: in the films surveyed, 100% of the investors, developers, judges, DAs, and editors in chief were male. Over 75% of CEOs, high-level politicians, doctors, and workers in other STEM careers were male. Obviously, it’s not at all safe to assume that these statistics directly apply to the theatre as well. But lacking a similar study of American plays, and knowing the other significant gender biases that exist against female writers and characters, it seems safe to assume fairly similar trends appear in American plays, both in superficial measures like profession and appearance, as well as in character traits that are more difficult to define, like Suzman’s discussion of autonomy.

Dolan writes that feminist criticism “is grounded in the belief that representation—visual art, theatre and performance, film and dance—creates from an ideological base meanings that have very specific, material consequences [...]

Performance usually addresses the male spectator as an active subject, and encourages him to identify with the male hero in the narrative. The same representations tend to objectify women performers and female spectators as passive, invisible, unspoken subjects” (Dolan 2). Therein, perhaps, lies the unintended truth in the above-quoted artistic directors’ comment that men resist identifying with female stories: there are, as Dolan points out, so few female stories worth identifying with. We have been trained to believe that marginalizing female voices is natural, a reflection of ‘the way things are.’ To quote Dolan once again, “theatre continues not just to mirror, but to mediate and shape *what we think is possible*” (Dolan xxvi, emphasis mine). In this project, I am concerned with this question of possibility, of the limits of a spectator’s imagination. In the previously discussed example of *‘night, Mother*, the critics’ limited ability to understand the scope of female interiority caused them to misunderstand the female protagonists’ motives; they seemed to think that surely a woman’s concerns could extend no deeper than a superficial dissatisfaction with her looks, even though the play itself told them otherwise. I propose that centuries of limited representation, demonstrated in the film industry by the Institute on Gender in Media, have stunted how both audiences and theatre makers of all genders conceive of female characters; that our stories have, as Dolan says, shaped what we think is possible for a woman to express and experience onstage—and by extension, in life.

PART TWO: THE PLAY

I tried to find a professionally written one act to use for this project, but I had extreme difficulty finding any plays where the female character(s) did not, at some point, say something that directly addressed her “femaleness,” thereby making the required gender swapping impossible without altering the text. For example, a short comic play I found about a trio of friends deciding to sell guns on the black market

seemed like a perfect option, until the penultimate page, when one of the male characters finally lured the female character into the scheme by holding forth about feminism, and how the triumph of the movement had won her the right to “shock her mother” and help them with their plan. This is compelling evidence already of some of the ideas discussed above; namely, that while male experiences can be generic and universal, female characters and their stories are always explicitly marked by their femaleness. It is also why I ultimately decided to write the one act I would be working with myself.

Triumvir is the story of three friends (Sam, Hayden, and Jamie) who have been working together to pretend, for the sake of a book tour, that Sam wrote a novel actually written by Jamie. Sam has grown sick of being the face of an achievement not his/her own, and tries to convince Hayden to back him/her when breaking this news to Jamie. As discussed above, the play features no character descriptions, no gendered pronouns, and gender-neutral names.

When writing the play, I tried to think of the characters as genderless. This proved oddly difficult, so instead I made an effort to periodically swap my mental image: as I worked through one draft, I imagined a character as a man, and in the next, a woman. By the end of these alternating passes through the script, I found myself with a draft in which I could read all the characters comfortably through either voice. My goal was not complete neutrality, however. I tried to build in characteristics and relationships that I thought would be drawn out in interesting ways by the changing genders. One type of relationship I very deliberately did not include is a romantic one: it seemed too complicated to account for the changes in sexuality that the experiment would create (that is, a character would be straight in one version and gay in another), and I wanted to see if any gender combinations caused audience members to read in romance where it was not intended.

I leaned into Sam's high energy and aggressive verbosity because these struck me as traits that are often presented as charming in young male protagonists, but I suspected would be found irritating in a woman; it is unusual, at least in my experience, for a female character to take up as much space and to unselfconsciously demand as much of other characters as Sam does. Hayden's supportiveness and apparent lack of personal investment, in contrast, seemed to be traits that I usually saw in female characters. Jamie's inward-looking neurosis is something I only ever see in a male form onstage and in other media, but of the three, I felt that it was the most likely to translate equally well to audiences in both male and female forms.

The other factor that chiefly directed the writing of the play was an effort to keep the morality of the characters' choices as ambiguous as possible. I wanted to create a scenario in which each characters' actions could be equally worthily construed as good or bad. So, for example, I tried to keep Sam's actions balanced on a narrow line of selfish and justified, as I hoped this could illuminate audiences' expectations for the various genders of characters. Would one gender be seen as good for forcefully defending their own interests, while another would be expected to look first to the needs of the other characters? I conceived of Hayden's passivity (and sudden rejection thereof) and Jamie's demands in a similar light. In this last case, as we shall see, I failed almost completely, but the other characters do manage to strike more of a balance. Whether a characters' actions are right or wrong is an essential element of how an audience member forms an opinion about a character, and so I hoped that creating the widest possible range of opinions on that subject would also lead to the most interesting insights about whether gender seems to have affected these opinions.

The text of the play follows.

TRIUMVIR was performed June 19-22, 2014 at Columbia University's Schapiro Theatre.

It was directed by Emma Rosa Went and designed by Jen Fingal.

CAST:

Cassie Foote and Ethan Nguyen as Sam.

Ashley Morton and Andy Herr as Hayden.

Shay Roman and Nate Krasner as Jamie.

With special thanks to Jen Fingal, Cameron Jefts, and Stephen Christensen.

TRIUMVIR

(A room, maybe an office. HAYDEN enters with a huge box of identical books and drops them on the nearest available surface. SAM follows behind a moment later, a burst of energy.)

SAM

Oh- do you need help with that?

HAYDEN

Well no, not now.

SAM

Right. Sorry.

HAYDEN

Don't worry about it.

(Silence. SAM bobs restlessly for a few moments, still not helping. Then--)

SAM

So listen-

HAYDEN

No.

SAM

What?

HAYDEN

I'm just trying to save time. I'm assuming whatever you're about to ask, the answer is no.

SAM

You know you're my best friend...

HAYDEN

Definitely no.

SAM

Hayden! Come on, just listen for a second!

HAYDEN

...fine. Yes?

SAM

I'm, um. I'm thinking of talking to Jamie.

HAYDEN

Okay... about what?

SAM

About. Well. About some changes, sort of. In the way we do things. The readings, mostly.

HAYDEN

Such as...?

SAM

Well, such as... such as, I don't want to do it anymore.

HAYDEN

--what?

SAM

I'm sick of this. Sick of following Jamie around and following this book around like this loyal band of...
I'm not just talking about myself, you know. This is about both of us, this is about you and me. It's not fair to... if I'd known when I agreed to pretend I wrote this stupid book that it would- you know, just- take over everything, I-

HAYDEN

Did something happen?

SAM

What do you mean? Between me and Jamie? No.

HAYDEN

I just don't get why- I mean, over a year going around doing readings of this and it only starts to bother you now that the book isn't actually yours?

SAM

It just... I don't know. Don't things ever just- hit you, sometimes? There doesn't have to be a reason.

HAYDEN

There has to be something. You can't just- drop something like this and shrug and say you don't know. If you're going to... I don't think it's a, a bad idea, necessarily- you know, to say something if you're unhappy, but why don't you take some time, think through what you're going to say and how and why and all that, and then-

SAM

I want to do it today.

HAYDEN

What? No.

SAM

You just said you didn't think it was a bad idea!

HAYDEN

Yes, but that was shortly before you reminded me that you're an idiot.

SAM

Gosh, thanks.

HAYDEN

You can't really think- you can't do it *now*. Unless your goal is just to make Jamie have a nervous breakdown, in which case, sure, go for it. But if you're actually trying to be *heard*-

SAM

I don't care! I don't care what Jamie does.

HAYDEN

Yes you do.

(beat)

SAM

Yes.
But that's not- I have to do it, Hayden.

HAYDEN

So do it. But not today. Not now. Please.

(Pause.)

SAM

Would you...

HAYDEN

What?

SAM

When I do it- I'm not saying now- are you... do you agree with me?
Would you be with me?

HAYDEN

About...

SAM

Not doing this anymore.

HAYDEN

Oh, I don't... what's it matter?

SAM

It matters.

HAYDEN

It's not like you need me to stand up to Jamie.

SAM

I don't want to be the one who- you know, I don't want to be the
Judas here, the lone voice of- while all the other proverbial
apostles- God, this metaphor is stupid... but that's what it feels
like sometimes like we're just orbiting around this, this sun-
now I'm mixing metaphors- I want to know you're with me. I want
you backing me up.

It used to be fun, at the beginning.

The three of us pulling something over on somebody like we used
to do in grade school except a hundred times bigger.

It was a- a secret, and it was ours. But now it doesn't feel
like ours it feels like it's Jamie's and we're the- the
apostles. To return to the previous- anyway. But if you're with
Jamie and it's you two and I'm the only one who... if it's just me
than maybe it's all just- me.

HAYDEN

It's not. Just you. I don't... I'd be with you, yes. I- yes.

SAM

Really?

HAYDEN

Yes.

SAM

Oh, I'm relieved. I thought- I don't know. I thought maybe you
liked it, maybe you liked- feeling important, I don't know.

HAYDEN

There's nothing like buzzing around the periphery of a famous author- supposedly famous author- to make you feel deeply unimportant.

SAM

Well, I mean, the *fame* is real. The *authorship*...
And God, how do you think I feel? People clapping and cheering at me for something I didn't even do...

HAYDEN

Oh, I'd've thought you loved that part.

SAM

Shut up.

HAYDEN

An adoring crowd at every turn, and you didn't even have to do any work, it's like your wildest dream.

SAM

Yeah it's turned out to be not as great as that makes it sound. Why us anyway? Don't you wonder?

HAYDEN

Because Jamie trusts us.
Because we're friends.
Anyway, listen though... not today, okay?
Sam.

SAM

I...

HAYDEN

You have to drop it. Just for now.

SAM

Yes. Okay. Sorry.

HAYDEN

Good.
Help me?

SAM

Yes, sorry.

(They start taking books out of the box. SAM starts flipping through one of the copies.)

I mean... it is good.

HAYDEN

Oh, for...

SAM

What! I'm saying a nice thing! And it's a true nice thing, the book is good, it's good!
I mean at this point I'm completely sick of it and sort of hate it.
But it's still, you know, good. Objectively.

HAYDEN

Literature can't be objective.

SAM

It's hardly exactly literature. It's a memoir with different names and better structure basically.
And you're willfully missing my point, which is that it isn't like I'm embarrassed about it or anything. I mean there's that at least.

HAYDEN

Uh-huh.

SAM

You don't care at all, do you.

HAYDEN

No, no. I was just so excited about that whole 'dropping it,' plan. I really liked that one.

SAM

Okay, okay.

(HAYDEN starts stacking the books. SAM keeps flipping through, then starts to read out loud, almost without realizing it.)

"'I didn't—'

"He deflates, suddenly, air rushing out of a sail. The air rushes out and the impressive bluster which he'd been building, the firm and fearsome falters and the last word comes out quieter and almost unsure: '-promise.'"

(SAM starts to read in a more presentational way, perhaps a preview of what the public readings are like.)

"He finds, as he thinks about this, as the space stretches out between them, the air with no words in it, his mind flipping with increasing panic through every word he's ever known to find one that fits and coming up blank- do I know any words? Have I ever spoken in my life?

"He finds that *not* making a promise is hard to define. He did not say, 'I promise,' those words were not said. But she stands there waiting and he starts to wonder if maybe he did promise-

maybe, like now, the words wouldn't come out, but he said them in some other way, with his eyes or with his hands, and maybe not even knowing that he said it."

(Having caught HAYDEN's attention, the reading starts to get broader and sillier, slipping finally into an impression of JAMIE— very exaggerated, but something that should be instantly recognizable once JAMIE actually speaks.)

"I didn't promise, he said, and he wonders if that makes it true, if those words mean more than the not-words that came before, and that he didn't understand while he- if he- was saying them. He didn't mean to promise, maybe he should have said, maybe he meant to say."

(As SAM is reading, JAMIE enters. Listens.)

JAMIE

Are you going to do it like that?

(SAM stops. Awkward pause.)

SAM

Hey Jamie.

JAMIE

Hi.

HAYDEN

We were just- just messing around, so...
Um, how are you?

JAMIE

Yeah, fine. I just wanted to- to talk over a few sections, but if you two are- we can do it later.

HAYDEN

We're not doing anything. We're just taking books out of a box. We're even capable of continuing to do that while doing something else.

JAMIE

No, really, it's really-

SAM

What do you want, Jamie? We will do whatever you want us to do, just *tell us*.

HAYDEN

Sam...

JAMIE

You're right. Sorry. I'm just, I don't know, agitated. Nervous.

SAM

Don't be. You don't have to do anything.

JAMIE

I'm still up there. You know- people. Looking. I always think somehow they'll know.

HAYDEN

How?

JAMIE

I don't know. It's not a particularly rational fear.

SAM

What did you want to go over?

JAMIE

Right, um. So you're- you're going to read the first chapter, and then the beginning of the fifth.

SAM

Yes.

JAMIE

Right.

And so, after, when they ask questions, if they ask something about- like that girl did last time, if they ask something about 'process' or whatever or how you write, this time, just- say something generic, you know?

SAM

Like what?

JAMIE

I don't know. Something boring, wake up at 6am and go for walks or something.

SAM

What *is* your process?

JAMIE

What?

SAM

I mean I've never seen you write. I mean just you show up one day with this book and me and Hayden had never heard a word about it 'til it was done.

JAMIE

Oh, I don't... I don't know.

HAYDEN

Come on.

JAMIE

It just... happens, I don't know? Like it all just- I don't know, it builds up, little bits by bits and none of them seem like anything or like they'll come to anything, and then one day it's just- full, and I- I just get them down. And until then I ignore them.

SAM

Well, so.
I'll say that.

JAMIE

Please don't say that.

SAM

Why not? I like that answer. And it's me who supposedly wrote this thing, right? Wouldn't I know how I did it?

JAMIE

You're right. You're right, you're right. It's- forget it, just nevermind, don't worry about it. You say- you say whatever you want.

SAM

Really? Whatever I want?

HAYDEN

Come on, Sam...

SAM

What?

JAMIE

I'm sorry. I shouldn't have said anything. You know what to do, I won't...

SAM

Just stop- stop, stop Jamie-ing and just tell me, okay: did I answer it wrong? When that girl asked that question, about process, my answer was wrong?

JAMIE

I mean not, not *wrong*, but-

SAM

But it was wrong. It's not what you wanted me to say.

JAMIE

Well, um. No, I guess. Yeah, no.

SAM

That's cool. That's fine. That's easy to fix.

JAMIE

Okay?

SAM

How about you say it this time.

JAMIE

Um.

Well, that's not really—
What?

HAYDEN

God damn it.

SAM

Why don't you say it?

HAYDEN

I said to you I *just said* to you—

JAMIE

Well that would be confusing probably.

SAM

You know what I mean.

JAMIE

I don't, really, actually, why are you-? I don't think this is really the, the time or place to-

SAM

Tell me something, because the more I've been thinking about it, I don't understand.

Why is it you would write a book— all these thoughts, that's what you said, you take them all and you write a book and you write them down and it's about you— it's about *us*— and then when it's done you won't even read it?

JAMIE

You know I don't, I can't— I've never been any good with, with people, with big groups of people.

SAM

I don't want to do it anymore, Jamie.

JAMIE

Please don't say that.

HAYDEN

You lack impulse control, that is your problem, has anyone ever told you that?

SAM

I've got this, okay?

HAYDEN

Oh you certainly do.

SAM

This has gotten out of hand.

JAMIE

This-?

SAM

This! *This!* The thing where you write the words and I read the words but they aren't *mine*.
Some man came up to me, he came up to me after the last one and said, "You know, you look exactly like I thought you would."
(SAM laughs, no one else does.)
It's not fair, Jamie, it's not *fair* that I talk and your voice comes out.

JAMIE

But I can't, I can't- I know that maybe I don't- if this about- I'm very, very grateful for- for what you do- what, what both of you do--

HAYDEN

We don't have to talk about this right now.

SAM

Well we've started now, might as well--

HAYDEN

We didn't start anything.

JAMIE

No, Sam is right. It's-- out now, so--
(Small pause.)
What do you-- want?

SAM

I said, I want to not--

JAMIE

I got that. I mean what are you, you know-- angling for. What can I-- what can I give you, what are you after here?

SAM

I-- what?

HAYDEN

Jesus.

JAMIE

I can't do this without you. You know that, you have to know that, so what's the-- what's the thing, the deal, what do you want?

SAM

I don't want anything. I don't want to do this anymore, that's it. It's not an angle.

JAMIE

I need you. I can't do this myself.

SAM

But what if you can, Jamie? What if you did? Stop come on don't make that face just listen to me okay? It's yours, alright? The words, the book- they're things you've already said, they're already in you, you could say them, you could do that, I know that you could.

JAMIE

No, no...

SAM

Why? Come on, *why*? You already wrote it. You already did all the work.

JAMIE

I didn't think this would be part of it.

SAM

What difference does it make? It's just people, just people hearing the story. They all think it's fiction anyway.

JAMIE

No. They don't, and you know it. Have to, to look at people while I- and having them- it's... different, it's just different.

SAM

Hayden, help me out here.

JAMIE

Did you guys plan this or something or-?

HAYDEN

No. No we did not.

JAMIE

I always...

I always thought of it as ours. The book, the story. No, I mean it. It's things that- that happened to all of us, we were all there, I was just the one who wrote it down. That's why it had to be you guys, I always thought of it as as much yours as mine.

SAM

Well...

HAYDEN

It's not.

Don't give me that look this isn't me agreeing or disagreeing with either of you I'm just-
It's not. Ours. It's you.

JAMIE

Well.

Well, be that as it may, at this point it would be... it would be complicated to extricate, not to mention awkward... and you know how people get about- remember that guy, that guy on Oprah, you know...

SAM

That was completely different. The book itself was a lie.

JAMIE

It's the same principle! It's a lie, it involves a lie, people feeling as if they have been lied to. And anyway, the book is... so it's popular right now, it's not going to be popular forever, just let this last as long as it lasts and sooner or later it will peter out and none of us will ever have to-

SAM

Sooner or later! *Years*, Jamie, at this rate it could be *years* and Jesus Christ Jamie *I don't want to be you*. Who would?

(Silence.)

HAYDEN

That's... not...

JAMIE

No.

It's true, so. Even I don't— well, anyway.
Just— just today, though. This last time.

SAM

No.

HAYDEN

Jesus Christ, Sam, this thing is starting in five minutes...

SAM

So tell them I got sick, tell them I got lost, tell them I died.
If I do it this one more time then I'll do it forever and I'm
not doing this forever. I'm not doing it ever again.

HAYDEN

This is... you are the most...

JAMIE

Someone... someone has to do it.

SAM

Then I guess that leaves you.

(Pause.)

HAYDEN

Jamie.

JAMIE

I...

(A stalemate. Finally, after a rather long pause,
HAYDEN seizes one of the books off the table and
starts towards the door.)

HAYDEN

Let's just get this done.

Well?

Someone has to do it. You both win.

(Beat)

I never liked it.

The book.

(HAYDEN exits. JAMIE and SAM look at each other—JAMIE
seems about to speak, but instead gestures for SAM to
go out first. They go.)

END

As seen in the list above, each role was cast with two actors, one male and one female. In general, we tried to rehearse as an entire group of six, but scheduling did not always make that possible. However, the pairs of actors were in frequent communication, and all of them watched all other possible configurations.

In general, in rehearsal the actors were quite game for the experiment. We tried to avoid drawing our own conclusions about the different versions, and instead focus on establishing consistent characterization and storytelling. A few interesting things emerged during the rehearsal process, however: the major discrepancy between the two actors playing Hayden, at least initially, was their comfort with the character's long stretch of silence near the end of the play. While the actress had no (apparent) difficulty, the actor struggled with feeling like it was awkward or conspicuous for him to be present but not speaking, and wanted to either add busy work for himself (moving a prop, going to the door) or to disengage from the scene by slumping in his chair, looking away, etc. Obviously I could not possibly conclude on the evidence of two actors that their behavior is typically gendered in any way, but I would suggest that very few actresses could reach this actor's age and level of experience without confronting the problem of how to remain an engaged and engaging part of a scene without having any lines. This especially true given this actor's background in classical theatre and Shakespeare, where any actress is more than used to spending entire scenes or acts, even as a major character, silently observing the action.

The actress playing Sam and the actor playing Jamie emerged as the most self-conscious about their characterizations. The actress playing Sam daily referred to her character as "crazy," expressed anxiety that she was being too loud, too angry, too forceful, and repeatedly reminded the director that she should be reined in if the characterization was getting too big (which it never did). The actor playing Jamie, in

contrast, fought hard against Jamie's passivity, and sought to find strength and moments of victory for Jamie, even when he had to play against the text to do so.

PART THREE: THE DIRECTORS

I sent the play to five theatre artists who self-identified as directors and asked them to describe their initial casting impulses upon reading the text, and to provide a brief summary of the play. The tables charting their casting responses are included in Appendix B.

Two of the directors offered alternate casting options, but acknowledged that these were not their first impulses. In both cases, they discussed specific gender-related reasons for making the changes. Though I was initially more interested in their first responses, their second thoughts— especially Director B's— offer some interesting alternate takes on the casting questions, and so are included as well.

Sam is clearly the most consistently imagined character, both because he was almost unanimously cast by the directors as male, and because they all envisioned him in various shades of charming. Negative descriptions (selfish, immature) were almost uniformly qualified with at least superficially positive traits like charm and leadership. The apparent exception to this is director B, who initially described Sam as “frazzled and spazzy,” but stated that “[u]ltimately, Sam is the one with the biggest guts. Sam draws a line in the sand, which Hayden undermines by forcing a compromise that solves nothing except their speaking engagement. What Hayden does is kinda weaksauce, especially by dropping that bomb as a parting shot.” Hayden “pulls the rug out from [Sam's] conviction.” In general, Sam is seen as superficially charming and a person to whom the audience ought to be drawn (multiple directors noted that he should be good looking), perhaps in spite of his ultimately selfish qualities. Only Director B saw these qualities not as selfish, but as a kind of moral integrity, which

implies an opposite dramatic evolution from the rest: rather than seeing Sam's charming exterior give way to its petty underbelly (as one director said, Sam "tried to play that dutiful game [of keeping the con going] with them, but ultimately can't resist putting his/her needs in front of the greater good"), for Director B, Sam's initial high-strung rambling is revealed to be rooted in a powerful sense of conviction and self. It's worth noting that part of the reason Director B offered two alternate castings in which Sam was female was because he wanted to "place a woman on the moral high ground." Ironically, of course, the other directors would seem to argue that Director B would be doing exactly the opposite. I find an interesting parallel here, however. All the directors wanted to assign the "good" role to a woman: directors who saw Sam as selfish (though a good, charming kind of selfish) were drawn towards casting him as a man, while the director who believed that Sam was heroic (in a way) immediately qualified his initial male casting with two alternate casts leading with a female Sam (one of which he identified as his "favorite" version).

When describing Hayden, there is once again large measure of consistency across these descriptions, with the exception of Director B. Interestingly, Director B noted that he'd be interested to see a female Hayden because "It's not often you get to see the man be the frazzled one and the woman be the one who's just trying to get her job done." Obviously, the casting decisions of the rest of the directors dispute this point—but as discussed above, Director B is clearly working from a different understanding of the characters than the other four directors. What I find particularly interesting is that Director B not only contradicts the other directors, he (perhaps unintentionally) contradicts himself. When describing a potential female Hayden, he wrote what I quoted above, about Sam as the frazzled mess and Hayden as the competent, focused party. But as seen previously, Director B's descriptions of a female Sam and male Hayden are very different, with Hayden as the cowardly compromiser

and Sam as the righteous crusader. Likely, for Director B these are not contradictions, but different stops on the characters' journey. However, I find it very interesting that the sections Director B chose to illustrate his casting decisions placed the female character in the "good" role (to be simplistic) and the male character in the "bad" role each time.

There do not seem to be any direct lines to draw between understanding of Jamie and the gender the directors chose, and several of the directors barely discussed the character at all. Even though Hayden almost entirely recedes in the penultimate section of the play, he/she is still seen as more important and intriguing by most directors than Jamie is. As the only director to cast Jamie as male outside of an all-male configuration (and as our token voice of dissent), I wish Director B had proved more interested in Jamie: all he offered was that Jamie and Sam's genders (in his opinion) needed to match, suggesting that he chose Sam's gender first and allowed Jamie's to default in response.

Part of this ambivalence can, perhaps, be explained by the directors' summaries of the play, which placed Sam as subject and Jamie as something more like an object. Hayden, when accounted for, was linked with Sam, placing them initially as allies in their efforts to protect or maintain, then seeing those efforts disrupted by Sam. Despite claims of Sam's selfishness, the directors tended to see his selfish decision as an ultimately understandable one: to "force the actual author to face her fame and free himself from guilt," or characterizing the play as the conflict between helping someone you love and being destroyed by that effort.

There are some compelling, though not entirely conclusive patterns to be found here. In general, complexity of motive and moral ambiguity tend to be gendered male, while straightforward motives and moral clarity are female. Director B's shifting value judgments of the characters' actions based on their gender (again, perhaps

unintentional, but I think revealing) are the clearest example of this. Sam can be both prickly and charming, both selfish and justified, both good and bad. Hayden's needs and actions are much more bland, and the general assessment of her competent coldness is one that Director B read as stereotypically masculine, but was interpreted as feminine by almost everyone else. In short, the directors seem to be drawn to making female characters "good," while male characters are free to wallow in a moral complexity that is ultimately seen as attractive. I am reminded of Dolan's previously-quoted suggestion that feminist plays be "defined as those that show women in the painful, difficult process of becoming full human beings" (Dolan 35). Pain, difficulty, and fullness. Sam, the central and most obviously fully-drawn character, seems to contain these ideas, and the directors' descriptions of him reflect this. Femininity on the stage is generally banished to the much more narrow role of Hayden—at least as long as there are men on the stage. In all-female worlds, women's identities are allowed to expand, but when a man is present, she must become the peacemaker in the middle. Director B's vision of Hayden as a scheming compromiser who has "been lying to them the whole time" is the both the most nuanced and the most negative understanding of Hayden, and also the only description that imagines Hayden as male. Full human beings are allowed nuance and negativity; the directors seem more drawn to making their women unimpeachable and attractive.

As we will see below, audiences watching the play follow a similar pattern of expectations. However, watching the characters onstage rather than encountering the on the page provokes a much more varied range of understandings of their personalities and motivations.

PART FOUR: THE ACTORS AND THE AUDIENCE

The performances of *Triumvir* featured 5 casting configurations: all women; all men; male Hayden with two women; male Sam with two women; and female Sam with two men. The audience of each performance was provided with a survey, which they completed at the end of the show. The survey questions can be found in Appendix A. The questions were designed to generate responses to the major ideas that have been discussed so far:

- Is the range of “acceptable behavior” for a female character narrower than for a male character?
- Are women’s stories seen as less universal than men’s stories?
- Are female characters perceived as less complex than male characters?

Specifically, audiences were asked to describe each character, their relationship to the other characters, and to summarize the play both literally and thematically. Obviously, there are multiple factors for which it is impossible to control: no matter how hard they tried, two separate actors cannot guarantee that their performance is identical, no more than even a single actor can be sure that their own performance is identical from night to night. Elements aside from the terms of the experiment may have influenced the audiences’ responses. But I do not think that fact renders them unworthy as the basis for discussion.

From the surveys, I created two charts that guided my analysis, both of which can be found at the end of this paper: I sorted the audience descriptions into positive, negative, and neutral adjectives and calculated which percentage of each made up the total descriptions for each character (Appendix C)²; also included is a list of adjectives that were assigned uniquely to a single gender version of a character—that is, words

² When I was uncertain, I erred on the side of neutrality. Repeats of words from different audience members are counted as separate words.

that were used only for female Jamie, or only for male Jamie (Appendix D). With these charts as a jumping-off point, I'd like to identify four major areas of inquiry.

1. What causes change?

It's clear at a glance that every set of percentages is at least slightly different: no two casting configurations generated precisely the same response to any character. Some configurations are at least relatively similar, however, and these can provide clues to which factors cause the variations in other configurations. So, Sam's two most similar groupings are Configurations A and E— all female and all male. This suggests that audience perceptions of Sam are most affected not by the character's gender, but by his/her relationships to the other characters. Specifically, placing a male Sam opposite female Hayden and Jamie resulted in remarkably low positive descriptions from the audience, whereas a female Sam and a male Hayden and Jamie sent Sam's positivity up, and Hayden's dramatically down.

On the other hand, gender seems to be a relatively more reliable indicator for audience perceptions of Hayden and Jamie: male Hayden's percentages are roughly similar, as are female Hayden's, though they are different from each other; the same is true of Jamie. Each character does have a single dramatic outlier, however, in which their changed relationships to the other characters apparently has a more powerful effect than gender on audience understanding (for Hayden, this is Configuration D; for Jamie, Configuration B).

If the way characters' relationships seem to change as their genders do has such a powerful impact on an audience's overall understanding of a character, what can we read into the specific scenarios?

Configuration B is both Sam and Jamie's most negative overall, and Hayden's second most positive overall. Hayden's position in this configuration as a man flanked

by two women seems to be the cause of these changes. I believe that having Hayden as the male moderator of a female dispute made audiences perceive the women's problems as more immature and unimportant. Hayden's sex combined with his peacemaking position granted him increased authority in the eyes of the audience, leading them to tilt their understanding of the conflict in favor of his being "right" and the women being "wrong." Though the audiences' thematic descriptions remained mostly consistent across the configurations, I think this may still be an example of Dolan's theory (discussed in part two) that questions perceived as "women's issues" are taken less seriously and applied less universally than men's stories. When the play becomes an argument between two women, with a man in the middle trying to make peace, suddenly the male voice is privileged in the ears of the audience, and they take Hayden's position that this argument is pointless and immature. This would explain the increased negativity percentages of both Sam and Jamie, who are now no longer placed in a position of deciding right and wrong between each other, but with themselves in opposition to Jamie.

On the other hand, we have Configuration C, where Sam's position as the only man causes a major nosedive in positivity: the positive adjectives reflected in the chart all came from a single audience member. In a kind of inverse of the above, Sam's confrontational attitude towards the women causes him to lose credibility, apparently making the audience unwilling to perceive any of his actions in a positive light. While female Sam gets credit for strength and determination even in her least positive configurations, the audiences don't seem to deem it necessary to give Sam the benefit of the doubt on those fronts. Perhaps this is another example (as with *independent* and *strong*, discussed above) of traits that the audience takes for granted in men: they should speak their minds and hold to their opinions, and therefore don't deserve any praise for doing so... but they can earn condemnation if they wield this strength

indiscriminately, as audiences seem to think that Sam does here. The fact that he is behaving as he does towards women seems to be the clear root of this sense of going too far and pushing too hard. For Sam to be argumentative and demanding towards men is, as we see in Configuration E, much more readily accepted. To do so towards women appears to violate deeply-held taboos of gender-based behavior, and strictures about the way a man is expected to act towards a woman (that is, gently, courteously, protectively etc.).

The final example, Configuration D, represents not only the highest negativity percentage, but also brought out a tenor of negative description that is completely absent from every other configuration. Suddenly, words including *cowardly*, *dull*, *disaffected*, and *self-interested* appear. Though other audiences saw Hayden as a tranquil mediator, these adjectives imply that the audience saw these same traits, in this situation, as the failure of a responsibility to act. In this configuration, Sam's negative descriptions likewise take on a noticeably different quality—she is now *overwhelmed*, *tormented*, *trapped*, and *lost*—and she narrowly receives her highest positive percentage. This leads me to believe that audiences, on some level, expected Hayden to be more forceful in standing up for Sam. While previously a female Sam and male Hayden led to very negative perceptions of Sam, in this case, the opposite is true. Apparently, a woman standing her ground against two men (Hayden and Jamie) is a more flattering position than two women arguing with a man in the middle. But even this is not necessarily a position of strength: Sam is seen as *overwhelmed*, among other things, and the audience seems to believe that she deserves (or, perhaps, needs) Hayden's explicit support. Whether this is because she is a woman, or because the audience feels that she is "right" and therefore Hayden should take her side isn't entirely clear from the responses. The uniqueness of this response to Hayden suggests

the former, or that at least Sam's apparent "rightness" (if that is the case) is derived somehow from her status as the only woman.

2. What's the motivation?

Several groups of adjectives indicate that audiences perceive differing causes for characters' behavior in different genders. Both female Hayden and female Sam receive multiple descriptions that focus on the difficulty of her circumstances, implying that her actions derive from a sense of turmoil (*conflicted, lost, stressed, trapped, exasperated, exhausted*, and others). Male Sam, on the other hand, finds his actions couched in more overall negative terms—*angry, confrontational, aggressive, persistent, reckless*—but these actions seem to be located in a place of innate certainty: "*strong moral compass, honest*. Even the enhanced violence of Sam's descriptions (aggressive, angry) reinforce the idea of directness and certainty. Female Sam is also more likely to be assigned words that can be equally seen as products of her circumstances as aspects of her personality: *conflicted, overwhelmed*, and others quoted above, but also *impatient* and *tired*. I believe it suggests in part a desire to root female Sam's unpleasant behavior in her circumstances, and thereby partially excuse or justify it, as opposed to male Sam, who acts from inner conviction, however ultimately misguided. This seems to echo some of the choices made by the directors mentioned in part three of this paper, particularly the tendency to make the characters they perceived as "good" female and the ones they perceived as "bad" or more ambiguous as male.

Female Sam also seems to be a particular victim of the stereotype of women being driven by the uncontrollable force of their emotions. Though both Sams are described repeatedly as *impulsive*, only female Sam is *emotional, passionate, strong-willed* and *impatient*. Male Sam's *aggressive* and *angry* could be seen as equivalent

terms, but I would argue that they are not. Aggressive and angry are specific and focused; *anger* is a single emotion, *emotional* implies a constant state of dramatic changeability. Likewise, while *aggressive* can be taken to refer to one's personality overall, it does not seem likely that this was the respondent's intention given Sam's behavior for the much of the play—rather, I believe it is a reference to the tenor of his actions (he pursues his desires aggressively), whereas *passionate*, like emotional, seems to refer both to a broader range of feelings, and to a personality as a whole. Also, neither of these words recur for male Sam the way *emotional* and others do for female Sam.

Like Sam, female Hayden is frequently described with words such as *annoyed*, *exhausted*, and *impatient*. So though female Hayden receives higher negative percentages in general than the male version does, many of these words should not necessarily be seen as descriptions of her personality. It is interesting that the audience sees female Hayden as so much more dramatically worn down by the situation than male Hayden. In general, she is described with a marked passivity, like a witness to the action rather than a participant. When male Hayden is seen as passive, as discussed above, it is viewed as a negative thing. This points to differing understandings of each Hayden's silence. The dramatic response to male Hayden's perceived passivity suggests that in general, audiences were reading his role as more active. The specific adjectives seem to bear this out: male-exclusive adjectives include "*business first*," *confident*, *forward-thinking*, *problem-solver*, and repeatedly, *protective*. While female Hayden has some similarly active adjectives (*decisive*, *hard worker*), male Hayden's are more numerous and, I would argue, more clearly point to the perception of an active, self-interested role in the scene. *Hard worker*, for example, might just as easily refer to Hayden's stage business of continuing to prepare for the upcoming reading while the other two characters argue.

I say “self-interested” to highlight what I think is one of the ideas at the heart of this difference: whether Hayden exists to push forward a scene between two other characters, or whether s/he has a stake in the scene him/herself. Responses suggest that female Hayden is generally seen as fulfilling the former function, a role emphasized by words like *appeasing*, *responsible*, and especially *selfless*. Male Hayden’s active adjectives suggest the latter. And, as discussed, when he is seen as acting more passive (like female Hayden does) he is very sharply criticized for it. I think this points to a huge gulf between expectations for male and female characters that exists both socially and dramaturgically. The idea of woman as helpmeet who devotes herself to her husband and children is all too familiar, and though huge strides have been made in terms of social opportunity for women, there is still a strong and insidious strain of expectation that women devote their lives to another person, reflected in media statistics quoted in part one of this paper, where female characters are much more likely to be shown in a committed relationship or with children. This in turn affects dramaturgical expectations. In part two, I mentioned that the actor playing Hayden had trouble adjusting to the idea that his character waited silently in the background for a large portion of the scene, while female Hayden had no trouble seeing the activity in her silence. The audiences’ adjectives run parallel to this divide: audiences (like the actor) cannot accept that male Hayden has nothing to do, and so infer interior motivations and subtle kinds of activity. They are much more willing, however, to accept that female Hayden exists only when she is needed and recedes when she is not. I argue that this is the product of a lifetime of seeing female characters whose role is exactly that: step in when the (usually male) main characters require it, then absent yourself or get kidnapped or be otherwise without will or agency when the final confrontation comes. It is a place we are very accustomed to seeing women inhabit in stories, and therefore audiences easily assume that female

Hayden is just another example of it. For men, it is much more unfamiliar, and audiences therefore assume that male Hayden is *not* occupying such a place of passivity (and, again, react very strongly and negatively when they think that he is).

I think this is a particularly fascinating discovery, in part because it has important implications specifically for dramaturgs. As the writer of the one act in question, I know that I intended Hayden's role to look much more like what the audiences saw in male Hayden: that his silence was active, and his investment in the scene as high as anyone else's. But given identical text, blocking, and actor motivations, the audience still mentally forced female Hayden into a traditional and stereotypically passive role. It would be ridiculous to think that because audiences want to assume women are passive, we must forbid this by writing and performing only loud, assertive women. There are quiet, passive women in the world, just as there are quiet, passive men. But quietness does not equate to lack of interiority or investment. This underlines, therefore, how absolutely aware theater artists must be of when they are treading alongside a stereotype, and how willing audiences are, because it's easy, to slip over that line in their imaginations— even when the play might be trying to tell them otherwise.

Almost the opposite situation can be seen in the different responses to the Jamies. While Jamie was certainly the most negatively perceived character overall, audiences were much more willing to acknowledge female Jamie's positive qualities, like her intelligence and creativity, while they dismissed male Jamie as needy and awkward. In other words, the audiences appeared to read more nuance into female Jamie's actions and character than into male Jamie's. While female Jamie's adjectives reflect a clash between her talent and her fear, male Jamie's paint the picture of an almost entirely pathetic, useless individual.

Though this is a gender flip from the example of Hayden, I think it is actually rooted in similar expectations of female passivity and dependence contrasted with male activity and independence, and in audience members' familiarity or unfamiliarity with characters of those types. In this case, however, the benefit runs in the opposite direction. I think the more familiar model here is the woman whose talent is all but crippled by her uncertainty and insecurity (see Emma Thompson's character in the film *Stranger than Fiction*). While this persona certainly exists for men, it almost always seems to be a comic type, the insecurities mined for their humor and not for the pained awkwardness of Jamie— and from this, perhaps we may assume that the reason this type is funny is because of its failure to live up to masculine ideals of confidence and strength. So, when the humor is taken away, one is left just with an apparent failure of a man. And it's a failure of imagination, too, as we saw in female Hayden: audiences don't know how to recognize this person, and so cannot supply the necessary, unspoken details. I am reminded of the play *Really, Really* performed at MTC in the winter of 2013. One character was a straight-A class president who made her hung-over roommate pancakes the morning after a crucial party in the play. At intermission, a group of girls sitting near me complained that the character was so flat and "so unrealistic," and that "there just aren't people like that." But, of course, there are, and I've known them. Just as there are men like Jamie who have the same complex and conflicted relationship between their abilities and their fears that audiences perceived in female Jamie. Once again, the question seems to be how we as dramaturgs and directors can make sure that audiences aren't able to leap to two-dimensional or dismissive conclusions about a character when they should be looking for depth.

3. Who's in control?

In the surveys, audiences were asked to summarize the play. In the all-male group, every summary characterizes Sam's main action as "Sam decides"... to speak out, not to participate, etc. One offered "Sam confronts Jamie" as Sam's role in the story. For the all-female configuration, audience members suggested that Sam's story was "logic [Hayden] fail[ing] in the face of emotion [Sam]," "Sam tries to rope [Hayden] into the plan," "Sam finally admits that she no longer wants to pretend to be the author," "three friends agonize," Sam is "eventually fed up," and "a silly but exciting plan [...] got too real and now it needs to end." Only one audience member used the words "decides" and "confronts" to describe Sam's actions. Though the audiences' literal understandings of the play did not change, their sense of who drove the action does seem to shift. Every audience member for the men saw Sam's action as inciting the course of events; audience members for the women highlight Sam as an emotional force, as focused on convincing Hayden rather than confronting Jamie, or draw upon the oddly inactive verbs "agonize," "things got too real," and becoming "eventually fed up." These last three descriptions also distribute the action evenly across all three characters, rather than pointing to Sam as more central or assigning each character a different action. Though hardly extreme enough divergences to turn these surveys into *Rashomon: Triumvir*, Sam's centrality and activity does seem to be reflected in different ways, suggesting subtly but noticeably different experiences of the play itself.

4. Single-gender words.

As reflected in the chart at the end of the paper, many words were used only in relation to one gender. For example, it's no surprise that *bitchy* was only applied to a female character. I found it equally unsurprising that *cowardly* was an exclusively male word: cowardice (and its opposite, courage) are concepts that have long been

associated with social expectations of proper masculine behavior, often specifically related to combat or similar displays of physical strength. Culturally, a woman does not labor under the same expectations, and so if she fails to live up to them, she need not be branded with cowardice.

Another all-male word was *angry*, which was slightly more unexpected. It brought to mind a quote by novelist Claire Messud, who was asked to explain why her protagonist was so “unbearably grim”: “if it’s unseemly and possibly dangerous for a man to be angry, it’s totally unacceptable for a woman to be angry” (Wilson). Audience members’ resistance to applying this word to the female characters could perhaps be seen as (again, almost certainly subconscious) unwillingness to tar the women with such a dramatic brush (whereas it would, perhaps, be seen as a less damning phrase when applied to a man), or perhaps rejection of the idea of an angry woman more generally. Like the differences in motivation discussed above, perhaps it is indicative of an assumption that while men may be acting out of anger, women must surely have some other motivation for their actions.

Cultural expectations drive another pattern to which I would like to draw attention, though I find my reaction to it difficult to quantify my response. These are the adjectives *independent*, “*speaks her mind*,” and *strong*, which are all applied to female Sam. All of them are, without question, positive descriptions, and probably more positive than almost any of the words assigned to male Sam. However, the fact that female Sam is singled out for these particular praises and male Sam is not suggests that the praise may not be as unequivocal as it seems. There is something about these word choices that suggest the respondents found them (almost certainly unconsciously) to be unusual, and therefore worthy of note. Independence, strength, and outspokenness could be used to describe male Sam as well, but apparently audience members did not find them to be notable traits, or defining characteristics.

But they were singled out by multiple audience members across multiple performances for female Sam—implying, perhaps, that while they are remarkable qualities in a woman, they are taken more for granted in a man.

When the audience members for these configurations were asked to describe the play literally and thematically, they all hit on roughly the same ideas. But these numbers reveal that in fact, their perceptions of the intention, power, and responsibility of the characters differed greatly even within a shared dramatic framework. I wouldn't say that any is right or wrong—each has its own interesting and less interesting elements. But if this were a more traditional play production process, there would surely be a story that the creative team and I were most interested in telling. The variations between the groups reveal the level of attention a dramaturg or director or writer (or all of them) must pay to the preconceived notions about gender relations that audience members bring with them into a play. Using this information, could we put together performances that actively work against the preconceptions revealed by the surveys? Would audiences ever allow themselves to feel sympathetic towards a male Sam fighting against two women, or negatively disposed towards a female Sam fighting against two men? I think it is fairly clear that we cannot just change the bodies that are enacting stories onstage; we must pay close attention to how we can change the kinds of stories audiences (and us, too) have been conditioned to see.

CONCLUSION

At the beginning of part four, I posed three questions:

- 1) Is the range of “acceptable behavior” for a female character narrower than for a male character?

- 2) Are women's stories seen as less universal than men's stories?
- 3) Are female characters perceived as less complex than male characters?

I think the most important amendment I would make to these questions as I conclude is to clarify that most of these questions could just as easily be applied to certain kinds of male characters as to female ones. Beyond that, I think the results discussed here provide interesting answers to each of these questions.

- 1) *Is the range of "acceptable behavior" for a female character narrower than for a male character?*

Not necessarily, at least in this case. Both male and female characters are constricted in terms of "acceptable behavior," and in this project, it may well be the male characters who bore the greater burden of social expectations. Though Jamie was found generally distasteful as a character in both genders, male Jamie was more harshly criticized for seeming pathetic. No one specifically said that he was insufficiently strong or masculine, but many of the adjectives ascribed to him could be seen to have that implication. Male Sam, when pitted against a female Jamie and Hayden, was seen as too harsh and aggressive. On the other hand, the female characters weren't generally allowed to escape the bounds of propriety: that is, audiences were more likely to seek out reasons and provide explanations for the female characters' behavior and to assign passive adjectives relating to their surroundings and circumstances, rather than the more active descriptions assigned to the male characters. So, though the characters were equally bound by social expectations, one could argue that female characters were indeed more dramatically constricted, because behaviors that were seen as transgressive in the men were, when

performed by the women, reinterpreted by the audience to be more appropriate.

I think this question could perhaps be more effectively demonstrated with a play that offered the characters starker choices, and specifically choices that relate to romance or family. I suspect that in those areas, the range of “acceptable behaviors” for women constricts even farther and more dramatically than in the more understated, friendship-based realm in which this play lived. As I mentioned above, the choice not to include romance was an intentional one of my part (and the decision not to make any of the central relationships parental was partly a reflection of the age of the pool of actors I knew I had readily available), but I think a repetition of this type of experiment with romance and parenthood entered as variables would yield telling results.

2) *Are women’s stories seen as less universal than men’s stories?*

The answer seems to be yes, if not precisely in the way examined by Dolan. Though the audiences’ thematic descriptions of the play did not vary greatly, their willingness to see a deeper reason behind the characters’ actions did. As seen in Configuration B, when male Hayden was caught between a female Jamie and Sam, audiences seemed to trivialize the actions and the problems of the women in light of the opinions of the single man. On the other hand, the all-female configuration did not seem to be taken any less seriously than the all-male configuration, and its themes were described no differently.

If I were to try and tease out more explicit answers to this question, I think it would be interesting to present a play that is more explicitly about questions of identity and self-actualization. In that context, I would be interested to see if, given the same longings, the women’s were seen as of equal importance to the

men's. This could very easily combine with the alternate "acceptable behavior" scenario described above.

3) Are female characters perceived as less complex than male characters?

Only sometimes. In fact, a failure to see complexity seemed to be predicted less by gender than by gendered expectations that flowed in both directions. When audiences seemed to "recognize" a character type, they proved more willing to fit the character they were watching into that shallow mold, whether or not it was able to account for all of the character's actual complexity. The clearest examples of this were female Hayden and male Jamie. The former was largely seen as a mild and disinterested helpmeet for the other two characters, in contrast to her male counterpart, who was attributed with agency and activity. On the other end of the scale, audiences were incapable of seeing past Jamie's perceived negative and "unmanly" qualities and viewed him as a pathetic coward, while they allowed female Jamie greater depth and inner conflict. The increased complexity of the audiences' reactions to each character's opposite number suggests that this is not necessarily a flaw in the writing, but an example of audiences latching onto a stereotype to explain a character they might otherwise find unfamiliar or difficult to understand. This could, in practice, become a failure to appreciate the universality of female stories because we are used to experiencing and understanding a much wider breadth of types of male characters in all their complexity, while female characters exist in a much narrower range of types. This fact also suggests that while the gendered expectations cause simplification for both genders, it is a problem more commonly encountered in female characters, who are drawing from a shallower pool of archetypes.

In this experiment, the female characters were specifically the subjects of a different kind of simplification. For the female characters, the audiences suggested a much stronger sense that they were under the effects of pressure and their environment than the male characters, thereby implying that the actions they took and decisions they made stemmed from this stress rather than their innate nature or unmediated decisions. While this is complexity of a sort—recognizing extenuating circumstances behind one’s behavior—it also denies the female characters the chance to fully inhabit some of the more negative traits assigned to the male characters. It is a useful reminder that equality of representation does not mean that women or minorities are always portrayed as the ‘good guys,’ but that they are allowed the full range of depth and complexity than any human has.

These are obviously subtle differences, but that is what makes pointing specifically to these kinds of ideas so difficult. If prejudices in life or in art were announced with bold, straightforward, easy-to-identify statements, then the jobs of people invested in equality would be much easier. As Jill Dolan writes, and as I quoted in part one of this paper, “theatre continues not just to mirror, but to mediate and shape what we think is possible.” The discrepancies between the characters seen in this study are not, I think, the effects of innate sexism or bigotry, but of a failure of imagination, a failure to look for or understand or accept characters as humans in all of their flawed complexity rather than evaluating them against or trying to fit them into an accepted and expected type. If the theatre is a place where audiences can be successfully called upon to imagine that there is an ocean onstage, or that a doll is really a baby, or that absolutely no one can tell those twins apart, is it really possible

that we cannot make audiences imagine that men and women are not as easily defined as they believe?

Perhaps someday, in an ideal world, this will be a question of erasing all perceptions of difference between men and women based solely on the fact of their gender. But the question I hope to raise with this study are not how we can eliminate differences in perception, but rather how we can build awareness of these differences, and then use said awareness to consciously manipulate audience responses to a character, rather than allowing stereotypes and assumptions to carry the story by default. It is, in other words, a question of seizing control over this aspect of characterization and storytelling. By doing so, we can begin filling in the gaps in onstage gender parity, not just in terms of literal numbers, but in the range and depth of female characters available.

I think the discrepancies between audiences' understandings of the characters and the information provided by the text itself suggests that one solution to the parity problem might be taking a second look at plays we already have. For the sake of this experiment, we attempted to observe a careful neutrality in the direction of the play, making sure each version matched all the others. I think there is a great deal of scope for directors and dramaturgs to create productions that make the depth and transgressive qualities of their characters (male and female) undeniable for the audience, perhaps especially in the case of older plays. There may be much more to even classical texts than modern audiences and theatre practitioners are trained to see. In the case of Shakespeare in particular, I think that it is absolutely true. That though Beatrice gets all the attention in *Much Ado About Nothing*, the play also ends with poor, constantly-silenced Hero finally seizing the right to speak for herself, in public; or that *Othello's* plot may be driven by Iago's vicious scheming, but it is initiated and predicated upon a Desdemona's staggering defiance of social expectation

and unrepentant embrace of her own sexuality. I would like very much to see a production of *Much Ado About Nothing* that recognizes that Hero is a character in spite of her silence, or one of *Othello* that sees no contradiction between Desdemona's sensuality and her unwavering insistence that she is faithful to Othello.

As a dramaturg passionate about classical theatre and Shakespeare in particular, I realize that these kinds of egalitarian textual interpretations are not always possible, which is when we must turn to creativity in casting. The most obvious example of this is Phyllida Lloyd's Donmar Warehouse production of *Julius Caesar* with an all female cast, which later transferred to St. Ann's Warehouse. A critical and popular success, I think the importance of such productions is not only to give female actors an opportunity to tackle some of the best text in English-language dramatic history, but also as another means to expand the available imaginative field. Watching Harriet Walter beautifully play Brutus, one realizes that there is nothing about Brutus that a woman cannot inhabit or express. Though the social pressures acting upon him may be those placed upon men, his essential self is not gendered. Indeed, sometimes a milieu of masculine social pressures can create interesting spaces for female actresses, as in the Oregon Shakespeare Festival's *Julius Caesar*, where company member Vilma Silva played Caesar as a woman.

In the case of new plays, I do not think the solution to this problem lies simply in providing more opportunities to female directors and writers (though of course that should and must be done anyway). As the results show, this is not a problem limited only to female characters, or only to male audience members. Women seem to be no less guilty of simplifying and stereotyping female characters than men are, and so it is unreasonable to expect that a playwright will avoid these traps just because she is a woman. Playwrights of both genders must look closely at the kinds of stories they are telling and the stereotypes they are perpetuating, and I think directors and especially

dramaturgs are perfectly placed to spearhead these kinds of inquiry. Of course it is a playwright's right to create the play and characters that they want to. But I think it is also a dramaturg's duty to interrogate what a play is saying and why. Failure to ask this question does not excuse artists from any subsequent complicity in perpetuating sexism, racism, or any other prejudicial received narratives.

Perhaps this sounds extreme, or like an unfair expectation of constant political correctness. But I think of this not as policing, but as an artist's responsibility to question. We must begin with questioning our own work, and the images and ideas it contains perhaps without our knowledge— only then can that work begin to question our society itself. It is possible, as in this experiment, that audiences will see their own expectations rather than what the play is showing them. But the only solution to that is to keep telling different kinds of stories, allowing different kinds of voices and permitting both men and women to inhabit the vast range of roles that real men and women do, until artists have learned to express all of them and audiences have learned how to see them.

Author Junot Díaz once gave a speech in which he discussed representation.

The most frequently quoted portion is as follows:

“You guys know about vampires? ... You know, vampires have no reflections in a mirror? There's this idea that monsters don't have reflections in a mirror. And what I've always thought isn't that monsters don't have reflections in a mirror. It's that if you want to make a human being into a monster, deny them, at the cultural level, any reflection of themselves. And growing up, I felt like a monster in some ways. I didn't see myself reflected at all. I was like, “Yo, is something wrong with me? That the whole society seems to think that people like me don't exist?” And part of what inspired me, was this deep desire that before I died, I would make a couple of mirrors. That I would make some mirrors so that kids like me might see themselves reflected back and might not feel so monstrous for it.”

Though Díaz is referring more specifically to questions of race, his speech expresses the core importance of the question of representation for any marginalized group. He suggests that it is, in fact, by failing to be represented be represented that a group

becomes marginalized, or at least that there is an almost inextricably close relationship between the two ideas. Theatre artists are empowered to, in Díaz's words, create mirrors.

I sometimes think about the outsized impact of big musicals such as *Rent* and *Wicked*, neither of which opened to remarkably good reviews and are often regarded with some disdain by theatre professionals I have known. But for young people across the country, early teenagers particularly, these shows have a dramatic and formative impact on their lives. Wildly passionate fans of both shows turn out to performances and create online communities that last even after the performance is over or the shows have closed. Both musicals also depict characters who are defined by their status as outsiders. Obviously arguments can be made about the authenticity of this definition, but the dialog and lyrics touch frequently on questions of difference, of failure to fit in, of a desire not only to escape the community one is in, but to be embraced by a new, like-minded pseudo-family. Kids who like musical theatre in the first place are rarely in the cultural mainstream, and in some ways it seems obvious why they would be drawn to these stories of charismatic outsiders whose otherness seems to be what allows them to achieve and create. In a more generalized way, both musicals provide a mirror, and preteens across the country (and the world) have continued to reach for them for over a decade, even as theatre artists turn up their noses. The massive popularity of the Disney film *Frozen* is seen by most to be rooted in its subversive depiction of a traditional fairy tale, including a princess who is unambiguously romantically unattached at the end of the movie. The potential impact of showing a different kind of story, and allowing a different kind of person to recognize themselves on screen or onstage, is vast. I reference these huge financial hits as a reminder that representation and equality needn't be only the project of fringe feminist theatre companies or radical off-Broadway. In fact, I think that the

beauty of theatre as an engine for social change is that it needn't be didactic. Simply by telling stories— but telling more stories, and telling them better, we can begin to effect actual change.

Hamlet says that is it the duty of the actor “to hold, as ‘twere, the mirror up to nature.” Maybe the goal of this project could be seen as learning to hold the mirror at a slightly different angle: away from the lord’s boxes and the rich old lords, and down towards the yard, or out into the street, or somewhere we’ve never bothered to look yet. Straight white men have been the default form of human for thousands of years of not just theatrical history. There is a lot to unlearn. But if Jill Dolan is right that theatre not only echoes but shapes possibility— if it is accepted that theatre and other forms of media are important, and that entertainment is never meaningless, then expanding the scope of our storytelling, teaching our audiences that no person can or should be reduced to a stereotypical collection of parts, might someday ripple outwards into how we perceive and accept others in life. After all, holding up mirrors banishes monsters, and leaves people in their place.

APPENDIX A: AUDIENCE SURVEY

The survey was handed out to the audience at the conclusion of the performance, and they were asked to respond in the room.

AUDIENCE SURVEY

Thank you for joining us at *Triumvir*, and for your participation in this survey.

Name (optional):

Age:

Gender identification:

Do you give permission for your responses to be anonymously quoted in the final thesis paper? Yes / No

Are you involved in theatre, and if so, in what capacity? (i.e., director, producer, actor, dramaturg, etc.)

How would you describe the character Sam (in 4-5 words or phrases)?

How would you describe the character Hayden (in 4-5 words or phrases)?

How would you describe the character Jamie (in 4-5 words or phrases)?

How would you describe Sam and Hayden's relationship?

How would you describe Sam and Jamie's relationship?

How would you describe Hayden and Jamie's relationship?

How would you summarize what happens in the play (approx. 3-4 sentences)?

How would you describe the play thematically?

APPENDIX B: DIRECTOR RESPONSES

Casting Table

Director	Sam	Hayden	Jamie
A	M	F	F
B	M	F	M
C	M	M	M
D	M	F	F
E	M	M	M

Directors B and D's Alternate Casting

Director	Sam	Hayden	Jamie
B	F	M	F
B	F	F	F
D	F	F	F

APPENDIX C: PROPORTIONS OF POSITIVE/NEGATIVE/NEUTRAL ADJECTIVES

CONFIGURATION A: All Female (9 total responses)

SAM. Positive: 35.9%
 Neutral: 41%
 Negative: 23.1%

HAYDEN. Positive: 64.7%
 Neutral: 20.6%

Negative: 14.7%

JAMIE. Positive: 15.1%

Neutral: 18.2%

Negative: 66.7%

CONFIGURATION B: Male Hayden, Female Jamie and Sam (6 total responses)

SAM. Positive: 28.6%

Neutral: 14.3%

Negative: 57.1%

HAYDEN. Positive: 72.7%

Neutral: 27.3%

Negative: 0%

JAMIE. Positive: 0%

Neutral: 16.7%

Negative: 83.3%

CONFIGURATION C: Male Sam, Female Hayden and Jamie (8 total responses)

SAM. Positive: 15%*

Neutral: 35%

Negative: 50%

HAYDEN. Positive: 65.2%

Neutral: 17.4%

Negative: 17.4%

JAMIE. Positive: 12.5%

Neutral: 25%

Negative: 62.5%

* All of the positive responses to Sam in this group came from a single audience member.

CONFIGURATION D: Female Sam, Male Hayden and Jamie (15 total responses)

SAM. Positive: 36.5%
Neutral: 17.3%
Negative: 46.2%

HAYDEN. Positive: 40%
Neutral: 24%
Negative: 36%

JAMIE Positive: 0%
Neutral: 20.3%
Negative: 79.7%

CONFIGURATION E: All Male (3 total responses)

SAM. Positive: 25%
Neutral: 41.7%
Negative: 33.3%

HAYDEN. Positive: 81.8%
Neutral: 18.2%
Negative: 0%

JAMIE. Positive: 7.7%
Neutral: 15.4%
Negative: 76.9%

APPENDIX D: ADJECTIVES BY GENDER

Asterixes (*) indicate appearances across multiple configurations.

SAM

<u>Female (A, B, D)</u>	Driven	Frenetic	Independent*
Assertive*	Emotional*	Fun*	Instigator
Ballsy	Excitable	Gregarious	“Little bitchy”
Conflicted	Explosive	Headstrong	Lively
Determined	Extrovert	Impatient*	Lost

Loud	Outgoing	Selfish*	Tormented
Malleable	Overwhelmed	"Speaks her mind"*	Trapped
Manic	Passionate*	Stressed	"Trying to connect"
Manipulative	Passive-aggressive	Strong-willed*	Upset
"Needs to be center of attention"	Primped	Strong*	Vibrant
Neurotic	Put-together	Stubborn*	
"No bullshit"	Resolved	"The Face"	
	Self-assured*	Tired	
<u>Male (C, E)</u>	Confrontational	Quick	Silly
Aggressive	Flirtatious	Rapid	"Strong moral compass"
Angry	Honest	Reckless	Temperamental
Annoying	Persistent	Rude	

HAYDEN

<u>Female (A, C)</u>	Facilitator	Patient	Standoffish
Annoyed	Fair	Quiet	Steady
Appeasing	Hard worker	Reasonable	Tranquil
Circumspect	Hesitant	Reserved	True to self
Considered	Independent	Resigned	Witty
Cool head	Introvert	Responsible*	
Decisive	"Oppressed by Sam"	Selfless	
Exasperated	Organized	Smart	
Exhausted		Soft-spoken	
<u>Male (B, D, E)</u>	"Doesn't make his own decisions"	Grounded	Self-involved
Ambivalent	Dull	Honest	Serene
Angry	Easily swayed	Indifferent	"Shoots from the hip"
Assured	Emotionally guarded	Laid-back	"Slightly cynical"
"Business first"	Even-keeled	Logical*	Strong
Cautious	Forward thinking	Neutral	Subdued
Chill	Friendly	Nice	Thoughtful
Conciliatory	"Goes with the flow"	"No bullshit"	Understanding
Confident		Practical	
Considerate		Problem solver	
Cowardly		Protective*	
Devil's advocate		Self-aware	
Disaffected		Self-interested	

JAMIE

<u>Female (A, B, C)</u>	Creative	Distant	Meek
Calculating	Damaged	Embarrassed	Overwhelmed
Can't cope	Defensive	Frenetic	Petty
Cautious	Demanding	Funny	Picky
Cerebral	Dependent	Guarded*	Quiet
Conflicted	Determined*	High-pitched	Reserved

Resilient Small	Suspicious Talented	“The Talent” Troubled	
<u>Male (D, E)</u> Academic Awkward Careful Confused Cowardly “Frightened of failure”	Irritating “live-at-home gamer type” Lonely Lost Manipulative Mousey Needy*	Paranoid “Probably talented” Resigned Secretive Self-involved Sensitive Short-sighted	Soft-spoken Sweaty Timid* “Too worried about others’ perceptions” Unhappy Unsure

Some common shared adjectives:

Anxious: Sam, 4 times;
Jamie, 4 times.
“Avoids conflict”:
Hayden, 5 times.
Calm: Hayden, 5 times
Controlling: Jamie, 5
times.
Frustrated: Sam, 9
times.
Impatient: Sam, 2 times
(only female); Hayden, 3
times.

Impulsive: Sam, 12
times.
Insecure: Jamie, 6 times.
Introvert: Hayden, 1
time (female only);
Jamie, 4 times.
Mediator: Hayden, 4
times.
Nervous: Jamie, 6 times.
Neurotic: Sam, 1 time
(female only); Jamie, 6
times.

Passive: Hayden, 3
times; Jamie 2 times.
Rational: Hayden, 4
times.
Sarcastic: Hayden, 3
times.
Scared/Fearful/Afraid:
Jamie, 14 times.
Selfish: Sam, 4 times.
(only female); Jamie, 2
times.
Shy: Jamie, 7 times.

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