'Make My Image but an Alehouse Sign': The Poetry of Women in Shakespeare's Dramatic Verse Get access >

Alison Findlay

https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199607747.013.0010 Pages 356–374

Published: 01 October 2013

Abstract

Queen Margaret's words 'Make my image but an alehouse sign' in 2 Henry VI (III. ii. 81) offer an appropriate metaphor for the female voice in Shakespeare's texts because they advertise the ways female characters strive to speak out within a discursive environment that silences them as images. The chapter explores how women in Shakespeare's plays negotiate a space to speak within a poetic discourse that repeatedly objectifies them as signs, focusing on Catherine's role in *Henry V* and the blason, and the Jailer's Daughter's self-inscription into a ballad tradition in Two Noble Kinsmen. A second section uses the analytic tools provided by corpus-linguistics to explore the poetic voices of tragic female characters: Lady Macbeth, Cleopatra, and the women of Richard III. The essay concludes by tracing the growth of an independent, poetic female voice in the role of Queen Margaret who offers an ironic commentary on Shakespeare's growing sense of his own identity as national bard.

Keywords: women, blason, ballad, image, metaphor, performance

poetry, Cleopatra, Lady Macbeth, Queen Margaret, bard

Subject: Shakespeare Studies and Criticism, Literature

Series: Oxford Handbooks

Collection: Oxford Handbooks Online

You do not currently have access to this chapter.

Sign in



1 Get help with access

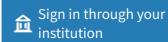
Personal account

Institutional access

- Sign in with email/username & password
- Get email alerts
- Save searches
- Purchase content
- Activate your purchase/trial code
- Add your ORCID iD



Register



Sign in through your institution

Sign in with a library card

Sign in with username/password

Recommend to your librarian

Institutional account management

Sign in as administrator

Purchase

Institutions

Flexible purchasing options

Browse products >

Individuals

Recommend to your librarian