Elements in Shakespeare Performance
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**SHAKESPEARE’S VISIONARY WOMEN**

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Shakespeare’s Visionary Women

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ABSTRACT: Shakespeare’s visionary women, usually confined to the periphery, claim centre stage to voice their sleeping and waking dreams. These women recount their visions through acts of rhetoric, designed to persuade and, crucially, to directly intervene in political action. The visions discussed in this Element are therefore not simply moments of inspiration but of political intercession. The vision performed or recounted on stage offers a proleptic moment of female speech that forces audiences to confront questions of narrative truth and women’s testimony. This Element interrogates the scepticism that Shakespeare’s visionary women face and considers the ways in which they perform the truth of their experiences to a hostile onstage audience. It concludes that prophecy gives women a brief moment of access to political conversations in which they are not welcome as they wrest narrative control from male speakers and speak their truth aloud.

This Element also has a video abstract: www.Cambridge.org/Wright

KEYWORDS: Shakespeare, visions, women, sight, future

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