Are There any Women in Shakespeare's Plays?: Fiction, Representation, and Reality in Feminist Criticism

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I

she never told her love

(*Twelfth Night* 2.4.109)

What shall Cordelia do? Love and be silent.

(*King Lear* 1.1.54)

but if there be
Yet left in heaven as small a drop of pity
As a wren's eye, feared gods, a part of it!

(*Cymbeline* 4.2.305-8)

Can Fulvia die?

(*Antony and Cleopatra* 1.3.58)

But man, proud man,
Dressed in a little brief authority

(*Measure for Measure* 2.2.120-21)

A jest's prosperity lies in the ear
Of him that hears it, never in the tongue
Of him that makes it.

(*Love's Labour's Lost* 5.2.861-63)

My life stands in the level of your dreams.

(*The Winter's Tale* 5.2.79)[1]

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Here are, respectively, Viola as Cesario, Imogen dressed as Fidele, Cleopatra, Isabella, Rosaline, and Hermione.

"How could any serious critic ever have forgotten that to care about a specific character is to care about the utterly specific words he says when and as he says them; or that we care about the utterly specific words of a play because certain men and women are having to give voice to them?"[2] Stanley Cavell asks this question in 1966, when Part One of "The Avoidance of Love: A Reading of *King Lear*" was written. Cavell was addressing the highly influential "New Criticism" that imagined texts as objects (well-wrought urns and verbal icons). New Criticism's main focus was poetry rather than prose fiction or drama, but the focus on the text as artifact or object obscured the question of address in all forms of literature. Who is speaking, and to whom? Such a question is central to any piece of theater, for example, where we understand the dramatic context only when we understand what is being said. The New Critics' text is an object rather than the subject of human concern, address, and witness. Hence how and why characters feel called upon to give voice, and the role that those specific circumstances have in the meaning of what is said, have no role in the work of understanding and responding to the work of art at hand. In Cavell's understanding, to forego a character's words is to forgo what has been said, and there can be no separation of character and word. The question is as pertinent now as it was in 1966.

I shall show that very similar issues are at stake in contemporary criticism. My initial point of inquiry will be criticism of Shakespeare's work. Feminist criticism of Shakespeare has historically done much in making Shakespeare's work available to just response.[3] It would be impossible in a sentence to do justice to the wealth of feminist work on Shakespeare, but the work of Marianne Novy, Carol Neely, Janet Adelman, Jean Howard, Coppelia Kahn, Mary Beth Rose, Naomi Scheman, Ann Pasternak Slater, and Dympna Callaghan should surely be noted. The gains in understanding the imbrications of gender and genre, of masculinity in tragedy, of the recovery of a woman's voice that allows the response to skepticism available in the romances, of the constitutive silences of some of the women characters in Shakespeare's plays, have meant that Shakespeare can no longer be read in a gender-blind way, and the critical gains are palpable and indispensable. But perhaps feminist criticism has something to learn from the work of Cavell, who provides an astonishing exploration of Ludwig Wittgenstein's and J. L. Austin's vision of language.

At first glance, the question Cavell poses, a question I have said is as relevant to current critical orthodoxies as to the orthodoxies at the time of writing the Lear essay, is apt to appear naive, to invite scorn,

perhaps even ridicule. Surely Cavell, and now Beckwith in citing him admiringly, is muddling up fiction and reality. Those women—Viola, say, or Hermione, who utter things such as "She never told her love," or "My life stands in the level of your dreams"—do not exist. They are "airy nothings." This response covers a range of understandings of the relation between fiction and reality, from L. C. Knights, who wrote a famous essay called "How Many Children had Lady Macbeth?" to the broad umbrella of poststructuralism that has extended its skeptical understanding of language from fiction to the entirety of language.[4]

When we fail in the kinds of attention Cavell is asking of us, we lose *what the characters are saying*, and as a result, our own capacities for acknowledging them. We lose how fiction might actually operate in our own lives, how I might live haunted by Hermione not simply when I watch the play, but when I read it, when I teach it, and this perennially, consistently over years, over, perhaps, a lifetime. So, to put it simply, not to care about what characters say when they say it is to lose *what they say* and also to lose the self-understanding involved in my acknowledgment of them.

That is a very great deal to lose.

The task of making a work available to just response, as Cavell puts it, simply cannot get off the ground when the guiding assumptions with which this response works fail to grant the basic fact that the characters who speak words are *in* those words, that their words express them, not something hidden behind those words. When we read or watch plays, we are called upon to respond to those words.[5]

II

Cavell's understanding of the role of criteria in language and judgment helps us to see that there need be no "problem" of fiction, for if we follow his idea that criteria show us what something is, but not that it is, that they are criteria of identity and not of existence, then we might see that the language of fiction and the language of the real world are the same. The language itself is not fictive. If we think further about criteria and the kind of work we can do with them, then the problem of the existence or otherwise of the topic under investigation (the "problem" of fiction) becomes irrelevant.[6]

Take the following example. I want to show my daughter what sadness is. I take a page and draw a smiley face with a twenty-past-eight mouth. Or I make such a mouth myself and gesture toward my eyes as if there were tears about to spill from them. (There are actors who can cry on

cue). Or I show her a famous etching by Dürer. I point to that woman sitting over there who is crying. I take her to a play, and when Leontes cries on seeing Hermione's statue, I say, look, he is overcome with sadness. (Or is it joy, there being forms of sadness adjacent to joy?) Of course my daughter's understanding of sadness will grow in the weave of her life with sadness. But the point of putting it this way is to show that it is sadness at issue in all the cases I've mentioned. The concept of sadness is, as Cavell puts it, retained, whether what is at issue is a drawing, a man playing sadness, a woman crying (*CR* 45).[7] The criteria for sadness are operable in each case. The criteria for sadness are disappointing in that they will not give us sadness, will not take us all the way to sadness itself.[8] They cannot show whether sadness exists, only what it looks like. Criteria do not concern something's *being* so, but rather its being *so* (*CR* 45). David Schalkwyk puts it the following way: "The fact that an actor *can* represent sorrow is usually taken to mean that we can never be certain whether sorrow is actually being *expressed*." The point, however, and this is where criteria play a role, is that we speak of sorrow in *both* cases: in the expression of real sorrow, and also regarding "mere representation of sorrow."[9] He goes on to suggest that the usability of the context of sorrow is independent of anything's being actually the case in the world. "What is fear," says Wittgenstein. "What does 'being afraid' mean? If I wanted to explain it at a *single* shewing—I would *act* fear."[10]

Cavell's understanding of the use of criteria asks us to think of criteria as claims and calls, and reminds us that reference depends on expression.[11] He recalls us to our inescapable responsibility in deploying them. So he will say that criteria are disappointing not merely because they can only tell us what something is like, not whether or not it exists; they are also disappointing because we have to use them if they are to do the work they do (*CR* 83). The responsibility we have for the way we use criteria makes us exposed in our judgments.

III

In another context I have suggested that theater is a form of ordinary language philosophy.[12] It requires us to ask: why does Edgar, Goneril, or Coriolanus say just this just now, in response to what, and inviting what response? On what do they stake their authority for saying what they say? Is that authority contested, interrupted, countermanded, exposed as fraudulent, ill-founded? Is it assumed, insisted upon, arrogated, risked? In pursuing these questions, we will not only be doing what good criticism requires—making the work available to just response—but also imagining

precisely, concretely, the simple, difficult fact that words are said and meant by particular people in particular situations. Theater can thus aid our fight against the consequential flight from particularity, from the world-denying and self-forgetful elimination of the contexts in which words have a use. And if theater is a form of ordinary language philosophy, then actors are its chief practitioners. They must decide, through each line of dialogue: what am I doing with my words? They must seek to make clear what the force of those words is on this particular occasion and so make sense of those words for us. The influential director Max Stafford-Clark sits with his actors in rehearsal and goes through every line of dialogue, asking his actors to apply a transitive verb from a huge list that he supplies. Stafford-Clark says the worst actor in the world can inform, but if you are trying to *do* something to the other actor, you provoke a natural response. "Actioning" allows the actor to be tremendously precise in her acting choices: I flatter you, I insult you, I scorn you, I chastise you, I attempt to stall you, I evade your implication, I test you out, I needle you.[13]

In his dry, mischievous, and profound book, *How To Do Things With Words*, Austin leads us to understand that we will fail to grasp what someone means by their words unless we understand what it is they are doing with those words.[14] You might know what the words mean when I say "I do admire your total oblivion to the protocols of email," but you may well be puzzled as to whether I have flattered or rebuked you. You will know what words I have spoken, but you may not have understood what I did in speaking them. Wittgenstein says that if we talk outside language games, we will be talking under the illusion of meaning, without meaning anything. He talks of language idling or going on holiday.[15] On those occasions where language is on holiday, when we speak outside of language games, we are speaking outside of the natural forms of life that give those expressions the force they have (*CR* 206–7). Thus, if we fail to attend to what a particular person/character is saying on the occasion of her saying it, we will fail to understand not what her words mean, but what *she* means in saying them. This is why Cavell thinks of ordinary language philosophy as a recovery of voice and why he takes his question, as do I, to be consequential.

IV

In her book *Shakespeare Without Women*, Callaghan claims that the fact that women characters are played by boy actors on Shakespeare's stage exposes "the problem of representation *in general*" (my italics).[16]

Callaghan here assumes that Shakespeare's theater is founded on an absence—the absence of women—and such an absence is an exacerbation of a more general problem in representation as such: that it will exclude. But it is unclear why women are any less present than kings or servants or any of the other dramatis personae portrayed on stage.[17] Her fixation on representation leads to an understanding of fiction as paradox (hence an antitheatricalism) that coincides with this anxiety about the lack of a feminine presence on the stage.

Callaghan suggests that she might as well have talked about the playwrights Middleton, Jonson, or Marlowe, but that her focus is on Shakespeare, whose exclusion of women by means of boy actors jars with "the full and vivid characters who populate his plays" (*SW* 7). The interchangeability of Shakespeare with Middleton and Jonson here should give us pause, for the playwrights' depictions of women are consequentially different from each other. These are not differences that have any chance of emerging when all exemplify a *general* point about the workings of language. I am reminded here of Wittgenstein's comments on the "craving for generality" in *The Blue Book*.[18] Callaghan's *starting* point is "a certain philosophical skepticism about the mechanisms of dramatic representation as well as a specifically political skepticism about the benefits of representation, understood as cultural visibility, for marginalized groups" (*SW* 7). The problem of representation in general, she suggests, is that it represents what is not there. Further, she claims, this problem is exacerbated when considered in specific relation to the representation of femininity and racial difference.[19] Hence the observation that "there were no women on Shakespeare's stage," or the problem of masculine impersonation of women in Shakespeare, is used "to focus on wider problems in feminism about what it means to secure cultural and political representation in patriarchy for women and other oppressed groups" (*SW* 7).

Callaghan goes on to say that one of her objectives is to challenge the fetishistic insistence on presence in Shakespeare, evident in the notion that there *mus*t be women on Shakespeare's stage "at least in every sense that counts, because there are representations of women on Shakespeare's stage" (*SW* 9). "Shakespeare's plays," she suggests, "both demonstrate and complicate the paradox whereby theatrical representation depends for its functioning . . . on the absence of the things it represents" (*SW* 9). Thus, even when Callaghan questions the logic of representation, she is still bound up in a picture of language that makes it central. I am "picking on" Callaghan's argument here because it so precisely displays the logic and compulsion of these worries, legitimate and serious worries, that seem to emerge of necessity once a certain picture of the workings

of language and the representation of women is in place. Callaghan's worries are hardly hers alone, and she articulates with skill and force a problem at the heart of certain understandings of language that theater has sometimes tended to crystallize especially. The duality of actor and role might, under a certain conception, show us that "theatricality" is the grammatical form of the problem of representation.[20]

What are the assumptions that drive Callaghan's logic? She assumes a) that the role of language is to represent; b) that there are failures of representation (figured as exclusion) intrinsic to language, but that the crisis of representation is doubled by the historical condition of the actual absence of female actors; hence c) that the question of representation is bound up with fiction as a *problem*—because it is representing what is not really there. In this analysis, historical conditions are used to highlight a more generalized picture of language that also renders the role of dramatic fiction paradoxical and puzzling. The idea that fiction might be a hugely rich and exciting resource of self-understanding, and an indispensable resource for examining the concepts we need to live our lives fully and well is not thinkable within these horizons. Fiction becomes paradoxical precisely here because it purports to create "real" emotions about what does not actually exist. Here her poststructuralist picture of language is completely in line with the picture of fiction drawn from analytic philosophy, and particularly that developed by Kendall Walton, whom she cites.[21]

Given this picture of language and world, Callaghan wants to find a way of bringing women into the picture. The feminist logic from the first premise is indisputable. If women are excluded as the means and medium of representation, then of course we need to highlight the consequences of their absence, and in our own time take up questions of women's role in the theater as actors, directors, producers of performance. But why would we need to come up with a whole theory of representation in order to do that? Callaghan's exclusive focus on the idea of language as representation and reference blinds us to all the other things that language actually does on and off stage, to language as address, act, and expression, and to the ways in which women might be *implicated* in all manner of speech acts, other than by means of representation. In fact, since the radical implications of Austin's understanding of language are that we will not understand what words mean unless we understand what they do, then it is vital that we begin to pay attention to what we are doing in, by, and with our words.

There is a fundamental difference between the way "reality" is pictured in Callaghan's understanding of language and the vision of language in ordinary language philosophy. When representation is the chief focus of

language and adequation to reality is seen solely in terms of reference, then other (moral and ethical) ways of thinking about reality drop out. Then we will ignore what Cora Diamond calls the "difficulty of reality" as a moral question, and the difficult task of seeing, say, the reality of another person.[22] In the vision of language of ordinary language philosophy, we don't lose contact with reality, and so with ourselves and to others, when we represent something that is "not there." Rather, we lose contact with reality when we lose our grip on *sense* because language and reality are internally connected.[23] When we can't make sense or cannot understand the sense others are making, can't see the point of what they are saying, we lose our grip on our own reality and the reality of others.[24] The focus here is thus not on presence and absence, inclusion and exclusion, but rather on intelligibility.

Peter Winch has expressed this idea when he says, "Reality is not what gives language sense. What is real and what is unreal shows itself *in* the sense that language has."[25] That is when we become confused and can't see our way about and need to command a clear view of things. Becoming real, seeing what is real (which may have all along been right in front of us), appreciating the reality of others in our lives is a moral and ethical task. Our everyday language reflects precisely this understanding of reality, its fragility and evanescence, but also the relief that comes from clarity and insight, the way we come into focus for each other when we see the point of our words on any particular occasion. It is the sense of reality evoked in such phrases as "I barely existed for him," or, "When I actually met with her I realized that my version of her was fundamentally distorted by my sense of resentment and envy, and I was able to appreciate different things about her," that give the sense of the difficulty of reality for us that emerges in quite everyday ways in our relations with each other. The ways in which reality is caught up in our speech acts is thus never general, never secured by anything outside of our relations with each other. Niklas Forsberg puts the point very well when he says, "If words are not merely the names for things—though they can be that too—but, more importantly, interconnected with how a particular life is led, then, the matter of 'meaning it' means listening to the sense of our words and to one's other. To lead by listening is to know and understand how a word and the speaking person belong to a particular context of use or form of life."[26]

Different pictures of language will entail entirely different understandings of what is real and what is not. Ordinary language philosophy calls our attention to how women are implicated in a whole range of speech acts, *other than by being represented*.[27] Callaghan, we might say, concentrates on "a narrowly circumscribed area" of language, namely representation,

and mistakes it for the whole of language.[28] She therefore drastically limits, perhaps even negates, the resources of fiction for feminist analysis. Feminist criticism needs to explore questions and problems as they arise. If it resists the temptation to generality, it might then free itself up to do real conceptual work, to explore the concepts we need and use when and as we use them, rather than in advance and for all eventualities.

If fiction turns out to be a "problem" and a paradox for Callaghan, it is at the center of ordinary language philosophy, for it turns out that there is, as Jay Bernstein has put it, "an intimacy . . . at times amounting to a virtual identity" between the *logic* of aesthetic claiming and the claims we make when we speak at all.[29]

VI

I now go on to discuss Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* and Éric Rohmer's 1922 film *Conte d'hiver*. These works of art offer us astonishing explorations of what it means to discover the reality of another, and so exemplify the ways in which the question of reality and intelligibility can emerge with moral force and lucidity. Hence these works of art illuminate the way in which the ethical and the aesthetic are not add-ons or remainders but at the heart of the kind of conceptual work fiction can do. Leontes shockingly and astonishingly discovers that Hermione is "warm." Her liveness to him is simultaneous with his shame and with his tears of remorse. Félicie's discovery of the way she wants to live her own life, and thereby become real to herself, rather than exercising her alienated will, is articulable to others by virtue of her beautiful understanding of Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*. Though Félicie has come to understand what she needs and how she wants to live her life, it is the experience of watching *The Winter's Tale* that helps her lay bare the faithful logic of her vision. Literature and drama offer us a way to explore not examples of a more generalized picture, but invitations to see with enormous precision and tact what gaining clarity in our own lives about ourselves and others might come to. Such work, in my view, will open us to the central role of fiction and aesthetics in our lives, and will vastly expand the possibilities of plays and works of art for thinking through the fundamental ways in which we acknowledge each other.

Insofar as feminist criticism is invested in the transformation of hearts and minds by virtue of seeing anew, such aesthetic work must be at the heart of the conversions and changes feminism seeks. My selection of texts for investigation here thus shows the importance of acknowledgement for feminist criticism.[30] In shifting the focus of feminism from

representation to recognition and acknowledgement, I do not intend to suggest that no important work has been done by feminist scholars on this topic. On the contrary, works by Judith Butler and Lois McKay and others have extensively studied this topic. However, it is probably fair to say that feminist scholarship has often emphasized the negative aspects of recognition, as a form of false acknowledgment, ideology, or misrecognition.[31]

The following analyses of Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* and Rohmer's *Conte d'hiver* are intended to show that the way reality comes in and out of the picture is connected with the coming to clarity of particular characters in those works. These works show what becoming real for each other comes to, and how easy it is to lose sight of this. What becomes necessary for a fuller realization of the others in our lives is not new information or facts about them, but rather the *realization* of the reality of other people. This is a task that needs to be endlessly repeated. What is at stake here is the internal relation of language and reality. It is not that one grounds the other. I am reminded of Iris Murdoch's words: "Love is the extremely difficult realization that something other than oneself is real."[32]

The Winter's Tale begins in Sicilia with Leontes' precipitous attack of jealousy towards his friend Polixenes and his wife Hermione, who is heavily pregnant with the girl who will later be called Perdita. Leontes withdraws himself from their society and then from a bitter distance interprets their talking and gestures as the signs of adultery. His sudden fantasy (for it is clear that it is so regarded in the play) leads him to doubt the paternity of his other child, Mamillius, and it leads him to desire the death of his friend and a trial in which his wife will be accused of adultery, treason, and conspiracy, crimes punishable by death. He banishes his newly born daughter, whom he disowns as a bastard. At the great trial scene, the oracle pronounces Hermione innocent, but Leontes' denial of the truth of the oracle is followed immediately by the news of the death of Mamillius and the reported news of the death of Hermione, who has fallen down in a faint. Sixteen years later, the lost daughter has found the son of Polixenes in Bohemia, and they all convene again in Sicilia where, after the happy news of the multiple reunions, the play's main protagonists unite to visit Paulina's gallery to view an extraordinary statue of Hermione. The scene is now set for an extraordinary pièce de théâtre as we watch Leontes in front of the statue, and as the "statue" who is really Hermione standing still as stone, appears to come to life.

In Hermione's lucid remonstrance to Leontes during the trial scene—"My life stands in the level of your dreams"—she gives us to understand that there is nothing she can say to Leontes:

> Since what I am about to say be but that
> Which contradicts my accusation, and
> The testimony on my part no other
> But what comes from myself, it shall scarce boot me
> To say "Not guilty." Mine integrity
> Being counted falsehood shall, as I express it,
> Be so received. (3.2.20–26)

Leontes has denied the very grounds of Hermione's intelligibility, and though she can mouth words, she cannot so much as tell him anything. It is at the point when Leontes insists that she knew of Camillo's departure and fantasizes "what she has underta'en to do in's absence," that she says, "Sir / You speak a language that I understand not / My life stands in the level of your dreams" (1.2.78–81).

The famous statue scene, then, is one in which Leontes comes to perceive the reality of Hermione, and if he wakes up from his nightmare, it is in the full ineradicable face of what he has done. Raimond Gaita has suggested that remorse is "recognition of the reality of another through the shock of wronging her, just as grief is a recognition of another through the shock of losing her."[33] Leontes' remorse shows the lucidity of his suffering. It shows that the only true remembrance of Hermione's will, mortifyingly, involve, a remembrance, blasting and perpetual, of his own folly in harming her: "Whilst I remember / Her and her virtues, I cannot forget / My blemishes in them, and so still think of / The wrong I did myself, which was so much / That heirless it hath left my kingdom, and / Destroyed the sweet'st companion that e'er man? Bred his hopes out of" (5.1.7–12). So when he sees the statue, it is only by fully acknowledging the absolute lucidity of Leontes' remorse that we can credit the final resurrection of his hopes and loves. He lives now fully unprotected by his own fantasies and denials, quite naked before his own terrible actions. The statue gives him a view of Hermione, but it is in the felt presence conjured by her likeness, in the sheer promise and gratuity of her return, in the self-forgetful yearning and love conjured into being by the statue, that he can also bear the thought of being seen by her, and so bear his shame. His remorse, as I have been arguing, has awakened him to the reality of Hermione. In being able to see her, he must be able to bear being seen by her, such that both can be brought to new life through this new presencing. His shame and his repentance are then the very substance of the grace he is in the process of receiving, and there can be no separation between the two movements.

Leontes' attitude towards Hermione is bound up with a broader, culturally sanctioned discrediting of women's voices ("women that will say

anything"), but the statue scene is a deliberate reprise of Ovid's story of Pygmalion and Galatea from the *Metamorphoses*. Only here Hermione is precisely not Leontes' creation. Indeed it is only by virtue of acknowledging her, and so himself in his relation to her, that she will respond with warmth to him. She might at any point not risk a return to life. She might stand still as stone and let him pass by. Only the pull of life and the demands of the actor's live body mitigate against this.

All talk of Hermione as an effect of femininity or of Shakespeare without women fails to do justice to this moment. The play has outrageously, audaciously, staked everything on the response to Hermione's liveness. What I am suggesting is that we need a criticism capable of response, not one that divests itself of all possibility of such response before it can even get going.

And here it is Camillo's and Polixenes' anxious responses that seem not adequate to the moment. For it is not how Hermione has survived that is important but *that* she has. Her recovery depends on the renunciation of epistemology as our mode of access to others.[34] For the insistence on knowing others as the very basis of our access to them, as Cavell and Shakespeare know, will make the others in our lives disappear, petrify them, or turn them into nothings. It will cloud the basis of our relations to each other in response and acknowledgment, even as it compensates for the sometimes intolerable responsibilities for the maintenance of our relations with each other when they rest on nothing more secure than such responses.

So the fictions within *The Winter's Tale* are not to be hooted at like an old wife's tale; life is, in any case, far stranger than fiction, as Mark Twain noted. The fictions to be disdained are the theatricalizing modes into which we might be led when we fail to count each other's words. It is this vital region of acknowledgment that feminist criticism needs to recover by remembering what we count, account for, and recount in our dealings with each other, in the convening of our criteria that is the work of fiction.

VII

I want finally to explore "just response" and questions of realization further by looking at Rohmer's beautiful version of Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale, Conte d'hiver*.[35] There is so much to be said about this film and its relation to Shakespeare's play, but here I want to show how the film's response to *The Winter's Tale* and the response of its central protagonist, Félicie, to a performance of the entire last scene of *The*

Winter's Tale helps us flesh out further the hard, particular work of making a work available to just response. In *Conte d'hiver*, Félicie learns to have faith in her "intimate convictions," and all the transformations of this delicate, astonishing film flow from this faith. (Feminism, we might recall, begins when women begin to describe their experience and come to find that such a description requires change of themselves and change of the world.)

The film starts not in winter but in summer, as the Breton sea laps gently at the bodies of the two lovers, Charles and Félicie. We watch them play and cook together. We see the warm sensuality of summer and can almost feel the lap of the water as the tide wets their recumbent, intertwined, and sleepy bodies. Landlocked Bohemia has a coastline in Shakespeare's play: it is the place where a man dies pursued by a bear and where a little girl is lost and found. Bohemia lies by the sea here. There's no festival, no sheep-shearing, but the opening sequences do the work of the pastoral, which is to explore the naturalness of our tastes and our complex alienation from that nature. We see Félicie take photographs of Charles; we see them make love. It is a short, delightful sequence that is juxtaposed with the wintry, gray, and restless traffic of the next scenes in which Félicie is almost constantly on the move, on a bus, on a train, walking through the streets, always between places. The sequence—call it Rohmer's "Bohemia by the sea"—makes it clear why Félicie will later find that no subsequent love can match the beautiful obviousness, the absolute fitness, of Charles and Félicie. But Félicie, in a silly but catastrophically consequential slip of the tongue, provides him with an address in the wrong town as they part from each other. "That won't be hard to find," says Charles, but it turns out that Félicie will become "the Girl no one can find," the lost girl, Perdita, as lost to herself as she is to Charles. The work of the film will be to explore the miraculous possibilities of recovery.

We see Félicie five years later. She has a daughter now, and we see photographs of Charles in Elise's bedroom. He is her father. She is involved with two men, Maxence and Loic, and she is partially attracted to each of them. Both are in love with her and each seeks a decision from her as to their future with her. She is completely straightforward with each of these men, both of whom know that she loves Charles, and they understand that she sees no way of being able to contact him. But that does not stop her behavior from frustrating and disappointing both men. "Why not marry him?" says her mother of Loic. "You won't find a better man." We see Félicie in several attempts to make a decision. She decides to go to Nevers with Maxence and her daughter Elise, and when she tells Loic that she is going to live with Maxence, she explains that

she's reached a decision. "Making a decision is never easy," she suggests, "There are pros and cons. Then you decide because you must." Later, she uses the same vocabulary when she explains to Loic why she is now leaving Nevers: "Ok, I chose. First I saw the pluses, then the minuses." "I *want* to love you," she says to Maxence. She cannot say that she does, and we know that this project of the will stands little chance of working. Rohmer is brilliant at pointing us toward the logic of will and decision that drives Félicie here. Poised between two equally good but different options, the choice between them seems arbitrary. Yet it is just here that the film begins to beautifully articulate the logic of choice and vision.

My vocabulary here is drawn from Murdoch, who criticized philosophy's narrow and truncated picture of the moral person as the person who chooses, identified with his or her will. "One might say that morality is assimilated to a visit to a shop" (*SG* 8). In this picture, morality rests "at the point of action" (*SG* 15). By means of her famous example of M, the mother-in-law, and D, her daughter-in-law, Murdoch begins to ask us to think in terms of vision rather than choice. M, the mother-in-law in Murdoch's example, thinks of her daughter-in-law, D, as "pert and familiar," "tiresomely juvenile," and "vulgar," but because she is a reflective person, and because she knows she has a future with her daughter-in-law, and because, perhaps, her son loves this woman, she learns to change the way she sees her. She begins to see her differently and, as Murdoch puts it, to change "one set of normative epithets for another." Now she sees her daughter-in-law as "simple," "spontaneous," "gay," and "spontaneously youthful." Murdoch says she sees her "justly or lovingly" and thus exemplifies the central concept of morality: "'the individual' thought of as knowable by love" (*SG* 29). The example is instructive because there is no change in the daughter-in-law. She has not altered her circumstances or changed in personality; she has not started treating her mother-in-law differently, with anger or indifference. But the mother-in-law disciplines herself to attend to her daughter-in-law in a different way, and the concept of "attention" begins to assume a large role in Murdoch's depiction of moral vision. The change is a change of vision and also a change of vocabulary. She describes her daughter-in-law differently, and thus there is an act of imagination involved in her picture of her daughter-in-law. This example of Murdoch, brief as it is, allows us to see the role of vision rather than choice in our ethical vocabulary and lives. Murdoch also says that when M is both just and loving, she comes to see D "as she really is." It is decidedly not a question of seeing the good and positive sides of D, but of seeing her as she really is.

It is no wonder that Félicie cannot decide with this picture of the men before her. When she comes to see what she wants with her whole heart

to do and how she wants to live, it is not a question of decision, and here we come to the relation between Félicie's "visions," her "intimate convictions," and the question of "just response."

What shifts Felicie's chronic indecision between the two men is an experience she has in Nevers Cathedral, an experience that she only retrospectively comes to articulate after the performance of *The Winter's Tale* she sees with Loic. Elise is restless in the little apartment above the beauty salon and Félicie takes her outside in the square. Elise, quite insistently, then pulls her mother towards the cathedral in which St. Bernadette's relics are housed because she wants to see the baby Jesus. The camera pans over the crèche where the lamb seems to watch over him. We now see Félicie sitting very still and we watch her face as it seems to register some profound change. We might say that the camera deliciously tracks Félicie's face as new aspects of her situation appear to come into view. The camera stays on her face for about thirty seconds. We see a subtle sense of peace and stillness, of openness, then relief, a flicker of determination, above all what looks like clarity. It is, of course, a kind of rapture, and there is a great deal more to be said about art's competition with religion in both winters' tales. We know that something is occurring to her, something she finds important, and it is immediately afterward that Félicie confronts Maxence and tells him that she does not love him enough to live with him.

What releases for us the pressing logic, the compelling clarity of Félicie's vision is her response—her just response, I want to say—to a performance of *The Winter's Tale* she attends with Loic. The camera cuts from the performance of *The Winter's Tale*, which we see almost in its entirety, to the faces of Loic and Félicie in the audience. The camera's viewpoint from which we see the scene is fixed, but it closes in on different actor's faces—on Hermione, on Perdita as she kneels, as if we see what Félicie sees. Félicie is enraptured. She is struck, visibly moved by the production, and we can see the tears pour down her cheeks. Once again we are able to watch Félicie's face in response. (We see Loic's face too because he is sitting next to her, but it is Félicie's face that draws us). As we see her and Loic walk toward his car after that performance, we see that mood of deep satisfaction and of wonder at seeing something so precisely articulated that accompanies such experiences. I love Rohmer's attention to this experience. It seems to require silence and contemplation, for we have been struck, and we seek to make sense of our responses. But we feel compelled to share, and to want of others that they see what we see, even at the cost of our very relationship with them. Despite the fact that Loic is the Catholic, he rejects as superstitious and fantastic the play's transformations. But we will have noticed

that the music played on the wooden flute that "awakes" Hermione in the play is also the music that is played when Félicie has her vision in the cathedral at Nevers. Now Félicie has been a silent partner at the philosophical discussions about love and poetry that have taken place at Loic's house. But she is now in a position to explain the movement of the last scene to Loic.[36] And as she does so, she tells him that she had a vision in Nevers Cathedral. What did you see, he asks? I saw my thoughts, she says. "I had tried to choose," she says, "but I saw there was no choice." She sees now in such a clear way that it is obvious how she must live. She will henceforth live her love in the hope and possibility of Charles's return. She will not henceforth do things that might prevent him from finding her. To do so is, she now understands, to make herself available for a "joy so great I would gladly give my life for it," even in the strong unlikelihood of a reunion. (Félicie is willing to stake her life on this hope. She is not in the business of prediction or probability but in the virtue of hope). Loic finds a place within the philosophical tradition for Félicie's experience: Pascal's wager, Plato's forms of recollection. But Rohmer understands Félicie's response to *The Winter's Tale* as a philosophical one. Were we to take seriously the exemplary work of literature, film, and criticism, we would vastly expand the impoverished philosophical diet that, as Austin was at pains to point out, focuses on a massively reduced and repetitive set of examples. It is for this reason that Rohmer's claim that Félicie is philosophizing here is a radical one, one that privileges vision over choice.

In Shakespeare's play it is Leontes who must, over a long sixteen-year period, learn what it is to see Hermione clearly, as she is. In Rohmer's film, Félicie achieves the beautiful vision of a fresh understanding of herself. I don't have time to explore the delicacy with which the encounter between Charles and Félicie is rendered. They meet on a bus, and it is Elise who is the catalyst of their encounter. It is as if the "still life" of Charles in the photographs has assumed flesh as the moment, captured in Kodak, is freed to move, to have a future, released from its isolated instant in time. Ask her who you are, says Félicie, and Elise calls him Papa.

Rohmer's film, like Shakespeare's play, allows us to see how hard such vision is to attain. Félicie calls her visions "intimate convictions," and Shakespeare's play helps Félicie give voice to those convictions. Just response—seeing things as they are—how hard this is, in different ways, for Leontes, as for Félicie.

Now, the reader might well be asking, what is feminist about all this? I suspect my answers to this question risk being disappointing. I happen to see both Shakespeare's play and Rohmer's film as deeply feminist works. But they are so by virtue of the fact that they have paid loving attention

to Hermione and to Félicie *and* also to why it might be extraordinarily hard to see them aright (in Félicie's case to see herself in a clear light, to respond justly to her own experience). Just response might sometimes involve a radical transformation in self-understanding, on the part of characters and readers. It might equally involve a fundamental critique of inherited practices and patterns, of received opinions, for it is the task of each of us to use a vocabulary that precedes us, to make it our own, and it is by no means obvious what is mine and what is merely conformist. Feminism begins, after all, in the articulation of new forms of experience, and these articulations take the form of discoveries and revelations about both self and world. These are the currencies of conversion in which these works trade. The role of, say, film or theater *in our lives,* depends on thinking about and through the hard particularities of our individual responses, and then risking them in our own words. There is in this sense no such thing as "general" acknowledgement. The hard particularity of that work—for Leontes, for Félicie, but for us, too, as we seek to articulate our responses in criticism—must work soul by soul.

I have proceeded in this essay by giving examples, rather than by explanations or definitions. Wittgenstein asks us to imagine different examples over a thousand times in his works.[37] Examples encourage us to think about how we use words, to consider the use and application of our words. They return us to particular contexts in which words have a use. It is from these applications and actual use that we might begin to return to the rough ground of feminist practice, making women's experience intelligible to others and to ourselves, expanding the elasticity and the point of the concepts we might at any point need. To move away from a myopic focus on representation and misrepresentation is to open ourselves up, to acknowledge and articulate the role of fiction in our lives as event, expression, and act, to let it read us, as much as we read it. In the renewed effort to describe and justly respond to the fiction in our lives, we might also restore some of the ancient pleasures of the text for feminism.

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NOTES

My understanding of ordinary language philosophy is deeply influenced by Nancy Bauer, Alice Crary, Sandra Laugier, Toril Moi, and Linda Zerilli, even where they are not directly cited. I thank them for their comments. Conversations with Keren Gorodeisky have also greatly aided the development of perspectives here. In addition I wish to thank Corina Starn, Christine Hamm, and Jeanne-Marie Roux, whose comments in Cambridge, MA, and Paris were so helpful.

1 All quotations from Shakespeare's plays are taken from *The Norton Shakespeare*, gen. ed. Stephen Greenblatt (New York: Norton, 1997).

2 Stanley Cavell, "The Avoidance of Love: A Reading of *King Lear*," in *Must We Mean What We Say?* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1969), 269.

3 For the idea of criticism and just response, see Cavell, "The Availability of Wittgenstein's Later Philosophy," in *Must We Mean What We Say?* 46: "Criticism is always an affront, and its only justification lies in its usefulness, in making its object available to just response."

4 Reprinted in *"Hamlet" and Other Shakespearean Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1979). For some thoughts on this, see Michael D. Bristol, "How Many Children Did She Have?" in *Philosophical Shakespeares*, ed. John J. Joughin (New York: Routledge, 2000), 18–33. For recent considerations of character, see the essays collected in *Shakespeare and Character: Theory, History, Performance, and Theatrical Persons*, ed. Paul Yachnin and Jessica Slights (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

5 Cavell, *The Claim of Reason: Wittgenstein, Skepticism, Morality, and Tragedy* (1979; Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1999), 342 (hereafter cited as *CR*). Cavell says he understands Ludwig Wittgenstein's teachings to be something like this: "My references to my pain are exactly my expressions of pain itself; and my words refer to my pain just because, or to the extent, that they are (modified) expressions of it. . . . Then what are my references to another's pain? They are my (more or less) modified responses to it, or to his having had it, or to his anticipations of it; they are responses to another's expressions of (or inability to express) his or her pain."

6 See John Gibson, *Fiction and the Weave of Life* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2007), 7, 9, 34–35.

7 Even if sadness is being feigned, it is sadness feigned, and thus the concept of sadness is retained whether you are really sad or only pretending to be so.

8 On our disappointment with criteria for not taking us all the way to the thing itself, see *CR* 79 and 81.

9 David Schalkwyck, *Literature and the Touch of the Real* (Newark: Univ. of Delaware Press, 2004), 145. I am indebted to Schalkwyck's work for getting me to see the criterial work that fiction can do. I build on his examples here and take this to be a very promising perspective. See also Gibson, *Fiction and the Weave of Life*, 109ff.

10 Wittgenstein, "Philosophy of Psychology: A Fragment," *Philosophical Investigations*, rev. 4th ed., ed. P. M. S. Hacker and Joachim Schulte, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1978), ix and Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 197. Wittgenstein often suggests that "the contexts of a sentence are best expressed in a play. Therefore the best example for a sentence with a particular meaning is a quotation from a play." Wittgenstein, *Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology*, ed. Heikki Nymen and G. H. von Wright (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1996), Remark 1:38. For further Wittgensteinian examples, see Beth Savickey, "Wittgenstein's Use of Examples," in *The Oxford Handbook of Wittgenstein*, ed. Oskari Kuusela and Marie McGinn (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2011), 677, 25n.

11 Cavell writes, "The dependence of reference upon expression in naming our states of consciousness is, I believe, the specific moral of Wittgenstein's inventions containing the so-called private language argument" (*CR* 343).

12 Sarah Beckwith, "William Shakespeare and Stanley Cavell: Acknowledging, Confessing, and Tragedy," in *Stanley Cavell and Literary Studies: Consequences of Skepticism*, ed. Richard Eldridge and Bernard Rhie (New York: Continuum Books, 2011), 124.

13 See Max Stafford-Clark, *Taking Stock: The Theatre of Max Stafford-Clark* (London: Nick Hern Books, 2007), and also Marina Caldarone and Maggie Lloyd-Williams, *Actions: The Actors' Thesaurus* (New York: Drama Publishers, 2004).

14 J. L. Austin, *How To Do Things With Words*, 2nd ed., ed. J. O. Urmson and Marina Sbisá (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1975).

15 For example, see Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, Remark 1:38, "For philosophical problems arise when language *goes on holiday*," and Remark 1:133, "The confusions which occupy us arise when language is, as it were, idling, not when it is doing work." I say, "I know that that is a sheep." This does not have a meaning independently of its usage. Here its meaning is indeterminate until we provide a context of use. I might say, for example, while we were taking a walk, "Dear one, I know that that is a sheep. You're not wearing your glasses today. That's why that thing you are squinting at looks like a lump of cotton wool to you." Or, a child might exclaim, "I know that that is a sheep. It is baa-ing. Like the black sheep in the nursery rhyme. Cows don't baa, they moo." We don't know what "I know that that is a sheep" means outside of a context of appropriate use.

16 Dympna Callaghan, *Shakespeare Without Women: Representing Gender and Race on the Renaissance Stage* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 7 (hereafter cited as *SW*).

17 This is a point excellently made by Roberta Barker in *Early Modern Tragedy, Gender and Performances, 1984–2000* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 13: "On the early modern stage . . . kings were not played by kings, moors by moors or country gentlemen by country gentlemen any more than women were played by women." Barker later points out that "the psychological presentation of early modern female characters by contemporary actresses also faces problems that the convention of the boy actress evades. It condemns the actress to identification with *her* culture's ideas about the coherence of feminine identity." Such themes are richly explored in Richard Eyre's film *Stage Beauty*, which stages the copresence of the last male impersonator of women on the stage, Edward Kynaston, and the first actress, though this is as much a film about naturalism in acting as it is about gender performance. Peter Womack's exploration points us in some useful directions in "Being a Woman," in *English Renaissance Drama* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 267: "Being a woman on the Renaissance Stage is something a man does."

18 Wittgenstein, *The Blue and Brown Books* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958), 17. Here Wittgenstein discusses a number of different factors at work in this craving for generality. "The idea," he says, "that in order to get clear about the meaning of a general term one had to find the common element in all its applications has shackled philosophical investigations; for it has not only led to no result, but also made the philosopher dismiss as irrelevant the concrete cases, which alone would have helped him to understand the usage of the general term" (19–20).

19 Callaghan writes, "The problem of representation in general—that it necessarily represents what is not actually there—becomes exacerbated in historically specific relation to femininity and racial difference" (*SW* 7).

20 I owe this formulation to Jay Bernstein at the conference at the New School for Social Research, where one version of this paper was delivered.

21 *SW* 9. Callaghan is here citing Kendall L. Walton's influential book, *Mimesis as Make-Believe: On the Foundations of the Representational Arts* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1990).

22 Cora Diamond's exceptional essay is called "The Difficulty of Reality and the Difficulty of Philosophy," in *Philosophy and Animal Life*, ed. Cary Wolfe (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 2008), 43–90.

23 I have found Camilla Kronquist's work on these issues very illuminating. See especially "Our Struggles With Reality," in *Emotions and Understanding: Wittgensteinian Perspectives*, ed. Ylva Gustafsson, Kronquist, and Michael McEachrane (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 202–20. I am grateful to Salla Peltonen for drawing Kronquist's work to my attention. See also Niklas Forsberg's work on concepts and literature, especially in the work of Iris Murdoch and Diamond, in *Language Lost and Found: On Iris Murdoch and the Limits of Philosophical Discourse* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013).

24 This is usefully explored in Patrick Rogers Horn, *Gadamer and Wittgenstein on the Unity of Language: Reality and Discourse Without Metaphysics* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 124–25,127,

and Rush Rhees's very important chapter, "Understanding What is Said," in *Wittgenstein and the Possibility of Discourse*, ed. D. Z. Phillips (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1998), especially 160 and 163.

25 Peter Winch, "Understanding a Primitive Society," in *Rationality: Key Concepts in the Social Sciences*, ed. Bryan R. Wilson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1970), 82. Kronquist comments on this citation from Winch in "Our Struggles With Reality," 205.

26 Forsberg, *Language Lost and Found*, 85.

27 For a fine recent account, see Avner Baz, *When Words Are Called For: A Defense of Ordinary Language Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 2012), 18, 41, 189, 205.

28 Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, Remark 1:2.

29 Bernstein, "Aesthetics, Modernism, Literature: Cavell's Transformations of Philosophy," in *Stanley Cavell*, ed. Eldridge (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2003), 107.

30 For an excellent account of the role of recognition in literary analysis, see Rita Felski, *Uses of Literature* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), 23–50. Recent feminist criticism has been more concerned with misrecognition than with recognition.

31 For a beautiful essay exploring the practices of recognition (and its failures) in literary criticism, see Nicholas Kompridis, "Recognition and Receptivity: Forms of Normative Response in the Lives of the Animals We Are," *New Literary History* 44, no. 1 (2013): 1–24.

32 Murdoch, "The Sublime and the Good," *Existentialists and Mystics: Writings on Philosophy and Literature*, ed. Peter Conradi (London: Chatto and Windus, 1997), 215. One might add another comment that Murdoch makes in *The Sovereignty of Good*: "The greatest art shows us the world . . . with a clarity which startles and delights us because we are not used to looking at the real world at all." Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good* (1970; New York: Routledge, 2001), 34 (hereafter cited as *SG*).

33 Raimond Gaita, *Good and Evil: An Absolute Conception* (London: Routledge, 2004), 52.

34 I am not claiming here that knowledge is of no importance in our interpersonal relationships, but rather that if knowledge is taken to be the primary basis of our access to one another, we are doomed to tragic results. This is the topic of Part 4 of Cavell's *The Claim of Reason*.

35 Éric Rohmer made a series of films between 1990 and 1998 called *Contes des quatres saisons*. *Conte d'hiver* was made in 1992 and is many ways the capstone of the series. Cavell has written beautifully about Rohmer's film in "On Éric Rohmer's *A Tale of Winter*," reprinted in *Cavell on Film*, ed. William Rothman (New York: State Univ. Press of New York, 2005), 287–94. Cavell's essay was first published in 1999. See also Rothman's reflection on this film in his essay "*Tale of Winter*: Philosophical Thought in the Films of Eric Rohmer," in *The "I" of the Camera: Essays in Film Criticism, History, and Aesthetics*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2004).

36 The fact that Loic utterly fails to get this scene confirms Félicie's sense that she is right not to live with him.

37 Savickey, "Wittgenstein's Use of Examples," 676.