Professions
and “the Labouring Arts”
in *All’s Well That Ends Well*

MARY POLITO

Les historiens ont récemment soutenu que la professionnalisation en tant qu’une nouvelle forme de gouvernement social était un produit de l’humanisme de l’après-Réforme. Ils ont également montré que le monopole de la juridiction et du statut qu’auraient acquis les professions érudites n’était pas inévitable, mais qu’il était plutôt l’objet de luttes et de débats sociaux. L’auteur de cet article montre que Shakespeare fait allusion à ces débats au sujet du travail et du statut des travailleurs dans plusieurs de ces œuvres, mais qu’il traite spécifiquement de la question dans sa comédie All’s Well That Ends Well. Shakespeare y présente de manière ironique le personnage d’Hélène comme un exemple idéal de professionnel instruit, prudent, mais audacieux qui se sert de sa compétence pour gagner en statut, mais qui, du même coup et sans en avoir l’intention, contribue à civiliser la nation. De cette manière, Shakespeare attire l’attention sur la fonction civilisatrice de sa propre profession.

In the many studies of early English selfhood that have been published in the last 20 years, scholars have written about the complexities of desire and gender, of status and blood, and of a burgeoning nationalism. Yet, seldom has the subject been considered in terms of the very mode of being that we experience and exercise when we write about these matters, that is, in terms of profession and processes of professionalization. For subjects in Tudor and Jacobean England, however, one’s work was an increasingly important measure of one’s worth and often the site of ethical engagement with issues of relevance to spirituality, citizenship, and private ambition. At the same time, professionalization schemes were a form of government that contributed to the great liberalizing and civilizing missions of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This essay considers the links among such early professionalization processes, the experience and exercise of self-government that such processes attempted to promote, and questions about gender that this

history raises. In the second part of the essay I will suggest that these issues resonate in Shakespeare's early seventeenth-century problem comedy, *All's Well That Ends Well*. Through its novel presentation of an ambitious, risk-taking woman who, like real early modern men, uses professional expertise as a means to achieve status, Shakespeare draws attention to the discourse of seventeenth-century professionalization, including the move to monopolies on jurisdiction and status by the "learned" professions. At the same time, he represents the value of his own profession to the good government of the commonwealth.

The history of such words as "profession," "vocation," "occupation," and "mystery" reveals the lively debates about the relative status, admission requirements, and principles of exclusion of various professions, about the political imperatives promoting the active rather than the contemplative life, and the ways in which expertise was increasingly and ironically figured as an aspect of one's personal "mystery." In the sixteenth century, usage of the word "profession" expanded from its association with religious faith and religious calling to denote "[a] vocation in which a professed knowledge of some department of learning or science is used in its application to the affairs of others or in the practice of an art founded upon it," a definition that was applied in the sixteenth century without discrimination to all manner of skills and practices, from prostitution, to baking, to the law.¹ "Vocation," too, expanded in the sixteenth century from its association with religious calling to signify "[o]ne's ordinary occupation, business, or profession"²; the word "occupation" emerged in the early sixteenth century to describe "[m]echanical or mercantile employment; trade ... a skilled handicraft."³ While "mystery" had been understood in the medieval period to signify "[m]inistry, office, service" and denoted, within the guild apprenticeship system, the actual formula of required learning for particular trades, this word as well takes on a now obsolete association with expertise acquired by an individual: "Skill, expert technique."⁴ All of these words, in fact, began to accrue associations, not only with a body of knowledge and practical skill, but also with the nature of actors in particular lines of work, both the nature upon which professionalization processes were to act and the nature that would be a product of such processes. For example, John Florio, when translating "professione" into English in 1598, draws a connection between professions and particular human "faculties."⁵ The *Oxford English Dictionary* finds J. Jones, in his 1579 work, *Arte Preseruing Bodie & Soule*, advising that "every one [should aspire] to some arte or misterie answerable to their nature."⁶ Thus, one's paid employment was increasingly that which was to bind one to both the commonwealth and to particular conceptions of the self.

That individual actors are capable of achieving, with effort, the specific expertise that is essential to particular occupations presupposes the early modern assumptions about individual ability that have recently been articulated by Elizabeth Hanson in her analysis of the discourse of pedagogy in the period: “[a]bility as an object of knowledge emerges (...) within a space not exactly of social indeterminacy but at least of semi-suspended social determination.”⁷ While one’s nature might dictate the path that would yield the greatest success, only industry would constitute the most important determinant of that success. The potentiality of self is constituted as the raw, sometimes unruly, if valuable, material upon which labour must make a difference. The labour of professionalization, however, included not only the cultivation of particular skill sets made possible by the will to industry; professionalization also required a high level of self knowledge and civil discipline. As Barnabe Barnes recommends, in his *Foure Bookes of Offices*, to enjoy success in any office or profession, it is expedient to understand “the nature of things, the Nature which natureth, and the Nature natured.”⁸

To study professionalization processes is therefore to study government, or the careful cultivation of an active citizenry with both technical expertise and the will and means for self-regulation in terms of professional development. As David Glimp observes in his study of governance, population, and cultural reproduction: “The imperative to work diligently within a vocation forms a key mode of ‘subjectification’ within commonwealth discourse.”⁹ Thus, one’s expertise was a personal “mystery” and one aspect of the privileged interior territory that was the secret and private domain of professional modes of being. This was a domain purchased, nonetheless, with the price of labour and self-regulation. Evidence of widespread interest in the cultivation of professional expertise and decorum is born out by the fact that, from the 1530s, self-help manuals for all manner of professions flooded the London bookshops.¹⁰ That such publication programs were viewed as potentially profitable is evident in the endorsement provided by Thomas Campion (“Doctor in Physicke”) in the preface to Barnabe Barnes’s *Foure Bookes*. Campion concludes his celebratory verse with the injunction “Then, Reader, love this Booke, or rather buy.”¹¹

One novel and crucial aspect of self-development that the manuals recommend could be construed, I would argue, as the capacity to determine and manage risk. Risk and the history of risk management are the empirical objects of an array of academic disciplines and business practices. Some trace the history of risk to the emergence, during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, of the techniques with which risk was calculated, such as actuarial mathematics and both commercial and social insurance systems. At least

three strands of social scientific research, however, query the historical conditions which produced risk as both an object of knowledge and an aspect of social existence that could be managed.¹² With the governmentality scholars, who follow Foucault's work on the history of liberalism, I am "less interested in what *is* a risk than ... in what is done *in the name of* risk."¹³

One such scholar, Francois Ewald, sees the emergence of risk as the turn to modernity itself,¹⁴ and certainly the risk mentality is oriented to the future and entails a kind of utopian and progressive mission. The late medieval innovation of double entry bookkeeping is crucial in this regard, for example, in that it signals an orientation to the future in its calculation of probable future profit. Deborah Lupton observes that this nascent early modern risk rationality grows to assume that "the social and natural worlds follow laws that may be measured, calculated and therefore predicted."¹⁵ No longer the realm of providence or fortune, the future became for the early moderns, argues Anthony Giddens, "a territory to be conquered or colonised."¹⁶ Through calculative, social, and administrative strategies, the early moderns worked "to transform a radically indeterminate cosmos into a manageable one, through the myth of calculability."¹⁷

In its orientation to influencing the future, the notion of "risk" carried a positive valence; it was, in this case, "venture." In its attention to danger, it appears as the identification and amelioration of "hazards." So, while the word "risk" itself does not appear in English usage until the late seventeenth century, words such as "peril," "jeopardie," "danger," "hazard," "chance," and "venture" carried the weight of risk in both its positive and negative denotations, and indeed the *Early Modern English Dictionary* finds these words as translations of the French "risqué."¹⁸ Risk as venture must be embraced by the ambitious, while "hazards" must be managed to provide security to the individual and the commonweal. The first insurance schemes were devised to manage the risk of maritime venture, and the enterprising nature of successful mariners is recommended in the manuals as a model for all manner of professionals. Barnes, for example, sets up as an exemplar for all his would-be professionals Sir Francis Drake and "his noble skill and industrious fortitude ... [and whose] working good spirit ... always incited him to some honourable interprise."¹⁹ Barnes also prescribes that "each man bee diligent in his lawfull profession ... that every man adventure his life and substance in difficult seasons for the preservation and safeguard of his country."²⁰ He recommends fortitude as risk manager to the psyche, "an affection or habite of the minde, which undergoing all honorable dangers, labours, and mischievous hazards considerably, represseth fear and wrath."²¹ He also warns his anticipated readers—would-be treasurers, counsellors, magistrates

and military leaders—that danger may in fact dwell within. One’s “inward enemies” may be a threat but, “with a little paines and knitting of themselves up together they might restraine or vanquish them.”²² Barnes continues to figure the operations of self-government as a function of the military profession itself when he suggests that one must call all one’s inclinations to a “universall muster, that they may be precisely viewed and measured by the cube of reason; receiving prest and wages answerable to their natures and qualities.”²³

The techniques of risk management are also found in Barnes’ emphasis on the need for professionals to develop all four cardinal virtues (fortitude, temperance, justice, and prudence) as they apply to individual professions, but especially in the emphasis on prudence, the virtue which requires wise, calculative consideration of future outcomes. Barnes recommends “civile prudence” as a means to “prescribe unto citizens their actions, conversing in the maintenance of civile societies,”²⁴ and his book of offices involves some theorizing upon the nature of civil society itself. In his warning against tyranny, he not only articulates the political problem of tyranny; he also attempts to warn off his readers by describing how those who act tyrannously will suffer psychic alienation and insecurity: “a continuall perilous and inward warre, because they cannot repute themselves safe either in front, in reare, or on the flankes, they miserably torture themselves with everlasting danger & fear.”²⁵ Like such writers as Thomas Elyot before him, Barnes also warns against inordinate ambition, sometimes the “greatest enemy”²⁶ leading one to imprudently “delight in hazard.”²⁷ This attention to risk management, I would suggest, signals the novelty and modernity of professionalization discourse. Ambition is both the “venture” that drives a readership to these manuals and at the same time a personal and political “hazard.” As a growing consciousness of risk is associated with ambition and professional development, risk’s calculation becomes a new function of self-government.

These observations about the emergence of complex professionalization schemes as early as the sixteenth century are borne out by the recent work of historians, among whom the received wisdom about the dating of the rise of the professions and the exercise of regulated professionalization processes has recently been challenged. As legal historian Wilfrid Prest observes, for most of the twentieth century both historians and sociologists understood the professions as a product of mature capitalism; a distinction between professionals and the proletariat was seen to define economic modernism.²⁸ Recently, however, scholars working on Tudor and Jacobean history—such as Prest and Rosemary O’Day—have argued that professionalization was a product of post-Reformation humanism, and that sixteenth- and seventeenth-

century England was in fact more professionalized than it would be after the decline of the guilds and the trading companies.²⁹ Indeed, the great educational reforms devised and put into practice by Henry VIII and his able counselors were meant to produce a class of professional bureaucrats set to serve the state. At the same time, as O'Day observes, "[i]n the years following the Henrician Reformation in England, prominent ecclesiastics gave their attention to the question of the calling or vocation to follow particular professions" as duty in the world.³⁰ O'Day concludes that although the words "professionalism" and "professionalize" emerged in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, "the phenomena, which these words were later to describe, certainly did exist or were in the process of development long before the words were coined."³¹

O'Day and Prest observe as well that the semantic shift in the word "profession" over the course of the seventeenth century was significant. While the word was extremely catholic in the sixteenth century, retaining, as I noted above, its association with religious "professing" and including all manner of secular occupations, by the middle of the seventeenth century it was coming to signify only the "learned professions," normally taken to be medicine, the law, and the clergy (although the military, pedagogy, architecture, and government administration were sometimes also included). This emerging monopoly on signification, historians observe, reflected a new and growing monopoly on expertise. Through legislation and initiatives generated by various professional governing bodies, the "learned" professions were cultivating an exclusive domain for their activities. Prest observes that "while the enlargement of the professional sector may have enhanced the scope for individual self-betterment, it simultaneously exacerbated the structural divisions—cultural, economic and social—which were increasingly distancing both the elite and the middling sort from the mass of their inferiors."³² Such new divisions, Prest relates, produced protest: "[i]n the revolutionary decades of the mid-seventeenth century, hostility towards the monopolistic pretensions of the ... learned professions ... was a common rallying cry"³³; and even O'Day, who generally argues that the learned professions deserved their status because they enjoyed a unique ethical imperative, concedes that

The professions made the laity believe that they had an expertise and authority that was out of the reach of ordinary people; they exploited the demand for their services by charging exorbitant amounts and by depriving those who could not pay. All professions were equally at fault. ... critics objected to the way in which the professionals made their knowledge a 'mystery.' There were vitriolic attacks on the humane learning in arts and sciences, which professionals made the cornerstone of their 'expertise.'³⁴

Yet, the rhetoric of the handbooks composed for those not of the “learned professions” suggests that other groups saw themselves and their work as ethically engaged and as having a role to play in the prosperity and strength of the commonwealth. William Scott links accruing the skill, decorum, and good business ethics of a draper to the realization of self as a “compleate citizen.”³⁵ In his *Countrey Contentments, or The English Husvife Containing the Inward and Outward Vertues which ought to be in a Compleate Woman*, Gervase Markham calls the domestic and often civilizing work of women “most profitable and necessarie for all men ... and the generall good of this kingdome.”³⁶

The new professionalism, however, while promoting the value of domestic labour, limited women’s participation in the public sphere. As has been frequently noted (and as Francis Bacon celebrates in *The Advancement of Learning*) the professionalization of medicine worked to outlaw the traditional practices of healers, many of whom were women. While new legislation worked to prohibit women from practising the trades of their husbands and fathers (as they had done in the past), on the other hand, as we see in the case of Markham and other manual writers, household management was treated as a skill base with great value to the commonwealth. The how-to books for these housewives in fact demonstrate that they were expected to obtain and practise a broad range of expertise, expertise that was part of the repertoire of many professionals. Markham’s lengthy title enumerates some of these skill sets: “*skill in physicke, surgerie, extraction of oyles, banquetting-stuffe, ordering of great feasts, preserving of all sorts of wines, concealed secrets, distillations, perfumes, ordering of wooll, hempe, flax, making cloth, dying, the knowledge of dayries, office of malting, oats, their excellent uses in a family, brewing, baking, and all other things belonging to an household.*” He also provides a list of virtues to be fostered: “our English Hus-wife must be of chaste thought, stout courage, patient, untyred, watchful, diligent, witty, pleasant, constant in friendship, full of good Neighbour-hood, wise in Discourse, but not frequent therein, sharpe and quicke of speech, but not bitter or talkative, secret in her affaires, comfortable in her counsels, and generally skilful in the worthy knowledges which belong to her Vocation.”³⁷ The irony by which women were to develop professional skills but not to see themselves as professionals is seen in Markham’s claim that although the housewife’s knowledge of “physic” is paramount among her skills, “we muste counsel the depth and secrets of the most excellent Arte of Physicke, as farre beyonde the capacity of the most skilful woman as lodging only in the breast of the learned profession, yet [he hopes] that our House-wife may

from them receive some ordinary rules & medicines which may availe for the benefit of her family.”³⁸

The Henrician administration had supported the monopolization of medicine through such legislation in an act of 1512 forbidding unlicensed medical persons from practising in England.³⁹ Among those it addressed were “common artificers, as smiths, weavers, and women that boldly and customarily take upon them great cures and things of great difficulty, in which they partly use sorcery and witchcraft ... to the ... greivous hurts damage and destruction of the king’s liege people.”⁴⁰ The government also granted a charter to the College of Physicians in 1518 and deemed that only members could practise physic in London and that only this body could grant licenses to physicians, surgeons, and apothecaries throughout England and Wales.⁴¹ O’Day admits that this body worked to function as a professional “aristocracy” but that compliance with either their professional criteria (which included extensive knowledge of Galen) or the limitations they would impose on who could practise, was not widespread. When the 1512 act proved too difficult to enforce, it was nullified in 1542,⁴² when the government conceded to the populace acceptance of their defiant employment of traditional healers with the so-called “Quack’s Charter,” which granted immunity from prosecution to such practitioners in particular cases. Ironically, it is now the university educated men who seem the most like quacks, as they clung to their classical sources; traditional practitioners, while not immune from quackery, continued to use the empirical operations of experiment and observation.

While women had no means to enter the College, they certainly continued to practise medicine in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. O’Day observes that “[m]edicine was one of the skills in which women of all stations were trained.” All good housewives were to include some knowledge of all three areas of medical expertise in their repertoire of household management skills.⁴³ On the other hand, women defiantly thwarted the various legal limitations upon them by also practising in the world beyond their households. We find evidence of this defiance in the Bridewell prison minute books, where, for example, in an entry for July 9, 1598, a woman was convicted of “practising physic and surgery.”⁴⁴ O’Day also provides cases in which women defied the imperatives by which they were enjoined to keep secret specific medical knowledge previously hoarded by the medical men in their families.⁴⁵ Medicine was a Christian “good work” that should be offered like alms to the poor; but it was also increasingly seen as a business, and authorities seem to have looked the other way when women practised charitable medicine, but to have taken every means to prevent them from becoming successful medical entrepreneurs. As O’Day observes, to be a success, especially in London,

where a very good living indeed could be made from medicine, medical men needed to possess an enterprising spirit. For such university educated and licensed entrepreneurs, O'Day argues, the practice of medicine was a means for upward mobility from a much lower starting position than was once thought.⁴⁶ But not for medical women.

Faith in the woman expert, however, seems to come to us augmented on the early modern stage, especially the Shakespearean stage, where women characters often perform a professionalism to which real women did not have direct access in the world. Shakespeare's Portia, the lawyer with her fine legal mind, and Paulina, the astute counselor to Leontes in *The Winter's Tale*: both solve problems that are dogging the state, and train the intemperate men that they serve. *All's Well That Ends Well* presents a similar woman, Helen, who displays a medical expertise that defies Markham's claim about the limitations on women's intellect, a claim he uses to justify their exclusion from the profession and its governing bodies.

Generally, I would argue, when early seventeenth-century plays employ such terms as "vocation," "profession," and "calling" to describe the work of those soon to be excluded from the professions, this was not a conceptual or semantic problem, as O'Day claims, but a purposeful engagement in the debate about labour and its spiritual, social, and economic value to the commonwealth. Shakespeare often takes a satirical approach to these issues, and the object of Shakespeare's satire is often the pretensions of the new professional class. O'Day describes this pretension:

...professional employment was regarded, by professionals themselves and by the elite in general, as a different and superior form of work. It did not soil the hands; it deployed knowledge and intellectual skills in the service of the community; it entailed responsibility and obligations as well as power and privilege; it did not command wages but rather an honorarium freely given; it was ennobling.⁴⁷

It is precisely this sense of privileged "ennoblement" that Shakespeare has his lower status characters mock when, for example, the bawd Pompey in *Measure for Measure* declares that despite the crackdown on bawdy houses, "[t]he valiant heart's not whipped out of his trade" (2.1.227). And Mistress Overdone, his employer, he states, has, in her career, "worn [her] eyes almost out in the service" (1.2.22–24). When, in the first scene of *Julius Caesar*, a cobbler is interrogated by tribunes about why he is appearing in public on a working day without the "signs" of his profession, the cobbler resists

being defined by his work at the same time that he associates that work, through a pun, with the learned “professions” of the clergy and medicine. He replies that he belongs to “[a] trade, sir, that, I hope, I may use with a safe conscience, which is indeed, sir, a mender of bad soles” (1.1.13–15) and that he is “a surgeon to old shoes: when they are in great danger, I recover them” (1.1.26–7). Similarly, in *1 Henry IV* Falstaff defends his habit of thieving with the claim, “Why, Hal, ‘tis my Vocation Hal: ‘Tis no sin for a man to labour in his Vocation” (1.2.114). Shakespeare, whose own profession as play-maker and merchant was often under fire, supplies these sympathetic characters with digs at the would-be elite class of learned professionals.

These issues arise as a vigorous element of plot and character in Shakespeare’s early seventeenth-century “problem” comedy, *All’s Well That Ends Well*. A renowned doctor’s daughter has been educated by him in the body of expertise associated with his profession (a not unusual event previous to the monopolizing movements of the seventeenth century). Shakespeare takes a tale from Boccaccio and provides us with a representation of local and specific concerns. The stories from Boccaccio’s “third day” of tale telling—promoting initiative—suit such a purpose. Susan Snyder observes that the active characters of these tales narrow “‘efforts’ to ‘strategems.’”⁴⁸ That Boccaccio is representing initiative as a valuable human trait reflects the economic and social reality of his own time and place, as the rise of the merchant class began to challenge the supremacy and authority of the *gente nova*. Boccaccio attaches his heroine’s strategy to a religious, rather than professional, imperative, however. In William Painter’s translation of Boccaccio’s story, Giletta (the Helen figure) is quick to deny her status as a professional. She appeals to the king, “Sir, you despise my knowledge because I am young and a woman. But I assure you that I do not minister physic by profession but by the aid and help of God.”⁴⁹ Shakespeare’s Helen, by contrast, calls her medical work “mine office” (2.1.124). Yet her aim is not to practise medicine for its own sake, but rather to achieve another ambitious end—marriage to the wild young courtier Bertram. But Bertram must be tamed. His mother complains that he is a “rash and unbridled boy” (3.2.27)⁵⁰; only marriage can achieve the temperance that will allow Bertram success in his career as courtier and soldier. While Helen cannot fulfill her considerable ambition through a career in medicine, or at least one that would be esteemed by the College of Physicians, she does cut the ideal figure of the studious, determined, risk-calculating professional that is represented in the manuals, in the pursuit of her civilizing mission.⁵¹

We learn that Helen’s father, who, Helen reports, was “the greatest of his profession” (1.3.229–30), has bequeathed her some precious “prescrip-

tions” and the knowledge, we assume, of how to diagnose their need and to administer them (1.3.207). When Helen claims she has a cure for the king, the Countess of Rossillion, who holds wardship of Helen, questions how a “poor unlearned virgin” can hope to compete with the medical schools, that have been “embowelled of their doctrine” in search of a remedy (1.3.226–7). Helen persists, however, travels to the court, and is introduced to the King by the “Old Lord” Lafeu, who calls her “Doctor She” and testifies to the “amazing” qualities she brings to her “profession” (2.1.77–81). She has taken in the knowledge of her father and “stored” it up “as a triple eye” (2.1.106). The King, upon meeting Helen, is also skeptical of her skills because “The congregated College have concluded / That labouring art can never ransom nature / From her inaidable estate” (2.1.115–117). He will not, he declares, “prostitute” himself to the “Empirics” of such remedies as Helen might offer. But she employs rhetoric to convince him to hope for the future and recommends that he take the medication as a kind of “experiment” (2.1.153). Lafeu is surprised that the King is willing to let go of the knowledge provided by Galen and Paracelsus, whom he calls “artists,” and to ignore the “Fellows” of the College in attempting this cure, but Helen’s success is soon evident for all to observe. Like Barnes’s ideal professional, she has understood “the nature of things, the Nature which natureth, and the Nature natured” and through her mere “labouring arts” she has indeed “ransomed” both nature from herself and the king’s health.

In this play, Helen is represented as not only knowledgeable, skilful, and wise but also as active and with the ambitious nature that is equated with both productive civility and professional success. These elements help make her, as Katharine Eisaman Maus argues, a “heroine . . . virtually without precedent in the Western tradition.”⁵² Helen longs for action. She decries the fact that her non-noble status is an impediment to the achievement of her goals. She is determined to go to court and “show” what she must only “think” (1.1.172). Her restless intellect and developing strategies are signaled by the great number of soliloquies that the character is given. In the second one, she reveals that she conceives of herself as free to determine, despite the handicaps of her gender and professional status, her own future: “Our remedies [she reflects, sounding like many of Shakespeare’s ambitious, self-made men] oft in ourselves do lie / Which we ascribe to heaven. The fated sky / Gives us free scope, only doth backward pull / Our slow designs when we ourselves are dull” (1.1.199–203). She will pursue what she calls her “project,” to achieve Bertram, and her “intents are fixed and will not leave [her]” (1.1.212).

Importantly, I think, Helen conceives of her medical project, not as a moral end in itself, but as an element of calculation and strategy, and in this

regard she employs the language of good risk. Going to Paris to cure the King and thus win Bertram's favour is that which she would "venture" (1.3.233). The King similarly calls her proposed cure a "venture" and he asks her what it is she is prepared to hazard in its enactment. She replies with a list; she risks her reputation and her life, and the King replies: "Thou this to hazard needs must intimate / Skill infinite" (2.1.182–3). He decides that if she is so willing to gamble on her own ability, so then will he. When the cure works, Helen wins from the King her choice of husbands and of course claims Bertram as her professional remuneration. Bertram, however, promptly attempts to escape his marital fate by enlisting in the army. Helen must then demonstrate that her skill is indeed "infinite" as she follows the troops and devises an elaborate bed trick scheme, venturing both time and money in her ultimate success.

The bed trick itself is instructive—when compared to the same strategy employed by Duke Vincentio in *Measure for Measure* (which Shakespeare wrote at the same period in his career). In *Measure for Measure*, the bed trick serves as one means for the duke to govern his population. He demonstrates his professional authority with it, as he uses it to mete out justice to Mariana, Isabella, and especially the bad apprentice governor Angelo. The duke is serving his own end at the same time, however, in that the trick preserves the chastity of the woman whom he would marry. In terms of form and function, the scheme in *All's Well* fulfills the same governmental ends. In both plays, the trick secures justice for wronged women, initiates or secures marital relations, and thus ensures reproduction of the population as both biological and social entity. The women who are actors in the scheme in *Measure for Measure*, however, have no part in devising the trick and are at first reluctant to take part. By contrast, Helen is the deviser of the scheme in *All's Well*; and while her personal stake is more overt than the duke's, both characters exhibit the skill base required to practise the complex professional tasks required of governors of many sorts in seventeenth-century England.

Bertram, unlike the disciplined and focused Helen, is a bungling diletante who displays bad judgment at every turn. As objects of satire, he and his even less wise companion, Paroles, belong to the line of military buffoons who were the stock characters of Roman comedy. I would suggest, however, that specific allusion to and satire of the English military is also at work in this play. While in early seventeenth-century England military technology and organization were in development, conditions were nevertheless poor, resistance common, and corruption at every level rife. Resistance to serving in fact sometimes rested on the claim that practising another and civilly more important profession should trump military obligation.⁵³ At the same time, as

Ian Roy observes, “[t]here was a general recognition, in the literature of the time, that the contemporary soldier had not only to equal the heroes of the past in courage and chivalrous behaviour, but master a wide range of modern skills, from mathematics, military engineering and pyrotechnics to the command of foreign languages.”⁵⁴

The difficulties of achieving this ideal of “chivalrous behaviour” are implied in the Earl of Leicester’s 55-point disciplinary code. The code promises, in its preface, that when “Estates” are well governed, “honor, fame and prosperitie, doe duely followe that common Wealth or Nation.”⁵⁵ While the code instructed officers in what to police (everything from blasphemy to sexual appetite, to where a soldier should and should not “ease himselfe”)⁵⁶ the professional imperatives that were to belong to those same officers were also the subject of dozens of manuals throughout the period. Barnes considers such men in his *Foure Bookes*, and in 1606 he can use the Earl of Essex as a negative exemplar, a man who, with others who suffered from too much ambition, could not “set limits on their owne appeties [sic].”⁵⁷ Cruikshank summarizes the virtues enumerated by Thomas and Dudely Digges: “[the officer] must be religious, temperate, sober, wise, valiant, liberal, courteous, eloquent, of good fame and reputation ... a man of great patience ... [and] learned in history and mathematical science.”⁵⁸ Certainly, a willingness to “hazard” life itself was crucial if such willingness was far from universal among conscripts. Barnes praises the soldier “so deerly bought with continuall hazard of life, which he so nobly doth adventure,”⁵⁹ and he associates such a willingness with the “habite of mind” that is “Fortitude,” in which “honorablen dangers labours, and mischievous [sic] hazards considerably, represseth feare and wrath.”⁶⁰ If officers should possess a particular “habite of mind” that would govern their potentially unruly emotions, so should the ideal officer be imaginatively engaged in devising “noble stratagems newly stamped, & never heard of before.”⁶¹ The officer was to hone a set of skills, fashion an appropriate inward orientation to the emotions of ambition and fear, and exercise a vigorous Renaissance imagination concerning professional innovation.

Shakespeare’s Bertram possesses no such orientation to himself or his profession. He looks on war as “no strife” (2.4.275). The Duke of Florence makes him the leader of the cavalry and he promises to live up to this honour “To th’extreme edge of hazard” (3.3.5). If Bertram is willing to go to the edge of hazard, however, he does not go there with the kind of self-knowledge and prudence that the conduct manuals suggest was necessary for success. At camp, it is all amusement as Bertram’s man, Paroles, is blindfolded and convinced that he is in enemy hands. Despite Paroles’s claims that he himself is

a “gallant militarist” with “the whole theoric of war in the know of his scarf, and the practice in the chape of his dagger” (4.3.137–9), he quickly caves to his “interrogators” and lists the number of Florentine soldiers “afoot.” He also provides information about Bertram’s lack of military discipline, skill, and honour. Bertram, he reports, is “a whale to virginity” (4.3.208) and an oath breaker. Worse, he charges, under Bertram’s command, his troops “charg[ed] in with [their] own horse upon [their] own wings and to rend [their own] soldiers” (3.6. 43–4). When Bertram witnesses Paroles’s easy treachery, he at least begins to learn of his own ignorance and lack of considered judgment. But it is Helen who must employ a wide range of professional arts to make him truly fit for both his public and household position and duties.

Shakespeare’s skilled and thoughtful women activists render women’s expertise the unspoken ground of civil and professional rule in a way that is representative of the state of affairs in early modern England. Household management required truly renaissance women who employed a diverse range of skills. And while there were administrative moves designed to exclude women from the supposedly “ennobling” and “learned” professions, evidence suggests that women’s work in the public service, as well, was crucial to the right workings of the commonwealth. We find the Earl of Leicester, for example, barring all women from military camps except those there “to tende the sicke and to serve in the laundry.”⁶² At the same time, Bridewell Prison, an institution that initiated an early workfare program for the poor, depended on its women matrons.

In his representation of such figures as Helen, Portia, and Paulina, is Shakespeare simply reiterating the common trope of political discourse in which a figuration of the feminine represents virtues which were to work on unruly masculine interiorities? In this vein, Thomas Elyot relates that Prudence was called by Aristotle “the mother of virtues; of other philosophers ... the mistress of virtues; of some the housewife.”⁶³ For Barnes, in his book of offices, prudence is similarly the “Gouvernesse and Judge of all virtue.”⁶⁴ If Shakespeare’s women characters are allegories of temperance, however, they nevertheless appear to be responding to real expectations of early modern women. In 1599, the legal thinker Anthony Gibson claimed that “Women’s society hath made civill the most outrageous conditions of men’s lives.”⁶⁵

I have argued that Shakespeare ironically represents a woman as the ideal, active professional citizen; Helen is the very wise, self-reflexive, ambi-

tious, prudent risk taker who was the hoped-for end of the professionalization manuals. By indirection she governs the governing class in this play; the play can be seen to comment therefore, not only on women's value to moral and natural philosophy, but also on the exercise of initiative and expertise required for the nation to thrive. By further indirection, I would suggest, Shakespeare foregrounds the contributions of his own profession to the commonwealth. Theatre, like and through such figures as Helen, also proves to be a professional venture with the aim of contributing to debates about the relative worth of labour, art, and professional citizens of all sorts. The theatre, of course, needed defending, not the least from Barnabe Barnes who, in the first book of his *Foure Bookes of Offices* warns that

Carelesnesse and negligence ... beeing the qualities of sluggish dolts, and persons assotted with curiositie, (which is the inordinate diligence or desire to learne arts unprofitable, evill, and unnecessarie) stand opposed unto the true studies of learning: semblably, scurulous prating, and unsavourie girding, (such as parasites, stage-players, and other giddieheaded Mimickes use).⁶⁶

In Barnes's defense of his learned "offices" as most ethical, he similarly complains that "those trades of an adulterat marchandize and traffique in buying or selling of wares ... bee very contemptible. Panders likewise and brutish baudes, the ministers of licencious voluptuositie, with mercenarie Players, Buffones, Fiddlers, Jugglers ... are most loathsome and filthie."⁶⁷ By contrast, Shakespeare's *All's Well That Ends Well* shows that if women's expertise and good government were the unspoken ground of English civility and prosperity, so might the theatre prove to be a profession of value to the commonwealth. Certainly, Shakespeare's drama exploits for dramatic purposes the struggles over status, the conflicts, the ironies, the ethical questions, the hazards and ventures that emerged with the imperative to professionalize.

University of Calgary

Notes

1. Definitions (unless otherwise noted) from *Oxford English Dictionary online*: <<http://dictionary.oed.com>>. University of Calgary Libraries. "Profession," III. 6. 1541 (14 March 2006).
2. "Vocation," 2.b. 1553 (14 March 2006).
3. "Occupation," II. 4.c. 1529 (14 March 2006).
4. "Mystery," n.1 1. a. Ministry, office; service, occupation ... c1390; "Mystery," n.2 .b. 1610 (14 March 2006).
5. Early Modern English Dictionary Database: <<http://www.chass.utoronto.ca/english/emedd/emedd.html>>: 1598@19182119. "Professione," (8 March 2006).

6. "Mystery," n.2. 2.c. (14 March 2006).
7. Elizabeth Hanson, "The Interiority of Ability," *The Dalhousie Review* 85: 2 (Summer 2005), p. 267.
8. Barnabe Barnes, *Four Bookes of Offices, Enabling Privat Persons for the Speciall Service of all Good Princes and Policies* (London, 1606), Early English Books Online (EEBO), University of Calgary Libraries, 8 March 2005, <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com>>, p. 60.
9. David Glimp, *Increase and Multiply: Governing Cultural Reproduction in Early Modern England* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), p. 21.
10. See general guidebooks, such as the translation of Juan Huarte's *The Examination of Mens Wits: in whicch [it will be showed] the varietie of natures ... [and] for what profession each one is apt, and how far he shall profit therein*, (London, 1594); works on individual professions such as Francis Godwin's *To the Parson, Vicar or Curate* (London, 1603); William Lambarde's *The Dueties of Constables, Borsholders, Tythingmen, and Such other Lowe and Lay Ministers of the Peace* (London, 1583), and William Scott's *An Essay of Drapery, or, The Compleate Citizen* (London, 1635). Two generations of the Digges family published on the military profession and Gervase Markham must have made a good income from the many editions of his many manuals aimed at two groups: householders and soldiers (with the care of horses a particular specialty and a crossover interest). See his *A Health to the Gentlemanly Profession of Servingmen* (London, 1598), *A Way to get Wealth: Containing Six Principall Vocations, or Callings, in which every good Husband or House-wife may lawfully imploy themselves* (London, 1631), and *A Schoole for Young Souldiers* (London, 1615).
11. Barnes, p. 6.
12. The "cultural/symbolic" perspective approaches risk as an aspect of the conceptual boundary between self and other and is exemplified in the work of anthropologist Mary Douglas. See her *Risk and Blame: Essays in Cultural Theory* (London: Routledge, 1992). The "risk society" sociologists, in particular Ulrich Beck and Anthony Giddens, look at the recent emphasis on risk as problematic in that risk management practices break down old unities and collectivities. The governmentality scholars work on the history of self-regulation and "ethical self-formation" in relation to risk. For an informative overview of risk scholarship see Deborah Lupton, *Risk, Key Ideas* (London: Routledge, 1999) and the introduction to Lupton's edited collection, "Introduction: Risk and Sociocultural Theory," in *Risk and Sociocultural Theory: New Directions and Perspectives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 1–11.
13. On this approach, see Tom Baker and Jonathan Simon, "Embracing Risk," Introduction to *Embracing Risk: The Changing Culture of Insurance and Responsibility* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), pp. 1–26.
14. Lupton, *Risk*, p. 5.
15. Lupton, *Risk* p. 6.
16. See Anthony Giddens, *Runaway World : How Globalization is Reshaping our Lives*. (New York: Routledge, 2000), pp. 39–40.
17. Reddy, quoted in Lupton, *Risk*, p. 7
18. *Early Modern English Dictionary* Cotgrave 1611 (8 March 2006).
19. Barnes, p. 12.

20. Barnes, p. 53.
21. Barnes, pp. 103–4.
22. Barnes, p. 9.
23. Barnes, p. 10.
24. Barnes, p. 40.
25. Barnes, p. 42.
26. Barnes, p. 61.
27. Barnes, p. 62.
28. Wilfrid Prest, *The Professions in Early Modern England* (New South Wales: Croom Helm, 1987), p. 18.
29. Rosemary O'Day, *The Professions in Early Modern England, 1450–1800* (Edinburgh: Pearson Education Limited, 2000).
30. O'Day, p. 34.
31. O'Day, p. 14.
32. Prest, p. 19.
33. Prest, unpaginated Preface.
34. O'Day, p. 15.
35. William Scott, *An Essay of Drapery: or, The Compleate Citizen Trading Justly. Pleasingly. Profitably* (London, 1635).
36. Gervase Markham, *Cowntrey contentments, or The English husvife Containing the inward and outward vertues which ought to be in a compleate woman* (London, 1623), extended title.
37. Markham, p. B2.
38. Markham, p. B3.
39. 3 Hen 8 c, 1.
40. See Alison Sim, *The Tudor Housewife* (Gloucestershire: Sutton, 1996), p. 86.
41. O'Day, p. 193.
42. 35 Hen 8 c, 8.
43. O'Day notes, for example, that “[t]he papers of the Ferrar family demonstrate that the granddaughters of Mary Ferrar were entrusted with the health care for their whole community in the seventeenth century” p. 214.
44. Bridewell Prison, *Minute Book*.
45. O'Day, p. 200.
46. O'Day, p. 249.
47. O'Day, p. 266.
48. Susan Snyder, ed., *All's Well That Ends Well* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 2.
49. Snyder, p. 226.

50. Quotations from *All's Well That Ends Well* follow *The Norton Shakespeare: Comedies, based on the Oxford edition*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997). Quotations from the work are cited in the text.
51. On Helen as civilizer see Lloyd Davis, "'Sick Desires': *All's Well that Ends Well* and the Civilizing Process," *Shakespeare Matters: History, Teaching, Performance*, ed. Lloyd Davis, (New Jersey: Associated University Presses, 2003). Davis writes: "Helena's pursuit of marriage to Bertram is a means of realizing the civilizing process as developed and imposed by the ruling generation of the king, the countess, and Lafew." (p. 101).
52. Katharine Eisaman Maus, Introduction to *All's Well that Ends Well*, in *The Norton Shakespeare*, p. 878.
53. C.G. Cruickshank, *Elizabeth's Army*, 2nd edition (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 9.
54. Ian Roy, "The Profession of Arms," in *Prest*, p. 192.
55. Cruickshank, p. 297.
56. Cruickshank, p. 302.
57. Barnes, p. 101.
58. P. 41.
59. Barnes, p. 115.
60. Barnes, p. 103.
61. Barnes, p. 107.
62. Cruickshank, p. 298.
63. Thomas Elyot, *The Boke Named the Governour*, ed. Foster Watson (London: Dent, 1907), p. 96.
64. Barnes, p. 37.
65. Anthony Gibson, quoted in Maria Cioni, *Women and Law in Elizabethan England with Particular Reference to the Court of Chancery* (New York: Garland, 1985), p. 23.
66. Barnes, p. 18.
67. Barnes, p. 39.