Knowing Women: Disrupting the Traffic of Male Epistemologies in *Pericles* and *Two Noble Kinsmen*

Yanrong Tan
University of Oxford

"What does a woman want?" That was the "great question" which Freud famously posed to Marie Bonaparte while investigating her difficulties achieving orgasm. That was the great mystery for one relationship workshop, whose claims of how "she's so confusing, no means yes? yes means no?" motivated booklets purporting to "decode" what a woman says versus what she means.[1] The stereotype is that a woman cannot be taken at her word, from which arises the related stereotypes of women being either deceitful or fickle—and the complementing view that a man's role is to then find out what truly lies behind her words. Uncertainties around women, and patriarchal society's anxiety to eliminate that uncertainty, have been mainstays of human culture for a long time. Of particular note for this essay would be *Pericles* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, plays which in part dramatize the investigation into women and female sexuality. *Pericles* begins with its eponymous character challenging King Antiochus's riddle for the right to marry his daughter, which would make him son-in-law to Antiochus and thus heir to his kingdom. When the riddle turns out to obliquely refer to the incest between King and daughter, it sets the stage for how the play would thereafter continue to fold its preoccupation with the ambiguities of women (including female bodies and female sexuality) into its riddling structure. *Pericles*, in a sense,

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makes woman a riddle to be solved. The riddle that *Kinsmen* takes up, meanwhile, is that of whom the heroine Emilia would prefer to marry, between the titular Arcite and Palamon, who must then fight to marry her and to be recognised by her kingly brother-in-law Theseus.

Considering that the resolution of the riddle is yoked to the play's regarding marriage, knowledge quests into female sexuality seem precursor to matrimonial stability. Most people seem to have some intuitive sense of this: that a woman is attractive to men for her ability to "keep him guessing," that in his attraction the man is like a detective amidst the "thrill of the chase."[2] Why is the desire for women is so often framed as a desire to solve woman? One might throw more light upon this curiosity if one begins by asking why so much of the dramatic action in *Pericles* and *Kinsmen* involves men grappling with the unknowability of women before the plays are allowed to reach resolution in marriage. What do men really want, wanting to know what women want? What then does this all say about the unexpected *answers* women might give to the men in their lives? Drawing on feminist criticism on female sexuality in relation to kinship and the male gaze, this essay argues that female unknowability in *Two Noble Kinsmen* and *Pericles* generates anxiety about how the epistemic instability around women could threaten the stability of patriarchal authority and its generational continuity. When the transmission of masculine authority and identity from patriarch to male heir depends on viewing woman as a mere vessel for the reproduction of society, the fundamental unknowability of women defying male certitude becomes a potential threat to patriarchal continuity itself.

I begin with the feminist theories that form the analytical framework for this essay, particularly theories showing how women are objectified within the systems of kinship and marriage, and how these in turn rest upon systems of male epistemology mobilized through the male gaze. Thereafter, I explore how the male characters in *Kinsmen* and *Pericles* make use of their female kin as the medium through which they transmit and preserve male power. Before this process can take place, however, a man must ascertain a woman's suitability to perform such a role. Not all women are suitable, depending on where they fall between patriarchy's polarization of women as marriageable or non-marriageable.

Accordingly, the following section turns to the methods by which men know women: namely, the investigatory and objectifying male gaze mobilized towards the making known of women within a dichotomous male epistemology. For, as the final section will observe, if woman must be unambiguously known to man in order that the latter can be unambiguously assured of the preservation of male power through her, then her ambiguity soon makes the continued future of patriarchy equally ambiguous, uncertain, and unknowable. Insofar as patriarchal continuity depends upon male inquests into women for certain knowledge that the appropriate female bodies and sexualities are being appropriately used for the transmission of male authority from one generation to another, the epistemic instability around women in *Two Noble Kinsmen* and *Pericles* threatens the very stability of patriarchal authority transacted through them.

Transacting Power through Women

Drawing on anthropological studies of how marriage organizes kinship, and psychoanalytical theories as to how kinship organizes gender relations, Gayle Rubin's "Traffic in Women" aims to explain the origins and nature of women's objectification under patriarchy, including the constraints placed upon autonomous female sexuality. Where kinship is transacted through gifts, Rubin argues that marriage transacts kinship through the circulation of women as gifts, which accordingly necessitates their objectification. In this system, the restraint on women's sexuality "responded to the desires of others, rather than … actively desired and sought a response."[3] But young males are also met with a restraint on their own sexuality. Where Lacan explains the incest taboo as a transgression against paternal authority and the organization of kinship around that authority, Rubin specifically characterizes the son's incestuous desire as a transgression against the paternal authority to manage the trafficking of female kin for the transaction of kinship and power.[4]

The value of "Traffic" lies in how it explains the durability of gender roles and sexual taboos as forcefully impressed upon the psyche, while also locating those psychic relations within a larger social structure.[5] By explaining women's position in patriarchy as "socially rather than biologically determined," "Traffic" opens

up the possibility that a change in social structure could change gender relations.[6] Certainly, "Traffic" ends with Rubin's call for an imagining of alternative sexual and gender relations. Carol Parrish Jamison has attempted to answer that call by exploring how women in Germanic literature variously respond to being objectified as gifts within marriage diplomacy, for the preservation of (male-ruled) nations.[7] This essay takes Jamison's cue to explore how men and women in *Pericles* and *Kinsmen* navigate the circulation of women and of male power through women. However, I would also like to specify the particular apparatus and methods upon which that system of circulation depends—that is, the parts of the system most vulnerable to strain.

Male Epistemologies

Before men can transact power between them through a woman, the woman in question must be reduced to an object of the quest to determine her suitability as a vessel for that transaction. That is to say, a would-be male heir finds that not all, and only some, women will allow him to successfully achieve a bond with a male father figure desirable for the power and inheritance it would grant him. This explains patriarchal society's attempt to make women intelligible through polarizing them into, essentially, marriageable and non-marriageable women. The Madonna/Whore dichotomy draws the line between a woman with whom long-term sexual relations bring the benefit of relation to her male kin, perhaps in terms of money or power, and one who exists only to fulfil short-term desire, but at the least carries with her no need to fight for fatherly or brotherly approval. Another more subtle dichotomy is that of the Mother/Not-Mother dichotomy. Since Mother is a woman that already belongs to Father in an affirmation of his own right to possess women, she is off-limits to the Son hoping to endear Father into making him heir. Instead, the Son must know to "renounc[e]" his mother and wait for Father to "provide him with a woman of his own" through which his own rights over women and his own male power will be realized.[8] Imperative for sons seeking to be the heirs to their fathers' power and authority, then, is an investigation into the women they would court to determine where they fall in the Madonna/Whore, Mother/Not-Mother, marriageable/not-marriageable scheme through which patriarchy makes women intelligible.

There is, in other words, a connection between a woman's perceived marriageability and her ability to be known, if only because one must first *know* if a woman is marriageable according to the purposes of marriage and women within patriarchy before one can marry her. The resonances among the marriageable/non-marriageable, Madonna/Whore, knowable/unknowable dichotomies are explored by Tania Modleski, in her study on how men study women in film noir. Particularly, Modleski notes how a *femme fatale*, initially an improper object of desire due to having an unknown number of past sexual partners, might gradually yield herself up to the investigatory gaze of the male detective, a yielding to being-known which simultaneously makes her into a proper object of desire.[9]

Of course, one might say that the unknowability of any mind other than one's own is a source of anxiety, so that Lisa Zunshine's general concern in *Getting Inside Your Head* is how individuals deal with the unknowability of other minds through fiction and other cultural products. Zunshine, however, also notes that even within this general anxiety about other minds, "every period in human history" seems to express a specific anxiety that women are unknowable, perhaps because their bodies "do not advertise their sexual intentions," while the nature of female reproduction and childbirth "makes it impossible for men to be certain about paternity," and so impossible for them to be certain of their "partners' intentions of staying faithful to them."[10] Rosi Braidotti makes a similar observation: the "morphologically dubious" female body, with an appearance which varies unpredictably in childbirth and pregnancy, becomes "troublesome" in a society where the gaze is the primary instrument of knowledge.[11] For it is indeed the male gaze that provides men with a way of knowing women, and accordingly, the operability of this gaze that makes or breaks the system for the preservation and transmission of male power through knowable women.

The Male Gaze

Introducing a gendered perspective on Freud's conception of the "controlling and curious gaze" which takes pleasure in reducing other people to "objects," Laura Mulvey describes how the male gaze positions man as active agent while woman remains

a passive object in her "to-be-looked-at-ness."[12] But apart from extracting voyeuristic pleasure from the spectacle of women, this male gaze also indulges in the fantasy of a powerful, omnipotence which neutralises the threatening possibilities raised by the female. Specifically, in psychoanalysis, the view of the female as castrated male forces upon the gaze a reminder of the castrating power wielded by the father whose law is absolute within the symbolic order. To compensate for this anxiety, the male gaze might investigate the woman, so reasserting male power as the power to investigate and punish women.[13] The phallus and castration, of course, represent male power and the anxiety of being deprived of it. Coupled with Rubin's insights, one can specify this as the power of the father and patriarch to organize the transmission of male power through the organization and circulation of his female kin; one can also specify, following Modleski, that the investigation into women is the investigation as to which , deemed marriageable, would grant participation in, rather than exclusion from, this circulation of power-through-women.

Knowing Women as Vessels for Male Power

I begin by exploring how man's knowledge of his place and identity within patriarchy depends upon certain knowledge about the women whose sexuality and reproductive processes organize men's positions and power relative to each other within a patrilineal social order. Knowledge of oneself as heir to patriarchal power requires both Father and Son's knowledge of the latter's maternal origins. Similarly, knowledge of oneself as heir to Father-in-Law's patriarchal power requires both men's knowledge of Father's Daughter's sexual fidelity. But what exactly is a man's inheritance? It is Father's prerogatives as supreme patriarch: primarily, the male right to own or give away women, manifested as the right to arrange and approve the marriages of female kin like daughters and sisters when such women have no rights to themselves; secondarily, the male right to that which can be exchanged for women (wealth, kingship, and so on), manifest as the men being the dominant agents in systems of political and economic exchange, wherein women are only the objects of exchange. What the Son inherits is the right to become a Father, which includes the right to make other Fathers, thereby preserving patriarchy through generations.

Yet the paradox is that inheritance of this patriarchal power "must go through the woman-in-between." This power is transmitted through the sexuality of women who, in dictating kinship between father and son, between mother's brother and sister's son, between father-in-law and son-in-law, dictate the lines of inheritance through which male power is transmitted, from father to son, from mother's brother to sister's son, from father-in-law to son-in-law.[14] Male inheritance is decided by kinship as decided by women—so that a surety of women is necessary for any sense of certitude as to one's inheritance, and all the implications for identity and societal role that inheritance has. This then explains the society-wide fixation upon virginity and female fidelity and the obsessive investigations into female sexuality, female bodies, and female desires. All manifest how patriarchy needs to *know* women to be sure of itself and the means of its own preservation and transmission.

The gaze of desire is so often the investigatory gaze because, though the desire of woman is prerequisite to successful biological reproduction, it is the knowledge of woman that is necessary to determine if she is an appropriate object of desire, this appropriateness being measured in terms of her utility for the social reproduction of patriarchy. Pericles's inquest into the sexual relations between Antiochus and his daughter is in fact an inquest into the daughter's sexuality, meant to judge whether hers is a sexuality through which Antiochus's power can be transmitted from him to Pericles, and the patriarchal structure of that power thus preserved from one generation to another. The princess is the riddle: Pericles desires Antiochus's Daughter as "the book of praise, where is read / Nothing but curious pleasures" even as he is investigating the sealed riddle about her that, when "read," reveals the "curious pleasur[e]" of her incestuous relations with her father (1.1.16-17).[15] Compared to its predecessors, Shakespeare and Wilkins' adaptation of the riddle sharpens the focus on Antiochus's daughter rather than on Antiochus, such that the true hidden referent to the riddle, as Phyllis Gorfain claims, is "not 'Incest', but the name of Antiochus's nameless daughter."[16] The true object of Pericles's quest for knowledge is to resolve the unknowability of daughter. Although the *secret* to be known is about how Antiochus has usurped marital pleasures rightfully "reserved for a future

son-in-law" in an interruption of the normal progression of time, ancestry, and inheritance,[17] the *riddle* to be solved centers on the daughter's part (willing or unwilling) in the incest, centers on definitively knowing her sexuality as either useful or not useful for purposes of patriarchy. In that sense Pericles does arrive at the answer, since knowledge of the Princess's sexual history with her father, Antiochus, makes him quite certain that her sexuality is not one which would transmit an inheritance from Antiochus to Pericles. In Pericles's discovery that the woman he would have wanted for a wife has already been claimed by the man whom he wishes for a father, is the tortured Oedipal recognition that Mother, already belonging to Father in an affirmation of his patriarchal right to possess women, is off-limits to the Son, who can only defer his hope that Father would eventually make him heir of that patriarchal right.

Pericles's revelation that the princess has been "played upon before [her] time" (1.1.84) is a necessary precedent to him recognising that it is the Father in Antiochus who, in playing this "fair viol" makes the "lawful music" of who is entitled to play said music and who is entitled to make the laws, elsewhere manifest as the near-tyrannical authority with which he orchestrates "Music!" and the other characters' actions onstage (1.1.6). Pericles must come to know that the princess is the instrument of Antiochus's patriarchal power to recognise how his own role in relation to Antiochus is that of an obedient listener before Father's laws. In this, Antiochus is counterpart to Prospero, whose authority to choreograph "solemn and strange music" (3.3.22-50)[18] and other characters' roles on stage is one with his patriarchal authority to choreograph the marital and sexual relations between his daughter Miranda and Ferdinand—one with his authority as Father to decide where and when to "provide [the son] with a woman of his own,"[19] while Ferdinand the Son can only wait and listen. Antiochus is far less amiable, such that even though Pericles has no hopes of receiving from Antiochus a woman of his own, he must nonetheless still recognise Antiochus's right to possess, give away, or withhold women, if only to survive long enough until he can come into that right through other means (another woman, and another relationship with another Father transacted through that woman). Pericles must claim to "care not" to possess the princess

already possessed by Father (1.1.86). He must "renounce" his own claim to her out of "fear that otherwise his father would castrate him" and punitively "refuse him the phallus [symbolising male power],"[20] out of fear that Antiochus would make him entirely unable to possess women at all through death as the most extreme of castration—out of fear that he would be excluded utterly from the patriarchal line of inheritance. The riddle of the princess dramatizes how the quest for knowledge of women's sexuality has incredibly high stakes for the patrilineal male kinship organized by that sexuality. In knowing the princess, he knows that Antiochus's ownership of her makes Antiochus patriarch and knows himself as a son subject to Antiochus's patriarchal rule for as long as Antiochus refuses Pericles the right to become a patriarch himself.

Still, in most circumstances, to know a woman as demonstrative of the patriarch's prerogative over women is eventually to come to deserve that right, as Pericles finds out with Simonides. If the initial riddle of the princess is answered with the unwelcome knowledge that she is reserved for the Father and not the Son, the riddle of Thaisa reveals her availability as a wife for the Son, and thus her suitability as a vessel for Simonides's male power to be transmitted through her to Pericles. As with the princess, Thaisa's sexuality passes in the exchange from Simonides the Father to Pericles his Son-in-law in the form of riddling texts to be unsealed, investigated, and brought to the light of (male) knowledge. As a letter which passes from her hand to Simonides's to Pericles's (2.5.40), Thaisa and her supposed desire for Pericles becomes, from Pericles's perspective, a mystery for the latter to solve. In Pericles's anxious declamations that he has "never aimed so high to love [Simonides's] daughter," the uncertainty as to Thaisa's sexual desire is one with Pericles's uncertainty as whether Simonides means Thaisa to be the woman for him or means "to have [Pericles's] life" (2.5.43-46), one with the Son's anxiety as to whether this woman is a woman Father means for him to have. From Antiochus, Pericles learns that recognition and knowledge of Father's female property is necessary to prevent unknowing transgressions upon said property. But now, when the riddle that is female desire is "[r]esolve[d]" by woman's explicit declaration that being made love to by Pericles "would make [her] glad" (2.5.66), it is simultaneously brought to resolution that this woman is indeed one Simonides means for Pericles to have—that

this woman's desire is appropriate and suitable for the purposes of the transmission of patriarchal authority from Simonides to Pericles. Pericles comes into knowledge of Thaisa's desire to have him as a husband in the same moment he comes into knowledge of Simonides's desire to have him as a son-in-law, because it is the two together that brings certain knowledge of Thaisa's sexuality as one appropriately "respond[ing] to [male] desires" with regards to the males being desired as kin and to the desired lines of patriarchal inheritance.[21] On Simonides's end, certainty that "[Thaisa's] choice agrees with [his]" (2.5.17) gives him certainty that, although his own desire for Pericles to be his son-in-law "resist[s]" him like the appetite for "cates" that cannot be directly satiated within his (male) body, Thaisa's desire for Pericles to be her "meat" makes her body newly useful as a vessel through which Simonides's desire for kinship with Pericles passes through Thaisa's body towards fulfilment. She becomes the literal go-between "say[ing] [Simonides] drink[s] this standing bowl of wine to [Pericles]" (2.3.63). Through Thaisa, wine flows from Simonides to Pericles as "great … blood" and might flow from Father to Son (2.5.78), between the two who have so thoroughly investigated her for the reassuring certainty of seeing that flow pass unimpeded through a body made utterly transparent.

This relationship between Simonides and Pericles reaches fruition when the riddle sealed in with Thaisa's coffin is "[f]rom first to last resolve[d]" at Diana's temple (5.3.37). Recalling the tetrameter couplets of Antiochus's riddle, the riddle in the coffin is a riddle of female identity as well as that of the "morphologically dubious" female body,[22] capable of hovering between life and death. When resolved, the revelation of Thaisa's identity coincides with news that "[her] father's dead" (5.3.73), so that Pericles inherited through his "queen" his claim to his father-in-law's "kingdom" (5.3.80-83). Now Pericles is patriarch in his own right, having produced, through his relations with Thaisa, a child whose birth coincides with another delivery of a letter (3.0.14). This revelatory letter symbolizes how the knowing of women in relation to men transacts between men the right over women. As knowing Thaisa is a necessary prerequisite for the right to possess Thaisa to pass from Simonides to Pericles through Thaisa, knowing Marina becomes a prerequisite for the right to possess Marina to

pass from Pericles to Lysimachus through Marina. Once Pericles has identified the correct woman (Son's Wife and not Mother who is already Father's Wife) through which he can inherit Father's right to own woman, he becomes a patriarch sure of himself and his capacity to make other patriarchs of his sons. According to Janet Adelman, the play begins with a female body faulted for how it "confounds distinctions" and so obscures the masculine identity Pericles seeks through a father-son relationship, progresses by purifying the maternal source of identity of such ambiguities, and concludes with a masculine identity newly clarified.[23] Another way of looking at it would be to say that Pericles's increasing knowledge about women is proportional to increasing self-knowledge as to his own identity and place in society. The less mystery there is to how he relates to women like Thaisa and Marina, the surer Pericles becomes of himself as a man in a man's world—and particularly, as a man charged with maintaining that man's world.

The epistemic instability around women as it relates to the instability or stability of male inheritance and identity is also thematized in *Two Noble Kinsmen*, where the questions of Emilia's sexual preference between the titular kinsmen double as questions as to whom, in receiving the right to Emilia, would be the rightful heir to Emilia's kingly brother-in-law, Theseus. Much of the conflict turns upon the question as to which of the two, Palamon or Arcite, "saw her first" and so has the right to claim her for himself (2.2.160-163).[24] At first, the object of inquiry seems to be not Emilia, but the men, particularly their male desire for Emilia as expressed through their gaze upon her. Yet the gazes of Palamon and Arcite differ little from Pericles's. Once again, a gaze investigates a woman, her body, and her sexuality to unravel the riddle of the hidden stakes of man's investigation into woman. For Valerie Voight, Palamon and Arcite's voyeuristic sighting of Emilia in her private garden is an instance of male surveillance eliminating the mystery of the all-female space and its ambiguous threats to heteronormative reproduction. The stakes of this surveillance are suggested in how it immediately precedes the prisoners regaining the bodily freedom more typical of male autonomy and how it sets in motions the events by which Emilia is "tamed."[25] Still, the final goal behind the investigation and taming of Emilia is really to more thoroughly ascertain and define the role she is to play as a wife, transmitting

power from Theseus to the liberated Palamon. Palamon and Arcite take pleasure in gazing upon Emilia as part of the masculinist impulse to "investigate the woman" and "demystify her mystery,"[26] specifically in Palamon and Arcite's case, the mystery of how she will organize the circulation of power between paternal authority and the would-be male heirs aspiring to his authority. If seeing and being seen is an inquiry into rank and nobility when trained upon men,[27] when trained upon women it becomes an inquiry into how female bodies transmit that rank and nobility from one man to another. The question as to who "first saw her" decides who is to be "First" to "[take] possession" of Emilia *as well as* "all those beauties in her," including the right to inherit from Theseus the beauteous power to possess women such as Emilia (2.2.169-171). When they gaze upon Emilia in both desire and curiosity, they investigate who has "a just title to her beauty," which they equate with the title accorded to one "That is a man's son" (2.2.181-185). Emilia's comparison between their contention for her hand and the contest for the "title of a kingdom" then belies the literal contest for the title of son and heir to Theseus's kingdom (5.3.33-34). Once more the problems of male inheritance and identity are inseparable from inquests into the female body.

The woman most favored for patriarchy's purposes would be the woman most knowable, transparent as glass and so impeding nothing of the clear light penetrating from father to son. Knowing women, then, becomes indispensable for men to ascertain if and how a woman will confer upon him the benefits of male kinship. If the inquest discloses knowledge that a woman is unsuitable for desire or marriage, such as Antiochus's daughter, who is already spoken for by the Father determined to keep her for himself, the Son must renounce her in order to retain his place, however subordinate, within the patriarchal social order. Conversely, with enough knowledge to identify the woman suitable for marriage, one secures a new place as potential heir to her male kin's power and prestige, as when Pericles identifies Thaisa as a bridge to her father Simonides's power. To know a woman is to know how one is to relate to other men in the patrilineal organization of relations, such that the investigations into Emilia's sexuality is overlaid with investigations into questions of primogeniture and the rights of the firstborn in relation to inheritance. Either way, the patrilineal

organization of male kinship through which patriarchy is preserved across generations is clearly dependent upon men performing inquests into women to make them known in terms intelligible to a male knowledge of the system wherein women are either marriageable or non-marriageable, dependent upon women being knowable to men.

Unknowable Woman

The problem, then, is that women are rarely so reassuringly knowable to men, regardless of how hard men try to know women and regardless of how much men need to know women. That is, the apparatus of seeing through women becomes suspect if women make themselves known through means other than sight. It might seem that in *Pericles* and *Kinsmen*, woman as riddle is eventually resolved into controllable certainty through the men's efforts, and resolved in concurrence with the resolution of the narrative and with the restoration of the patriarchal order. Yet the great exertions the men display in their investigations of women are stalked by a persistent undercurrent throughout the plays: a fear that, for all that, women, their bodies, and their desires remain fundamentally unknowable.

If obsessive investigations into female virginity, chastity, and fidelity are necessary to secure certain knowledge of the heir to which a man is transmitting his patriarchal power, they are also *necessarily difficult* because such aspects of women continue to elude certainty. *Kinsmen* from the very first opens with the unknowability of female sexuality and the threat of it eluding the male gaze. The play's celebration of "maidenheads" is troubled by an awareness that one can never truly know "[if] they stand sound and well" (Prologue.1-3). The new bride who "after holy tie and first night's stir / Yet still is Modesty and still retains / More of the maid to *sight*, then husband's pain" (Prologue.5-8, emphasis added), who might in fact be other than she appears to be to sight, is no small threat to men for whom sight and the gaze is the means by which they attempt to make known and possess female sexuality (as discussed above). The doctor that the Jailer seeks after his daughter goes mad for Palamon is even more explicit, bluntly professing that her "honesty" would be impossible for him to "find" (5.2.28-29). Not even Theseus can escape this anxiety-

inducing uncertainty in his wedding to Hippolyta, where it is symbolized as a "sland'rous cuckoo" (1.1.19). The cuckoo, finally heard, reveals the eyes as having been inadequate instruments all along, reveals how blind are men's systems for knowing women. This uncertainty about paternity creates further uncertainty about patrilineal continuity and stability. For all that the male gaze acts to reduce that uncertainty around women and so neutralize the anxiety they cause to some degree,[28] uncertainty always remains. The gaze on women, rather than solving the riddle that is woman, repeatedly encounters only the unsolvability of woman which created the need to solve women in the first place, a need which can never be answered.

Nor could it have been otherwise. To have determined that the only thing worth knowing about woman is her chastity and marriageability, is in effect to have already placed limits upon the male system of knowledge, and thus to have consigned certain aspects of women beyond that system. Thus it is impossible to attempt to know women through such a system without running into the limits of its methods. Even as the scene of Emilia in her virginal garden provides Palamon and Arcite wide space to indulge in their sexual curiosity, it at the same time occasions a subtextual lesbian desire that, being beyond the male gaze that is men's method of knowing, resists being known. Examining how *Kinsmen* adapts Emilia's virginity, Lori Leigh notes that the garden offers up a safe and constrained version of female sexuality which, being transparent to and penetrable by Palamon and Arcite's male gaze, remains containable within heteronormative marriage and the malleable to the purposes of patriarchy. Yet this hardly precludes it from being, at the same time, a homosocial enclosure where Emilia might have a homoerotic encounter with her maidservant, away from male influence and surveillance (54-58).[29] In this the garden becomes but one instance of how the uncertainty about Emilia's preference between Palamon or Arcite is shadowed by a larger uncertainty around women which takes its most extreme form in the possibility that she "shall never—like the maid Flavina— / Love any that's called man" (1.3.84-85), that she is not knowable to men because he is knowable only by women. Remembrance of Flavina is so stimulating that it puts Emilia "out of breath" (1.3.83) and puts her sexuality quite out of male access. If her "breasts"

and "decking" seem to grant men visual access and advertise her fertility's usefulness for patrilineal purposes, they also hint at her romance with Flavina, who would "long" for the "flower that [Emilia] would pluck / And put between [her] breasts," and whose "pattern" Emilia copied in her "decking" (1.3.66-72). Greedily and confidently seizing upon Emilia's figure in her seemingly transparent "to-be-looked-at-ness,"[30] the male gaze instead fails to grasp how it is another unknown woman Emilia looks at, with quite unknowable intentions and threateningly opaque history and future. Appropriately, then, Emilia's homage to Flavina and her demonstration of her unknowable sexuality is compared to "old importment's bastard," since the "bastard" child of uncertain paternity and unascertainable femininity, is male knowledge at its most fallible (1.3.80). As the ambiguity of the "bastard" troubles the patrilineal Emilia's possibly female-oriented sexuality, and the more general fact of its unknowability, frustrate the attempts of those who would make her sexuality known in order to appropriate it into a vessel for the certain continuation of patriarchal authority.

In much the same way, Marina at her most knowable within the male system of knowledge is paradoxically also Marina unknowable in the ways most dangerous for the continuation of that system. From the first, Marina's resistance to being known by men (sexually or otherwise), is one "able to freeze the god Priapus and undo a whole generation" (4.5.12), one that threatens the continuity of a patriarchal society dependent upon women being knowable for reproduction of itself. Eventually, Pericles and Lysimachus come to know Marina well enough to know her as a suitably chaste vessel for the transmission of Pericles's patriarchal power to the next generation. Yet, even as Pericles's discovery that Marina "*look'st* / Like one [he] loved indeed" (5.1.115-116, emphasis added) paves the way for his knowledge that she is as pure as the woman he married to inherit her father's power (and therefore certainly chaste enough to allow him to transmit his own), he encounters the same unknowability of woman before which Antiochus confuses his daughter with his wife and brings proper patrilineal lines of inheritance to destruction. The most successful fulfilment of the male investigation into women, in which the woman in question is most completely known as pure enough to pass from Pericles to his son-in-law Lysimachus, cannot throw off the shadow of its

dark twin in Lysimachus passing Marina to Pericles while praising, in an ambiguously sexual context, her "sweet harmony / And other choice attractions" (5.1.38-39). Such ambiguity is deadly in another daughter passed between Pericles and Antiochus. The unknowability of Marina momentarily renews the threat of incest and the destruction it wreaks upon patriarchal social organization as well as the national government it supports.

The Unknowable Future of Patriarchy

If patrilineal stability and male success depends upon knowing women, yet is hindered by the fact that women are impossible to know through the ways by which men know, then patriarchy becomes perilously dependent upon women choosing to make themselves knowable. Men cannot know women because the system and instruments by which they know (an overdetermined masculinist gaze) is fundamentally incompatible with what they seek to know of women's ambiguities. The male gaze in the end is a dubious means of actually resolving the riddle of women, prolonging an investigation without ever coming to certain conclusion. After all, the conclusion of the riddle comes not through the gaze but the voice. While a riddle might be investigated in the passing of the eyes over the riddle's object, the riddle is only *solved* when the answer actually passes the challenger's lips. (This is the very quibble by which Pericles can complete his investigation into the riddle without actually completely resolving it, and so partially escapes what would have been the consequences of doing so.) And if the gaze has been heretofore the tool by which men attempt to know women, it is the voice that is the means by which women make themselves known. If there is a riddle of women to be solved for the success of patriarchy and the succession of its heirs, it is a success dependent upon women making themselves known, rather than men who are doomed to fail in their attempts to know women when equipped with the worst possible tools for the task.

Given the impossibility of Pericles attaining knowledge of Marina through male ways of investigating and knowing and thus the impossibility of him ever securing his patrilineal continuity through that knowledge, it instead falls upon Marina to makes herself known to Pericles and to restore him to his kingship. When she declares, "I am the daughter to King Pericles, / If good King

Pericles be" (5.1.168-169), her identification of herself in some sense does conjure King Pericles back into "be[ing]." To extend Kurt Schreyner's argument that "[i]t is Marina that makes Pericles a father, not Pericles himself,"[31] one might say that it is Marina making herself known to Pericles, rather than Pericles's coming into knowledge of her, that equips him with the knowledge he needs to re-establish his patriarchy and become King Pericles once more. At the same time, it is the voice by which Marina makes these declarations of identity. As her musical talents once allowed her to escape being subject to rapacious male investigation of her body, her voice now cancels out the silence Pericles has fallen into following his failure to answer the riddles around his wife and daughter. Marina's musical voice breaks the silence of the unknown and unknowable to keep tempo with the "music of the spheres" (5.1.18), accompanying Diana's answer to the question of which sea to cross to find Thaisa, whose body is the question and the path Pericles must cross to find her father's power. Pericles himself admits that it is "by *her own* most clear remembrance she / Ma[kes] *known* herself [his] daughter" (5.3.12-13, emphasis added), that she succeeds where he fails, that knowledge is to come only by being female and freely given rather than from the invasive gaze upon women, especially when the answer turns out in the end to lie in the voice that cannot be seen. What is "dumb" in Pericles's mute "show" Marina now makes "plain with speech" (3.0.14). Antiochus, even Simonides and Pericles, only ever aspired to authority on the paternal level of Prospero, whereas Marina's originary power in relation to Pericles finds its closest parallel in the way everything that can be known of *Pericles* flows from the omniscient Gower himself.

Marina's voice is what finally gives the patriarchal system the knowledge of woman that it desperately needs for the preservation of its regulatory systems, the knowledge that it is also poorly equipped to acquire precisely because of those systems. This gives a new context from which Emilia's silence at the end of *Kinsmen* might be viewed. One might certainly read Emilia's silence at the end of the play as evidence of how there is nothing more to be known about her because she has become entirely known to men. Her wishes are not taken into account; her consent is "precarious or nonexistent"[32] because the men do not bother to ask—but they

do not bother because they do not think there remains anything to ask, not when all has already been wrenched into the harsh light of revelation. Yet it is precisely the silence of another daughter in *Pericles* that makes her so much a symbol of familial and national disorder occasioned by the unknowability of woman.[33] The question of whether Emilia consents to the marriage is forgone by the mute fact that she has never consented to being known, such that her final silence speaks to a refusal to be definitively known, a refusal to be comfortably reduced to an object of knowledge and knowable transaction. Her silence seems almost a fulfilment of Hippolyta's early promise to Theseus, that she will forever let herself fall to "vigour dumb" (1.1.195) and make no more requests of him if he refuses her present request that they postpone the wedding until after he helps the three widows. Lois Porter comments that Hippolyta's words might sound "obedient" but "can also be seen as a threat," especially in the context of her actually withholding her sexual availability from Theseus until he fulfils her request.[34] Hippolyta's "vigour dumb" is a threat for how the withdrawal of her voice will make her acoustically inaccessible, on top of how the withdrawal of her body will make her sexually and visually inaccessible and thus unserviceable towards the reproduction of patriarchy. It is Emilia who, before her own impending nuptials, makes good on that threat. If the apparently heteronormative ending of *Midsummer's Night Dream* is still not conclusive enough to contend with the homoerotic suggestiveness that Rosalind and Celia retain precisely because sexuality is "unknowable,"[35] then perhaps the seemingly heteronormative endings of *Pericles* and *Kinsmen* are not as conclusive as they seem either, especially given the unknowability of women that the plays are insistently preoccupied with, and that both make emphatic once more in their heroines' silence.

In *Pericles* and *Two Kinsmen*, marriage with women is indispensable in creating the kinship between males through which patriarchal authority is transmitted. Equally indispensable to this process of patrilineal inheritance is the reduction of women into objects of knowledge by which their suitability as patrilineal vessels might be judged. The problem, however, comes in how the women of the plays are not so readily known, are far more unpredictable and unknowable than is intelligible to the reductive

epistemologies of patriarchy. Unknowable as they are, they begin to make uncertain the continuity of patriarchy itself. It is Oedipus who speaks the answer "Man" and passes the riddler on the road to Thebes, but it is the Sphinx in her suicidal silence who clears the path leading to the destruction of his patriarchal kingdom.

Notes

1. According to the pamphlets: "If he says 'Nothing', he really means 'Nothing'"; "If she says 'Nothing', she really means 'Something is bothering me. I hope you are sensitive enough to *figure it out*'" (emphasis added). A more accurate phrasing of the organization's ostensible aim to "help young people unravel the world of the opposite sex" would be that they aim to help *males* unravel the world of *females* while positioning them, respectively, as unraveller and to-be-unravelled. Some of its materials are reproduced in Azim Azman, "Hwa Chong student's post over 'sexist' relationship workshop goes viral", *The New Paper*, Oct 8, 2014, https://tnp.straitstimes.com/news/hwa-chong-students-post-over-sexist-relationship-workshop-goes-viral.

2. "The more mysterious and aloof you appear, the more he'll want to spend time with you and figure out what's changed in your life." Such is the love advice given in Ellie Porter, "8 Ways to Ignore a Man and Make Him Want You," *Mindful Cupid*, October 29, 2021, https://mindfulcupid.com/how-to-ignore-a-man-and-make-him-want-you/. For an account of how the *femme fatale* trope in film noir plays up this sexual appeal (to men) of the mysterious (woman), see Tania Modleski, "The Woman Who Was Known Too Much: *Notorious*," in *The Women Who Knew Too Much* (New York: Routledge, 2015).

3. Gayle Rubin, "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex," in *Toward an Anthropology of Women*, ed. Rayna R. Reiter (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975), 173-174, 182. For further exploration as to how kinship organizes gender relations, see Janet Carsten, *After Kinship, New Departures in Anthropology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511800382. Although this essay focuses on how such ideas of kinship might lend insights to their representation in Shakespeare, the usefulness of Rubin's ideas even for contemporary kinship and gender relations is demonstrated in Andrea Wright, "Making Kin from Gold: Dowry, Gender, and Indian Labor Migration to the Gulf," *Cultural Anthropology* 35.3 (August 3, 2020), https://doi.org/10.14506/ca35.3.04.

4. Rubin, "Traffic in Women," 193.

5. Gayle Rubin and Judith Butler, "Sexual Traffic: Interview with Gayle Rubin by Judith Butler," in *Deviations: A Gayle Rubin Reader* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012), 283.

6. Laura Kipnis, "Response to 'The Traffic in Women,'" *Women's Studies Quarterly* 34.1/2 (2006): 435.

7. Carol Parrish Jamison, "Traffic of Women in Germanic Literature: The Role of the Peace Pledge in Marital Exchanges," *Women in German Yearbook* 20 (2004): 13–36.

8. Rubin, "Traffic in Women," 193.

9. Modleski, "*Notorious*."

10. Lisa Zunshine, *Getting Inside Your Head* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012), 176.

11. Rosi Braidotti, "Mothers, Monsters, and Machines," in *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 225-226.

12. Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," in *Visual and Other Pleasures* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 16-19.

13. Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure," 21-22.

14. Rubin, "Traffic in Women," 192.

15. William Shakespeare and George Wilkins, *Pericles*, ed. Suzanne Gossett, The Arden Shakespeare: Third Series (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2004).

16. Phyllis Gorfain, "Puzzle and Artifice: The Riddle as Metapoetry in *Pericles*," in *Pericles: Critical Essays*, ed. David Skeele (New York: Garland Publishing, 2000), 136.

17. Sophie Emma Battell, "Pericles and the Secret," *Shakespeare* 18.4 (October 2, 2022): 432–50, https://doi.org/10.1080/17450918.2022.2066166.

18. William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, ed. Barbara Mowat, Paul Werstine, Michael Poston, and Rebecca Niles (Washington, DC: Folger Shakespeare Library, 2015).

19. Rubin, "Traffic in Woman," 193.

20. Rubin, 193.

21. Rubin, 182.

22. Braidotti, "Mothers," 226.

23. Janet Adelman, "Masculinity and the Maternal Body: The Return to Origins in *Pericles*," in *Pericles: Critical Essays,* ed. David Skeele (New York: Garland Publishing, 2000), 185-187.

24. William Shakespeare and John Fletcher, *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, ed. Lois Potter (Revised Edition, New York: The Arden Shakespeare: Third Series, 2015).

25. Valerie Voight, "'I Am Not against Your Faith yet I Continue Mine': Virginal Vocation in The Two Noble Kinsmen," *Comparative Drama* 55.2 (2021): 307–30, https://doi.org/10.1353/cdr.2021.0017.26. Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure," 21-22.

27. Alex Davis, "Living in the Past: Thebes, Periodization, and The Two Noble Kinsmen," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 40.1 (January 1, 2010): 173–95, https://doi.org/10.1215/10829636-2009-018.28. Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure," 22.

28. Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure," 19.

29. Lori Leigh, *Shakespeare and the Embodied Heroine* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2014), https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137465993.

30. Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure," 19.

31. Kurt A. Schreyer, "Moldy Pericles," *Exemplaria* 29.3 (July 3, 2017): 210–33, https://doi.org/10.1080/10412573.2017.1346394.

32. Voight, "Virginal Vocation," 325.

33. Gorfain, "Puzzle and Artifice," 136, reads the unsolvability of the riddle around the Princess, as typical of her as a "symbol of disorder" and threat to social

stability, "because of her undifferentiated anonymity and the silence her riddle imposes."

34. From Porter's commentary in the above cited Arden edition.

35. Caitlin Mahaffy, "Possible Impossibilities: Female-Female Desire in Early Modern English Drama," *Journal of the Wooden O* 22 (2022): 77.