

# Shakespeare's Sister

BY MICHAEL COVENEY

It is a real tonic to find at the ICA the feminist theatre movement mixing their politics with exciting visual statement. For too long, dour agitprop and below par production standards have been the order of the day. Now Monstrous Regiment have recruited Hilary Westlake, of Lumière and Son, to direct their version of a piece borrowed from the Theatre De L'Aquarium, a feminist collective based in Paris.

Gemma Jackson's beautiful set is a large cream room whose perspective recedes to a kitchen area at the back. It is populated by four girls in bridal white and two grandmothers played by men. At one point, the brides' head-dresses are decorated with a tangle of tapes. On these tapes are recorded fragments of women's conversations about their domestic roles, their guilt at not being able to read since starting a family, their panic at running out of ideas for the bread-winner's evening meal.

One of the girls finds the passage in Virginia Woolf's "A Room of My Own" in which the heroine speculates on what would have happened to a sister of Shakespeare born with a comparable literary talent. As the four brides surreptitiously read these pages, they are supervised by the grandmothers maintaining the status quo. The pages are read and then immersed in four bowls and hung out to dry on a washing line.

The point is thus made in an entertainingly surreal manner. Later, the brown linoleum floor is covered with pink rubber kitchen gloves hurled from be-

hind the set. The grandmothers attempt to sweep them away. As Piaf's "Je Ne Regrette Rien" blasts forth on the sound system, the girls collect the gloves and pile them in pairs. A young girl (representing a third generation and a voice of real dissent?) invades the stage from the auditorium and examines the tapes for herself. The stage picture freezes.

The approach is expressionist and fragmentary. The theme is more or less covered by the opening shot, of Gillian Hanna in silhouette listening to brief excerpts of the theme music of Un homme et une femme, Mendelssohn's Wedding March and a crying baby. But the variations are beautifully executed and cover the subject from a wide variety of starting points. A cock is seen in a little basket failing to keep the eggs warm after the hen has flown the coop. Perhaps she is helping to summon the dawn. Miss Hanna blames herself for a failing marriage by delivering her own knock-out punch with a boxing glove before sitting up to wade excitedly through the male mail and find that the one letter addressed to her is some sort of bargain offer catalogue.

Throughout, the grandmothers' break into such songs as "Some Day My Prince Will Come" and "Love and Marriage." I feel the show misses out in this respect, as the male actors, perhaps as a matter of policy, are not technically competent as their opposite numbers. But this is an enjoyable and important production nonetheless, and Miss Hanna is splendidly supported by Chris Bowlen, Josephina Cupido and Mary McCusker.

## British works for Belgium

The 1981 ISCM World Music Days will be held in Belgium from September 26-October 4. The following five works have been chosen for submission to the international jury by the British reading panel: Tim Soster, *Sonata*; George Benjamin, *Horizon*; Peter Knussen, *Symphony No. 3*; James Dillon, *Once upon a time*; and Mike Westbrook, *The Corridor*.

In addition saxophonist Evan Parker has been admitted as an invited solo musician for solo works.

## Arts Council jazz bursaries

The Arts Council has approved 21 jazz bursaries of between £300 and £1,550. These were selected from a total of 102 applications. This year's successful applicants include Dave Chambers who receives an award which will enable him to organise a jazz club.

Another successful applicant is the Bristol-based Frank Evans who has received a bursary for the purpose of organising a jazz club.



Sorrell's self portrait.

## now

sary restriction, the company put up a realistic purse and assembled a splendidly heavy-weight jury, and the artists responded. Of course I quarrel in some respects with the final decisions, but that reflects more upon the variety and quality of the serious contenders than upon any perversity, or myopia on the jury's part. I am afraid I thought Margaret Foreman's winning portrait (to the tune of £4,000) worthy rather than outstanding, though good luck to her with the further commission (worth £3,000) that follows: but I have no such doubts about the runner-up (£500), Julia Sorrell's large and admirably forceful self-portrait, which commands the entrance to the show.

Many other things are indeed very good: Beryl Lewis' quietly edgy small painting of a girl sitting in the studio might too easily be over-looked; John Bellamy's large expressionist portrait of his father, which thoroughly deserves the commendation, could hardly be missed. Maggi Hambling, just about to complete her residency at the National Gallery, shows characteristically strong and powerful. The portrait of that other Rose's good friend, the young art student is nevertheless a strong and confident work; and by Smith's quieter use, tucked into the show, is its difficult...

# MONSTROUS REGIMENT

—THE NEW STANDARD, MONDAY, DECEMBER 8, 1980

## Hell's kitchen . . .

### THEATRE: CHARLES SPENCER

THE combination of a feminist theatre company and a play about the frustration of young wives chained to their husbands, their children and the kitchen sink sounds like a certain recipe for a bitter diatribe against men or else a prolonged wail of self pity.

Refreshingly, however, Monstrous Regiment's fine production of Shakespeare's *Sister* at the ICA deftly sidesteps both these pitfalls.

First performed by the Paris-based Theatre de L'Aquarium and now receiving its British premier, this 70-minute work is alive with a collection of startlingly effective theatrical images.

And it approaches its somewhat hackneyed theme with a wit, invention and passion which occasionally takes on the intensity of nightmare.

The enigmatic title comes from Virginia Woolf who imagined in *A Room of One's Own* what would have happened had Shakespeare had an equally talented sister. Her conclusion was that the sister would have achieved nothing, and the play shows the same pattern repeating itself in the present day.

In a series of beautifully staged and often surreal



Picture: Alistair Muir.

#### BRIDES and prejudice: John Slade and David Bradwell

scenes, we are presented with four young brides, immaculate in their gleaming white wedding dresses and initially delighted to enter the little kingdom of their kitchens.

But the mood turns to claustrophobia, fear and despair as the wives buckle to the endless household chores and cope with the messy pains of birth, and the sheer frenetic exhaustion of motherhood.

We watch the brides washing up, with the books they have no time to read, throttling the children who never

cease their wailing, and finally escaping—though briefly and only in fantasy—through a hole in the back of the fridge.

It might be argued that Hilary Westlake's *Sister* and powerful production conveniently ignores both the women who find real fulfilment in marriage and those who lead a rich life without it.

But the somewhat blinkered perspective undoubtedly serves to intensify the impact of the play's stunning theatrical punch.

Monstrous Regiment Limited  
4 Elder Street London E1 6BT  
Telephone: 01-247 2398

Registered in England number 1332483

Registered Office: 49 South Molton Street London W1Y 1HE

Charity number 274517

Directors: Ms C Bowler, Ms J Cupido, Mr G Garside  
Ms G L Hanna, Ms M McCusker, Mr J Slade



With its inventive interplay of choral speaking, balletic movement and surreal visual effects 'Shakespeare's Sister' (ICA) marks an exotic departure for Monstrous Regiment. Embroidering themes raised by Virginia Woolf in her fantasy about Shakespeare's sibling (a child of equal gifts to her brother but constrained in their fulfilment by her sex), the group have created a wonderfully witty and evocative series of tableaux to demonstrate that the lot of women has progressed somewhat slowly over four centuries. Although such a message isn't exactly hot off the presses (a slim script in itself sheds no new light on feminist dilemmas), the production underlines its points with real theatrical élan. Dressed all as snowy brides—under the gaze of two grannies murmuring ominous homilies about wifely duty—four privileged women ponder their destinies: to wash; to scrub; to breed; to hive off drudgery onto working-class women; to be, or not. I'll long remember the brides transformed to mewling infants, the gift-wrapped kitchen and the live cockerel (yep, onstage) 'unnaturally' tending eggs. Trippy, and well worth the trip. (Rosa Asquith)

ICA

Nicholas de Jongh

## Monstrous Regiment

SHAKESPEARE'S sister was a tragic fantasy figure imagined by Virginia Woolf in *A Room of One's Own*, a gifted girl born in the wrong age and of the wrong sex and therefore never allowed the chance of self-fulfilment. In the *Monstrous Regiment's* superb and expressionistic portrayal of the rigid domestic lives of young contemporary wives she serves as the symbol of lost potential and also an indication of how little has changed in the treatment of women, or even in their view of themselves.

The company has based their 70-minute play on the Theatre de L'Aquarium's original Paris production and it is a joy to see how they exploit surrealist and expressionist techniques and give them a blazing theatrical life and function. Music, song, pantomime, lighting, choral speaking and symbolism all play their parts and there is no real chronological narrative. Instead, there is a panorama of middle-class women under stress; the first scene is like an encapsulation of all that follows.

On a wedge-shaped stage with four framed exits, a white-robed bride stands in front of her symbols of married life: the baby in a pram, the cooker and the fridge. She is joined by three more brides and they dance to nineteenth-century romantic music—music which becomes a mocking and ironic accompaniment to the quartet's resentment and frustrations. A couple of men, serving as a butler and a maid, arrive to begin their sweeping and remind the young brides of what they will become.

In a series of swift vignettes of domestic life, the bridal quartet (dressed as if to reinforce the idea of wedding-day bliss) begin their lives of submission. "Every woman's home is an expression of her husband's salary," says one. Food is an obsession and a anxiety.

Some of the dramatic inventions—an escape through the back of a fridge, a girl emerging from there, Ophelia-like and scattering wafelt and cassette tapes—are as bizarre as they are theatrically striking. But the cumulative impact of Hilary Westlake's superb script and production is devastating. The end, with the brides, a little like who will be like her, and an old woman call to rebellion, is a powerful and touching statement.

THE TIMES FRIDAY DECEMBER 5 1980

## Shakespeare's Sister

ICA

### Irving Wardle

The second production in *Monstrous Regiment's* international feminist season, this adaptation of a collective piece by the Paris-based Theatre de L'Aquarium is still recognizably a French show. Apart from sardonic choruses of "Ca ira" and a Fiat number that reduces the company to frozen zombies on the word "zero" when the needle gets stuck in the groove, Gillian Hanna's extremely breakable text still locates the action in the domestic dungeon of the French bourgeoisie.

This is a good thing, given the French genius for passing off mildewed platitudes as piercing new insights. The message of *Shakespeare's Sister* is that young women walk into the marriage trap without realizing that the drudgery of housework and child-rearing do not add up to a sufficient life-occupation; and that there is a conspiracy of silence among their elders to keep this discovery from them.

The title is misleading. The point about Shakespeare's sister, as Virginia Woolf imagined her, is that there was no escape from conventional womanhood even for a girl who had it in here to write *Hamlet*.

Nobody in this piece seems up to writing anything more than a line to the milkman. And if one of them does make a break, like the alleged Judith Shakespeare, she is back in three days with a suitcase full of vegetables for her husband's dinner.

If the show were set in Cobham, you might reasonably conclude that the girls had nothing to moan about. In the present setting, with a refrigerator and cooker stationed upstage like an altar, and two crow-like

peewees in tight grey curls (played by men) flicking them back to work with sisters should they happen to glance at a book, they have just about got a case. Whatever its correspondence to French actuality, the show does present the believable image of a closed order governed by inflexibly invariable rules.

It is images more than words that define Hilary Westlake's production, and which succeed in profitably extending a single commonplace statement to an 80-minute performance. Designed in black and white it shows four brides in wedding dresses serving their apprenticeship under the stuffing old granpies. They will finally become themselves. At first the kitchen is a dream domain to them, except that they can not cook.

One, in panic, subdues a smoking pan with a fire extinguisher. First steps in floor polishing are made, to a backing of "One Day My Prince Will Come", washing, is followed by a scene of children rocked off to sleep again and again. Hopes flare and fade of part-time study, of getting a job. Their teeth set in hard smiles to keep up appearances, the girls begin succumbing to mad little stunts and outbursts of gull, hammering themselves with boxing gloves. And when Mother's Day comes, the little boy with a bunch of flowers changes in a flash to an adult on the way out. In such ways the form of the show succeeds in resharpening these blunt home truths.

ICA

DURRANT'S

11 Northburgh  
Street  
London EC1V 0JL  
01-251 4918

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH

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THEATRE

ERIC SHORTER

## Intellectually arid humour

By ERIC SHORTER

WHO'S AFRAID of quoting Virginia Woolf? Not the theatre group that calls itself Monstrous Regiment. "Shakespeare's Sister," a catchpenny title from an allusion by the novelist, is seized at the Institute of Contemporary Arts for a few moments to make us wonder whether any sister of our Will's would have had the same chance of becoming a famous playwright.

Unfortunately the point is not explored. It merely crops up in a series of sprightly tableaux about the downtrodden business of being a woman and the brave faces worn by these long-suffering, modest, virtuous and cheerful victims of inequality. They sweep and clean and dream (of princes) and they bear and bring up children. But is motherhood enough?

On the other hand if they go out to work, isn't that too much? Meanwhile, husbands come home late; and the older the marriage the wider the gulf between the couple.

If this is familiar and intel-

lectually arid the staging by Hilary Westlake is lively and good-humoured as we watch four brides going through their domestic routines with a sigh of sardonic resignation and with an almost choreographic sense of re-charged clichés.

The style and most of the theatrical ideas are drawn from the Theatre of the Aquarium, a French company based in Paris, which also claims a social conscience and usually takes up one cause or another by its collective way of working and though its points of view are as predictable as Monstrous Regiment's the spontaneous rehearsals and team spirit supply an air of sincerity.

But the absence of an author to give shape or an artistic view leaves me wondering why they go to so much trouble to say so little. The show is translated by Gillian Hanna and as a sermon for the converted it is mildly amusing as long as the title isn't taken to mean that if it weren't for their sex these players would be further up the theatrical ladder.

# theatre

## SHAKESPEARE'S

## SISTER

by Théâtre de l' Aquarium  
Paris

Directed by

Hilary Westlake

Monstrous Regiment

After Monstrous Regiment's wonderful production of *Dialogue Between a Prostitute and Her Client*, I'd eagerly awaited the second in their series of foreign feminist plays. Publicity informed me that *Shakespeare's Sister* uses visual

rather than primarily verbal images to explore the world of four brides and two grandmothers. Well! Off to London's ICA I zoomed!

Visually, the show is stunning and Monstrous Regiment often succeed in condensing the oppression of 'wifehood' into powerful, frequently funny images. In one bleakly funny scene a wife blames herself for the

emptiness of her marriage and follows up each recrimination by punching herself with her boxing-gloved fist. Guilt and frustration intensify until, finally, she knocks herself out.

Horror replaces humour in the episode where a boy child is shown being conditioned into (so-called) 'manhood'. As egotism, brutality and emotional and

sexual repression take root, a boy in cub's uniform is transformed into a man in Nazi regalia who mechanically, violently, sings *Deutschland Uber Alles*, his arm jerking up and down in a Nazi salute. Impossible to describe in a few words, it was the best stage representation I have seen of the links between the psychology of patriarchy and that of fascism. ►

Spare Rib 47

Yet for all Monstrous Regiment's theatrical inventiveness and energy, the show left me feeling hollow and empty. The perceptive, compassionate probing of the deep, often conflicting emotions and needs of women and the ultimate celebration of our strength *in spite of* male oppression, is absent from *Shakespeare's Sister*. In its place is a cold, cerebral analysis of patriarchy where the characters of women are reduced to cardboard cut-outs who manifest all the negative effects of male domination. Dominated by the workings of patriarchy, *not* love for women, *Shakespeare's Sister* ends up sharing patriarchy's values and perceptions.

Two scenes encapsulated this. In one a woman gives birth screaming in agony, whilst the grandmothers reiterate how this is the most wonderful day of her life. Her screams deny their every word. But it's not that simple, is it? Childbirth is painful. It can also be wonderful. There is nothing in the play which communicates how much worse birth has been made by the apparatus of modern male medicine, that 20th century expression of men's fear of our ability to give birth and their need to control it. Nothing which shows how men have so distorted our experience of childbirth that our bodies scream in protest at the distortion as well as the effort of birth. So what are we left with — a feminist version of the Biblical 'In pain and suffering shalt thou give birth', that prime example of men's hatred of women?

Recovering from this onslaught, the next scene, where two mothers kill their perpetually screaming babies, finished me off. Cleverly played for laughs, the babies died with their tongues stuck out and their eyes rolled back. The audience laughed. I laughed — until I heard a voice saying "But how can you laugh at murder?" Murder as solution. Whose answer is *that*? And it's still too simple. Most women love and hate children, the very nature of that bond combining to trap us at the same time as it expresses the values of compassion and love so opposed to the death values of men.

Monstrous Regiment are an excellent theatre

company. I only wish that, this time, they'd chosen a better play.

Jenny Vaughan

MARCH 1981

ISSUE 104

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**AT THE THEATRE**

with Robert Shelton

# The brides of hell are a

by Robert Shelton

# brilliant vision

A FEW more productions like this might push the Save the Gardner campaign right into winning ground.

To hear that a feminist fringe troupe was doing a play about women's liberation aroused my fears of square-jawed thespians ranting against "man, the oppressor."

In fact, Shakespeare's Sister is refreshingly different. This sly, clever, inventive argumentation never loses its sensibilities as entertainment.

## Counterpoint

Opening music: Albinoni's funereal Adagio gives way to the Wedding March, then the 1812 Overture. We prepare for a view of matrimony as death, war and peace. Visual counterpoint to this, as four gleaming brides in radiant white enter, all burdened with the mythologies that used to fill a bride's head.

A tape-recorder intones the testament of a humble, trapped wife. She actually doesn't create profit, just children. She lives in the shadow of "him" seeking somewhere, somehow, some recognition, a glimmer of fulfilment.

A series of rapid-fire tableaux presents aspects of marital disillusion. The obsessions with food, children and pleasing "him" almost always cut with wry satiric

**PLAY:** Shakespeare's Sister.  
**VENUE:** Gardner Arts Centre.  
**CAST:** Mary McCusker, Gillian Hanna, Anne Haydn and Patricia Donovan.  
**DIRECTOR:** Jan Sargent.

thrust. Yet this isn't frivolous, it's theatre of ideas and the argumentation accumulates force.

Two men, Tony Guilfoyle and Stephen Ley, portray grandmother types reluctant to admit anything's wrong with the institution of marriage, as the four younger brides discover it's a form of hell.

The show is attentive to visual brilliance. The clean, sparse set centres on a huge fridge as a sort of marital altar. At one point, a rubber household glove is thrown off, and soon there is a flood of gloves thrown from every corner.

This production is based on the improvisations of the Parisian Theatre de l'Aquarium. There's a happy moral to their ten-year battle for recognition as a stubbornly independent,

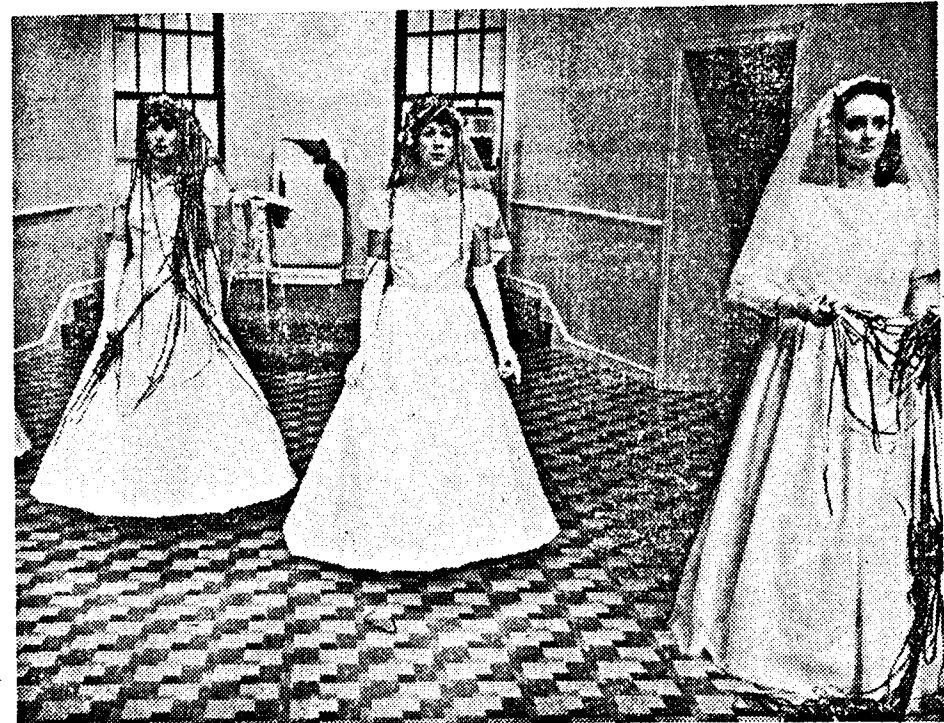
non-commercial stage collective. Last month the French government doubled its arts subsidy allocation at a stroke!

Shakespeare's Sister drew its inspiration from a fragment of a fantasy by a Sussex author. In A Room Of One's Own, Virginia Woolf concluded that Shakespeare's sister would have had an unfulfilled life because of her sex, whatever her talent.

## Satire

Happily, the women, and men, of Monstrous Regiment, the London collective that is presenting this brilliant satire, are getting full expression here to their obviously passionately held ideas.

This is a genuine rarity: theatre of ideas that is also brilliant, entertaining and moving stagecraft of high order.



## THE CRITICS

# REGIMENT LINES UP SUCCESS

Vandyck Theatre Bristol: Monstrous Regiment  
in Shakespeare's Sister.

AT last a truly feminist play that gets across its message with humour, bitter satire and no preaching.

The theme is one suggested by Virginia Woolf: What would have happened had Shakespeare an equally gifted sister?

The answer is that she would have ended up washing the dishes and changing nappies and finding fulfillment in the service and achievements of her husband.

And that, the company suggests, is the fate of most women.

### Despair

They are persuaded that marriage is the only aim, a fitted kitchen the only ambition, the raising of children the only achievement for a real woman.

This is the voice of centuries of tradition, represented here by two granny figures who happen to be men in drag.

Symbolism plays a great part in this piece, but never clumsily and the staging by Jan Sargent and Gemma Jackson's design are both inventive and extremely effective.

The overall message seems to be one of despair.

Even the professional woman who tries to escape the drudgery feels guilt about hiring a daily to do the chores.

And if there is one failing in this marvellous and splendidly humorous attack on the bastions of male privilege, it is the common one of suggesting nothing to take its place.

That apart, this excellent company hit the target time and time again with unerring accuracy, and without recourse to boring polemics.

Superb theatre, both thought provoking and entertaining and very highly recommended.

DAVID HARRISON

2—EVENING POST, SATURDAY, MARCH 27 1982

BRISTON.



# REVIEWS

"SHAKESPEARE'S SISTER"  
presented by Monstrous Regiment  
at the Crucible Studio.

"FEMINISM FOR BEGINNERS" said  
the feminists as they propped up  
the Unbiased Reviewer at the  
bar and bought him a drink.

Lynda thought (over her  
lager) that the situations were  
unoriginal, but typical of mar-  
ried excitement. The kitchen,  
the washing-line, the screaming  
kids, the kitchen. With the  
point rammed home by having all  
the women dressed in wedding  
dresses.

We all liked the idea of  
the two older women, represent-  
ing the Bride's alter ego,  
being played by men, ("very well  
too, said Lynda). They fussed  
indulgently, persuading the Bride  
of the importance of Looking  
After the Home and Bringing Up  
Children.

Anthony liked the Virginia  
Woolf bit best, where they read  
in a book (Haven't you got any-  
thing to do?" said the older  
women.) about what would have  
happened to Shakespeare's equal-  
ly gifted sister, if he'd had  
one. Not a lot, apparently. Bill  
gets all the breaks and his sis-  
ter gets to stay at home and be  
the apple of her father's eye.

The play was linked toge-  
ther by a series of images rather

than by a formal plot or narra-  
tive. Much of this was imagin-  
ative and multi-dimensional. We  
all liked, for example, the  
shower of hundreds of red rubber  
washing up gloves, symbol of  
servitude, blood and impoverish-  
ed 'empty-handedness'. And an  
economic way of saying how wide-  
spread those things are.

But under the rich imagery  
Lynda wondered if too many points  
were being glossed over. There  
was the scene in which the Bride  
had to pay another woman to do  
the housework, so she can have  
the privilege of earning her  
own money. And the only letter  
addressed to "Mrs" is a circular  
from some grocer. The failure of  
revolution and socialism to con-  
front women's needs is mentioned  
too, through images of the French  
Revolution and the telling om-  
ission in the cry of "Liberty,  
Equality...".

Yet it was all food for  
thought, ready for the Crucible  
audience to store away in the  
fridge. (Some of it even had the  
Unbiased Reviewer thinking, which  
isn't what they're for at all.)  
And it was performed with great  
energy and passion. Lynda really  
savoured the chopping of the  
cabbage with the great big meat  
cleaver, (symbolising...?)

We were all moved, too, by  
the entry of the small child  
(female) at the end, who read  
from pieces of paper "I will  
have to make myself fairly av-  
ailable" and other, similar  
phrases. The play had spilled  
over into real life. Will she  
have to, we wondered?

But by now we were into our  
second pints and all was getting  
fuzzy. "Do you think they'd miss  
one of those pairs of rubber  
gloves?" said Anthony. RICHARD.

Sheffield Free Press  
April No. 55

Yorks. Evening Press 12.3.82

## *A hard look at women and marriage*

DO NOT expect too much poetry or Elizabethan drama from Shakespeare's *Sister*, which opened last night at the York Arts Centre.

For it is a hard-hitting and humorous look at women, and the institution called marriage.

The stage is littered with unfulfilled women in wedding gowns bemoaning their fate as cooks, washers and lovers, who, like Virginia Woolf's idea of Shakespeare's sister, were never allowed to develop.

The Monstrous Regiment fringe theatre group, pour their full bitter scorn on the

wasted women with a cocktail of straight comedy, and bizarre surrealism.

Alongside the hilariously butch grannies, ironically played by Tony Guilfoyle and Stephen Ley, were the stage histrionics of women washing up, peeling vegetables and having babies.

Yet in another moment literally hundreds of empty red rubber gloves descend on the stage — it is gimmicky but effective.

On the whole the four brides, Patricia Donovan, Gillian Hanna, Anne Haydn and Mary McCusker, portray pre-

tty dismal versions of their marriages, although husbands stay invisible throughout.

Based on an original production by the Theatre de L' Aquarium in Paris, the play starts out for laughs, but then begins to take itself rather seriously.

By the end the mood is definitely sombre, and the feeling is that as much as acting, the cast have been delivering a lecture.

Nevertheless a challenging and worthwhile production by a very professional company, which is on for tonight and Saturday only. — CZ.



## SHAKESPEARE'S SISTER

The latest hit show from Monstrous Regiment

Shakespeare's sister is a high energy and exciting show based around Virginia Wolfe's fascinating fantasy about a child of equal gifts to her brother but constrained in her fulfillment because of her sex. It is playing to enthusiastic audiences — and *The Scotsman* acclaimed the play as 'intelligent and entertaining political theatre':

"Shakespeare's Sister is adapted from a work created collectively and through improvisation by Le Theatre de l'Aquarium, Paris. Laying memorable images one on the other, tissue thin, Monstrous Regiment create a surreal collage that is as apparently inconsequential as a housewife's day, a day in which nothing happens which is considered important, to someone (who feels they have nothing much to say.

In *A Room of One's Own*, from which the company takes the show's name, Virginia Woolf describes women's struggle to write; Monstrous Regiment unravel women's struggle to even read. "Every time I open a book I know there's something I ought to be

doing." They show the younger women instructed in the duties of the wife and mother by the older women — who are played by the two male members of the company to great effect. Theirs are the disciplines of self effacement, self-flagellation, guilt. The stage becomes a trap as insubstantial as a wedding veil.

As the debris mounts Monstrous Regiment lay bare the nightmare hidden behind an apologetic smile. It is intelligent and entertaining political theatre, often very funny, beautifully designed, and played with skill, commitment and panache."

Susan Innes, *The Scotsman*

**HAVE YOU  
SEEN  
SHAKESPEARE'S  
SISTER ?**

THE SCOTSMAN Saturday, August 21, 1982

GLASGOW HERALD Friday September 3 1982

**Monstrous Regiment** with "Shakespeare's Sister" surely one of the strongest, most theatrical feminist plays on the Fringe. Its quartet of demure white brides march through the post-wedding stultification of cooking, cleaning, washing like distressingly biddable Cindy dolls, encouraged in their subservience by a couple of advice-spinning middle class matrons — played tellingly and outrageously by two men.

It is a harsh indictment of how easy it is to lose identity in a mindless domestic routine simply because it seems the "right," the "nice," even the "natural," thing to do.

It is a brilliantly played piece.

**MONSTROUS  
REGIMENT**

Shakespeare's Sister:  
Little Lyceum

*SHAKESPEARE'S Sister* is adapted from a work created collectively and through improvisation by Le Theatre de l'Aquarium, Paris. Laying memorable images one on the other, tissue thin, *Monstrous Regiment* create a surreal collage that is as apparently inconsequential as a housewife's day, a day in which nothing happens which is considered im-

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Sue Innes

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