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The Wooden O Symposium is a cross-disciplinary conference that explores Medieval and Renaissance studies through the text and performance of Shakespeare's plays. The symposium is held annually in August in Cedar City, Utah, and coincides with the Utah Shakespeare Festival's summer season. Plays from Shakespeare's canon are performed each summer in the Englestadt Shakespeare Theatre, a unique performance space modeled after the Globe Theatre, Shakespeare's own "Wooden O."

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Birthing Death: A Reconsideration of the Roles of Power, Politics and the Domestic in *Macbeth*

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At curtain-rise on *Macbeth*, a king confronts an insurrection and is subsequently murdered by one of his subjects. At curtain-fall, a king has countenanced an insurrection and has recently been decapitated by one of his subjects. What varies between these two scenarios is the name of the king and the locus of the audience's sympathies: for or against him. Yet the bookended nature of the play should prompt inquiry into the instinctive desire to censure Macbeth and validate Duncan/Macduff. On closer inspection, Macbeth and Duncan are not so very distinct as kings,[1] nor are Macbeth and Macduff as king-slayers. Scotland is also as politically turbulent at the inception of the play as at its culmination. Removing Macbeth does not release the country from the clutches of a dangerous ideology of political power, and installing Macduff, a man implicated in the death of his wife, children, and mother, is certainly not an unqualified triumph.

Macbeth contains many conflicts, but almost all of them may be subsumed under the one between the political and domestic spheres. Shakespeare weaves multiple manifestations of this crisis, in the process profoundly critiquing the systemic validation of the former at the cost of the latter. Critics have long recognized the play as Shakespeare's vehicle for endorsing James I,[2] the myth of the Stuart genealogy, and the new monarch's particular fears and interests.[3] The play, for example, condemns regicide,

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substantiates the sacredness and authority of the anointed king, recognizes witchcraft, and demonizes equivocation.[4] However, a more exacting investigation rediscovers the play as itself a massive equivocation: it endorses neither kings nor kingship—instead, it appraises and contests the very nature of power. During his reign, James readily recited two opposing notions of power—one political and one domestic—to serve his immediate goals. These two notions were the major ones held generally by early modern English culture. *Macbeth* evokes these theories and examines what I shall call "domestic power" as the counterpoint to political power. The play seems not so much to argue for a union of the two as to warn that a divorce between them promulgates a sickened form of sexuality. That is, without the redressing force of domestic power, political might prompts a perverse maternity, one in which infertility begets death. *Macbeth*, I contend, illustrates that the king's competing notions of power are a formula for calamity.

Political force in Scotland is self-promoting and inevitably destructive; it is the Nietzschean will-to-power in its most negative sense or, as Shakespeare elsewhere defined it, a senseless yet instinctive urge to dominate. *Troilus and Cressida's* Ulysses, admittedly a self-interested schemer, is nevertheless one of the play's premier commentators on social mores. He characterizes political power as an appetite of cannibalistic and self-destructive dimensions: "Everything includes itself in power, / Power into will, will into appetite; / And appetite, an universal wolf, / So doubly seconded with will and power, / Must make perforce an universal prey / And last eat up himself" (1.3.119-24).[5] In *A Speech to the Lords and Commons of the Parliament at Whitehall* delivered in 1610, James I upholds this appetitive and self-serving power as a rightful royal entitlement:

> Kings are justly called gods, for that they exercise a manner or resemblance of divine power upon earth . . . God hath power to create, or destroy, make or unmake, at His pleasure, to give life, or send death, to judge all, and to be judged nor accomptable to none, to raise low things, and to make high things low at His pleasure, and to God are both soul and body due. And the like power have kings: they make and unmake their subjects; they have the power of raising and casting down, of life, and of death . . . [and to] make of their subjects, like men of the chess, a pawn to take a bishop or a knight, and to cry up, or down any of their subjects, as they do their money.[6]

James's absolutist definition of monarchical right includes the right to expedient manipulation and exploitation of his subjects.

Robert P. Adams contends that this "myth of Machiavellianism" became one of the Renaissance's foremost concepts of power. This concept "was and is above all an expression of the realities and fantasies of those who actually control the power-to-destroy and of those, including real or potential victims, who sense that great men-of-respect do have such capabilities. By late Elizabethan times the myth was a force in being . . . [and it forced] the first modern century to forgo nearly all pretence that international law (itself a mythic and nostalgic medieval notion) had living force . . . As the worn-out myth of 'Christendom' collapsed, the normal relationship between European princes became one of warfare."[7] Adams argues that Renaissance dramatists, including Shakespeare, identified this Machiavellian, malevolent urge for power with usurper-kings, and the Christian, benevolent desire to guide with legitimate rulers. Alan Sinfield perceives the same dichotomy in Renaissance political culture, only terming it as one between Absolutism (as evident in early modern power states) and Feudalism (as was manifest in the Middle Ages). He observes that the conflict occupies a central role in Macbeth. The play, "like very many plays of the period, handles anxieties about the violence exercised under the aegis of Absolutist ideology. Two main issues come into focus. The first is the threat of a split between legitimacy and actual power . . . A second problem . . . [is] what is the difference between Absolutism and tyranny?"[8]

At risk of overly schematizing the early modern understanding of power, one can claim that the appetitive, Machiavellian, absolutist will-to-power was posited against an idealized concept of domestic, bountiful authority. Perhaps the best manifestation of this latter rule is to be found again in the language of King James I himself. In *Basilikon Doron*, James attempts to define a more benevolent and somewhat affective notion of command:

> A good King, thinking his highest honour to consist in the due discharge of his calling, emploieth all his studie and paines, to procure and maintaine, by the making and execution of good Lawes, the well-fare and peace of his people; and as their naturall father and kindly Master, thinketh his greatest contentment standeth in their prosperitie, and his greatest suretie in hauing their hearts,

> subjecting his owne priuate affections and appetites to the weale and standing of his Subiects, euer thinking common interesse his chiefest particular where by the contrarie, an vsurping Tyrant, thinking his greatest honour and felicitie to consist in attaining . . . thinketh neuer himselfe sure, but by the dissention and factions among his people, and counterfeiting the Saint while he once creepe in credite, will then (by inuerting all good Lawes to serve onely for his vnrulie priuate affections) frame the common-weale euer to aduance his particular: building his suretie vpon his peoples miserie and in the end (as a stepfather and an vncouth hireling) make vp his owne hand vpon the ruines of the Republicke.[9]

James here accentuates the domestic space in the rather sentimental rhetoric of parental self-sacrifice, emotionality, love, guidance, peace, happiness, and reciprocity. The affective poignancy is further heightened when the opposition between the "good king" and the "tyrant" is expressed as one between a kind, natural father, and a self-serving, exploitative stepfather, that is, one not related by blood.

Macbeth deploys these two concepts of power, political and domestic, to posit that without the redressing force of the domestic, the political turns all "signifyings" into nothing. Macbeth clearly learns this consequence, albeit too late, and is excoriated for his crimes. The real crux of the play, however, lies in the fact that Macbeth is but a scapegoat for a well-populated system. This system survives, hale and unblemished, at the finale. The tale is indeed idiotic, but it will be told again.

More significantly, the play seems to attribute gender identities to these two models of power. The privileging of such "masculine" elements as ambition (and similar impulses), violence, tyranny, and public success, induces an existence in which such "feminine" elements as altruism (and like sentiments), peace, fellowship, and private prosperity are stifled. More problematically, and herein lies the true peril of this fractious world, the male element perverts itself to the point where it becomes monstrously hermaphroditic.[10] That is, though the masculine is completely uncoupled from the feminine, it nevertheless manages to engage in a sickly reproduction. The annihilation of the feminine by the masculine gives rise to the central paradox of the play—it gives birth to death, it brings to life that which cannot live and yet continues to thrive. Political power becomes paradoxically self-

generating, yet simultaneously barren. Each element of *Macbeth* is encompassed within this single matrix.

The play manifests this conundrum at every turn: in its characters, symbols, actions, resolutions, and so forth. Whether they are male or female, anointed kings or murdering upstarts, the individuals who pursue political supremacy instigate a self-defeating infertility. Duncan, Macbeth, and Macduff are all points on a continuum, and by privileging the politics of might, they participate in engendering a system that can only "dis-engender," to coin a phrase. These three men, and countless others, propagate the unnatural condition where only death can thrive. Thus, no family survives intact in Scotland, and every configuration of familial relationship is made defunct.

The matrix is correspondingly played out in the women. Lady Macduff is its victim, while Lady Macbeth is proponent as well as victim. Scholarship has often emphasized Lady Macbeth's defeminizing. In actual fact, her pursuit of the masculine engages her in a perverse maternity, one that matures from and gives birth to political power; Lady Macbeth propagates destructive and unregenerative power. More pervasively, no aspect of the feminine sphere remains at the end of the play: all the wives beat their husbands to the grave, no mortal woman of child-bearing age is left alive, and the play is littered with dead babies and bloody children, in image and in fact.

Finally, the proffered solution does not augur promise. Macduff is simply a more perfect product of the Scottish system than is Macbeth. He is the true anathema, and the horror is exacerbated by the fact that Scotland, and ostensibly the play, perceive him as the savior. The play's final solution, a "family unit" constituted of Macduff, Malcolm and Fleance, is also severely flawed. The ultimate image is of a bizarrely perverse family, one composed entirely of men, rendering the hope for Scotland's renaissance immensely ironic, and serving only to confirm the ubiquitous masculinity of the play.

But first, the nature of power: attaining power status is a systemic impetus in Scotland. This impetus is evidently contrary to nature, as emphasized by the attire imagery attached to it: "Why do you dress me in borrowed robes?" (1.3.107); "new honors" are like "strange garments" (1.3.146-47); "Was the hope drunk wherein you dressed yourself?" (1.7.36-37).[11] These metaphors reveal power as a deliberately assumed and artificially constructed

function, an external ornamentation rather than an integral element of the "unaccommodated man." The play also rarely offers rationales for exploits of might. It never stipulates why the Norweyans or the rebels assail Scotland, nor indeed why Macbeth desires the kingship or Lady Macbeth craves it for him. Thus, power does not simply lack justification, it often lacks meaning beyond the *per se* ownership of it.

Every initiated act of force, be it by Duncan, Macbeth, Macduff, Lady Macbeth, Siward, Malcolm, or others, has as objective the securing of the throne, the ultimate symbol of power.[12] Those already in occupancy dedicate every deed to safeguarding it. Macbeth's own search for status and subsequent destruction are blatant enough not to merit further discussion. More interesting, precisely because more covert, and because advanced as better alternatives, are the vaulting ambitions of the secondary characters.

The historical sources of *Macbeth* foreground the fact that the Scottish system of royal succession was at the time negotiating change from election to primogeniture. Shakespeare deploys this issue to query the ambiguous nature of power. What he engages is not which of the methods is superior,[13] but rather, how making political muscle more important than family sentiment is solipsistic annihilation. Duncan designates his son as successor to secure the throne and his, that is Duncan's own, station. When he decrees, "Sons, kinsmen, thanes, / And you whose places are the nearest, know / We will establish our estate upon / Our eldest, Malcolm, whom we name hereafter / The Prince of Cumberland" (1.4.35-39), he is engaging in a political act rather than merely a spectacle of ritual. He is constructing and articulating—that is, speaking into being—his dynasty. It is manifest that the drive to power substitutes for love when a man's unique depicted interaction with his son is limited to a single political performance.

There is no affection, intimacy or even informality present in this one interaction between Duncan and Malcolm. Shakespeare depicts Duncan as he secures the throne for his son, but not as he expresses love or even friendship towards him. When Duncan and Malcolm discuss the death of Cawdor, Duncan speaks generally; and while Malcolm does address Duncan specifically, he does so as subject to king, not son to father. He refers to him as "my liege" and "your highness"; any of the thanes could have spoken his lines (1.4.1-14). This is, in fact, the play's only direct exchange

between Duncan and either of his children. Indeed, in number it is one more than between the brothers, Malcolm and Donalbain, after Malcolm accepts the mantle of monarch. In Scotland, power and family are mutually exclusive, and power is primary. Duncan is more affectionate and paternal with Captain Macbeth, the most successful enforcer in his power stratagems, than he is with Malcolm or Donalbain.[14] By dividing the political from the domestic, Duncan renders both meaningless and, ironically, fails at both. He is not a present father, and as king he is slaughtered by the very man he treated more like a son than his own.

The Siwards replay how the pursuit of might diminishes the parental bond. As in Duncan and Malcolm's case, the Siwards' political agenda has the goal of securing the crown. Similarly also, Siward and his son share scenes, but never engage in either rhetorical or affective exchange. When informed of his son's death, Siward asks, "Had he his hurts before?" (5.8.46). He finds comfort in the fact the young man died honorably, that is, executing an act of force. Certainly Siward may be assuming a brave front, but his ensuing pun on *hairs/heirs,* in "Had I as many sons as I have hairs / I would not wish them to a fairer death" (5.8.48-49), nevertheless demonstrates a curiously disengaged and flippant reaction to the loss of a child. Macduff's earlier response to the reports of his murdered family serves as the play's cue to a more natural and impassioned reaction. In fact, Malcolm calls attention to Siward's response as being inadequate: "He's worth more sorrow, / And that I'll spend for him." Siward, however, is adamant: "He's worth no more" (5.8.50-51). This small incident, positioned at the play's denouement, and depicting the rescuing forces and Scotland's future, is fraught with significance. It confirms that when power is its own goal, it destroys the domestic and paradoxically engenders barrenness. Siward, after all, has no heirs.

Banquo, contrarily, has an heir, and one on whom he dotes. He is a devoted father, and the only one from those proffered by the play who ever speaks directly to his son. One of Banquo's functions in the drama is to hold a mirror up to Macduff in his role as father. Like Duncan and Siward, Macduff does not communicate with his son; he does not even merit one scene with him. Fleance never appears without his father. Banquo dies for his son, while the young Macduff dies for his father. Even so, before his brutal death, Banquo symbolically hands his sword, dagger and belt to his son (2.1.4-5), allocating to him the trappings of the violent

world they inhabit. Banquo nevertheless privileges the domestic elements above the political ones. He refuses to entertain the hints of insurrection that Macbeth offers (2.1.20-30), he interacts with his son, and he dies to save him. Sadly, Banquo's more calibrated life and understanding are not sufficient to rescue him from the destruction that thrives in Scotland. Banquo is perhaps more a victim of the conundrum than a creator. Nonetheless, he pays the heavy debt that results from favoring the political; all father-son relationships in the play collapse.[15] The fault cannot be simplistically laid at Macbeth's door alone: Duncan, Siward, Macduff and their *façons d'etre* predate Macbeth.

A system that highlights power over love and politics over domestic, gives birth to decimation, and there is no better embodiment of that paradox than Lady Macbeth. Like the men mentioned above, Lady Macbeth does not comprehend masculine right action, "glamorizing" the need for violence and power, as D.W. Harding, Richard Kimbrough, and many others have rightly argued.[16] Her definition of manhood, like Duncan's, Siward's, Macduff's, and the rest of Scotland's, turns on achievement of power: "When you durst do it, then you were a man; / And to be more than what you were, you would / Be so much more the man" (1.7.50-52). Because she lacks discernment between political and domestic good, she fails, like the rest of them. The paradox becomes particularly highlighted in her only because her gender is the one to which the feminine elements "should" be integral. The play, however, finds men and women equally culpable for equivocating between political and domestic goals, power and love. It is the power system itself that creates the fissure between masculine and feminine principles.

Lady Macbeth primarily identifies herself in terms of female agency. Her conduct can always be subsumed under one of the three Renaissance designations of woman—wife, hostess and mother. However, because she aims all her energies towards the accession of power, she vacates each of these domestic roles of any significance. In line with the criterion of wife or helpmeet, Lady Macbeth's actions stem not for her own glories but those of her spouse. She never makes mention of personal profit, and even in soliloquy, her profoundest deliberations and resolutions for action are for his betterment. The conception of murder is initially Macbeth's (1.3.135-43), and her role, as she perceives it, is to gestate his "courage" to obtain what he deserves and desires.

As good wives ought, she discerns her husband's character well and yearns to aid him in what she asserts to be the right course for him. Although she wishes he had more "mettle," she perceives her contribution not in terms of supplanting him, but of bolstering him with the "valor of [her] tongue"(1.5.23)—with speech or nagging, typical female attributes. Lady Macbeth cajoles, she entreats, she bullies, but she never does. Unfortunately, all her domestication is insufficient to redress the imbalance in Scotland because, paradoxically, its ultimate intent is procuring power and status.

Lady Macbeth illustrates the Scottish system's endemic failure also in her role as hostess. She "entertains" to facilitate her husband's promotion, and in a grim distortion of the welcoming chatelaine, greets "the entrance of Duncan under [her] battlements," if only because it is "fatal" (1.5.35-36). Joan Larsen Klein has pointed out the "frightening perversion of Renaissance women's domestic activity" when Lady Macbeth makes preparations for the assassination and "cleans up" after it.[17] She also establishes the domestic conditions to facilitate her husband's success by providing the poisoned wine. The further in political blood she wades, the more she equivocates the distinction between power and love, right and wrong, sane and insane, waking and sleeping.

Lady Macbeth's personification of the play's paradox is most manifest in the instances when she perceives her identity in terms of mothering. When she begs the spirits to "unsex" her (1.5.37), she pleads not to be made male,[18] but rather, a "generator of evilness," an "anti-mother," to coin a phrase. Her blatant cravings for strength of purpose, and her ultimate goal of political power, are ironically expressed in feminized metaphors. The speech articulates the play's matrix: when the masculine sphere is validated over the feminine, both become meaningless. The disjunction between the masculine goal and the feminine method of attaining it is borne out by the paradox of the speech's central metaphor—giving birth to destruction.

In a perversion of the acts of intercourse and impregnation, Lady Macbeth asks the spirits to invade her body, and "fill [her] from the crown to the toe topful" (1.5.38) with the cruelty to which she hopes to give birth. She pleads for the thickening of blood, a reference to the constitution of foetal matter. The speech culminates, "Come thick night, / And pall thee in the

dunnest smoke of hell, / That my keen knife see not the wound it makes, / Nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark / To cry 'hold, hold!'" (1.5.46-50), the allusions echoing the cutting of the umbilical cord, the emerging of the child, and its first cry. Once her cruelty is born, she nurtures it with poison. Whether one interprets the lines as indicating that the milk of human kindness should be replaced by gall, or concurs with Moelwyn Merchant, who argues they mean "bewitch my milk for gall,"[19] or with Janet Adelman who suggests that "perhaps Lady Macbeth is asking the spirits to take her milk as gall, to nurse from her breasts and find in her milk their sustaining poison,"[20] the prevailing image is a perverse one: a mother breastfeeding for death, not life.

Lady Macbeth gives birth to death here, but this is neither her, nor the play's, only instance of coalescing death and children. When she employs "the babe that milks [her]" (1.7.56) to convey her censure of Macbeth's vacillation over his accession to power, she chooses the most atrocious crime she can imagine to assert what she would *never* do: "I would, while it was smiling in my face, / Have pluck'd my nipple from his boneless gums, / And dash'd the brains out, *had* I so sworn as you / Have done to this" (1.7.57-60, emphasis added). Lady Macbeth's frame of reference and self-image continue to be articulated in feminized language. Nevertheless, her choice of analogy is against nature, and the play once more enunciates the perversion that results from valuing the political over the domestic.

This incident moreover raises a silent query about the babe's whereabouts. The question remains unanswered and it hovers over the play, complete with the sinister and disturbing implications of its possible responses. Children do not survive in Scotland, and Lady Macbeth's "pep-talk" exacerbates the play's deliberate presentation of dead offspring. The play is littered with dead babies, in reference and in deed. The witches' hell broth contains the "finger of a birth-strangled babe" (4.1.30), the second apparition is a "bloody child" (4.1.76), and the Macduff "pretty chickens" (4.3.219) are slaughtered. Macduff's son is furthermore the youngest child in the Shakespeare canon to be so violently massacred on stage.

Integral to the action while Macbeth wavers, Lady Macbeth becomes expendable once his fully-fledged masculinity and dedication to power are wholly gestated. Ironically, but in line with the central paradox of the play, the cruelty and death to which

she gives birth are her undoing, and when she takes her life, she is but finalizing an action she herself set in motion. To blame her entirely, however, is to disregard the fact that she embodies an alienation between domestic and political that is exists on a larger plane.

It is common knowledge now that the patriarchy of the early modern era viewed the female body and female bodily functions as, at best, lacking or mysterious beyond comprehension, or at worse, deformed and incomprehensible because illogical. The tendency in the culture to prioritize masculinity over femininity has prompted modern day scholars to suggest early modern literature presented the Caeserean birth as a way of resolving the issue. Children born in this fashion represent a deliberate liberation from the containement of the female body and element. *Macbeth*, with its "fiendish queen" and bearded malevolent hags, is also perceived as playing into this binary. Janet Adelman, for example, suggests that the play solves the problem of the female in the action of Macduff's "untimely" birth, "a ruthless excision of all female presence [and the play's] own satisfaction of the witches' prophecy";[21] and Richard Wilson comments, "Cesarean section recurs in the tragedies and histories, then, as a final solution of the female puzzle and fulfillment of the *Lex Caesare*, the Roman inheritance law that decreed the womb to be a place where the infant was merely 'imprisoned,' and from which, and by whatever means, an heir was justly 'enfranchised' into 'light'" (*Titus Andronicus* 4.2.124-25).[22] I contend, however, that at least in *Macbeth*, the Caesarean birth serves to emphasize rather the opposite; when the feminine principle is subjugated to the masculine, what triumphs is a true perversion of nature. This perversion is best perceived in Macduff.

As perverse as Lady Macbeth is, then, she is by no means the most disturbing character. Macduff, tendered as the savior who dismisses the fiendish couple to redeem Scotland, is, I argue, a more complete expression of the death-bringing conundrum. The play culminates by punishing the Macbeths and ostensibly validating the scourging force of Macduff. Scotland's happy future is massively equivocated, however, by the fact that this liberator is a man who conceivably (pun intended) occasioned his mother's "untimely" death and who most certainly is implicated in his wife and son's demise. Macduff is undoubtedly not as egotistically motivated as Macbeth, but his unblinking dedication to the political demands of his country leads him to sacrifice the domestic aspects of his life in an astonishing way.

In his eagerness to recruit Malcolm and raise an army, Macduff abandons his wife and children in a country run by a man who has amply demonstrated his enthusiasm for damaging the innocent and defenseless. Lady Macduff herself is certainly sentient of a desertion when she remonstrates that it is not "wisdom . . . to leave his wife, to leave his babes, / His mansion, and his titles in a place / From whence himself does fly" (4.2.6-8). Indeed, she imputes that he "loves [his family] not," and charges him with lacking the "natural touch," i.e., the domestic sentiment, "for the poor wren, / The most diminutive of birds, will fight, / Her young ones in her nest, against the owl" (4.2.8-11). Simply put—it is instinct to protect one's young. Macduff undoubtedly acts out of what he holds to be right reason; but this politicized "right reason" is misguided, for how natural is it not to attempt to prevent the slaughter of one's family? When Macduff places political demands in a superior position to domestic ones, he again reveals the meaninglessness of the Scottish system. The play raises several questions: Has not Macduff placed the cart before the horse? Is killing Macbeth more exigent than saving his own family? For whom does he save the country? Is Scotland, that nebulous concept for whom he sacrifices his family, anything more than a collection of families?[23]

The English scene insists that Macduff was alert to the repercussions of his actions when he undertook them. When Ross enters, Macduff solicits in two separate instances after his wife and son. Ross confirms their welfare, but Macduff cannot credit the response: "The tyrant has not battered at their peace?" (4.3.179). Ross guarantees their security, but still Macduff cannot rest: "Be not niggard of your speech. How goes't?" (4.3.181). Ross changes the subject, but later admits that he has some woe that pertains to Macduff; the latter exclaims, "Hum! I guess at it" (4.3.204). The development of the scene accents Macduff's suspicion that Macbeth would assume the conduct he ultimately did, and it underscores his decision to decamp as deliberate and cognizant. It also demonstrates Shakespeare's superb audience manipulation. By highlighting Macduff's response in line 204, one wonders if Shakespeare did not intend the audience to react by thinking, "If you 'guessed at it,' why not take precautions?" When Ross delivers the "newest grief," Macduff rejoins, "And I must be from thence!" (4.3.213). Once more, the unintended disingenuousness of the statement, in the face of what was blatantly clear, even for

Macduff himself, raises the silent accusation, "But you expected it."

The death of Lady Macduff is most significant on the symbolic level. With it, the ability to generate children, that is, Scotland's posterity, is devastated. Lady Macduff is the one remaining mother in Scotland, or so it seems. However, even before the action opens, Duncan and Banquo's wives are absent. After her death, the women who remain are either old, interested in birthing cruelty, or "unnatural hags," both female and male, natural and metaphysical, flesh and air.[24] The play covertly proposes that the decease of natural and healthy births predates Macbeth. True, he perpetuates a system that is divorced from the domestic, but it is a system essentially not of his making. The system will also post-date him. In an ironic continuation of his alignment with Macbeth, Macduff also participates in perpetuating the system, and at the cost of his own family.[25]

Harding argues that Macduff had no other meaningful choice. He "has turned to political and military alliance with other men as the only means of restoring his country and re-establishing a right order. His dilemma consisted in the choice between living out his wife's fantasy of the dauntless protector with an impotent gesture of manliness, and playing an effective part in the real world of men."[26] But even if such reasoning were to elucidate Shakespeare's choice for Macduff, it does not address Macduff's choice for himself. Macduff has too many possible alternatives to exculpate his decision to leave: he could have taken his loved ones with him, he could have taken steps to conceal them, and he could have posted protectors for them. But Macduff takes no steps towards thwarting what he is certain will transpire. Macduff indeed "plays an effective part in the real world of men," but the critique of the play is levelled precisely at what Scotland constitutes as the "real world of men," as well as Macduff's acquiescence to it, rather than at Lady Macduff's affective "fantasy" understanding of manhood.

Macduff is implicated in the death of his wife, his child, and because of his untimely birth, possibly his mother. Vincent F. Petronella posits that when Macduff kills Macbeth, the man who had hoped to "clear the way to political and military security by eliminating pertinent fathers and sons and even mothers," he has "stopped the malignancy." Macduff "becomes the most important literal father-figure of the play."[27] Such a figure, however, has to be supremely ironic. For to one extent or another, Macduff is guilty

of causing deaths as a son, father and husband. And he is the cause of the death of a mother, infant son, and wife. The feminine element is much in danger with Macduff, and as much as he is well intentioned, he is also not desirable. He may be a better alternative than Macbeth, but he is certainly not a good one.[28]

Act 4, scene 3 does proffer one moment of hope that the self-breeding system of destruction will be halted. The optimism is offered tantalizingly, only to be dashed within a few lines. Malcolm counsels Macduff to "dispute [the news of his family's demise] like a man" (4.3.221), urging Macduff to turn for comfort to the masculine realm—revenge, politics, punishment, violence, and so forth. Macduff's response, "I must also feel it as a man. / I cannot but remember such things were, / That were most precious to me" (4.3.223-25), fleetingly redefines right behaviour and what it is to be "a man." The male principle cannot deny the female one if it is to be truly successful or truly male. In this one moment, Macduff makes a nod towards the coexistence of the political and powerful with the domestic and affective.

But immediately Malcolm counsels Macduff to form his grief as "the whetstone of [his] sword" and to "convert it to anger." When he urges him to "blunt not the heart," the seat of emotion, but to "enrage" it (4.3.30-31), he instructs him to transmute his heart into a weapon.[29] There is perhaps no better image of the imposition of aggression on love in this play, and Malcolm's advice is a not very distant echo of Lady Macbeth's instructions to the "murdering ministers" and her "woman's breasts" (1.5.42-43). Macduff's anger, perhaps even guilt, will simply be invested in furthering the violence, and once more the system rebirths itself. Macduff's next statement indeed underlines the opposition of gender principles, not their coexistence: "O, I could play the woman with mine eyes / And braggart with my tongue! But, gentle heavens, / Cut short all intermission. Front to front / Bring thou this fiend of Scotland and myself" (4.3.232-35). Malcolm concurs: "This tune goes manly" (4.3.237).

In fact, the end of the play propounds a "manly" trio as the pledge for the future. Macduff (who rids the country of Macbeth), Malcolm (who takes over the throne), and Fleance (who was identified by the weird sisters as the fountainhead of the royal line) constitute a "family" composed entirely of men. When observed closely, this androcentric family is most problematic, both in terms of the unit as a whole and in terms of the individuals who

comprise it. As a unit, this family of men does nothing to redress the absence of the female element in the country or the system. Pearlman notes that both Macduff and Malcolm are "each in his own way as free from contact with women as can be imagined. It is as though we were in the presence of some primitive rite of the sort that anthropologists recover from the darker ages, where the warrior must preserve his strength by abstaining from contact with women before battle. In order to overcome Macbeth, who has fallen under the influence of the witches and their agent, the hero must be free of women, whether mother, wife, or mistress."[30] Pearlman is right to note the absence of the female element in the final solution, but not quite right in his celebration of it. For the feminine element will be absent even after "the battle," and the play has consistently demonstrated the danger and hopelessness of a single-gendered world. This family of men makes the paradox manifest one more time: the female-less world has found a way to propagate its own, diseased nature.

The family is also perverse in terms of its individual components. On the one hand, as argued above, Macduff enacts a mature and extreme masculinity that is not healthy. On the other, Malcolm embodies an inexperienced and feminized masculinity that turns out to be equally insufficient. Pearlman perceives Malcolm's inexperience as symbolic of the spring of Scotland's future: "Duncan's reign . . . was on a symbolic level a green and fertile experience. Macbeth's is the opposite. He is a frost giant, and his way is the sere and yellow leaf. There is no more potent image of the succession of the seasons and the triumph of fertility in all literature than the spring that comes to Scotland when Birnam Forest picks itself up and conquers the sterile and discontented world of the winter king. Malcolm's youth is a logical focus of this symbolic movement."[31] But this triumph is itself greatly equivocated, for this Birnam wood has been deracinated, and it is a dead nature, in fact, a killed nature, that is coming to impose itself upon Dunsinane. Literally and symbolically, there is little difference between the dead wood of the forest and the dead wood of the castle walls. Moreover, it is not happenstance that it is Malcolm who is at the root of the plan to hew down the wood (5.4.4-7); the promise of his youth and his nurturing qualities are thus quibbles that participate in the overriding paradox.

In addition to his inexperience, Malcolm's feminization makes him implausible as a solution. In contradiction to the other

Scotsmen, he is curiously passive, even though it is his father who was slain and his throne purloined. In effect, of all the play's men, he has the most obligation and justification to resort to action, and yet he relinquishes that duty to others. The one direct feat he undertakes serves rather to confirm his submissiveness—he flees to England where he fleshes out his feminization. Once there, he "put[s] [himself] to [Macduff's] direction" (4.3.123). His self-identification further emphasizes an inexperienced and inactive modesty: "I am yet / Unknown to woman, never yet was forsworn, / Scarcely have coveted what was mine own, / At no time broke my faith, and would not betray / The devil to his fellow, and delight / No less in truth than life" (4.3.126-31). It seems that Malcolm is chaste, silent, and obedient. Indeed, he appears to possess the feminine elements necessary to accompany the masculine. But such is not the case. First, as king, he is the one man who *should* be more politically vigorous. Second, in this family unit, the man who occupies the position of "husband" has already been responsible for the demise of one, if not two, families, which does not auger well for the new family. Third, if Malcolm is virgin, and representative of the feminine because no women remain, then at least on the symbolic level, this other, necessary element, will also not be reproduced. Malcolm cannot fulfill the requirements of the domestic sphere.

The final member of the family, Fleance, the real hope for the future, has no physical or even referential presence in the play's finale. He is a final missing baby in a play full of missing babies. Symbolically, the future is absent and silent. Thus, Macduff is culpable in the death of his own family, Malcolm has so far withdrawn from the flawed masculine world that he is but a symbol of the pervasive barrenness of Scotland, and Fleance is puny and missing from the action. This masculine family, representing a powerful father, a virgin mother, and a missing child resonates, of course, as a final huge and ironic equivocation of another family. The early modern period understood this family as responsible for rebirthing an entire world. Scotland, it seems to me, will not be as lucky. Splitting the domestic from the political has created a devastating system. The most dangerous thing about this system is that it has mutated to the point where it reproduces itself. The end of the play darkly insists that this situation is not an aberration; it is the state of affairs. This play does not so much endorse James I as

send him a covert message regarding the dangers of equivocating between the two notions of power.

Notes

1. In the few short scenes during which Duncan is alive, he is under siege and taking steps to confirm his royal position. The gentle and nurturing language attached to him belies his ruthless and self-interested nature. He joys in vicious punishments upon the rebels and promotes only the strongest, fiercest, and most bloodthirsty men. He is autarchic in his authority, and despotically craving to "be safely thus," names his son as successor. Except for placement of the son, and only because he is childless, this description can be applied in its entirety to King Macbeth. Certainly the similarity between the two kings is not a novel observation. Alan Sinfield, for example, in "*Macbeth*: History, Ideology and Intellectuals," *Critical Quarterly* 28 (1986): 63-77, comments that the play "break[s] down the antithesis . . . between the usurping tyrant and the legitimately violent ruler" (69).

2. There is some debate that the play was even written for a special performance at James's court. See Lily B. Campbell, "Political Ideas in Macbeth IV.iii," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 2 (1951): 281.

3. During the last years of her reign, there was a general sense of dissatisfaction with Queen Elizabeth. A rational, self-controlled, unextravagant male ruler was touted as the resolution to that unease. Henry Hooke, for example, a rector from Lincolnshire, articulated that desire in 1601 or 1602: "What corruptions in iustice, what blemishes in religion, the infirmitie, and inconueniency of woemanhead, would not permitt to discouer and discerne, the vigor, and conueniency of man sytting as king in the throne of aucthoritie; maye diligently search out, and speedylie reforme" (*Of the succession to the Crowne of England*, British Library Royal MS. 17 B XI, fols. 1-19; quoted in Katherine Eggert, "Nostalgia and the Not Yet Late Queen: Refusing Female Rule in *Henry V*," *ELH* 61 [1994]: 523-50; 525). This manuscript was dedicated to James I, although the dedication was probably added after James's accession to the English throne. On the face of it, in *Macbeth* Shakespeare seems to participate in this flattering approbation of James I as a most fitting king for England's particular needs. Jane H. Jack, for example, insists that "James exerted a considerable influence on *Macbeth*, and my thesis is so far from being a handicap which Shakespeare had to surmount, the writings of the King were a positive help to him as he wrote the play" ("*Macbeth*, King James and the Bible," *ELH* 22 [1955]: 173). See also George Walton Williams' "*Macbeth*: King James' Play," *The South Atlantic Review* 47 (1982): 12-21; and more recently, Christopher Wortham's "Shakespeare, James I and the Matter of Britain," *The Journal of the English Association* 45 (1996): 97-122.

4. When Guy Fawkes was arrested for his participation in the Gunpowder Plot (1605), he was tortured to name his conspirators. One name he mentioned was that of Henry Garnet, a Jesuit Father. In truth, there was little evidence against Garnet, but *circa* 1598 he had authored *A Treatise of Equivocation*, a text that purported to teach Catholics how to respond truthfully to inculpating questions without self-incrimination. The idea was not to tell the truth without actually lying, or to say one thing while meaning another. Renaissance equivocation was a way of splitting a sign from its signifier, or a word against its intent, and it

reveals the underlying slipperiness of signification. Garnet offers a variety of methods of equivocation, one being to "use some equivocal word which hath many significations, and we understand it in one sense, which is true, although the hearer conceive the other, which is false . . . [For example, if I were] asked whether such a stranger lodgeth in my house, . . . I should answer, 'he lieth not in my house,' meaning that he doth not tell a lie there, although he lodge there" (in William C. Carroll, ed., *Macbeth: Texts and Contexts* [New York: Bedford / St. Martin, 1999], 266). Because of the infamy of the Gunpowder Plot—after all, its aim was to decimate James I and much of his parliament—"equivocation" became a catch phrase in English culture during the early years of the seventeenth century. In *Macbeth* the Porter uses it in 2.3.6: "Faith, here's an equivocator, that could swear in both the scales against either scale," and Macbeth calls the witches' prophecies diabolical "equivocations" (5.5.43). See also *Hamlet* (5.1.138).

5. William Shakespeare, *Troilus and Cressida*, *The Arden Shakespeare Third Series*, ed. David Bevington (London: Thomson Learning Center, 1998; reprint 2003).

6. James I, *A Speech to the Lords and Commons of the Parliament at Whitehall* (1609) in *Political Works of James I*, ed. Charles H. McIlwain (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1918), 307-8.

7. Robert P. Adams, "Opposed Tudor Myths of Power: Machiavellian Tyrants and Christian Kings," in *Studies in the Continental Background of Renaissance English Literature: Essays Presented to John L. Lievsay*, ed. Dale B. J. Randall and George Walton Williams (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1977), 67-90; 68. Adams argues that this Machiavellianism had little to do with what Machiavelli actually espoused. Rather, it was a myth abstracted, or perhaps even constructed, by the late Elizabethans based on their understanding of the Florentine's writings. The goal behind creating the myth was to open up a forum in which to voice their dissatisfaction with absolutist power.

8. Alan Sinfield, "*Macbeth*: History, Ideology and Intellectuals," 64-65.

9. James wrote several treatises on right rule, including *Basilikon Doron or His Majesties Instrvctions To His Dearest Sonne, Henry the Prince* (1599), *The Trew Lawe of Free Monarchie: Or the Reciprock and Deutie Betwixt a Free King and his Naturall Subjects* (1598), and several speeches to Parliament. See *Political Works of James I*.

10. Robert Kimbrough, "*Macbeth*: The Prisoner of Gender," *Shakespeare Studies* 16 (1983): 175-90. Kimbrough perceives "a fierce war between gender concepts of manhood and womanhood" in this play, holding that this war is eventually resolved in a conflated and inclusive concept of gender, a concept he terms "humanhood" (176). This androgynous gendering is what Shakespeare ultimately promotes, Kimbrough suggests, with Macduff achieving "humanhood." I agree with Kimbrough on the detrimental effects of divided gender-concepts, especially as articulated in understandings of power, but not with his contention that the play finally secures a positive understanding of androgyny. Rather, as argued below, Scotland's alienation of gender characteristics engenders a freakish, perverseness that is suspected by the play and the playwright. Moreover, it is not resolved by the play's conclusion.

11. William Shakespeare, *Macbeth: Texts and Contexts* (The Bedford Shakespeare Series), ed. William C. Carroll (Boston: Bedford / St. Martin's, 1999). Line references to *Macbeth* are from this edition.

12. The one individual with power who employs it towards something other than itself is Edward, whom Malcolm serves when he escapes to England. His healing ability to cure the "King's Evil" (4.3.147-60) stems from his divinely sanctioned, political authority as king. Edward, however, is significantly missing from the action and never actually appears in the play. He appears to have transcended the self-defeating human drive for power, but only by transcending both humanity and the play itself. Power, as manifest in this play, is always self-motivated and barren.

13. It is intriguing that the laws of primogeniture themselves politicize affective bonds and turn family units into active power structures. It would be intriguing, but beyond the scope of this article, to assess if Shakespeare indeed does have a preference for a law of succession.

14. It is not accidental that Duncan speaks to Macbeth as a father who is interested in the "plant[ing], . . . labor . . . [and] growing" of a son in the very same scene in which he hardly addresses his biological son (1.4.28-29). Duncan has three sons, two parented with a woman, the other parented with violence and the need for supremacy. Shakespeare underlines the irony of the promotion of the aggressive at the cost of the affective when the non-biological son eventually murders his "father."

15. The husband/wife relationship between the Macbeths also becomes enfeebled as the play progresses, and precisely because of the valuation of power over love. Ironically, the best example of love between adults is that of Lord and Lady Macbeth. Each one wants the best for the other, and there is no competition between them. Rather, affection and intimacy are at the root of their exchanges. However, as Macbeth's milk of human kindness dries up and his lust and ability for power flourishes (a transference initially desired by his wife), his relationship with his wife also wanes. Following the banquet scene they do not appear together on stage, and when informed of her death, he can only comment on its inevitability. While Lord Macbeth had love, King Macbeth is denied even the expressions of sorrow and a sense of loss.

16. See, for example, D.W. Harding's "Women's Fantasy of Manhood: A Shakespearean Theme," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 20 (1969): 245-53.

17. Joan Larsen Klein, "Lady Macbeth: 'Infirm of Purpose,'" in *The Woman's Part*, ed. Carolyn Ruth Swift Lenz, Gayle Greene, and Carol Thomas Neely (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983), 240-55; 245.

18. Many critics perceive Lady Macbeth to be masculinized to some extent. Coppélia Kahn, for example, interprets Macbeth's injunction to "bring forth men-children only" (1.7.73) as an indication that he views his wife "as a kind of man . . . as though she were a sole god-like procreator, man and woman both" (*Man's Estate: Masculine Identity in Shakespeare* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981], 173). See also E. Pearlman, "Malcolm and Macduff," *Studies in the Humanities* 9 (1981): 5-10, and Kimbrough, "*Macbeth*: The Prisoner of Gender," 181, 187.

19. W. Moelwyn Merchant, "'His Fiend-Like Queen,'" *Shakespeare Survey* 19 (1966): 75-81; 76.

20. Janet Adelman, *Suffocating Mothers: Fantasies of Maternal Origin in Shakespeare's Plays*, Hamlet *to* The Tempest (New York: Routledge, 1992), 135.

21. Ibid., 91.

22. Richard Wilson, "Observations on English Bodies: Licensing Maternity in Shakespeare's Late Plays," in *Enclosure Acts: Sexuality, Property, and Culture in Early Modern England*, ed. Richard Burt and John Michael Archer (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994). 121-50; (132).

23. Phyllis Rackin, "Staging the Female Body: Maternal Breastfeeding and Lady Macbeth's 'Unsex Me Here,'" in *Corps / Decors: Femmes, Orgie, Parodie*, ed. Catherine Nesci et al. (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999), 17-29. I am grateful to Dr. Phyllis Rackin for pointing out that historically wives were often left to guard castles when husbands were at war. In the fictional sphere, however, the context forces judgment on Macduff. John F. Hennedy, in "Macduff's Dilemma: Anticipation of Existentialist Ethics in *Macbeth*," *The Upstart Crow* 18 (1998): 110-17, underlines Shakespeare's deliberate depiction of Macduff's actions as being discrepant within the play's moral parameters: "Departing from his Holinshed source in providing the perspective of Macduff's abandoned wife, Shakespeare casts grave doubts on any justification for her husband's departure" (110; see also n. 6).

24. The realm of anti-nature is integrally tied to the conundrum under discussion. The false division between masculine and feminine, political and domestic, causes fissures in every element of the world, including between natural and unnatural dominions. The witches' weird conflation of opposites is related to Scotland's equally weird division of principles that should co-exist. The two realms and two states of affairs are two sides of coin.

25. Vincent F. Petronella, "The Role of Macduff in *Macbeth*," *Etudes Anglaises* 32 (1979): 11-19. Petronella argues that the "principal reason for Macduff's inward suffering is his ability to love deeply. In presenting him as such Shakespeare distinguishes him from nearly all the characters in the play" (15). Macduff undeniably does love deeply, but significantly, so do the Macbeths. In these and other cases, the search for power procures the loss of love. When Macduff chooses country over family, he essentially makes the same mistake as Macbeth—although for better and less selfish reasons. Macduff is more effectively read as an ironic reflection of Macbeth, not as clearly distinctive from him.

26. Harding, "Women's Fantasy of Manhood," 249.

27. Petronella, "The Role of Macduff in *Macbeth*," 14.

28. In fact, I would argue that Macduff is a more menacing alternative. In Macbeth's case, the danger is overt and obvious, and the man is excommunicated from society. In Macduff's, the danger is covert and more subtle, and the man is lauded as a lynchpin of society.

29. The fact that this statement comes from a man who has only just aligned himself with Christ, with the lamb, with feminine modesty, love and patience, makes the scene only that much more ironic.

30. Pearlman, "Malcolm and Macduff," 8.

31. Ibid., 9.

Staging the Alphabet in Shakespeare's Comedies

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"Are you not lettered?" Armado asks the pedantic schoolteacher Holofernes in *Love's Labour's Lost*. What does it mean to be "lettered?" Shakespeare's Comedies frequently refer to individual alphabetic letters and they often stage scenes of literacy, but the critical literature still lacks a systematic study of how these alphabetic references contribute to the meaning of the plays.[1] This article demonstrates four significant results from such a study: 1) the Comedies provide a safe space for characters to experiment with language play as part of the coming-of-age process in a literate world, with an evolving relationship between letter and self; 2) the letter references reveal a broad range of literacy options in the early modern English-speaking world, as well as a broad range of letter play available to alphabetically literate cultures; 3) we are shown the effects of a pedagogical system that promotes a view of letters as self-sufficient pieces of language that can operate independently from words; and 4) Shakespeare uses alphabetic homophones—both letter/word homophones, like "I" and "Ay," as well as homonymous words, like "letter" and "character"—to develop fundamental ideas about the nature of poetry and the art of drama. In this article, I focus primarily on three comedies that grapple the most intensely with letters: *Two Gentlemen of Verona, Twelfth Night*, and *Love's Labors Lost*. These works demonstrate that Shakespeare's wooden "O" is far from wooden: his plays test and affirm the elasticity and plasticity of alphabetic letters, including the wide variety of uses for which they may be deployed.

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Because Shakespearean comedy in general places so much importance on writing and the interpretation of writing within interpersonal communication, the staged acts of literacy acquisition and moments when characters become aware of their alphabetic literacy take on special significance. In *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Julia's ripping up and piecing back together letters into words constitutes a pivotal learning experience for her: anagramming an epistolary letter allows her to express hidden desires and grapple with questions of identity. In *Twelfth Night*, Malvolio also anagrams (an epistolary) letter to create a fantasy identity, and his eavesdroppers' homophonic commentaries on the alphabetic letters he mentions reveal ways that letters can teach readers and audiences about poetics and dramatic art. By staging scenes of early literacy and poetic creation, *Love's Labors Lost* highlights pedagogical structures that served to heighten an early modern awareness of the presence of individual letters within words. We see that being lettered means, all at once, to possess the ability to read words made out of letters, to participate in a cultural discourse arising out of shared words, and to have passed through an education ritual that marks the minds and bodies of its participants.

A cluster of coming-of-age, identity-experimentation themes envelop the alphabet passages in the plays: the challenges of integrating scholarly learning into one's life; the availability of letters to express or work through desires; the relationship between letters and self; and managing the aleatory in language. An account of letter play—such as letter homophones, alliteration, anagrams, Roman numeral letters, and alphabetic shapes—gestures towards the broad extent of alphabetic effects and issues throughout the entire Shakespearean canon. Being lettered certainly has its pitfalls; displays of an unreflective and impractical erudition make *Love's Labors Lost*'s pedant Holofernes a baffoon. But to be unlettered is simply dangerous; the same play's Jaquenetta and Costard cannot read letters written to or about themselves. To be unlettered as well as overly lettered is to expose oneself to ridicule, at the very least. Letters are one way characters come to terms with the meaning and role that scholarly knowledge gained through education—a training in how to put letters together meaningfully, at least at its start—will play in their lives.

I. How Thou Art Lettered: Letters On, In, As, and Around the Body

One early modern understanding of the lettered human imagines him or her as physically covered with writing, inside and out.[2] *Love's Labour's Lost*, for example, provides plentiful examples of this.[3] Metaphors of book ingestion further the idea of a written interior or an incorporate alphabet: Nathaniel disparages Dull to Holofernes, "Sir, he hath never fed of the dainties that are bred in a book. / He hath not eat paper, as it were, he hath not drunk ink" (4.2.21-22). In a play that increasingly materializes language, the goal of study becomes, as it were, proper ingestion: letters materially become a part of the human body. The noblewomen jestingly call Rosaline "beauteous as ink" and "fair as a text" (5.2.41-42), and the lady herself—whose very name suggests rubrication on a page—describes make-up pencils as writing colored letters on a face to cover up O-shaped syphilitic pock marks (5.2.43-46).[4] Armado suggests that his metamorphosis through love is a potential transformation into not merely a sonnet-writer, but into the very sonnets he proposes to write: "Assist me, some extemporal god of rhyme, for I am sure I shall turn sonnet. Devise wit, write pen, for I am for whole volumes, in folio" (1.2.162-64). The Princess calls the King "Navarre and his bookmen" (2.1.226); likewise, Dull says to Nathaniel and Holofernes, "You two are bookmen" (4.2.31). Mote, in following Armado, describes himself, "Like the sequel, I" (3.1.123). The range of these comparisons shows the breadth and depth of the lettered human metaphor.

II. Loving Letters

The pun on the word "letter" expresses the close relationship between writing in general and the alphabetic letter. Although the relationship between alphabetic and epistolic letters is synecdochic, the use of the same word for each implies a closer relationship of equivalency. The following two extended alphabetic "letter episodes" from *Two Gentlemen of Verona* and *Twelfth Night* both occur in the context of love letters. The letters (alphabetic) in letters (epistles) spotlight the desires of readers rather than the words of writers. Characters use the letters of love letters in order to come to terms with desires they do not understand.

We might expect a love letter to offer primarily a glimpse into the innermost emotions and desires of its *author*. While the private

letter itself makes for a very personalized form of writing, the particular genre of the love letter sends its addressee an even more intensely personalized expression of emotion. The lover aims to infuse his or her presence and desire into the love letter. The readers in the following two passages see their own bodies and the bodies of their desired ones in the letters, and rearrange the letters so as to put themselves in closer proximity to the (hoped for) lover. *Readers*, rather than authors, articulate their erotic desires through these love letters. Julia's imaginative reading of Proteus's letter and especially Malvolio's imaginative reading of a letter he mistakenly thinks comes from Olivia's pen are self-revealing in these two most extended treatments of anagrams in all of Shakespeare's plays. Are their acts also an implicit commentary on the many ways readers more generally interpolate their own desires into a text? The characters' private desires made public in quirky and awkward manipulations of alphabetic letters direct attention to how they struggle to privately inhabit the publically available alphabet.

A. "Do what you will": Graphic Paper Sex and Suicide in *Two Gentlemen of Verona*

Shakespeare's *Two Gentlemen of Verona* refers frequently to the visual and physical properties of writing. One of the servants claims that the news in a letter is "the blackest news that ever thou heard'st" simply because it is written in black ink.[5] Julia describes her maid Lucetta as "the table wherein all my thoughts / Are visibly charactered and engraved" (2.7.3-4). Anagrams play a part in this visual and physical focus: Silvia's suitor Thurio evokes the relationship between "sonnet" and "onset" (3.2.92-93), characters debate whether "stand under" is the same as "understand," and Julia pieces back a torn-up epistle letter by letter. This last episode is the focus of my discussion.

Julia's anagrammatic rearrangement of a love letter from her suitor Proteus in *Two Gentlemen of Verona* unlocks the latent emotional and sexual energy potential of inert alphabetic letters by a) activating them through reading, and b) manipulating their material qualities. Letters of both kinds—epistolary and alphabetic—become a way to express or author desire. The materiality of writing becomes key to Julia's re-authoring of the text, where she physically tears up the love letter in order to create free-floating alphabetic letters that she can anagrammatically

rearrange. This rearrangement and self-authoring has long-term effects for her: she initially tears her own name out of the letter, then spends the rest of the play trying to reinsert herself back into Proteus's heart disguised as his page. In a scene that plays heavily on the homography of the word "letter" (as epistle, as member of the alphabet), Shakespeare also seems interested in testing another homographic ABC term: character. How do characters—mere alphabetic marks on the page of a play-script—transform into psychologically complex characters, brought to life by human actors?

Julia's introduction in the first act of *Two Gentlemen of Verona* focuses on the extreme difficulty she has in articulating her feelings about Proteus to her maid Lucetta. When Lucetta mentions him as her favorite in a list of Julia's potential suitors, the heroine appears to reject him categorically, as he has not spoken much to her of his suit. When she sighs, "I would I knew his mind" (1.2.33), Lucetta hands her a letter from him. At first she petulantly refuses to look at the letter, instantly regretting her foolishness and calling the maid in again on a pretext. She rips up the missive without looking at it; but when left alone, Julia grows determined to piece Proteus's words back together, letter by letter, if need be. By physically destroying the original text, she re-orders it and re-authors it to express what she prefers it to say. The letter through which she would "know his mind" in fact becomes a site for revealing her own as she discovers in the letters and words her and her beloved's bodies. Alphabetic letters become the site of an imaginative sexual and suicidal fantasy. A standout feature in this passage, other than the amusing paper sex at the end, is the sheer physicality of her interaction with this paper and the writing on it. Julia begins with a make-out session:

> O hateful hands, to tear such loving words;
> Injurious wasps, to feed on such sweet honey
> And kill the bees that yield it with your stings.
> I'll kiss each several paper for amends.
> *[She picks up some of the pieces of the paper]*

Then she starts to re-author the letter; having not only torn it up and reordered it, she rewrites her epithet and tears herself out of the paper:

> Look, here is writ 'Kind Julia'—unkind Julia,
> As in revenge of thy ingratitude

> I throw thy name against the bruising stones,
> Trampling contemptuously on thy disdain.

By piecing the letters back together in a letter she has never read, Julia opportunistically takes advantage of the disorder to re-author the letter in accordance with her wishes. She alters the epithet to her name, "kind Julia," to its opposite, "Unkind Julia!" Here we see her also distancing herself from herself ("I throw thy name . . .") as she must later when altering her identity.

Certainly the wish to read her lover's declaration or sense his presence in the letter fuels Julia's attempted restoration of the text. Her desire to access Proteus physically through his written words leads to the eroticization of his letters. She perceives in them the presence of bodies. She starts fantasizing about taking Proteus to bed, clasping him to her bosom:

> And here is writ 'Love-wounded Proteus.'
> Poor wounded name, my bosom as a bed
> Shall lodge thee till they wound be throughly healed;
> And thus I search it with a sovereign kiss.

Having torn up the letter, Julia "coincidentally" finds the epithet "love-wounded Proteus" (115) and quickly becomes aware of her own act of wounding the name—and, by extension, the body—of her beloved. Julia kisses the pieces of paper and soothingly (and erotically) cradles Proteus's "wounded name" in her décolletage. Her anagrams reflect or even affect the order of the material world as alphabetic letters flesh out into body parts.[6] With that realization, she commits paper suicide:

> But twice or thrice was 'Proteus' written down.
> Be calm, good wind, blow not a word away
> *Till I have found each letter in the letter*
> *Except mine own name.* That, some whirlwind bear
> unto a ragged, fearful, hanging rock
> And throw it thence into the raging sea.

Again she destroys her name in its paper effigy, calling for a particularly violent triple demise through a whirlwind, a ragged rock, and drowning.[7] Dangerously, she threatens to tear herself out of the letter altogether with the last epithet she finds—"To the sweet Julia"—but quickly changes her mind. Back from the brink of paper suicide, she gears up for her raciest move yet:

> Lo, here in one line is his name twice writ:
> 'Poor forlorn Proteus,' 'passionate Proteus,'

'To the sweet Julia'—that I'll tear away.
And yet I will not, sith so prettily
He couples it to his complaining names.
Thus will I fold them, one upon another.
Now kiss, embrace, contend, do what you will.
(1.2.106-30, *emphasis mine*)

Thus the soliloquy culminates in, literally, a "graphic" sex-act. Julia takes delight in the proximity of Proteus's names on the paper to "the sweet Julia" and in the sensuality of his handwriting: "So prettily / [Proteus] couples [the name 'Julia'] to his complaining names." In Julia's hands, those lettered pieces of paper offer a safe space to dramatically enact her erotic desires, hidden hitherto perhaps even to herself. She has manipulated everything about this letter: she cuts herself out of it at certain places, she creates anagrams in her search for "each letter in the letter," and she takes advantage of the medium of paper to create her own private erotic theater. The letters first have things done to them, but by the end of the scene they become an addressee —"do what you will"—and have assumed a life and will of their own.

The paper-sex sounds frivolous, but her private letter theater touches on the foundations of drama itself: paper and ink become the tools for turning letters into words, and words into characters. Moreover, what happens with the writing and rewriting of this letter happens with Julia's character. First, she really is "torn out" of Proteus' affections and her name is replaced by Silvia's in future love letters. A whole scene is devoted to the moment when the two women meet and their love tokens—letters, rings, and images—to and from Proteus threaten to become substitutes for each other. Second, Julia actually turns herself into a page. Whereas she re-authored the male page with the letter, she now becomes the male page. Julia maneuvers through male writing and male gender roles to articulate her own feelings and achieve her goals. Finally, at the end of the play, as she did at the end of the letter, she strongly reinserts her name as she reasserts her identity:

Proteus: But how cam'st thou by this ring? At my depart
I gave this unto Julia.
Julia: And Julia herself did give it me,
And Julia herself hath brought it hither.
Proteus: How? Julia?
Julia: Behold her that gave aim to all thy oaths
And entertained 'em deeply in her heart.

> How oft hast thou with perjury cleft the root?
> O Proteus . . .
>
> . . .
>
> It is the lesser blot, modesty finds,
> Women to change their shape than men their minds.
> (5.4.95-103,107-8)

Julia's name is repeated four times in succession: the lovers get back on the same page. And again, even in her penultimate line, Julia stages her cross-dressing act in terms of writing, or unreadable writing, on a page: "It is the lesser blot." Where there once were holes in Julia's ripped up letter, now there are blots. Both holes and blots make reading difficult, but her statement seems to indicate that, while form may obscure content, the presence of content (men's unchanging minds) is more important.

Love in this play serves as both a hindrance to learning and as a catalyst for self-growth that dialectically lends experiential meaning to what one reads about it in books. The rest of the play focuses on the tension between love and learning between the two male protagonists. Valentine chides Proteus at first for neglecting his studies to pursue love, but himself soon falls victim to the same behavior. His page, Speed, frames the transformative "learning of love" as a knowledge opposed to alphabetic literacy. "You have learned, like Sir Proteus, . . . *to sigh, like a schoolboy that had lost his ABC*; . . . And now you are metamorphosed with a mistress, that when I look on you I can hardly think you my master" (2.1.16-17, 19-20; italics mine). Sandwiched between the "mortally" serious comparisons of suffering from a pestilence and mourning a beloved grandma's death, the sighing of a schoolboy who has lost his ABC appears pretty weighty. Books or the horn-book were not cheap, but losing the ABC poses a more serious threat: the threat of lost or at least temporarily delayed literacy through negligence. How can one "regain" the ABC book and still find love? The characters' problems at the Milanese court, where they have gone to receive a gentleman's education, represent some of the problems students face as they move towards adulthood and seek to align their emotions, thoughts, and physical and mental desires with what their school education has shown is expected from two gentlemen.

B. What Should That Alphabetical Position Portend: Malvolio & Olivia's "Hand"

Who owns the letter(s) Julia holds in her hands? Letters, both epistolary and alphabetic, are always to some extent a communal good. Catherine Belsey has commented on this quality of the epistolary medium:

> The letter can never ensure its own secrecy. However cryptic it is, however coded, designed exclusively for the recipient, if the message is intelligible, it is always able to be intercepted, read, misread, reproduced. Since it is necessarily legible to another, who does the letter belong to? To the sender, the addressee, or an apparently irrelevant unspecified third party?[8]

While legibility cannot be the determining condition for ownership, underlying Belsey's question of ownership is the notion of a letter as a special kind of property whose regulation must take its qualities as a token of exchange into account. If Proteus owns the letter, then it has been given to Julia as a gift. If Julia owns the letter, should she be under obligation to preserve the gift in its original state? If the ownership is mutually shared, who maintains the authorial rights to it? The letter to Julia from Proteus becomes a means of managing exchanges between characters. Letters, as physical objects, may be intercepted by anyone, and written in the medium of a shared language and alphabet, may be read by anyone literate in both. Writing, therefore, encourages readerly revision even as it threatens to spin out of writers' and readers' control. All three plots of the plays under consideration rely on this quality of letter-writing.

Like the epistolary letter, alphabetic letters by nature invite readers to invest them with meanings. In her description of ABC books, Patricia Crain points out that the "the verbal and visual tropes that surround the alphabet cloak the fact that the unit of textual meaning—the letter—lacks meaning in itself.[9] Letters accrue semiotic possibilities because they are at heart empty symbols whose function it is to take on meaning. Crain seems amazed by "the way in which the alphabetic functions appear to extend themselves, draw meaning to themselves, and create the powerful motifs that characterize alphabetic texts."[10] Because of their endless semiotic possibilities as shapes, sounds, and words,

alphabetic letters too always seem a human technology slightly beyond human control.

Malvolio's letter-reading scene in *Twelfth Night* exhibits all the dangers and powers of taking ownership of letters, both epistolary and alphabetic. Malvolio's desire to see himself as the addressee of the letter forged deliberately by Olivia's servant Maria to trick him provides one of the most humorous moments of the play and prompts the most extended treatment of the most kinds of letter-play in the entire Shakespearean canon. The steward Malvolio's officious pretension and goody-two-shoes ambitions at Olivia's court have annoyed the three drinking buddies, Sir Toby, Sir Andrew, and Fabian. In revenge, Maria has suggestively counterfeited her mistress Olivia's hand to encourage the steward in a set of behaviors particularly disagreeable to Olivia. The letter-play in this letter-reading scene consists of two kinds: two anagrams and a series of homophonic puns based on the letters in the anagrams. The homophonic puns shed light on the poetic qualities of letters, a characteristic I will discuss at length later. A closer look now at the first kind of letter-play reveals how Malvolio, like Julia, seeks himself and the realization of his desires through alphabetic letters.

Malvolio sees proof for the connection between humans and letters already in what he presumes to be Olivia's handwriting on the exterior of Maria's letter. "By my life, this is my lady's hand. These be her very c's, her u's, and her t's, and thus makes she her great P's. It is in contempt of question her hand" (2.5.77-80). The shapes and even sizes of the letters bear for Malvolio testimony to Olivia's calligraphy. His comments make an explicit connection between character (lettering) and character (personality). Drawing letters supposedly at random from the letters or words on the sealed letter, Malvolio unconsciously creates an anagram that points even further towards his desire for Olivia's authorship, as well as his desire to be with her sexually.[11] The anagram spells out the Renaissance word "cut," a slangy term for female genitalia, an interpretation augmented by the fact that the great P's imply urination.[12] In *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Julia anxiously gathers "each letter in the letter" as if alphabetic letters were body parts, and couples in a sexual fantasy her written name with Proteus's. In *Twelfth Night*, the productivity of spelling—linking letters together to form the word "cut"—is also associated with the pleasure of sex. In his daydream prior to the letter-scene, Malvolio imagines

"having come from a day-bed, where [he has] left Olivia sleeping" (2.5.43-44). The plurality of the c's, u's, and t's suggest Malvolio has imagined this fantasy many more times than just once.[13] The popular figured alphabets of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries reinforce the notion of spelling as a copulatory activity: Peter Flötner's 1534 *Menschenalphabet* shows human couples creating letters together and was widely copied across Europe. The very beginning of the alphabet, Flötner's letter A, consists of a naked Adam and Eve locked in an embrace, linking human copulation with letters to suggest the sexual nature of letter copulation underlying words.

In the body of the (epistolic) letter, the (alphabetic) letter continues to serves as a means through which Malvolio expresses his desire and his ambitions. A little prefatory verse offers up for his consideration a series of baffling initials, which the eavesdropping Fabian deems, "A fustian riddle" (2.5.98). "I may command where I adore / But silence like a Lucrece knife / With bloodless stroke my heart doth gore. / M.O.A.I. does sway my life" (2.5.94-97). Malvolio repeats the last line with the initials before reading and interpreting the rest of the poem, commenting longest on that final line. "And the end—what should that alphabetical position portend? If I could make that resemble something in me. Softly, -'M.O.A.I'" (5.2.106-8). The steward aims to make the letters resemble something in him. What interior state can a sequence of letters resemble? Malvolio wants to force a connection between himself and the letters, just as he had forged the connection between Olivia's letters and her persona. The question, "What should that alphabetical position *portend*?" already anticipates the steward's conclusion that the letters form a partial anagram of his name.[14] Sure enough, after thinking through the order of each letter, the steward concludes himself to be the addressee:

> 'M.' Malvolio—'M'-—why that begins my name
> . . .
> 'M.' But then there is no consonancy in the sequel.
> That suffers under probation. 'A' should follow, but 'O' does.
> . . .
> And then 'I' comes behind.
> . . .
> 'M. O. A. I.' This simulation is not as the former; and yet to crush this a little, it would bow to me, for every one of these letters are in my name.
> (5.2.112, 115-116, 119, 122-24)[15]

Owning the letters of his name ("my name"), Malvolio reasons he must be the intended M.O.A.I. Said quickly, the letters almost sound like the word *my*. He repeats the set of letters four times, anagramming like Julia as if to will himself into them. The identification of letters in his name focuses attention on the parts of his name: he is the *male*-volio, the male will.[16]

To prompt this reading, Maria has capitalized on the ways writing overwhelms the control of its writer and even the control of its readers. She takes advantage of the confused ownership and the general legibility of (epistolary) letters to stage Malvolio's letter-reading. She "reproduces" in counterfeit her mistress's letters to provoke "reproductive" sexual fantasies in Malvolio. But Malvolio's coincidental reading of "cut" exceeds even the expectations of the letter's orchestrators, and the eavesdropping characters do not hear the joke. (Sir Andrew repeats "Her c's, her u's, and her t's? Why that?" 5.2.81.) The anagrammic CUT, P, and MOAI become sites for the expression of Malvolio's fantasies of ambition and sex. As with Proteus and Berowne's letters, the reading of love letters' letters helps to manage or negotiate relationships of power between characters. All of these qualities of letters reinforce what we have encountered before in *Love's Labour's Lost* and *Two Gentlemen of Verona*; what makes *Twelfth Night*'s letter scene distinct is movement of different kinds of staged letter-play between the play's meta-dramatic frame.

III. A Poetics of the Letter

Critics have long sought to tie the various meta-dramatic frames to the letter-play, with varying amounts of success. They have questioned why only the audience is in on the CUT, P joke, or whether the MOAI joke offers any guidance for reading the partial anagrams comprising the character names of "Malvolio," "Olivia," and "Viola."[17] How can a focus on letters add to the critical interpretation of the relationship between the letter scene and the anagrammatic names? In other words, what larger implications for the play does that alphabetical position portend? In the following readings I differ from other critical responses in that I do not attempt to determine if the alphabetic elements occur as part of a unified system of meaning or if they simply take one form of joking and try it out in multiple variants. Instead, I first ask, at what understanding of letters can we arrive from examining these

various anagrams? I then bring that understanding of alphabetic *letters* to bear upon the interpretation of the plays.

Malvolio's letter-by-letter progression and his willingness to undo that order gesture towards various alternative ways of progressing through the play to find meaning for ourselves. "Ultimately," asserts Andrea Bachner in "Anagrams in Psychoanalysis," "the work of interpreting is highly anagrammatical. It is a work of bricolage, of disassembling and recombination."[18] For example, the letter-play may invite readers or viewers to pit the sequentiality of reading/seeing the play against the non-sequential act of interpretation, in which we revisit and reconsider names, words, places, and events outside of the play's order of acts and scenes. Or it may draw us to consider the effect of representing certain events sequentially on the stage or page, which are meant to occur simultaneously in time. Anagrams and letter homophones may draw attention to elements of simultaneity in the plot.

Malvolio's ostensibly unintentionally sexual "her c's, her u's, her t's, and thus she makes her great P's" testifies to a potentially rich alphabetic subtext that the Shakespearean play invites readers and viewers to explore. This is not to say that we should go through the plays like Malvolio does his letter, picking out letters at random and making words. We should consider, however, the sounds and appearances of letters in the play. Joel Fineman's book-length treatment of the invention of poetic subjectivity in the *Sonnets* hears the *I-Ay* homophone (that is, the first person pronoun and the synonym for yes) as an integral element in the creation and expression of that subjectivity.[19] Fineman's claim must necessarily base itself in the *Sonnets*, but Shakespeare's language in the plays is insistently homophonic, to a variety of effects and purposes.[20]

In an alternate reading of what that "alphabetical position" should portend, Sir Toby and Fabian riff off Malvolio's M.O.A.I. spelling to both reposition the letters and link each letter to an individual word. The framing of this very humorous scene, with Malvolio sounding out "random" letters while the three eavesdroppers make meaningful words from those letters, demonstrates the way this alphabetic subtext may function: letters are picked up from one discourse, and "repositioned" in another, parallel one. I reproduce here the orthography of the First Folio, which by its use of the letters instead of the words visually highlights the scene's letters-as-words phenomenon.

Malvolio: Softly, **M.O.A.I**.
Sir Toby: **O I**, make vp that, he is now at a cold sent. (2.5.106-7)

Malvolio: **M**. But then there is no consonancy in the sequell that suffers vnder probation: **A.** should follow, but **O.** does.
Fabian: And **O** shall end, **I** hope.
Sir Toby: **I**, or **I**le cudgell him, and make him cry **O**.
Malvolio: And then **I**. comes behind.
Fabian: **I**, and **you** had any **eye** behinde you, you might see more detraction at your heeles, the Fortunes before **you**. (2.5.112-21)

Sir Toby and Fabian's ridiculous "suggestions" for what the letters mean consist of a series of word-puns on the letters O and I. "O" becomes a shout of encouragement (107) or a cry of pain (115, 116). "I" becomes "ay" the affirmation (ay), a further encouragement (107); it becomes "I," the first person singular pronoun (115, 116, 119—these are set up in opposition to their alphabetical antonym, "you" or "U" at 119-21), and "eye" the sight organ (119). Like Malvolio, the two hecklers also anagrammatically reorder letters, which appear within their discursive frame as words. This process exactly fits Andrea Bachner's second point in her description of anagrams: "The anagram is a meeting place of different sign systems and does not have to consist of units of only one of these systems. Transpositions of units from one system into the other are possible."[21] Here the very basis of anagrams, the letters themselves, move from a system of somewhat random letters from the alphabet to make up Maria's rhyme to a system of potential monograms in Malvolio's interpretation, to a system of letters as words. Similarly, the "her c's, u's, and t's," which for Malvolio and the eavesdroppers sound like a series of letters chosen at random, no longer sound like random letters to the audience. The same may be said of the character name anagrams: on one level, Malvolio, Olivia, and Viola are distinct characters whose names seem merely evocative of each other; on a meta-discursive level, they are derivatives of each other, in the order listed. Given that this scene serves to ridicule Malvolio's mistaken search for meaning within the anagram, how seriously should we consider the unity of the character name anagrams as meaningful? Are we meant to be the third set of fools in these three instances of anagrammatic letter-play?

If we take this variety of letter phenomena together, we see that the play ambivalently answers that question. The kinds of letter-play and the repetition of framing (first, none of the characters "gets" the "c.u.t." joke, then in the M.O.A.I. bit just Malvolio remains left out) certainly seem designed to bring attention to the name anagrams. Malvolio's "c, u, t, and P" from Maria's letter are not purely aleatoric (a quality the name anagrams share), and they do reveal relevant information about Malvolio's desires. Plus, the sophisticated technique of framing to reposition letters as letters from one level of discourse to letters as words in another hardly seems meant to be uninstructive about the levels of discourse operating in the play. Thematically, the threat of uncertain anagrammatic meaning feeds into the drama's potential chaos of identity, gender, age, love object, social status, and familial relationships. In the end, the play asks us to decide for ourselves whether these connections are "just for laughs" or whether we should seek some deeper connection among these characters.

More importantly for the present purpose, the Malvolio letter scene reveals anagrams and homophones as *conscious* structural and poetic practices. As the scene continues, more and more letter-words emerge, including one which does not derive from the original MOAI: Fabian's last sentence includes a "you" (U). How do letters become words? When do we hear the elements of letters within words, and what do they make us think of? Sometimes texts draw our attention to letter sounds, or the letter as phoneme, with techniques like alliteration, assonance, or the whole host of rhetorical schemes in Puttenham's 1589 *Arte of English Poesie*, that add, cut, or rearrange the letters in a word. These instances of letter-as-word in *Twelfth Night* point to a deliberate, yet subtle, underlying *poetics of the letter*.

IV. The Letter in Pedagogy and Poetry

How attuned may Renaissance ears have been to the presence of letter homophones in the plays? Andrew White Tuer's expansive two-volume *History of the Hornbook* suggests that any person with even the most basic education would have been sensitive to the sounds of letter-names in texts.[22] He points to John Brinsley's frequent oral repetition of the letter names to form syllables in the 1612 book *Ludus Literarius, or the Grammar Schoole*:

> Then teach them to put the consonants in order before every vowel and to repeat the oft over together—as thus:

> to begin with b, and to say ba, be, bi, bo, bu . . . [inflects through various consonants]. When they can doe all these, then teach them to spell them in order thus. What spels b-a? If the childe cannot tell, teach him to say thus b-a, ba; so putting first b before every vowel, to say b-a, ba, b-e, be, . . . [etc]. By oft repeating before him hee will certainly doe it.[23]

Rather than focusing on the actual sounds letters make in words, this pedagogical method drills letter names over and over. It assumes a closer relationship between the name of the letter and the letter's phonetic value than what actually exists. Mote calls attention to this very pedagogical method through his mockery of the pedant Holofernes in *Love's Labour's Lost*:[24]

> *Mote*: What is 'a, b' spelled backward, with the horn on his head?
> *Holofernes*: Ba, *pueritia*, with a horn added.
> *Mote*: Ba, most silly sheep, with a horn! You hear his learning. (5.1.42-45)

Mote turns the practice on its head by making meaningful sounds—the sheep's bleat—out of the drill's meaningless syllables. While it may not have proven too effective in learning to read, the method does, however, bring about an alphabetical awareness of the letters as entities, as things with names. The groups of syllables following the alphabet row in hornbooks and reading primers across Europe, including Russia, reflect this educational practice, which may have been common enough to form the basis for a set of poetic practices. I acknowledge that the majority of Shakespeare's audiences could not read, but it may be that the Renaissance ear commanding even the most remedial of literacies was much more attuned to the sounds of alphabetic letters during performance than modern audiences.[25] Sir Toby's and Fabian's jibes could heighten sensitivity to the sounds of certain repeated words that non-readers too might appreciate. Thus the letter homophone, like the anagram, can function combinatorially, can allude to a textual code or a governing mode of poetics, and, based on a pedagogical memory of the past, may itself make letter wordplay more memorable.

An extempore poem of the pedant Holofernes in *Love's Labour's Lost* takes the letter's poetic potential as its inspiration. "I will something affect the letter, for it argues facility," he prefaces the poem (4.2.51). Understanding the poem requires an explanation

of the Renaissance specialized nomenclature for deer that by now has fallen into disuse. Despite the poem's status as a parody of Holofernes' erudition, its opaqueness to present audiences is a tribute to how very much more sensitive early modern ears and eyes may have been to the individual letter within the word.

Ostensibly the poem celebrates the Princess's success at the hunt, honing in on an earlier dispute as to the age and gender of the deer. In that dispute, Nathaniel called the animal "a buck of the first head" (a buck in its fifth year); Dull mistakenly understands Holofernes' Latin *haud credo* as an "auld grey doe" and corrects them both by calling the booty a pricket (a buck in its second year); Holofernes' "sore" is a deer in its fourth year, while his "sorel" denotes a buck in its third year. The letter-poem imaginatively uses alphabet play to enhance this confusion.

> The preyful Princess pierced and pricked a pretty pleasing pricket.
> Some say a sore, but not a sore till now made sore with shooting.
> The dogs did yell; put 'l' to 'sore,' then 'sorel' jumps from thicket-
> Or pricket sore, or else sorel. The people fall a-hooting.
> If sore be sore, then 'l' to 'sore' makes fifty sores—O sore 'l'!
> Of one sore I an hundred make by adding but one more 'l.'
> (4.2.52-58)

How does one "affect the letter," and what kind of "facility" does it argue? This silly but virtuosic poem centers around two primary alphabet phenomena: the doubling of letters as numbers; and alliteration, an increased number of repeated letter-sounds, which in this case are *p*, *s*, and *l*. The problematic tallying up and confusing of numbers as letters and letters as numbers dovetails with the topic of the poem, which itself revolves around a confusion of numbers: the age of the animal slain, the number of animals, and/or the number of wounds. Adding the letter or roman numeral "L" to the word "sore" creates, under Holofernes' alphabetic logic, 1) a new animal, "sorel" (a buck in its third year), or 2) fifty "sores," that is, either fifty wounds upon one animal, or 3) fifty separate deer. The addition of yet another L to the word (sorell) or another roman numeral L (50) throws the numbers even further out of whack. These ambiguities pile up on each other along with the accumulation of L-alliteration, which winds with a

rhyme throughout the speech and its preface.[26] L reveals the letter as the point of semiotic increase. "O sore L": by the end of the poem, it almost seems as if the letter itself has grown sore from all these manipulations.

The moral of the sorrel? Awkwardly humorous in its ostentatious display of wit, Holofernes' punning rings contrived. His work stands in stark contrast to the Princess's own much more subtle and naturalized sonnet-meditation on the deer's demise. The pedant's poem points to the sheer aleatory productivity inhering within letters, the way it creates connections and things out of "just letters." A semiotic vacuum surrounds the letter: through its sounds and images, a wounded deer, then fifty, then a hundred rise and fall in the space of a few lines. Hyper-aware of the sights and sound of letters, the schoolteacher ostentatiously draws on their latent productivity.

V. Character from Character: A Theater of Letters

The single stroke of an L evokes a hundred deer. Some three combinations of the letters M-A-L-V-O-L-I-O designate three characters in a play. Julia rips alphabetic characters out of a letter and must re-author her own character onto or as a "page." A thorough analysis of the connections between the body and letter, and the mind and letter takes on particular urgency when we consider that all of Shakespearean theater (and not only Shakespearean) arises out of an assembly of carefully ordered letters.

And yet, Holofernes' performance of literacy is staged as a kind of illiteracy, for Mote continually outmaneuvers him in pedagogical language games. Why? The surface answer replies topically that Holofernes cannot easily distinguish between the uses and play of letters for their own sake and the role of letters in other kinds of meaning-making, though the two are related. In other words, he struggles to distinguish between letters in their autotelic and heterotelic roles—i.e. letters exist unto themselves as members of an alphabet, and they exist as instrumental members working together to produce the holistic unity of words, among other uses. In the beginning pedagogical phase of the Renaissance classroom, letters are put forth autotelically as a worthy object of learning unto themselves. (Hence Holofernes' confusion when Mote starts making meaning out of the nonsensical "ba" letter lesson: "Ba, most silly sheep, with a horn! You hear his learning" [5.1.49]). But in order to make sense, most of the time individual

alphabetic letters must recede into the holistic unity of words and sentences.

A deeper answer to why Shakespeare's plays exhibit ambivalence toward literacy drives at the ongoing conflict between art and life: performance-based Renaissance pedagogy and all kinds of theater both aim at what Julie Stone Peters describes as "the performance of the book."[27] The Comedies show characters in the coming-of-age process, grappling with the discrepancies between what they have learned in their formal educations and their own experiences: characters find themselves comparing their feelings for each other with what they have been taught about love in books. *In Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *Twelfth Night*, and *Love's Labor's Lost*, alphabetic letters offer one means of managing the distance between "U" and me.

The playful uses of letters in these three works reveal ways in which the Comedies offer a safe space to subvert authorial meaning, to test and play and cavort and take risks with the breakdown of language within the human-alphabet connection—all without the severe penalty of a tragic, nihilistic conclusion as seen in tragedies like *King Lear* and *Titus Andronicus*. That Armado poses the question "Are you *not* lettered?" instead of "Are you lettered?" implies that literacy is the default state. And literacy is a one-way street; once you start down it, you take up a destiny of letter shapes and alphabetical orders. The Comedies present that path as dynamic and negotiable, a place where knowledge may be productively ripped up and discarded as new ideas supplant the old order, or where letters and orders may be tried on for size.

Notes

1. Some work in that direction includes Jonathan Goldberg, "Romeo and Juliet's Open Rs," *Queering the Renaissance* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994), 218-35; David Willbern, "Shakespeare's Nothing," *Representing Shakespeare: New Psychoanalytic Essays*, ed. Murray M. Schwartz and Coppélia Kahn (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), 244-63; Travis D Williams, "The Story of O: Reading Letters in the Prologue to *Henry V*," *Shakespeare Up Close*, ed. Russ McDonald, Nicholas D. Nace and Travis D. Williams (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2012), 9-16; Joel Fineman, *Shakespeare's Perjured Eye: The Invention of Subjectivity in the Sonnets* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986). Work considering the letters in *Twelfth Night* is cited below in the discussion of that play. In locating the many references to alphabetic letters in the plays, I have gratefully relied upon research by Dirk Delabastita, who helpfully catalogued all such moments in the Shakespearean dramatic canon: Dirk Delabastita, "Translating Shakespeare's Letter Puns," *Rimbaud's Rainbow: Literary Translation in*

Higher Education, ed. Peter Bush and Kristen Malmkjær (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 1998), 145-56.

2. For numerous examples of letter-like figures, see Massin's *La lettre et l'image: la figuration dans l'alphabet latin, du huitième siècle à nos jours* (Paris: Gallimard, 1970) and Joseph Kiermeier-Debre and Fritz Franz Vogel, *Menschenalphabete: Nackte Models, Wilde Typen, Modische Charaktere* (Marburg: Jonas Verlag, 2001).

3. Unless otherwise noted, I use the Arden 3rd editions for the *Love's Labour's Lost* and *Two Gentlemen of Verona* citations, and the Norton first edition for the *Twelfth Night* and other citations.

4. Cf. *Antony and Cleopatra*'s character *Scarus*, who naturalizes the alphabet in the wounded body through the shape and sound of his wound or "scar": "I had a wound here that was like a T, / But now 'tis made an H" (4.8.3-4). During battle, his T-shaped wound receives another gash, making it look like a sideways H. With the increase in size, the wound also increases in pain, represented neatly by the pun on the letter name H, pronounced like "aiche," or *ache*. The scar as his namesake, Scarus's identity lies intimately tied to this letter-shaped wound.

5. Cf. *Cymbeline*: Pisanio, upon receiving instructions to murder Imogen cries out, "O damned paper, / Black as the ink that's on thee!" (3.2.19-20). The Arden editors of *Two Gentlemen* cite the expression as proverbial (fn 221).

6. The language used to describe letters and type takes its cues from human body parts, attributing bodies, arms, faces, and feet to the ABC's.

7. The violence of this letter drama is reminiscent of beginning readers' reaction to the frustrations of reading. Surrounded by an increasingly alphabetic world, students crave a measure of control over the letters: they would rather see letters controlled than have letters control them. Chris Van Allsburg's late twentieth-century children's alphabet book, *The Z Was Zapped*, offers an enlightening parallel to Julia's behavior. The book depicts an alphabet drama occurring in twenty-six "acts" performed by the Caslon *players* (in reference to the font), in which each page positions a letter upon a stage, the victim of some gruesome act of violence. Turning the page, *ta-dah!* the act is named in an alliterative sentence written in the passive voice: "The Z was Zapped." "The N was Nailed and Nailed again." "The Q was neatly Quartered." The book is popular with the under-eight set, children who, having themselves been forced to perform the alphabet with varying degrees of success, delight in seeing the letters themselves "perform" under duress. Chris Van Allsburg, *The Z Was Zapped: A Play in Twenty-Six Acts* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987).

8. Catherine Belsey, "The Name of the Rose in *Romeo and Juliet*," *The Yearbook of English Studies* 23 (1993): 126-42.

9. Patricia Crain, *The Story of A: The Alphabetization of America* from The New England Primer *to* The Scarlet Letter (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2000).

10. Ibid., 84.

11. Critics have long disputed why only one U and neither a C nor P appear within the writing from which Malvolio supposedly draws them: "To the unknown beloved, this, and my good wishes" (2.5.82-83).

12. Modern productions usually emphasize the "and" to produce the more recognizable joke on "cunt."

13. Andrea Bachmer, "Anagrams in Psychoanalysis: Retroping Concepts by Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan, and Jean-François Lyotard," *Comparative Literature*

Studies 40.1 (2003): 1-25. These anagrams bear much resemblance to the Freudian *Trennwitze*, "jokes that work through segmentation of the phonematic content of their texts, like 'Anti? Oh nee' {'Antigone—ancient? Not really'}, 'buona parte' {'a large part of—Napoleon Buonaparte'}, 'O na, nie' {'onania—o no, never'}." This list comes from Bachner's article, p. 6.

Desire entirely eclipses its object to settle on the letter itself in this scene from *Much Ado About Nothing*:

> *Beatrice*: By my troth, I am exceeding ill: heigh-ho!
> *Margaret*: For a hawk, a horse, or a husband?
> *Beatrice*: *For the letter that begins them all, H.* (3.4.44-46)

14. People have long considered letters and their permutations to have magic, fortune-telling prophesies. For an overview of letters and magic in primarily the ancient world, see Franz Dornseiff's *Das Alphabet in Mystik und Magie* (Leipzig and Berlin: Teubner, 1925). A contemporaneous example comes from George Puttenham, in his 1589 *Arte of English Poesie*, who creates his own anagrams of Queen Elizabeth's name, linking it to prophesy: "Also I imputed it for no litle good luck and glorie to my selfe, to haue pronounced to her so good and prosperous a fortune . . . which though it cannot be said by this euent any destinie or fatal necessitie, yet surely is it by all probabillitie of reason, so likely to come to passe" (110). George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie*, ed. Gladys Dodge Willock and Alice Walker (1589; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1936).

15. I have omitted the lines of Malvolio's eavesdroppers, interspersed throughout, to focus on Malvolio's reasoning.

16. Some read this as the completely italianate "ill-will."

17. Lee Sheridan Cox argues that the subtext within the anagram reads, "I am O," in "Queries and Notes: The Riddle in *Twelfth Night*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 13.3 (1962): 360. R. Chris Hassel, Jr., argues against this interpretation in "Queries and Notes: The Riddle in *Twelfth Night* Simplified," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 25.3 (1974): 356. Peter J. Smith proposes an alternative reading ("I am Ajax") based on the Ajax figure who turns up in the play and on contemporary events in England: "M.O.A.I. 'What Should That Alphabetical Position Portend?' An Answer to the Metamorphic Malvolio," *Renaissance Quarterly* 51. 4 (1998): 1199-224. Leah Scragg moves to the larger context of early modern playgoing in her reading of CUT, P as a warning against cutpurses in "'Her C's, Her U's, and Her T's: Why That?' A New Reply for Sir Andrew Aguecheek," *The Review of English Studies* 42.165 (1991): 1-16.

18. Bachner, "Anagrams in Psychoanalysis," 22. Many thanks to Andrea Bachner for pointing out the relevance of her article to several of my arguments here.

19. Joel Fineman, *Shakespeare's Perjured Eye: The Invention of Subjectivity in the Sonnets* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986). He stresses the importance of repetition with a difference in the epideictic poetic tradition and the way the tradition calls attention to its own repetitions and epideictic nature. Subjectivity is bound up in its modes of speaking about itself. He reads Shakespeare's language as "duplicitously verbal as opposed to singly verbal," as it is in other Renaissance poetry. "The result is a poetics of a double tongue rather than a poetics of a unified and unifying eye, a language of suspicious word rather than a language of true vision" (15).

20. I borrow the phrase "insistently homophonic" from David Willbern's "Shakespeare's Nothing," as he talks about the semiotics of "nothing," including "Oh" as emblematic of the homophones "hole" and "whole."

21. Bachner, "Anagrams in Psychoanalysis," 2.

22. The hornbook consists of a printed or handwritten alphabet, several rows of syllables, and The Lord's Prayer, covered with a protective layer of horn and affixed to a wooden paddle. For an extensive examination, see Andrew White Tuer, *History of the Horn-Book*, 2 vols. (London: Leadenhall Press, Ltd.; New York :C. Scribener's Sons, 1896).

23. John Brinsley, *Ludus Literarius, or The Grammar School*, ed. E. T. Campagnac (1612; Liverpool: The University Press, 1917).

24. Tuer's *History of the Hornbook* first drew my attention to the similarity of the Brinsley text to the following passage.

25. See Keith Thomas's article describing a range of literacies in early modern England: "The Meaning of Literacy in Early Modern England" in *The Written Word: Literacy in Transition*, ed. Gerd Baumann (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 97-131.

26. The L-sound, particularly as end-rhyme, seems to derive its inspiration from the end-rhymes of the Princess's sonnet discussing the slaying of the same deer. Having end-rhymed four of the sonnet's sixteen lines—kill, ill; skill kill—she finishes the sonnet with a final couplet, "As I for praise alone now seek to spill / The poor deer's blood that my heart means no ill" (4.1.34-35). Compare Holofernes' exhibitionist wit, which thinks nothing of imagining the death of a hundred sores, with the Princess's own introspective reflection on the morality of mortality for the purposes of attaining praise.

27. Julie Stone Peters, *Theatre of the Book, 1480-1880: Print, Text, and Performance in Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 114. "Renaissance education, like Renaissance theatre, aimed at teaching the proper performance of the book . . . The promulgation of classical and other kinds of learning was inseparable from its performance, imbibed through dramatic enactment, rhetorical performance, disputation, grammatical analysis, enunciation, memorization, and scholarly gloss."

2014 Undergraduate Paper

Securing Permanent Power: The Sexism of Self-Otherization in Shakespearean Plays

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Critics have consistently been concerned with examining the otherized characters of Shakespeare's plays, focusing on those characters marginalized by either their race or female sex. However, there is rarely a focus on the play's protagonists as self-otherized, even though many characters purposefully take on attributes of such marginalized character tropes. Specifically, in the plays *Measure for Measure*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, and *The Tempest*, major characters emphasize a defining trait as a means of marginalizing themselves from the common cast. In regard to achieving their goals, only the male protagonists succeed—the females, particularly Cleopatra and Isabella, end up losing the very characteristics they used to marginalize and define themselves. I would suggest that an explanation for their failure in contrast to the males' victories can be found in their sex and the social expectations associated with womanhood. Shakespeare presented this discrepancy to exhibit the limitations aristocratic women faced regarding mobility because of expectations placed upon them. The otherized characters in the aforementioned plays lose their personhood and sense of self because their identity is instead attributed to them by the majority type, that is, white males.

Ania Loomba's scholarship regarding the marginalized characters in Shakespearean works focuses on characters of foreign origin, though she quickly connects the same discriminating attitude to women of Shakespeare. Loomba

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writes, "Both women and racial 'others' are posited as biological and natural inferiors and similar characteristics are attributed to them."[1] These characteristics include inferiority, unnaturalness, lack of intelligence, and lack of ambition. Therefore, marginalized characters begin to lose their ability to define themselves, their personhood becoming a construct of others' conceptions. Loomba explains the phenomenon in this way: "Women, and indeed other marginalized peoples, were excluded from the projected ideals of self-fulfillment and self-fashioning, of personal achievement and mobility; sexual difference became a central preoccupation of religious and secular authority."[2] In other words, aristocratic females were limited in what they could strive to achieve or the positions they could try to attain. Examples are evident in the treatment of both Isabella and Cleopatra by the men from whom they strive to separate their identities.

In order to fully understand the marginalization faced by women during the time Shakespeare was producing his works, it is enlightening to look at specific views the cultures imposed on them regarding how a well-behaved woman ought to behave. In 1608, William Vaughan, a Doctor of Civil Laws, writes, "But what shall the woman do? Shall she do what seemeth good in her eyes? No."[3] Following a detailed passage on the duties of husbands, Vaughan segues into a discussion of a wife's duties by stressing that her judgment of morality and propriety are not reliable. This statement is evident of the mentality that gave the decision-making of a woman to her husband, as Vaughan instructs. The reason, he explains, is that because "the woman is a feeble creature and not endued with such a noble courage as the man, she is sooner pricked to the heart or moved to passions than man."[4] Therefore, a woman is to rely upon the man above her for wisdom and guidance regarding decision-making and judgments. By understanding these biases that were imposed on women, the dynamics of Shakespeare's female characters and their actions in attempting to gain power over themselves and others can be better understood.

In *Measure for Measure*, the protagonist Isabella, in addition to being otherized automatically as a part the female sex, willingly otherizes herself by choosing a life of abstinence and permanent separation from men as she studies to become a nun. The reason this separates Isabella even further from the already marginalized woman of the time was that the women of Shakespeare's age were

expected to live in accordance with the rules of their patriarch, or at least parental control until they were to become—in essence—the property of their husbands. Indeed, Bullinger offers a lengthy paragraph regarding the rules by which daughters and maidens shall "avoid all wantonness and niceness in words, gestures, and deed, to eschew all unhonest games and pastimes . . . [and] wanton communication."[5] Although chasteness—not just in purity, but also in action, thought, and speech—is the aim of these stifling regulations, the end goal for all women is marriage: "to work to love their husbands and children."[6] Because the purpose of women's chastity was to save themselves for their husbands, Isabella's decision to remain pure always through a life in the nunnery makes her worthless in the eyes of men. By willingly choosing not to fulfill her societal role as a woman, Isabella loses the immediate value of the identity that comes with partnership with a man.

Not only does Isabella choose to refrain from the responsibility of becoming a submissive wife, but she also contradicts a second, equally important, expectation: that women are to submit to the decisions of men. In the nunnery, Isabella would be under the guidance of set rules; in fact, she even expresses a desire for "farther privileges . . . wishing a more strict restraint upon the sisterhood" (1.4.1-5).[7] As discussed earlier, Vaughan expressed that women were not meant to do what they saw as right in their own reasoning, but rather to listen to the wisdom of their husband. Before their expected marriage, a woman was under the control and leadership of her father. Thus, following this ideology, a woman must never gain control over her own thoughts; she was always subject to the guidance of a male figure. However, the nun Francesca reveals to Isabella that by becoming a nun she loses the direct connection with male opinions, stating, "When you have vowed, you must not speak with men but in the presence of the prioress. Then if you speak, you must not show your face; or if you show your face, you must not speak" (1.4.10-13). By this rule, nuns in the convent not only follow their own rules as enforced by their prioress, but also limit their connection with male guidance and instruction. In the context of the play, therefore, to men such as Angelo or the Duke, Isabella will soon be literally and figuratively untouchable. That is, her purity and mind will be protected from male intrusion. In reality, though, since the nunnery is under the control of a church, which is under the control of a Father, Isabella's attempt to escape male dominance is futile.

At first, Isabella's choice to protect herself in this way results in momentary power. She is able to deny Angelo the use of her body as a bartering chip for her brother's life, by virtue of her vows. It cannot be said whether or not this is the sole reason for her refusal, but it does give her the means of honorably declining the wishes of the man in power. Furthermore, through her denial of Angelo's desires, Isabella is able to gain knowledge about his sinful intentions, thus gaining the power to later incriminate him in front of the Duke and the townspeople. Therefore, her choice to otherize herself by joining a convent eventually results in the "salvation" of her brother's life. Although through her self-otherization Isabella is able to reveal the hypocrisy of Angelo's dealings of justice, it inevitably results in her loss of autonomy.

At the play's close, despite her effort to escape the expectations thrust upon her sex, Isabella eventually is forced to account for those conjectures—she is still unable to refuse the offer of marriage from a man, particularly a figure of authority. Isabella, whose intentions throughout the play are clearly to live a life of rules and abstinence, has no say in her final fate. The Duke commands, "For your lovely sake give me your hand and say you will be mine"; Isabella has no choice but to silently comply (5.1.62). The argument that the Duke is undeserving hardly needs to be made, as throughout the play he is a figure of deceit, foul play, and gutlessness. This symbolism is evident in his initial exchange of power to the hands of Angelo for the purpose of avoiding uncomfortable decisions of justice among his people. However, by virtue of his gender and status, the Duke has the final say regarding the fate of all the women crucial to the play. Interestingly, Shakespeare doesn't give Isabella a voice after the Duke's request for her hand. This silence should not be read as acquiescence on her part, but rather as a commentary on how expression of her desires would fail to change the proceedings.

From the play's start to finish, it is clear that Isabella was set on giving her life to God and the nunnery; it is obvious that a simple proposal would not sway her. Furthermore, it was clearly not the first time she had been propositioned—think Angelo—and the Duke who had deceived her would not have convinced her to willingly forsake a lifetime of values. Overall, although her self-marginalization by abstinence and pursuit of nunhood did provide her with the power to save her brother's life—resulting in a happy future for him and Juliet—and momentarily escape the control of

men over her decisions, Isabella was unable to gain enough power to achieve her true desire: to be left alone to serve God with her body and life.

While Isabella attempts—though in vain—to gain power through her chastity, the female title character of *Antony and Cleopatra*, takes the opposite approach. As Vaughan warns, "A woman is jealous and naturally suspicious," a proclamation that frames the attitudes surrounding analysis of Cleopatra's behavior.[8] In many ways, Isabella's plight is mirrored through contrast in Cleopatra's overt sexuality. While Isabella chooses to protect her decisions from the control of male influence by refraining from sexuality, Cleopatra attempts to influence and gain control over men through by enticing them with her sexuality. However, because she is not only a woman but also a foreigner, Cleopatra is faced with marginalization twofold to that of Isabella. In many ways, her Egyptian race inflates the restrictions placed on her sex. Loomba writes, "Cleopatra's feminine wiles are specifically linked to her being an Egyptian [which is] constructed as being . . . uncivilized and un-Christian; [and therefore] Cleopatra cannot be sexually attractive."[9] Cleopatra can escape the constraints of neither her race nor her sex throughout the play. Her position as the queen of Egypt defines her throughout the play through references such as "serpent of old Nile" and "foreign goddess" (1.5.26). These phrases alone warrant a close analysis of how Cleopatra is treated because of her race and refusal to conform. However, Cleopatra heightens this otherization by dramatizing her differences of culture and stressing womanly stereotypes.

Many critics discuss the play in terms of Antony's struggle as he is forced to choose "between fidelity to a chaste, white wife and adultery with a promiscuous, tawny, black seductress."[10] However, what's interesting is not that Antony is forced to make such a choice, as Cohen suggests, but rather the assumptions that underlie this choice. Reading *Antony and Cleopatra* as Antony's choice between Octavia and Cleopatra encourages the audience to view those characters simply as the right or good choice versus the wrong or bad choice. Following this reading, Cleopatra represents the epitome of an aristocratic woman who fulfils the stereotypical demeaning characteristics attributed to womankind. L. T. Fitz describes this depiction as follows: "Cleopatra is seen as the archetypal woman: practice of feminine wiles, mysterious, childlike, long on passion and short on intelligence—except

for a sort of animal cunning."[11] Aware of her declining power, Cleopatra compensates by stressing those characteristics that already make her otherized. It is not far-fetched to describe Cleopatra as melodramatic or theatrical. Consider, for example, her famous exclamation at news of Antony parading into battle: "O happy horse, to bear the weight of Antony! Do bravely, horse, for wot'st thou whom thou mov'st?" (1.5.22-23). The text is chock full of such proclamations by the great queen of passion, love, or anger, demonstrating her emotional reaction to life.

For Isabella of *Measure for Measure*, her true desires are clear: power over her decision to devote herself to God and a life of chastity. Cleopatra's own motives for gaining power have been debated by critics, but it is difficult to deny that her love for Antony was anything other than legitimate. Fitz explains Cleopatra's use of femininity to win Antony's affections and states that Cleopatra "is almost unique among Shakespeare's female characters in her use of feminine wile."[12] This exclusivity is why Cleopatra is such an important figure in the discussion of Shakespeare's commentary on women—she embodies a different stereotype than the majority of female characters in Shakespeare. However, when Fitz describes Cleopatra's actions as "wiles," a negative connotation of manipulation is present. Yet Cleopatra's vying for power is best understood as promoting her sensuality—otherizing herself further—so as to not lose Antony's interest, especially since she is clearly not the ideal choice for Antony's affections, given her Egyptian race, which makes her exotic, yet not marriage-worthy. In an aside, Cleopatra questions, "Why did he marry Fulvia and not love her?"—suggesting a desire, perhaps knowledge, that his love was her own (1.1.41-42). Also, this rhetorical question aids explanation of her violent reaction at the news of Antony's new marriage to Octavia: "The most infectious pestilence upon thee!" (2.5.61). The ferocity of her reaction, which carries on for over fifty lines, in addition to witnessing to the intensity of her emotions for Antony, suggests that Cleopatra considered herself to be the rightful heir to Antony's full affections after the passing of his late wife, Fulvia.

Regarding the reading of the play centered on Antony's choice between Octavia and Cleopatra, clearly the "correct" choice for Antony was Octavia. Caesar refers to his sister as "the piece of virtue set between them" (3.2.8-9). In other words, Octavia is viewed as the cement that bonds the triumvirate; it is not a

marriage of love, but of power transfer. However, the power is not given to Octavia through her marriage, but rather to Antony, her husband. An official relationship with Cleopatra, who already had some control over Antony due to her sexual availability, would result in further compromise of Antony's authority. Loomba writes, "Active female sexuality is disruptive of patriarchal control, not just because it is an emblem for, or analogous to, other sorts of rebellion, but because it directly threatens the power base of patriarchy which is dependent upon its regulation and control."[13] Here Loomba observes the ways in which a sexually loose woman, or at least a woman sexually available outside of the confinements of marriage, challenges the understanding of Shakespeare's time of how a woman ought to behave. Clearly, Cleopatra is able to engage in sexual activity without the commitment of marriage and submission to a man's authority. Thus, by choosing her over Octavia, as he eventually does, Antony is allowing Cleopatra to control his actions by undermining his authority as a virtuous man.

The travesty that can define the conclusion of *Antony and Cleopatra* is expressed by Caesar: "He hath given his empire up to a whore" (3.6.66-67). Shakespeare's viewers, though they might hope for a happy ending for the illicit lovers, realize that Cleopatra's endeavor to gain Antony's love and power cannot realistically occur. Cleopatra, though in most ways opposite to the virtuous Isabella, offers another example of how her attempt at otherizing herself through feminine wiles to gain her desired result—a life of love with Antony—is in vain. Cleopatra is already otherized by her foreign heritage and female sex, and therefore must die shortly after the death of her lover. Not only does she lose her power in death, but also her attempt to gain Antony's unwavering dedication to her results in his loss. Through this conclusion Shakespeare is suggesting to his audience not only that there is a limit to the power women can truly gain during his age, but also that often their attempts at gaining power will result in tragic losses for the men in their path.

While Isabella and Cleopatra both offer examples of women who strive to break out of the expectation forced upon aristocratic women by otherizing themselves, but instead failed to gain what they desired, *The Tempest*'s Prospero demonstrates the advantage of masculinity as part of the aristocracy. Prospero's own recollection of the tale suggests that part of his brother's jealousy can be attributed to Prospero's unique abilities in the magic arts.

Aside from his physical estrangement from society, Prospero is otherized by his use of magic and his ability to control others through threats and actual magic acts. However, once Prospero is banished to the island, he begins to emphasize the very thing that otherized him—in a way similar to Cleopatra's assertion of her race and sexuality. Both Prospero and Cleopatra are rulers who gained their authority through self-otherization. Indeed, once on the island Prospero uses his magical powers as a way to define and assert himself among the other inhabitants. Because he is the only human in the context of the play that has the ability to use the magical arts, Prospero is otherized by this unique ability. Furthermore, he is aware of his advantage using magic and through it is able to manipulate the situations of the play to aid the achievement of his desires. The play follows Prospero's journey as he gains the power he believes is rightfully his: first, power over the island on which he is stranded, and eventually power as Duke of Milan as he was originally entitled.

Prospero's first goal, to gain power over the island, has already taken place as the play commences. Snippets as to how he achieved this mastery are revealed through recounting his and Miranda's initial arrival on the island. It is clear that his magic is the tool that enabled him to achieve this. After banishing Sycorax, Prospero wasted no time in making a slave of her son, Caliban, of whom Prospero states, "We cannot miss him. He does make our fire, fetch in our wood, and serves in offices that profit us" (1.2.314-16). The character of Caliban serves as a demonstration as to how Prospero's magic can reduce a threatening being—one who had attempted rape of Miranda, Prospero's daughter—into nothing more than a house-slave. It is evident that Caliban detests Prospero, but he laments, "I must obey. His art is of such power it would control my dam's god Setebos, and make a vassal of him" (1.2.375-77). This quote alone demonstrates the true strength of Prospero's magic. The native Caliban, son of a witch who could conduct spells, feared him to the point of lowering himself to menial labor.

Ariel, Prospero's chief minion, is responsible for enacting most of Prospero's biddings in the play. It was through Prospero's magic that he was able to rescue Ariel from "a cloven pine; within which rift imprison'd [he] didst painfully remain a dozen years" (1.2.279-81). Prospero is aware of the power that comes from rescuing someone and continually holds the debt over Ariel's

head throughout the play, saying, "It was mine art . . . that made gape the pine and let thee out" (1.2.293-95). Without Ariel, who as a spirit has inhuman abilities to carry out Prospero's wishes, Prospero would not be able to accomplish his goal of confronting his brother and regaining his rightful throne. Stephan Greenblatt discusses the importance of Prospero's magic study which he "perfected during his long exile, [and] enabled Prospero to cause Antonio and his shipmates, sailing back to Italy from Tunis, to be shipwrecked on his island, where they [fell] unwittingly under his control."[14] Prospero uses his advantage over Ariel to force the spirit to control the weather, creating an artful storm that forces the crew off the ship to meet Prospero face to face. From that point, once each character was in place, Prospero used his powers and knowledge to control each encounter and regain a relationship with his brother Antonio.

In the middle of the play, Prospero concludes that he is in power saying, "My high charms work, and these mine enemies are all knit up in their distractions. They now are in my power" (3.3.88-90). Because his brother and men are on the island that he already controls, Prospero easily gains power over them; thus, he is just a few step from gaining the upper-hand over his brother permanently, including repossession of his dukedom. Greenblatt writes, "His magic makes it possible not only to wrest back his dukedom but to avenge himself for the terrible wrong that his brother and his brother's principal ally, Alonso, the King of Naples, have done him."[15] In the end, Prospero is able to reassert himself as the rightful duke with the potential for heirs from his daughter Miranda—now betrothed to Ferdinand. Granted, fulfillment of his desire did take twelve years and a well-timed trip near Italy by his brother, but it would have been impossible without Prospero's defining mark—the very magic that marginalized him in the first place. In the end, Prospero is able to use self-otherization by stressing his magic abilities to gain control over servants and also over his brother. In the play's epilogue, Prospero relinquishes the powers that regained him the authority of his dukedom: "Now my charms are all o'erthrown, and what strength I have's mine own" (5.1.223).

This reading of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* is influenced significantly by the fact that Prospero is a man rather than a woman. However, in Julie Taymor's 2010 rendition of *The Tempest*, she cast instead a female protagonist—Prospera, played by

Helen Mirren.[16] The effects of this gender-swap open a bigger understanding of the implications of Shakespeare's commentary on gender throughout the play. The explanation the film gives of Prospera's dethronement puts a greater emphasis on her magic as the thing that marginalized her in the first place. She explains to Miranda that after her husband's death—he was the Duke of Milan—the brother was afraid she might take over the position and turns her power against him, so he accused her of witchcraft. "Women have burned for less," female Prospero laments, adding a layer of awareness to the audience's consciousness of sexism in the film. Because of the nature of the film as a retelling of the Shakespearean work, the ending remains in essence the same. However, because she is female, the implications that she is ousted because of her magical abilities—rather than simply her position as a ruler, as Prospero was in the play—suggest that a woman cannot intrinsically be a threat when in a position of authority, but only when given outstanding powers, such as Prospera's magical abilities.

Throughout Shakespeare's works, his depictions of various female tropes showcase the limitations faced by women, specifically of the aristocracy, during the time he was writing. It would be presumptuous to claim that Shakespeare's purpose in doing so was to challenge such limitations or to even raise awareness of the plights of women. Rather, Shakespeare was most likely presenting the ways these expectations did indeed restrict a woman's ability to gain power. By depicting these limits, Shakespeare was writing to his audience with realistic stories that reflected the views of his time. This theory that his protagonists, whether male or female, used self-otherization as a way of achieving their wants can be applied to many other of his plays. Consider Shakespeare's less-known work, *Titus Andronicus*,[17] as a prime example in which both male and female characters use self-otherization to gain power, but the man eventually gains control. Shakespeare presents the two main characters, Titus and Tamora, caught in a back-and-forth of diabolical attempts to gain the upper hand over the other. Though their motives are different, both center on revenge. Each character attempts to gain power by self-otherization: Titus accentuates his sorrow until he is perceived as crazy and is underestimated, whereas Tamora uses her feminine wiles—not unlike Cleopatra—to subtly usurp Saturnine's power.

However, as with Cleopatra, it is important to note that Tamora, the former queen of the Goths, is already marginalized by virtue of her race and gender, whereas Titus is not. While Tamora uses her hyper-sexualized foreign appeal to undermine Saturnine and control the Roman Empire, Titus feigns mental instability and tricks her into thinking he can be easily deceived. Like Isabella and her rescue of Claudio, Tamora temporarily gains power and achieves partial victories through the subjugation of Saturnine and the rape of Lavinia, Titus's treasured daughter. Yet the true goal of the game is revenge rather than ultimate power; revenge is what they both are willing to die to achieve. Therefore, as Titus uses his feigned craziness to capture, kill, and cook Tamora's sons into a pie served to the queen herself, he makes the final move and thus achieves ultimate revenge. Their battle begins with the death of Titus's sons at the hands of Tamora's army, but ends with unwitting mother-son cannibalism. Although both Titus and Tamora use self-otherization as a way to gain the upper hand, Titus is the victor. Though the end of this tragedy is a smear of bloodshed and chaos, Shakespeare leaves hope for Titus's kingdom in the life of his grandson, Young Lucius. For Tamora, despite calculated plans and premeditated manipulation, all that remains is total destruction and humiliation as she consumes her only children and watches her authority—and then her life—wrenched from her. In this failed attempt to achieve permanent control, Tamora joins Isabella and Cleopatra. This imbalance of opportunity for power reaffirms Shakespeare's assertions that possibilities of true power and mobility for the female aristocracy of his day were limited. Whether through sexual looseness, such as that of Cleopatra and Tamora, or extreme chastity, as exemplified by Isabella, the limitations placed on women prevent permanent, effective grasps of power as a means to a desired purpose.

Notes

1. Ania Loomba, "Sexuality and Racial Difference," in *Shakespeare: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory 1945-2000*, ed. Russ McDonald (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 794-816; 800.

2. Ibid., 799.

3. William Vaughan, "The Golden Grove," in *Renaissance Woman: A Sourcebook: Construction of Femininity in England*, ed. Kate Aughterson (New York: Routledge, 1995), 96-98; 97.

4. Ibid.

5. Henry Bullinger, "The Christian State of Matrimony," in *Renaissance Woman: A Sourcebook: Constructions of Femininity in England*, ed. Kate Aughterson (New York: Routledge, 1995), 106-8; 108.

6. Ibid.

7. Stephen Greenblatt et al., *The Norton Shakespeare*, 2nd ed. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2008). Act, scene, and line citations from Shakespeare's plays refer to this edition.

8. Vaughan, "The Golden Grove," 97.

9. Loomba, "Sexuality and Racial Difference," 803.

10. Walter Cohen, "Antony and Cleopatra," in *The Norton Shakespeare*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt et al. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2008), 2633-42; 2635.

11. L. T. Fitz, "Egyptian Queens and Male Reviewers: Sexist Attitudes in *Antony and Cleopatra* Criticism," in *Shakespeare: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory 1945-200*0, ed. Russ McDonald (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 570-90; 571.

12. Ibid., 572.

13. Loomba, "Sexuality and Racial Difference," 809.

14. Stephen Greenblatt, "*The Tempest*," in *The Norton Shakespeare*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt et al. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2008), 3057-58.

15. Ibid., 3058.

16. *The Tempest*, directed by Julie Taymor (Burbank, CA: Touchstone Home Entertainment, 2010), DVD

17. *Titus*, directed by Julie Taymor (Los Angeles: 20thCentury Fox Home Entertainment, 2000), DVD.

2015 Keynote Speaker

#King Lear
Shakespeare's Most Contemporary Play

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Introduction

You all remember Tolstoy's famous opening line of *Anna Karenina*: "All happy families are alike; each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way." Why are we perennially fascinated with unhappiness? An eminent critic once wrote of *Paradise Lost*, "John Milton may have been interested in Heaven, but his readers troop to Hell for entertainment."

Perhaps we take grim delight in miserable families because they look so . . . familiar, and nowhere in Shakespeare do they look more familiar than in *King Lear*. In case you hadn't already noticed, in *Lear*, Shakespeare opened your closets and pawed through your drawers to portray your father, or sister, your partner, brother, caretaker, boss, minister, teacher, therapist, and—yes, you. I'm in the same boat: I can rename most of the characters in this play for people in my own life.

I titled this keynote *#King Lear*: I, who have never used Facebook, Twitter, Flikr, Flitter, blogs, droids or whatever. But I wanted to suggest how contemporary this play is. As I have already implied, part of its contemporaneity derives from its portrayal of a thoroughly dysfunctional family. In Shakespeare's interconnected world, this dysfunction spreads outward, infecting many aspects of the play—on the political plane, family disorder goes global; in psychological terms, individual identities fracture; and, in terms of world-view, dysfunction ultimately eradicates the possibility of any

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coherence. On every level, *King Lear* ends in fragments—not even in the certainty of classical causality, but a quantized world much like contemporary physics. Welcome to the 21st century.

Background

As you know, Shakespeare explored problematical families in many of his earlier plays. Think of Coriolanus (and his mother); Hamlet (and his mother, and father, and uncle, and girlfriend). The Montagues and Capulets, a.k.a. the Hatfields and McCoys, weren't exactly model families, like Mr. and Mrs. Macbeth with a marriage almost literally made in hell. Titus Andronicus set a new bar for the family bloodbath. Shylock, of course, was a terrifying father, underscored by the comic sub-plot with Launcelot Gobbo saying to his blind father, "It's a wise father who knows his own child." As happily as *The Tempest* or *Winter's Tale* end, their plots are still propelled by controlling fathers, vicious brothers, and unmotivated rage.

But Shakespeare never staged heartbreaking and horrifying family dynamics so vividly and so centrally as he did in *King Lear*. His most epic and inclusive play is at heart about the most universal, and therefore most contemporary theme of all—the family unit.

Definitions

The term *du jour* for families like Lear's is "dysfunctional," but what, exactly, does that mean? Simply performing below average, like a C-? Or *really* below average, like F-? My friend, who is a psychiatrist, tells me that, however widely used, this term is not yet in the bible of psychotherapy, the DSM (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders). The accepted short definition of "a dysfunctional family" is one in which conflict, misbehavior, and often child neglect or abuse occur continually, leading other members to accommodate such actions. Children often grow up in such families assuming that such an arrangement is normal.

I grew up with a schizophrenic mother, and it seldom occurred to me or my brother that our family was even unusual, let alone clinical. I have since learned that happens because the operative reality in your family is established by its most non-functioning or "weakest" member, in my case, my mother's. Consider your own family, nuclear or extended, and the member around whom you must walk on eggshells. "Don't make Dad mad. Just agree with

Mom. Don't get your brother started. Don't rock the boat. Be a doormat." In other words, erase yourself.

Of course, we don't need any formal definitions to see that the Lear family long ago obliterated the boundaries of normal, let alone viable, interpersonal relationships. At least one-third of the main characters exhibit various clinical disorders: sadism, Asperger's Syndrome, bipolarity, abuse in several varieties, denial with a capital "D," and the Ground Zero of it all—sudden anger syndrome, now called Intermittent Explosive Disorder (with the painfully appropriate acronym of IED).

The calmest version of this in your life is probably road rage, but you might be lucky enough to be know someone who becomes violently angry over something even more trivial: the soup is cold, the window sticks, I broke my shoelace. They blow up and then they are over it. But you aren't. And that's the problem. Their rage filters through your psyche and lays down deposits in your personality that accumulate and harden over the years.

Traits of Dysfunctional Families

Before we look at specific moments in the play, I want to share with you a selected list of traits of dysfunctional families; as I do so, consider Lear, Gloucester and their five children in contemporary psychological terms.

Dysfunctional Parents.

1. An unpredictable emotional state (due to personality disorders, untreated mental illness or dementia)
2. Emotional intolerance (family members not allowed to express the "wrong" emotions and other forms of conditional love)
3. Ruling by fear and loyalty manipulation (no one is allowed to dissent or question authority)
4. Unfair treatment of certain family members (due to birth order, gender, age, etc.)
5. Denial of abusive behavior
6. Lack of empathy
7. Abnormal sexual behavior such as adultery or promiscuity
8. Judgmental statements or demonization ("You're stupid. You're fat.")

*Children in Dysfunctional Families***.**

1. Myriad forms of accommodation, often morphing as fast as viruses to fit the intensifying problems

2. Low self-esteem or a poor self-image (with resultant difficulty expressing emotions)
3. Moderate to severe mental health issues (depression, anxiety, violence)
4. Bullying or harassing others
5. Difficulty forming healthy relationships
6. Finding an abusive partner, perpetuating dysfunctional behaviors in other relationships
7. Rebelling against parental authority
8. Auto-destructive or self-damaging behaviors (sometimes suicidal)

As I was doing this research, I kept wondering if I were reading psychology or literary criticism about *King Lear*.

Examples of dysfunction in the play

Now I want to go through the play quickly to point out selected examples, and then discuss how this central idea, the dysfunctional family, informs other aspects of the play—political, psychological, and philosophical—helping to make it the most "contemporary" play Shakespeare wrote.

Act 1. The play starts with a dirty joke: in front of Kent, Gloucester jokes about Edmund and calls him his "whoreson"—the son of a whore. This obviously manifests adultery, demonization and denial; and we are only twenty-four lines into the play.

Lear divides the kingdom, but not really. He wants to divest himself of "rule, interest of territory, and cares of state," but he wants to keep "the name, and all the addition to a king," in other words, all the trappings and appearances of power. One critic considers this a dividing of himself, a splitting of his own identity.

In this scene, Lear plays the "show me how much you love me" game with his daughters, clearly quantifying love. Goneril and Regan have developed adaptive behaviors to survive and succeed in this family: Play along to get along—and to get your share. But Cordelia rebels, in effect saying, "I refuse to say my lines in your melodrama, to be part of your power trip, Dad. I *act* what I feel. I *do* instead of say." Then follows their famous and catastrophic exchange, ending with Lear's ironic line, "Nothing will come of nothing."

Lear explodes uncontrollably in his first IED, echoing Shylock and his daughter Jessica, shouting, "Better thou / Hadst not been born than not to have pleased me better." Obviously, Lear has always been emotionally unstable: Goneril calls it his "long

engrafted condition," and Regan agrees that their father lacks any self-knowledge, having "ever but slenderly known himself." They get it. Lear's reality is skewed by egocentrism and narcissism, and it is the operative reality for the family. Ultimately, it becomes the operative reality for the entire kingdom.

Edmund's soliloquy about bastards reveals how the illegitimate son, exhibiting understandable low self-esteem, has adapted to his father's unequal treatment and will exact revenge. At the same time, Gloucester, like Lear, denies personal responsibility, laying his "goatish disposition to the charge of a star." Edmund understands his father perfectly, exactly like Goneril and Regan.

As early as act I, Shakespeare introduces what contemporary psychology terms "interventions," through Kent in disguise and the Fool—in other words, the friend and the psychiatrist. Through the brilliant riddle of the egg and the crown, the Fool begins trying to teach Lear that the old man is the source of his own problems and that he has essentially destroyed his own identity: "You are an O without a figure."

Lear characteristically reacts by demonizing Goneril and cursing her with sterility, but he has a glimmer of self-knowledge about "letting folly in and judgment out." Concerning Cordelia, he quietly suspects that he "did her wrong," which the Fool underscores with the pitiful and profound statement, "Thou shouldst not have been old till thou hadst been wise."

Act 2. Early in act 2, Lear's family dysfunction spreads to rumors of war between Albany and Cornwall, the first evidence of the impossibility of containing chaos. In the same vein, Gloucester immediately believes Edmund's lies and denounces his loyal and legitimate son. Except for the dramatic parallel with Lear and Cordelia, the audience must ask *why.* Does it merely result from Gloucester's unpredictable emotional state? Or his unconscious guilt regarding his bastard son? In any case, it will have disastrous consequences for everyone concerned.

The motif of Lear's fractured identity now spreads to Kent, notably in his insults to Oswald, which culminate in "Thou whoreson zed, thou unnecessary letter!" Such a remarkable metaphor resonates like the scene in Ionesco's *Bald Soprano*, where the characters are reduced to hurling vowels at each other: "A! E! I! O! U!"

As Lear's daughters begin to toss Dad back and forth, they sound like contemporary women trying to cajole an old parent

into a rest home; he should "be ruled and led" by those who understand his situation better than he does. Understandably, Lear again explodes, still thinking that he is king and still quantifying love, this time regarding the number of knights in his retinue. He sarcastically asks forgiveness for being old, but he truly fears that he is going mad. Typical of children raised in dysfunctional families, Goneril and Regan say that their father deserves what he gets and the only way he will learn is through suffering. Unfortunately, in Lear's case, they are right.

Act 3. In the storm on the heath, dysfunction now permeates nature as well, causing Lear to call for the destruction of the entire world: "Blow winds and crack your cheeks." The Fool tries to "outjest [Lear's] heart-struck injuries" by insisting that Lear himself has turned the world upside down; "the codpiece that will house before the head has any . . . makes his toe what his heart should make."

Lear has some self-recognition but is still engulfed in self-pity, still in denial, describing himself as "more sinned against than sinning." However, when he realizes that the Fool is cold, he shows empathy for the first time, in most productions, covering the Fool with his own cloak. His empathy increases as he meets Tom o' Bedlam, realizing that he should "expose himself to feel what wretches feel." More important, Lear encounters raw existence, what Jean Paul Sartre calls the *ensoi,* and concludes that "unaccommodated man is such a poor, bare, forked animal."

On the heath, Lear, Tom and the Fool conduct a mock trial, embodying the only "justice" available to help Lear, if not to cure him. Lear himself now asks, "What causes these hard hearts?"—in effect asking what causes dysfunctional families in the first place. Of course, no one can answer this question, so vital to the world-view of the play. By now, the world is so insane, so broken and hopeless that the Fool cannot jest it back to health; and he leaves, never to return. Kent, ever the realist, counsels rest for his friend and king.

Then, in one of the most horrifying scenes in all of theater, just as Gloucester pronounces his faith in divine justice, Cornwall tortures and blinds him. The violence is gratuitous, the characters are sadistic and the effect is random evil, like a terrorist shooting into a crowd of innocent people.

Act 4. From the horror and his own pain, Gloucester does learn that he "stumbled when he saw," and, like Lear, must recognize that one cannot see if he does not feel. Nonetheless, he understandably concludes with some of the play's most famous lines, "As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods, / They kill us for their sport." Looking at the old man's bloody eye sockets, no one can disagree.

In one of the more baffling scenes of the play, Edgar, still disguised as Tom o' Bedlam, stages a mock suicide, theoretically to cure Gloucester of his despair. In contemporary terms, he is using exposure therapy, often employed to alleviate symptoms of PTSD, in which victims relive traumatic or near-death experiences to address their avoidance and to get past the memories. Edgar's action also shares elements with CBT (cognitive behavioral therapy) to force victims to think differently about their trauma and to cope in the present.

Meanwhile, dysfunction is rapidly spreading across the kingdom. Goneril openly expresses adulterous desire for Edmund, causing Albany to express his disbelief and disgust with an image of cannibalism: "Humanity must perforce prey on itself, / Like monsters of the deep." In other words, big fish eat smaller ones, and Goneril has guaranteed her place on a dangerous and implacable food chain.

Lear, now half-mad and accompanied by the blind Gloucester, suddenly realizes his daughters' adaptive behavior and its consequences. "They flattered me like a dog . . . and [said] 'ay' and 'no' to everything that I said 'ay' and 'no' to." Of course, as a dysfunctional father, he believed them when they told him he was everything. "Tis a lie," he now sees; "I am not ague-proof."

In the play's second mock trial, Lear upbraids Gloucester for pleading blindness, since "a man may see how this world goes with no eyes." He tells Gloucester to consider a standard trial of a robber: "Change places and handy-dandy, which is the justice, which is the thief?" In a world where causality does not even operate, what hope is there for anything as abstract as justice?

The act closes with the reunion of Lear and Cordelia. Lear can finally admit that he is a "very foolish, fond old man" and, more important, asks for his daughter's forgiveness. Early in the next act, his fantasy of their singing together in prison like caged birds, of their gossiping about court news like "God's spies," is as tender as it will prove impossible.

Act 5. In act 5, what began as family dysfunction goes global. The domestic war in the Lear family quickly develops into sexual war between Goneril and Regan over Edmund, which in turn becomes civil war in England, and finally international war with France.

Edgar, now disguised as a knight, challenges Edmund essentially to reclaim his identity, as well as to regenerate the Gloucester family. Edgar may believe that the "gods are just and of our pleasant vices / Make instruments to plague us," but the ending of the play belies his faith. Goneril poisons Regan and commits suicide—a type of "justice" at work—but Cordelia cannot be saved, nor can Lear. At least, the old king accepts some responsibility, although too late: "I might have saved her," he moans, implying more than saving her from hanging in prison.

Kent leaves, probably to commit suicide, and Albany and Edgar are left to inherit the kingdom. But what does winning, or even survival, mean in this context?

Effects of family dysfunction in the larger world—"war" on all levels

By now, we have seen, in perfect Shakespearean fashion, how disrupting the Great Chain of Being on any level necessarily disrupts it on all levels: the rapid spread of chaos from the family to international politics. In the Elizabethan world-view, all people, events and creatures are intimately related in a strict hierarchy: from the King to the slave, eagle to the sparrow, lion to the housecat. If anyone—especially a king—inverts the order of things, everyone and everything feels the effects.

In the 21st century, if we have learned nothing else, surely we now understand that no political act occurs in isolation. No president, no king, no dictator, no madman, no charismatic religious leader, no terrorist acts in isolation. We are all connected: what happens to China or to Russia, to African rebels or to Syrian refugees, happens to all of us. We can ignore that only at our peril.

As dysfunction spreads throughout the larger society of *Lear*, the play increasingly articulates its disastrous effects. Shakespeare's descriptions of his England are painfully descriptive of our contemporary world.

- Gloucester says to Edmund, "Love cools, friendship falls off, brothers divide: in cities, mutinies; in countries, discord; in palaces, treason; and the bond cracked 'twixt son and

father. . . . We have seen the best of our time. Machinations, hollowness, treachery and all ruinous disorders follow us disquietly to our graves." How many people do you know who feel that way?

- When Edgar assumes his disguise as Tom o' Bedlam, he describes street people we have all seen: "With nakedness [I'll] outface / The winds and persecutions of the sky. / The country gives me proof and precedent / Of Bedlam beggars, who, with roaring voices, / Strike in their numbed and mortified bare arms / Pins, wooden pricks, nails . . ."
- In similar terms, Lear describes homeless people to Kent: "Poor naked wretches, wheresoe'er you are / That bide the pelting of this pitiless storm, / How shall your houseless heads and unfed sides, / Your looped and windowed raggedness, defend you / From seasons such as these?"
- Increasingly the wider world sounds more and more desperate, dismal—and contemporary. Taken out of today's headlines is Lear's lamentation to Gloucester: "A dog's obeyed in office. / Thou, rascal beadle, hold thy bloody hand; / Why dost thou lash that whore? Strip thine own back / Thou hotly lusts to use her in that kind / For which thou whipp'st her. . . . Robes and furred gowns hide all. Plate sin with gold, / And the strong lance of justice hurtless breaks." Hello, Supreme Court; hello, Wall Street; hello, the eternal battle between the haves and have-nots.

Individual's Psychological Journey

In such a world (i.e., ours), how can any individual (i.e., you) possibly maintain your identity, let alone gain insight or wisdom or regeneration? On the individual psychological level, the spreading chaos in *Lear* undermines any progress, spiritual, intellectual or philosophical, any progress toward self-knowledge, self-actualization or existential authenticity.

I am talking now about your personal journey as a contemporary human being.

Shakespeare returns time and again to the idea of identity, to which I've alluded several times. In many of his plays, he uses disguises as an inherently theatrical metaphor but also for lying, for comedy, for testing others, for self-protection, and the like. In *Lear*, however, very few people are what they seem—loving daughters, loyal sons, friends, fools, kings.

When Edgar disguises as the mad Tom o' Bedlam, he says, significantly, *not* "I will no longer be Edgar," but "Edgar I nothing

am." Total erasure. When he challenges Edmund at the end, he clearly wants to reclaim his something-ness, his selfhood. In the meantime, he confronts his "foul fiend." What is that "foul fiend"? What is *your* foul fiend? What keeps you up at night? Your conscience? Your unconscious? People with the "glib and oily art" might answer the Prince of Darkness, but who or what is your Prince of Darkness?

Lear cannot simply reclaim his identity: he's given away half of it, and the other half he has destroyed. Yet to create a viable self is Lear's greatest problem and only potential "salvation." And ours. In terms of existentialism, Lear, like the rest of us, must try to live authentically for what little time he has left. In the terms of Jean-Paul Sartre, authenticity begins with recognizing that we made choices from free will and therefore must accept responsibility and guilt for our actions. You cannot blame anyone else. Lear makes some progress when he intuits that he did Cordelia wrong, when he recognizes raw existence (the *ensoi*) on the heath, and when he learns a limited kind of empathy from the Fool and mad Tom. But his progress toward an authentic life, as in everything else, is truncated with his own death—making the ending of the play even more tragic.

Essentially, no one can help you on this most important and difficult journey, although we all have some kind of "support groups." Who or what helps you stay on a healthy path to selfhood? A good friend? A psychologist? Group therapy? Drugs? The NFL? The shooting range? Motorcycles? Shakespeare gives Lear, Kent, the Fool, mad Tom, Cordelia—the best of friends, the best psychiatrist, the best advisor, and the best truth-teller—and he, as an integrated and authentic human being, still cannot survive.

World-View

Why not?

What do we finally take away from Lear—years after our first viewing or reading? A senile old man makes a tragically serious mistake, and not only does his own life and that of his family fall apart, but he also takes his country and all he holds dear down with him. In today's terms, is this the Domino Effect? Butterfly Effect? Chaos Theory? Collapse Theory?

Whatever we call it, we are left with a post-apocalyptic scenario, a world which has burned all of its fuel, running on empty. Whether Edgar or Albany is left to resuscitate it hardly

matters. What, exactly, is left to rule, or even put into order?

To me, the overwhelmingly contemporary effect of all the dysfunction in *Lear* has less to do with individuals than with the world they inhabit and inherit. This play is not simply dark or even ominous; it is much scarier. Utterly random. The shooter in the elementary school at Sandy Hook. Or in the Colorado theater. On the streets of Los Angeles or the subway in London or the train in Amsterdam.

As king, Lear is the top of the human power structure, in Elizabethan terms God's symbolic representative on earth. Then we must surmise that Lear's state of mind echoes God's: the old Great Chain of Being, the symbiotic macrocosm-microcosm. Not a pretty thought: God has dementia. *Very* 21st century. *Very* Beckett. *Very Waiting for Godot*.

When Gloucester cries out, "As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods; they kill us for their sport," he sounds hopeless. But in the world of Albert Camus and existentialists like him, even a careless or malicious or prankster god is preferable to none at all. To Camus, man's existence consists of his passionate longing for meaning and the fact there is none. If we didn't want meaning or if there were meaning, everything would be fine. But we are caught between our longing and the lack of meaning, and this makes us what Camus terms Absurd.

One could ask if Gloucester's conclusion is the "definitive" world-view in the play. After all, who are the "wanton boys" in here? Who is torturing, hanging, blinding and killing people for their sport? Cornwall, Regan, Edmund, anonymous murderers. If there is a god or gods compelling them at all, it might be the God of Bastards, or the God of Ingrates or of Disintegration, or of Madness, or of Bad Timing.

But the play doesn't even offer that "consolation." Lear lives in a 21st-century world which functions less on causality than on probability, on contingency. This is a universe in which the gods, like King Lear, have not simply broken down. The universe has exploded into bits and fragments: quantized individuals, quantized families, quantized society. Bits and pieces: like so much contemporary visual art, contemporary music, contemporary literature—Duchamps' Dada, John Cage's chance music, Absurdist theatre.

Consider for a moment the endings of Shakespeare's other

great tragedies—the "justice" of Othello's death, the "justice" of Macbeth's death, even the "justice" of Hamlet's death. As we all know, Lear could so easily have ended happily, a fairy tale come true, a slightly different *Winter's Tale*. It came within a hair's width of another *Tempest*—only without the magician and the fairies. It could have ended if not with hope, at least with some minimal order.

Not possible. By this time in his life, Shakespeare knew too much. He had spent too long in despair.

The theme of "nothing" and "nothingness" hammers throughout the play, beginning with Cordelia's and Lear's early exchange of "Nothing." "Nothing?" "Nothing." "Nothing will come of nothing." Quickly following is Edgar's dissolution of his own identity, expressed as "Edgar I nothing am."

One of the Fool's early riddles warns Lear to "Have more than thou showest, / Speak less than thou knowest / . . . Learn more than thou trowest . . ." Lear responds characteristically, "This is nothing, Fool." Of course, he could not be more wrong, and the Fool can only joke, "Then 'tis like the breath of an unfee'd lawyer, you gave me nothing for it." But too much is at stake, and the Fool asks again, "Can you make no use of nothing, nuncle?" At this point, Lear is capable only of his knee-jerk response, "Nothing can be made out of nothing."

Is all this nothingness nihilism? Possibly. *Lear* ends like Mahler's Ninth Symphony with cataclysmic slowness and darkness and, finally, silence. Many people have tried to find some glint of hope or renewal in Mahler's ending, as they have in *Lear*. But most finally agree with Lewis Thomas: this is not simply the end of the work of art. This is the end of the world.

Conclusion

In conclusion, regardless of your religious convictions, secular philosophy, persuasions as a literary critic, or experience in the theater, *Lear* holds your face in its hands and forces you to look. This is who you are. This is how you act. This is what will happen as a result of your blindness, your lack of self-knowledge, your failure at empathy, your abuse of privilege and power. Not only are we all in Lear's family photo, we are using our own cell phones to snap the selfie.

The Filial Dagger: The Case of Hal and Henry IV in *1 & 2 Henry IV* and *The Famovs Victories*

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English culture and politics in the last decade of the sixteenth century were both patriarchal and patrilineal, in spite of—or, perhaps, in part, because of—the so-called bastard queen sitting on the throne. The prevailing political questions of the day concerned Elizabeth's successor and the fate of the nation that, so many believed, hung precariously in the balance. Questions of legality, legitimacy, and fitness formed the crux of these debates, but almost all claimants attempted to justify their right by tracing their bloodlines back to either Henry VII or Edward III, the respective patriarchs of the Tudor dynasty and the houses of York and Lancaster.[1] These debates hinged on the 1543 Third Act of Succession, in which Henry VIII stipulated that the heirs of his younger sister Mary (the Grey line) should take precedence over the heirs of his elder sister Margaret (the Stuart line). After Elizabeth suffered a dangerous bout with fever in 1593, these discussions intensified.[2]

By 1595, when *Richard II*, the first play in Shakespeare's Henriad, initially appeared on stage, the conversation had spread out from the Court, appearing in public discourse, both in pamphlet and on stage. In December of 1595, the Queen's Men were replaying an anonymous play entitled *The Famous Victories of*

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Henry V. *Famous Victories*, first performed circa 1586, is, according to Larry S. Champion, "perhaps the earliest extant example of an English history play or . . . the raw material from which Shakespeare fashioned much of the material in his trilogy."[3] Philip Henslowe's records from the Rose indicate that it played at least eight times that season, suggesting both the play's popularity and topicality.[4] In its original context, *Famous Victories* drew a parallel between Henry V's victories in France and Elizabeth's ostensible triumph over the Babington conspiracy and Mary Queen of Scots, highlighting the dangers of foreign (especially Catholic) kings and promoting English nationalism.[5] By 1595, however, the play's overt propaganda began to ring false; Shakespeare's Henriad sequence deliberately reconstructs its core premise to focus on the performative nature of both father-son and monarch-subject relationships in order to address the increasingly pressing question of who would inherit Elizabeth's throne upon her death.

Where the earlier, anonymous play depicts the young Prince Henry as openly hostile to both his father and his future responsibilities, only reformed by God as a sign of divine endowment upon his accession to the throne, Shakespeare's iconic Prince Hal acknowledges and accepts both his filial and princely responsibilities *prior* to assuming the crown. This alteration not only criticizes the ideology of divine right, but suggests that, in spite of the glorious depiction of Hal's transformation into the "Mirror of all Christian kings" (*H5* 2.0.6), the uncertainty of the Elizabethan succession posed a significant threat to the stability of the English commonwealth.[6]

The earlier *Famous Victories* opens with Prince Henry plotting the robbery of "my father's Receiuers" (*FV* 10), rationalizing his actions with the argument that the wealth they carry will be his upon his accession.[7] This justification emphasizes the lack of harm, allowing the audience to sympathize with the prince's "fun" and minimizing his potential to threaten the commonwealth; however, his actions indicate a lack of respect for the role of king: "I tell you sirs," he says, "and the King / My father were dead, we would all be Kings" (*FV* 93-94).[8] Henry's attitude here reflects that which typically appears among common, rather than noble, rebellions, likely because Henry's audience is commoners. However, it betrays a misunderstanding of what kingship actually means; according to common law, kingship relies on the ratification and good will of both the nobility and commons. The play recognizes this,

as John continues by saying that if Henry's roguish behavior continues, "I heare say, if he vse it long, / His father will cut him off from the Crowne" (*FV* 116-17). The young Henry's behavior in the early portions of the play threatens the foundations of his society, not simply because his actions are criminal, but because, as Larry S. Champion suggests, they "denigrate monarchy and reflect the plight of the commoners in such a society."[9] Henry's tendency to thievery in the play contains a criticism of royalty as mismanaging funds in light of the heavy taxation levied in support of the Anglo-Spanish wars starting in 1585; as John Cobler says of Henry, "I dare not call him theefe, but sure he is one of these taking fellowes" (*FV* 112).

As a consequence of this "harmless" robbery, the Lord Mayor of London has Prince Henry thrown in prison. At first, King Henry objects on the grounds that the prince's royalty should excuse him from punishment:

> *King*: I vnderstand, that you haue committed my sonne to prison without our leaue and license. What althogh he be a rude youth, and likely to giue occasion, yet you might haue considered that he is a Prince, and my sonne, and not to be halled to prison by euery subiect. (*FV* 229-33)

The king argues at first that royalty are not accountable to subjects for their actions. However, the Mayor excuses his actions by placing the safety of society over the prerogative of royalty: "In such a case we knew not what to do, but for our own safegard we sent him to ward" (*FV* 258-59). This excuse prompts the king to rescind his rebuke, authorizing, by implication, subjects' actions against their sovereign (or, at least, their sovereign's heir) should his or her actions endanger the safety of the realm and its subjects:

> *King*: Oh my sonne, a Prince thou art, I a Prince indeed,
> And to deserue imprisonment,
> And well haue they done, and like faithfull subiects
> (*FV* 268-70)

Here, the king admits that the duty of subjects (and monarchs) to the commonwealth supersedes even royal prerogative. Although the prince will later reform his behavior—at least to a certain degree—that his father permits his imprisonment for misdeeds indicates that the author of the play wants to promote the understanding that monarchy is and should be limited for the

betterment and safety of the realm and its subjects from the whims of the monarch.

However, when Prince Henry is brought before the Chief Justice, he echoes his father's earlier attempt to use his status as future monarch to secure unlimited prerogative:

> *Henry*: Why my Lord, I pray ye who am I?
> *Judge*: And please your Grace, you are my Lord the yong Prince, our King that shall be after the decease of our soueraigne Lord, King Henry the fourth, whom God graunt long to raigne.
> *Henry*: You say true my Lord;
> And yet you will hang my man. (*FV* 350-56)

Henry repeatedly demands the release of his man (in lines 358, 360, 362, 364, and 366), and when he is just as repeatedly refused, "giveth [the Justice] a boxe on the eare" (*FV* 366.1) in a childish fit of petulance at being denied his will by the law. The Justice responds by rebuking the prince:

> *Judge*: You greatly abuse me, and not me onely, but also your father: whose liuely person here in this place I doo represent. And therefore to teach you what prerogatiues meane, I commit you to the Fleete, vntill we haue spoken with your father. (*FV* 378-82)

This second instance seems to confirm to the Judge, King Henry, and even the audience that the prince is unfit to rule England, and, upon learning of his son's second imprisonment, King Henry bemoans England's future:

> *King*: Oh my sonne, my sonne, no sooner out of one prison, but into an other, I had thought once whiles I had liued, to haue seene this noble Realme of England flourish by thee my sonne, but now I see it goes to ruine and decaie. (*FV* 532-36)

Here, the play presents us with the problem of primogeniture through the lens of an uncontrolled heir; Henry, should he continue in the present vein of behavior, would further endanger the realm and bring it to "ruine and decaie" by continuing the abuses of power in which he is currently engaged. His father recognizes the danger of such uncontrolled use of power, and laments his son's actions, although he does not address the unspoken alternative—that Henry would not succeed to the throne.

Shakespeare's *1 Henry IV* also contains a scene of robbery, with some significant alterations. First, Hal himself does not participate in stealing from the Travelers, as he and Poins only rob Falstaff (the original thief) of the stolen money, which, as in *Famous Victories*, "tis going to the King's exchequer" (*1H4* 2.2.52-53).[10] The purpose of the episode is thus less to reveal Hal's depravity than to show off his cleverness, made particularly evident even before the robbery itself in his now-infamous confession soliloquy, in which, John Alvis suggests, Hal "chooses to put virtue in the service of glory":[11]

> *Prince Hal*: So when this loose behaviour I throw off
> And pay the debt I never promised,
> By how much better than my word I am,
> By so much shall I falsify men's hopes;
> And, like bright metal on a sullen ground,
> My reformation, glittering o'er my fault,
> Shall show more goodly and attract more eyes
> Than that which hath no foil to set it off.
> (*1H4* 1.2.198–205)

In emphasizing the self-consciously performative nature of his actions—both robbery and his intended future reformation—Hal's speech foregrounds his social role(s) as deliberate fiction. The intentionality of this performance serves as both a caution and a reassurance: caution because Hal's "true" intentions cannot be fully trusted, and reassurance that he is not "really" a thief and a drunkard. In addition, this soliloquy reveals multiple motivations for Hal's performance: "It allows him to develop a complex understanding of the lower classes . . . and their motivations; it enables him to 'offset' his later goodness; and it represents to the audience the conscious self-construction in which monarchs engaged."[12] In Shakespeare's version, the "real" Hal—the one who speaks directly to the audience—is already transformed; the performance, at least in Hal's own characterization, is that of vice.

It makes sense, then, that in the Henriad Hal is not arrested, and his confrontation with his father contains a nuanced discussion of performative sovereignty rather than an exchange of insults. Speaking to his son in *1 Henry IV*, King Henry describes inappropriate monarchical conduct through the negative exemplum of Richard II: "The skipping King, he ambled up and down / With shallow jesters and rash bavin wits"; "And in that very line, Harry, standest thou, / For thou hast lost thy princely

privilege / With vile participation" (*1H4* 3, 2, 60-61, 85–87). By contrast, King Henry clarifies, he cultivated an appearance of humility:

> *Henry IV*: I stole all courtesy from heaven
> And dressed myself in such humility
> That I did pluck allegiance from men's hearts,
> Loud shouts and salutations from their mouths,
> Even in the presence of the crowned King.
> (*1H4* 3.2.50–54)

Here, the king describes the deliberate construction of a persona, recognizing, David Scott Kastan explains, "that kingship is a role that can—indeed that must—be acted," rather than a claim of divine or patrilineal worthiness.[13] It is a pattern which Hal—his father's spiritual as well as biological son—has already recognized.

The other pivotal father-son exchange from *Famous Victories* altered in Shakespeare's Henriad occurs when the prince walks into the king's bedchamber "with a dagger in his hand" (*FV* 558.2). King Henry, seeing the weapon, concludes that "these thy doings / Wil end thy fathers dayes" (*FV* 564-65), believing the prince there to kill him, although young Henry insists otherwise:

> *Henry*: Farre be the thoughts of any such pretended mischiefe: and I most humbly render it to your Maiesties hand, and liue my Lord and soueraigne for euer: and with your dagger arme show like vengeance vpon the bodie of that your sonne; . . . tis not the Crowne that I come for, sweete father, because I am vnworthie, and those vilde & reprobate company I abandon, & vtterly abolish their company for euer. (*FV* 582–90)

The prince's repentance—for both the presumed treason of bringing a dagger into the king's chamber and for his general dissolute behavior—is an abrupt change in character, which Irving Ribner calls "a sudden and entirely unprepared-for reformation."[14] Like Ribner, Champion is skeptical of Henry's personal transformation, since "Hal's first words when in possession of the crown strike neither a note of moral contrition nor of concern for the stability of the country, but one of cold, steely power politics."[15] Karen Oberer seems to think, like others, that Henry's transformation in *Famous Victories* is insincere, although she expresses the belief that he was never really that bad—"he never

seriously engages in transgression at the beginning of the play"—which runs counter to the fact that he carries an unsheathed dagger into his father's bedchamber and never actually *repents* of his behavior.[16]

Nevertheless, the king pardons his son, reassuring him of his place in the succession, "Stand vp my son, and do not think thy father, / But at the request of thee my sonne, I wil pardon thee" (*FV* 598-99), such that the prince no longer has even theoretical need of the dagger. Champion observes that "changes that the anonymous author made in his source directly support this reading," that the prince's reformation is motivated by power rather than virtue or filial affection: "The playwright *adds* the rowdy company that the king twice bars from the room, *adds* both Hal's entering the room alone and his carrying a drawn dagger, and *omits* his offering the dagger to the king in a sacrificial posture."[17] These changes to the historical source material compound a reading of the play as intrinsically orthodox, since Henry is characterized as a proto-tyrant and a Machiavel, rather than as a fun-loving rakehell who has always recognized that, some day, he will need to cast off his companions and take responsibility for his nation (as we do see, at least more so, in Shakespeare's *1 Henry IV*).

Famous Victories's Henry *reforms* as a means to secure power (and, presumably, to keep it), where Shakespeare's Hal uses the opportunity for performance to appear dissolute, thus exposing his (ostensibly) true self as kingly. In the paradigm of *Famous Victories*, monarchy ensures virtue, whether bestowed miraculously by God or conferred by the crown itself as an extension of divine right. In the Henriad, although sovereignty is performative, that performance is as much the enaction of duty and obligation as it is the assumption of power.

In Shakespeare's version, Hal carries no dagger, instead coming to sit by his dying father's bedside. His error is taking up his father's crown before the king's death. Holding it, he muses:

> *Prince Hal:* O majesty!
> When thou dost pinch thy bearer, thou dost sit
> Like a rich armour worn in heat of day,
> That scald'st with safety. (*2H4* 4.5.27-30)[18]

While both Richard and Bolingbroke had to come to an understanding of sovereignty once anointed (in the earlier plays of the Henriad), Hal already comprehends the complexities of

rule. He recognizes that both Richard's claims of absolutism and his father's own act of usurpation are conflicting ideologies, but that in order to maintain a secure rule, he must somehow maintain both: wear the armor of divine authorization but manage not to be burned by its heat.

When Henry does not respond to Hal's calls of "My gracious lord! My father!" (*2H4* 4.5.33), the Prince assumes the worst and departs with the crown. The king, not yet deceased after all, rouses and chides Hal for his supposition, saying,

> *Henry IV:* Dost thou so hunger for mine empty chair
> That thou wilt needs invest thee with my honours
> Before thy hour be ripe? O foolish youth!
> Thou seek'st the greatness that will overwhelm thee.
> . . .
> Thou hid'st a thousand daggers in thy thoughts,
> Which thou has whetted on thy stony heart,
> To stab at half an hour of my life.
> (*2H4* 4.5.94-97, 106-8)

The "daggers" in Shakespeare's version of the scene are emotional rather than physical, emblematic of treason-by-thought rather than regicide-in-deed. In Shakespeare's retelling of the story, however, Hal's motivations include both ambition (as in *Famous Victories*) and filial duty:

> *Prince Hal:* due from me
> Is tears and heavy sorrows of the blood,
> Which nature, love, and filial tenderness
> Shall, O dear father, pay thee plenteously. (*2H4* 4.5.36-39)

Ostensibly alone (except for the king, whom Hal believes to be dead), Hal's words are trustworthy, and his sorrow at his father's death genuine. Although some critics argue that, in Edmund Taft's phrase, "the prince harbors patricidal wishes," Taft asserts that "there is little room in Hal's meditation for lusting after the crown or for wishing Henry dead."[19] Although it is not the cold, calculating lust we see in *Famous Victories*, I would argue that Hal does, indeed, lust after the crown. In the breath after expressing his grief, Hal says, "My due from thee is this imperial crown" (*2H4* 4.5.40), which he then places on his own head, and proclaims that "put the world's whole strength / Into one giant arm, it shall not force / This lineal honour from me" (*2H4* 4.5.43-45). These

are not words that lack ambition, yet Hal's remorse nevertheless appears genuine, balancing ambition with his duty as a son, a subject, and a (future) sovereign.

As in *Famous Victories*, the question of Henry's timing of his transformation to the moment of—or, at least, the moment immediately prior to—his father's death is one raised repeatedly by critics, such as Jonathan Crewe, who asks, "What is implied by such deferral, resistance or incapacity? What is at stake *in* reform? What is to be understood by the noble change Hal claims to purpose—and with which he is credited by his father at the moment in which the crown changes hands?"[20] Placed alongside the scene from the earlier play, Shakespeare's Hal exhibits considerable pathos and contrition, inviting God to "let me in my present wildness die, / And never live to show th'incredulous world / The noble change that I have purposed!" (*2H4* 4.5.152-54). The audience, having witnessed Hal's earlier proclamation of this "noble change" in *1 Henry IV*, is therefore inclined to believe him, as does Bernard Paris, who suggests that Hal's expressions of love and filial tenderness "are evidence of his genuine reformation."[21] Hal's immediate contrition—and lengthy apology (from lines 138 to 174)—convince Henry of both Hal's sincerity and his future capability as monarch, and concludes with Hal shouldering the "golden cares" of both a loving son and, as king, national paterfamilias:

> *Hal:* You won it, wore it, kept it, gave it me;
> Then plain and right must my possession be
> Which I with more than with a common pain
> 'Gainst all the world will rightfully maintain.
> (*2H4* 4.5.221-24)

In this enactment of filial duty and patriarchal succession we see inheritance functioning as it was intended by common law. However, in 1598, when *2 Henry IV* came to the stage, a tidy patrilineal succession was not to be, and Shakespeare concludes his tetralogy with an appropriate reminder of an uncertain future, straying yet again from the pattern established in *Famous Victories*.

In *Famous Victories*, once Henry becomes King, he is transformed, never returning to his earlier profligate ways. Henry has defeated the French against the impossible odds of "a hundred thousand, / And we fortie thousand, ten to one" (*FV* 1175-76), since the "quarrel is good, and God wil defend you" (*FV* 1179). Having defeated the French, Henry's final conquest is

in wooing the French king's daughter, Katherine, and taking her as his bride—perhaps a subtle jab at Elizabeth for refusing to marry, perhaps simply the ending expected of a victorious play. Whether or not the audience believes in the sincerity of his reformation is irrelevant; once he determined to play the king, Henry never once altered his course, repeatedly turning away his companions and refusing to engage in un-kingly behavior, conforming to the traditional expectations of conquest and marriage.

Although *Famous Victories* reflects an orthodox depiction of divine right sovereignty, the prince's image, Champion argues, is specifically designed as equivocal:

> *The Famous Victories of Henry V*, in a word, can be viewed as either a glorification of monarchy or as an attack on its corruption, egocentricity, and militaristic monomania. Hal, from one perspective the mirror of Christian kings, is from another an impetuous upstart reflecting the worst of aristocratic disdain for his common subjects. . . . If to some the play depicts a unified commonwealth, to others it reveals an oppressive oligarchy with commoners subject to fear, suppression, and disruption of livelihood.[22]

In letter, *Famous Victories* presents the picture of orthodoxy; yet Champion is unsatisfied with the rapidity and seeming completeness of Henry's sea-change, and he is right to be so. The orthodoxy in *Famous Victories* is forced and artificial, a disingenuousness which its audience—which must have included Shakespeare—would have recognized, and which Shakespeare deliberately chose to subvert by giving the audience glimpses of the "tavern persona" his Hal has ostensibly left behind.[23]

The first instance of Henry's performative rule that we see is his metatheatrical representation of kingship in a moment of play-acting with Falstaff. At first, he "plays" himself while Falstaff takes the role of Henry IV, but Hal stops him, asking, "Dost thou speak like a king?" (*1H4* 2.4.421). They switch roles, and Hal presages his later conversation with his father and his own actions at the conclusion of *2 Henry IV* by rejecting Falstaff and his other tavern companions, saying, "Thou art violently carried away from grace," and lambasting Falstaff as a "reverend Vice, that grey Iniquity, that father Ruffian, that Vanity in years" (*1H4* 2.4.434, 441-42). His confirmation of Falstaff's line, "Banish plump Jack and banish all the world" is "I do; I will" (*1H4* 2.4.466-68), which clarifies Hal's already stated purpose of rising above his worldly persona and

ascending to the position of king so often affiliated (especially by James in print and speech) with the sun.

When Falstaff approaches the newly crowned Henry V, Henry rejects him, acknowledging—unlike Richard—the distinction between minions and appropriate counsel, and choosing the latter over the former. He continues, "Presume not that I am the thing I was; / For God doth know, so shall the world perceive, / That I have turn'd away from my former self" (*2H4* 5.5.56-58), enacting the self-transformation that he promised at the beginning of *1 Henry IV*. Interestingly, Hal's repudiation of Falstaff—which David Bevington terms "politically prudent"—causes audiences considerable anxiety.[24] Falstaff was popular, and his dismissal at the end of *2 Henry IV* produces an outpouring of audience sympathy, even as audiences are forced to recognize its necessity.[25] In the act of rejecting Falstaff and his own former character, Hal-turned-King-Henry-V assumes the carefully cultivated persona of a Christian king, and, as Bevington remarks, he is successful "because he enacts the role so well."[26]

Once transformed, throughout *Henry V* Hal maintains a carefully constructed monarchical image for the benefit of his soldiers, both common and noble. Preceding act 4 of the play, the Chorus describes Henry's persona from the perspective of his men:

> *Chorus*: O now, who will behold
> The royal captain of this ruined band
> Walking from watch to watch, from tent to tent,
> Let him cry 'Praise and glory on his head!'
> For forth he goes and visits all his host,
> Bids them good morrow with a modest smile,
> And calls them brothers, friends and countrymen.
> Upon his royal face there is no note
> How dread an army hath enrounded him,
> Nor doth he dedicate one jot of colour
> Unto the weary and all-watched night,
> But freshly looks and overbears attaint
> With cheerful semblance and sweet majesty,
> That every wretch, pining and pale before,
> Beholding him plucks comfort from his looks.
> (*H5* 4.0.28-42)

This image of idealized monarchical performance, as the Chorus explains, helps to reassure the soldiers and secures their loyalty to

Henry and to England. In this description, we also find an echo of Bolingbroke's appearance before the commons in *Richard II* and a recognition of the validity of his advice to his son in the *Henry IV* plays. And yet when the audience sees Henry enact the description in act 4 itself, they are given privileged access to the king's inner turmoil, which does not appear in the public image described by the Chorus.

The night before the infamous battle of Agincourt, Henry borrows Erpingham's cloak and moves unknown amongst his men, testing their resolve and measuring their loyalty—observing them as he once observed the tavern-goers (although unrecognizable as the king). Disguised as a common Welsh soldier, Henry confesses to his (unknowing) men that he shares their anxiety, recognizing that the only thing which divides them is performance: "What have kings that privates have not too, / Save ceremony, save general ceremony?" (*H5* 4.1.235-36).[27] The question is, of course, hyperbole, but it nevertheless acknowledges the significance of sovereign performance to the maintenance of power. However, Henry also recognizes that "we must bear all" (*H5* 4.1.230): as with his father, Henry has an obligation to his subjects, and it is duty, rather than privilege, which elevates him to the position of king.

By the conclusion of *Famous Victories*, the transformed King Henry has conquered France, his claim authorized—according to the Archbishop—through a lineal claim through the female line back to Edward III, progenitor of England's kings, including the Tudors and Stuarts. Interestingly, the Archbishop specifically situates Henry's claim through his "great grandmother" as validation for his right to the French throne (*FV* 782); it was also through a maternal great-grandmother that James VI of Scotland would lay claim to England (through his maternal grandfather's mother, Margaret Tudor).

As in *Famous Victories*, Shakespeare's Hal also lays claim to France by means of lineal descent through a maternal line:

> *Canterbury:* Go, my dread lord, to your great-grandsire's tomb,
> From whom you claim; invoke his warlike spirit,
> And your great-uncle's, Edward the Black Prince
> Who on the French ground played a tragedy
> Making defeat on the full power of France.
> (*H5* 1.2.103-7)

Canterbury's justification, like the Archbishop's in *Famous Victories*, explicitly traces Henry's lineage back to Edward III ("your great-grandsire") and to Edward the Black Prince, father of Richard II, thus anachronistically allying Henry with both the houses of Lancaster and York, a figurative move more often associated with Henry VII and the Tudors than with Henry V. Interestingly, Malcolm Pittock notes that "Shakespeare must have realised that Henry V, as the son of a usurper, had no *de jure* right to the English throne and, consequently, could have no *de jure* claim on the French throne. Henry's justification for going to war was entirely without merit."[28] Yet despite this, Shakespeare characterizes Henry as virtuous as well as victorious. Shakespeare's Henry embodies limited rather than absolute monarchy; Henry's sovereignty is justified by his actions rather than his (tainted) lineage. As Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield explain, "The alternative to this is not to become fixed on its negation—universal chaos and subjective fragmentation—but rather to understand history and the human subject in terms of social and political process."[29] In other words, the breakdown of patrilineal succession was not necessarily cause for chaos and civil war, so long as the monarch who assumed the throne was capable of acting the kingly part. In 1590s Tudor England, Henry's on-stage successes might thus stand for the hope that the next monarch—like Henry, who, argues Joe Falocco, "represents an example of the forces opposed to hereditary monarchy"—would prove to be successful in spite of his (or her) lineage (or lack thereof).[30]

For Elizabeth's Privy Council, who held themselves responsible for ensuring a smooth interregnum upon the queen's inevitable demise, it was already clear that primogeniture could not provide security. For many—including Robert Cecil and Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex—the leading candidate was James VI of Scotland, but his claim was far from certain, even as late as 1599. In addition to Elizabeth's fear of a "second person," James's claim was corrupted by his family lineage.[31] First, his accession was barred by Henry VIII's 1543 Act of Succession, and, second, a statute from the reign of Edward III prohibited the accession of a candidate born outside the "allegiance of the realm of England."[32] Third, James's mother was Mary Queen of Scots, a Catholic traitor to the English crown executed by Elizabeth in 1587. On all three counts, James's lineage was against him. However, James was nevertheless a descendant of Henry VII, patriarch of the Tudor

line, himself a descendant of Edward III. As the ostensible heir of the Lancastrian line, Henry VII had united the warring houses of Lancaster and York through his marriage to Elizabeth, daughter of king Edward IV. In this context, the conclusion to *Henry V* is both a warning and a comfort; James's family ties to the Stuarts were cause for concern, but the Stuart connection to the Tudors provided the necessary pseudo-fiction which ultimately helped him to secure the English crown.

It is because of this uncertainty that, despite Henry V's victories, Shakespeare concludes his second tetralogy with what Peter Parolin calls "a legacy of loss," a reminder of impending tragedy, a jarring epilogue to his tale of victory:[33]

> *Chorus*: Small time, but in that small most greatly lived
> This star of England. Fortune made his sword
> By which the world's best garden he achieved,
> And of it left his son imperial lord.
> Henry the Sixth, in infant bands crowned King
> Of France and England, did this king succeed,
> Whose state so many had the managing
> That they lost France and made his England bleed.
> (*H5* Epilogue.5-12)

It is particularly noteworthy that the epilogue foregrounds not only Henry's death, but the specific failure of primogeniture to secure national stability.[34] For although Henry "left his son imperial lord" of England, Henry VI's lineal legitimacy could not guarantee effective rule. Furthermore, "Shakespeare omits what might be considered a prime opportunity to gain Elizabethan favor" by making reference to Henry VII's victory on Bosworth Field, but he does not.[35] Instead, "Shakespeare confronts the immanent vacancy of the throne by producing a linguistic vacancy with his omission," leaving the audience—and the Queen—to fill in the role for themselves.[36] As such, the epilogue offers mitigated pessimism in response to the Elizabethan succession crisis. Although the line of inheritance is unclear, it suggests, even primogeniture could not provide absolute security from unrest or war. By extension, then, Shakespeare's Henriad—unlike the earlier *Famous Victories*—focuses on capability and performance rather than filial inheritance as an index of sovereignty. While Shakespeare's play offers no direct solution—although some have argued its advocacy for various candidates, including James and the Earl of Essex—it does remind its audience that sovereignty is

performative rather than inherent, and that a good king (or queen) is determined through actions rather than bloodlines.

At the close of the sixteenth century, when *Henry V* opened on the public stage, the nation, particularly London and the court, was under considerable stress. The court and Council were debating, Sara Munson Deats notes, "the question of whether to attempt a preemptive strike against Spain" in the midst of three straight years of poor harvests.[37] The question of inheritance therefore became increasingly urgent as the Council sought to guard against both invasion and civil unrest. Undoubtedly aware of these anxieties, James VI of Scotland sought to press his advantage with both the queen and her Council, but was never able to secure a promise. Instead, Elizabeth spent the next four years steadfastly refusing to mitigate the chaos which many were certain would be the inevitable consequence of her death. Ultimately, the dire warning contained in the epilogue to *Henry V* was not to pass; on March 20, 1603, Cecil sent a dispatch to Scotland as Elizabeth lay on her deathbed, ensuring that the morning after her death on March 24, James would be proclaimed the "only, lawful, lineal and rightful Liege James the first, King of England, France and Ireland, defender of the faith," both in spite of and because of his descent from a Tudor king.[38]

Notes

1. The primary claimants included the Spanish Infanta Isabella; Katherine Grey's son Edmund Seymour, Viscount Beauchamp; James VI of Scotland; and Arbella Stuart, James's cousin. There has been some discussion of the supposed claims of Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex, but his candidacy did not seem to be taken seriously by either Elizabeth or the Privy Council, and his uprising and subsequent execution in 1601 ended any such discussion permanently.

2. Third Act of Succession, 1543, 35 Hen. 8, c. 1; Leanda De Lisle, *After Elizabeth: The Rise of James of Scotland and the Struggle for the Throne of England* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2007), 28; J. Leeds Barroll, *Politics, Plague, and Shakespeare's Theater: The Stuart Years* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 101.

3. Larry S. Champion, "'What Prerogatives Meanes': Perspective and Political Ideology in 'The Famous Victories of Henry V,'" *SAMLA* 53, no. 4 (1988): 1.

4. Philip Henslowe, *Henslowe's Diary*, ed. Walter W. Greg (London: A.H. Bullen, 1904), 27-28.

5. David Bevington, *Tudor Drama and Politics: A Critical Approach to Topical Meaning* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968); Champion, "What Prerogatives Meanes," 1.

6. William Shakespeare, *King Henry V*, ed. T.W. Craik, The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series (London: Routledge, 1995). Citations designate the play, *H5*, followed by act, scene, and line numbers.

7. *The Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth*, reprint 1598 (Cambridge: Chadwyck-Healey, 1994), http:collections.chadwyck.co.uk/. Citations designate the play, *FV*, followed by contiguous line numbers.

8. Kristin M.S. Bezio, *Staging Power in Tudor and Stuart English History Plays: History, Political Thought, and the Redefinition of Sovereignty* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate Publishing, 2015), 61.

9. Champion, "What Prerogatives Meanes," 5.

10. William Shakespeare, *King Henry IV Part 1*, ed. David Scott Kastan, The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series (London: Thomson Learning, 2006). Citations designate the play, *1H4*, followed by act, scene and line numbers.

11. John E. Alvis, "Spectacle Supplanting Ceremony: Shakespeare's Henry Monmouth," in *Shakespeare as Political Thinker*, ed. John E. Alvis and Thomas G. West (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2000), 113.

12. Kristin M.S. Bezio, "Drama and Demigods: Kingship and Charisma in Shakespeare's England," *Religions* 4, no. 1 (2013): 41.

13. David Scott Kastan, "Introduction," in *King Henry IV Part 1*, ed. David Scott Kastan, The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series (London: Thomson Learning, 2006), 32-33.

14. Irving Rigner, *The English Play in the Age of Shakepeare* (Princeton: Princeton Unversity Press, 1957), 72.

15. Champion, "What Prerogatives Meanes," 8.

16. Karen Oberer, "Appropriations of the Popular Tradition in *The Famous Victories of Henry V* and *The Troublesome Raigne of King John*," in *Locating the Queen's Men, 1583-1603: Material Practices and Conditions of Playing*, ed. Helen Ostovich, Holger Schott Syme, and Andrew Griffin (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2009), 174.

17. Champion, "What Prerogatives Meanes," 8.

18. William Shakespeare, *King Henry IV Part 2*, ed. A.R. Humphreys, The Arden Shakespeare, Second Series (London: Methuen, 1981). Citations designate the play, *2H4*, followed by act, scene and line numbers.

19. Edmund M. Taft, "The Crown Scene in *Henry IV, Part 2*," *Iowa State Journal of Research* 59, no. 3 (February 1985): 311.

20. Jonathan Crewe, "Reforming Prince Hal: The Sovereign Inheritor In *2 Henry IV*," *Renaissance Drama* 21 (1990): 226.

21. Bernard J. Paris, "The Disparity between Rhetoric and Mimesis in Shakespeare's Presentation of Prince Hal," in *Essays on Shakespeare in Honour of A. A. Ansari*, ed. T. R. Sharma (Meerut, India: Shalabh Book House, 1986), 186.

22. Champion, "What Prerogatives Meanes," 14.

23. See also Bezio, *Staging Power*, 116-122.

24. Bevington, *Tudor Drama and Politics*, 103.

25. Falstaff was a popular enough character in Shakespeare's time to warrant the composition of a play devoted entirely to him: *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (1597c.).

26. Bevington, *Tudor Drama and Politics,* 103.

27. See also Bezio, *Staging Power*, 120-21.

28. Malcolm Pittock, "The Problem of *Henry V*," *Neophilogus* 93 (2009): 179.

29. Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield, "History and Ideology: The Instance of *Henry V*," in *Alternative Shakespeares*, ed. John Drakakis (London: Routledge, 2001), 215.

30. Joe Falocco, "Shakespeare, Essex, and Machiavelli," *Journal of the Wooden O Symposium* 2 (2002): 70.

31. De Lisle, *After Elizabeth*, 6.
32. Ibid.
33. Peter Parolin, "Figuring the King in *Henry V*: Political Rhetoric and the Limits of Performance," *Journal of the Wooden O Symposium* 9 (2009): 57.
34. Brian Walsh, "'Unkind Division': The Double Absence of Performing History in *1 Henry VI*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 55, no. 2 (2004): 124.
35. Bezio, *Staging Power*, 128.
36. Ibid.
37. Sara Munson Deats, "Henry V at War: Christian King or Model Machiavel," in *War and Words: Horror and Heroism in the Literature of Warfare*, ed. Sara Munson Deats, Lagretta Tallent Lenker, and Merry G. Perry (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2004), 85.
38. James F. Larkin and Paul L. Hughes, eds., "Proclamation of James VI and I," in *Stuart Royal Proclamations: Royal Proclamations of King James I, 1603-1625*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), 2.

A Tale of Two Shrews: Recovering the Repertory of the Lord Pembroke's Players

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When we talk about anonymously written plays, we often regard them as stuck out of time; we have no author, fallible or otherwise, on which to hang their intentions. One way of recovering a sense of those intentions is to place anonymous plays amongst their peers. Repertory study, or the method of analyzing the set of plays owned by a single playing company, is an old theatre history method for recovering our sense of the place of lost and anonymous plays within their historical moment, and now gone out of fashion. The anonymous *A Pleasant Conceited Historie called The taming of a Shrew* owned by the Lord Pembroke's Players is one such text. Referred to as either a source or competing performance text in relation to William Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*, an analysis of the preferred manner of playing evident in the Pembroke repertory can situate the play in its moment rather than as derivative of the Shakespeare canon. By first sketching the some of the presentation strategies privileged by Pembroke's Players, and then assessing the variations between *A Shrew* and *The Shrew* (with attention to their framing devices), my aim is to fill in some of the picture about what exactly about this shrew narrative made it competitive enough to warrant two in the same theatrical marketplace.

The Taming of a Shrew (1592) was one of a number of shrew-taming entertainments circulating in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Theater historians now concur that this anonymous

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play, along with Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* (1593), both derived from an ur-*Shrew* play.[1] Additional allusions to domestic reform literature of the period that counseled against unseemly, physical domination, and early 1580s ballads like the anonymous *A merry Ieste of a shrewde and curst Wyfe* (c. 1580) have also been linked to these plays.

The shrew trope continued well into the seventeenth century with John Fletcher's *The Woman's Prize, or the Tamer Tamed* (c. 1607), John Lacy's *Sauny the Scot* (1698), and the ballad *The taming of a shrew: or The Onely way to make a bad wife good* (c. 1624), and even into the eighteenth century with David Garrick's long-running *Catharine and Petruchio* (1754). Film versions were developed in 1929 and 1967 as vehicles for Hollywood couples with contestatory public personas: Douglas Fairbanks and Mary Pickford first, then Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor. These undertakings did rather poorly in relation to their budgets, unlike Gil Junger's *10 Things I Hate About You* (1999), which made $53.5 million at the box-office. Of all these versions, only Shakespeare's *The Shrew* and the anonymous *A Shrew* ask audiences to step out of the action with the framing induction of Christopher Sly.

The first dramaturgical question a company must address with either of these plays is what to do about Sly. Based on the ancient motif of "The Sleeper and the Waker" where, like *The Arabian Nights,* a lord tricks a commoner,[2] should the induction be kept or cut? If kept, will the part of Sly and the Lord be doubled with other parts in the play or not? Will he remain on stage throughout the performance or disappear in act two after his last interjection? Cole Porter's *Kiss Me Kate* (1948), for example, addresses these questions by removing Sly and shifting his metatheatrical work to the rehearsal space of the play, itself a frame device for a musical. In general, however, because the frame device in Shakespeare's version has no obvious bookend—Sly never returns to close his telling—the majority of adaptations choose to remove the Sly frame altogether.

One could argue that there is a closing to *The Shrew*'s induction, but it simply does not include Sly. Shakespeare's play opens with a Lord concluding his hunting activities for the evening by praising his five male dogs—Meriman, Clowder, Bellman, Echo, and Silver—as well as one unnamed female. Of Silver he says he "would not lose the dog for twenty pound" (Induction.1.17).[3] Just before they are redirected to kidnap the drunk and sleeping Sly,

the Lord directs his huntsman to two tasks: to "sup them [the dogs] well" (Induction.1.24) and to "couple Clowder with the deep-mouthed brach" (Induction.1.14), referring to a bitch hound with a deep baying voice. In hunting, to couple meant to leash together, but in the context of the play, it implies Clowder is a kind of Petruchio, being knotted to a loud female partner as a reward to either procreate or restrain her into good behavior by being locked together. At the wedding feast of the play's final act, the grooms make a wager on whose wife will come first when called. Petruchio repeats the sum of the Lord from the induction: "Twenty crowns! / I'll venture so much of my hawk or hound / But twenty times so much upon my wife" (5.2.71-73). That Petruchio wins this "bitch bet" provides us with two veins for interpreting the gender politics of *The Shrew*: either Kate has been successfully tamed and rendered a shell of a character, a mere mouthpiece for sixteenth-century spousal reform tracts;[4] or Kate has carved out a space to exercise her agency by doing more than was asked, bringing her resistant sister to heel, thus coopting her husband's power by taking others'.[5]

To situate Sly as the locus for who is being tamed in these plays, the remainder of this talk will focus first on the theatrical strategies and preferred manner of presentation—what we might call a "house style"—of Pembroke's Players in order to situate the anonymous *A Pleasant Conceited Historie called The taming of a Shrew* within its larger repertory and cultural milieu. Second, rather than reading *A Shrew* as a source, derivative, or competitor to Shakespeare's *The Shrew*, I will provide a reading of the reception implications of *A Shrew* as the only version of the shrew-taming narrative where the subject of instruction, Sly, remains and even interjects all the way through the action. In doing so, my aim is to use Pembroke's strategies to articulate the communal politics at work in the shrew trope—a subject of debate seemingly heated enough to warrant two versions in the same theatrical marketplace.

"Loud 'larums, neighing steeds and trumpets' clang"

Pembroke's players come to us in what Andrew Gurr describes as a "farrago" of speculation.[6] From the paratextual evidence, theatre historians concur on only a few aspects of their existence. The company formed around 1591/92 as a splinter group from Strange's Men with eleven principal actors,[7] one of whom was named Will Slie and some of whom were incarcerated for a brief

period after the maiden performance of *The Isle of Dogs*.[8] We know of ten plays in their repertory, of which one is lost, one survives only as a plot,[9] four are alternate or serial versions by Shakespeare of plays already existing in the repertory, which likely consisted of several more comedies.[10] Formed at the height of plague season, where death counts ranged from 150 to 1100 per week,[11] the company performed at inn-yards as well as the Rose and Swan theaters, but was primarily on tour outside of London in the time we know of their existence (c.1592-1600).

This history has been complicated by the collision of the gendered implications of the play with editorial machinations privileging Shakespeare over anonymous contemporaries. From the 1960s through the 1980s, scholarship of Pembroke's players was deployed either to hypothesize what Shakespeare was up to during the lost years between his disappearance from Stratford and reappearance in London, or to determine the intertextual relationship between his "good" and the "bad" versions of similar plays by contemporaries. The underlying question of these debates is worthy of merit, however: where do we ascribe agency to the changes between duplicate plots. Critics have posited forms of individual agency like piracy and memorial reconstruction, forming a historiography that attests to the pervasiveness of authorship and the need to ascribe texts and their changes to a single, stable subject.[12] Assumptions underlying these studies include Shakespeare's inherent supremacy, one which clearly needed no incubation or training; it is becoming increasingly clear now that his role in Pembroke's players was most likely as apprentice and reviser. As one critic put it in a bloated biography, had "Shakespeare been with Pembroke's, he could certainly have helped them produce better texts than they did" but having laid low was ready to give the Chamberlain's Men a hit when the plague abated.[13]

This privileging not only of biography, but of Shakespeare's male biography, has had additional implications for the shrew plays, centered as they are on forms of masculine domination. In her seminal study *Unediting the Renaissance*, Leah Marcus uncovers gendered strategies, distortions, and "textual conservatism,"[14] including a prostitution of the "true" text by the "bad" quarto through a "language of transgression" wherein "textual errors register as education or spoliation."[15] In *A Shrew* "women are not as satisfactorily tamed as they are in *The Shrew*," making the

Shakespeare text more "manly" than the anonymous one.[16] The history of editorial energy spent on *The Shrew* and *A Shrew* has been to hermetically seal one from the other, the latter having "been perceived as an affront to the editors' own manhood."[17] With this springboard of editorial historiography, the next logical step in recovering *A Shrew* is to assess the play in its historical context and on its own merits without Shakespeare as its *raison d'etre*.

Amongst its repertorial peers, *A Shrew* includes a number of hallmarks of the Pembroke's house style. Roslyn Knutson surmises it included "generic variety, serial drama, their own version of popular stories, and theatrics such as onstage violence, sexually provocative moments, traffic with the supernatural, and challenges to hierarchical structures with which to entertain London and provincial audiences."[18] Of their touring practices, their "provincial stops took them to towns where their patron was influential, where players had traditionally been welcomed, and where their rewards were the average or higher."[19] Together, the character of their repertory and touring practices suggests that "whatever the cause of the company's reported collapse" around the end of the century, "the fault does not appear to lie with its repertory or touring schedule."[20] Their War of the Roses plays, shrew plays, and *Titus Andronicus* speak to imitation, duplication, and serialization as compositional norms of the period.[21] Their presentational strategies—such as the frequent staging of beheadings and piked heads;[22] coordinating the food smells of the inn-yard with dramatic content to pit "playgoers' innate desire for food" against "regulating principles of morality";[23] and drawing on shared memories of unsavory and violent native history—worked to implicate audiences ideologically and sensorially.

In my assessment of the playtexts theatre historians agree were owned and performed by Pembroke's players up through the 1590s, I would like to propose two additional strategies endemic in their repertory: specialized trumpet calls and factional blocking. The first records of a troupe patronized by Henry Herbert, the second earl of Pembroke—patron of Fulke Greville and Philip Sidney, and close friend of Robert Devereaux, the earl of Essex[24]—are harpers[25] and minstrels.[26] While each of these only has one payment record, there are significantly more of an Earl of Pembroke's trumpeters,[27] especially in the late 1580s and early 1590s, up until a playing troupe of the same name enters the

records.[28] While there are no firm accounts of the relationship between these two troupes aside from a familiar patron, the systemic employment of trumpet calls and trumpet allusions in their repertory far outstrips their competitors. Their repertory deploys five distinct calls in a nuanced example of a playing company capitalizing on a specialized resource. The density of the soundscape, especially in *The First Part of the Contention*, *The True Tragedy of Richard Duke of York*, and *2* and *3 Henry VI,* clue us in to the fact that varied trumpet calls were tied to specific semantic work that enabled stagings with a particular political resonance.

The work trumpet calls do to construct the landscape of a scene is consistently tied to arranging bodies within the stage action in order to visualize their political allegiances. Excursions, flourishes, sennets, alarums, colors and drums clutter up the stage directions of this repertory, facilitating, I argue, a specific kind of social relationship through blocking: that of factionalism, or the fractious governance produced by clusters of competing and dissenting peers orbiting around a monarch. The plays stage not only factionalism in action but also suggest the conditions necessary for the formation of factions amongst the peerage. Some of the flashier examples include the three suns descending from the Heavens mechanism to portend the necessary unity of the three sons of York; the two tents set up on either side of the stage in which Richmond and Richard III are visited by ghosts the night before the battle of Bosworth Field; and the plucking of red and white roses from a temple garden, drawing blood in the choosing of sides between Lancaster and York.

As I have discussed elsewhere in detail,[29] these visually spectacular moments become emblematic cores to these plays; suns, ghosts, and roses become important symbols for the nature of factional tension. For our purposes, it is important to note that both *A Shrew* and *The Shrew* deploy the complex trumpet calls in the induction and wedding scenes. In *The Shrew*, to the group of men, having banded together as a faction in order to get Kate married so they can again vie against one another for Bianca, Petruchio says,

> Have I not in a pitched battle heard
> Loud 'larums, neighing steeds and trumpets' clang?
> And do you tell me of a woman's tongue,
> That gives not half so great a blow to hear
> As will a chestnut in a farmer's fire? (1.2.195-99)

Here not only is Kate made a trophy of siege warfare, her voice analogized as battle calls of "trumpets' clang," but in the military context "blow" carries connotations of both a horn and the back of a hand. So while both plays share this multisensory technique, *A Shrew*, in its casting requirements and inclusion of a final bookending scene to the induction, maximally facilitates factional blocking to implicate audiences as part of a culture that problematically authorizes female censure through non-physical violence.

"*Better than a sheepe*"

In addition to changes in character names, there are four major differences between the plots of *A Shrew* and *The Shrew*, aside from the extended induction: in the former, (1) three sisters are on the marriage market (and the youngest is presumed best); (2) not just Ferando (the Petruchio figure), but also Kate beats servants, two in fact; (3) Kate believes that Ferando is her ideal match in an aside before his taming program begins; and (4) Kate's putting her hands under her husband's feet is made explicit by a stage direction. Within the induction itself, however, there are five differences: (1) Slie interrupts the action not once, but four times; (2) the Lord becomes an actor, playing the role of a serving man; (3) a boy actor, not a page, cross-dresses as a female companion for Slie, taking it as a professional challenge that Slie is convinced he's a woman; (4) the hostess is instead a male Tapster; and (5) the "bitch bet" that stands in to bookend Shakespeare's version is here only metaphor, and the play ends with Slie's reawakening. For my purposes, I will attend only to the gendered implications of the variations in the inductions.

The version of Slie in *A Shrew* doesn't actually seem capable of distinguishing between the real and imagined. The play opens with the Tapster booting him out of the alehouse, but Slie doesn't really mind, finding the ground feels like "a freshe cushion" and makes for "good warm lying" (43).[30] When kidnapped, he is wholly taken in by the illusion that he is now a lord, that the boy actor beside him is a lady, and that the boy actors playing Kate and Valeria are "two fine gentlewomen" (57). This is true so much so that the Lord, under his servant pseudonym, Simon, has to remind Slie "this is but the play, theyre but in jest" (81). Slie does not express any interest in the characters except for the servants Valeria, Phylotus, and the "fool" Sanders (57). Concerned over

their possible arrest, Slie interrupts the action to say, "Why *Sim[on]* am not I *Don Christo Vary*? Therefore I say they shall not go to prison" (80-81); the play continues once he is assured they have successfully run away and he is placated with more drink. Despite the posh clothes, wine, and high characters, Slie's communal associations with the low plot wins out: once he is sure they are safe, he falls asleep for the rest of the play.

Slie and the disguised Lord, Simon, interrupt the play no fewer than four times, the last of which is merely an expression of boredom on Simon's part. While not seemingly malicious like Shakespeare's lord figure, his ploy to improve Slie seems to have failed miserably. The disguising is no longer fun when the subject of taming, entirely taken in by the illusion, sleeps through the climax of the play and is seemingly unchanged by the experience. He summons his servants to remove the sleeping Slie, "put him in his one apparell againe, / And lay him in the place where we did find him, / Just underneath the alehouse side below" (83). His removal occurs just before the "bitch bet," or in this case, the "backfired bet." Aurelius, feeling confident after having tricked his father into blessing his marriage to the youngest of the daughters, challenges his brothers-in-law to see "who will come soonest at their husbands call . . . for a hundred pound" (83). Ferando's response alludes to the opening induction, which in this case did take place after a day of hunting, but included no hounds:

> Why true I dare not lay indeede;
> A hundred pound: why I have laid as much
> Upon my dogge, in running at a Deere,
> She shall not come so farre for such a trifle,
> But will you lay five hundred markes with me, (84)

The Shrew builds an explicit scene out of what is merely metaphor in *A Shrew*. Not only does Ferando win the wager, but the stage directions suggest that Kate does tricks for him on command, like a well-trained dog, hawk, or horse, all of which she is likened to in the play (68). When commanded, according to stage directions, "*She takes of her cap and treads on it*" (86) and literally "*laies her hand under her husbands feete*" (88). In *The Shrew*, Kate gets the last word with her long speech of wifely acquiescence. In *A Shrew*, both her sisters rebuke her afterwards. Philena chides her "for making a fool of her selfe and us" (86), and Emelia doubly so by using the incident to correct her new husband that having "a shrew"

for a wife is "better then a sheepe" (88). The sisters, in a show of female community, respond to and correct the illusion of wifely obedience presented in Kate as a vacuous animal who does tricks rather than engage as an embodied subject. We can say then that within the action and within the frame, which is to say for both Slie and these sisters, the didactic performance of the taming of Kate fails to take with its watchers.

Two Shrews

How we read the Slie induction is important to the gender politics of the play because without him to extirpate us from the narrative, the pressure is placed on Kate's reformation, not on the audience's assessment of whether physical abuse is the only kind of abuse that should be censured in domestic life. Without an intensely sardonic portrayal of her final conversion speech and in light of the opportunities available in *A Shrew*, Shakespeare's *The Shrew* is all the more incommensurate with twenty-first century feminisms; it unsettlingly vindicates behavior like that of Ray Rice, the NFL player who was caught punching his then-fiancé now-wife, Janay, in an elevator last September, and then made *her* apologize for it at a press conference. The prominence of Shakespeare as a brand, however, ensures this version will be the one that circulates. When Sly remains, however, as in the anonymous *A Shrew*, the play is not only more dramaturgically coherent, but offers opportunities for critique that Elizabethans (and in re-mountings, we ourselves) participate in a cultural tradition that, Emily Detmer argues, "accepts coercive bonding and oppression as long as they are free of physical violence."[31]

The history of Pembroke's shrew plays gives us not only two versions and two possible subjects in need of taming, Kate or Slie, but also three models of what we as audiences are supposed to do with our new knowledge by play's end: how to tame a shrew. The Duke, Aurelius' father, encourages us to reject the notion that identity is communally constructed for us and outside our control. Encountering Ferando and Kate on the road to Athens (trying to convince him the sun is the moon) he mutters to himself:

> What is she mad to? or is my shape transformed,
> That both of them persuade me I am a woman,
> But they are mad sure, and therefore Ile be gon,
> And leave their companies for fear of harme, (78)

This is in direct opposition to Slie, who *is* easily tricked that a man is a woman (and so perhaps should we be that the boy playing Kate is a shrew). Waking from his "brave" dream, Slie's first instinct is to go to his "wife presently and tame her too," now knowing "how to tame a shrew" (89). It is a horrifying surprise to find the simple drunk is married. What exactly are we to believe Slie to take as appropriate shrew-taming considering his consistent misreading of the play, sleeping, and drunkenness?

It would be a frightful place to leave audiences if not for the Tapster. Upon discovering Slie still on his doorstep, Slie asks the Tapster, "Whats all the / Plaiers gone: am not I a Lord?" (89). The Tapster replies: "A Lord with a murrin," referring to a general cattle blight like mange or plague. *Murrain* was often associated with sheep,[32] recalling Emelia's retort that it is better to be a shrew rather than a mewed, acquiescing ovine. This would suggest that we as audiences are discouraged from blindly giving over to the didactic effects of performance, like Slie, and look at the taming of Kate with a critical eye skeptical of those who merely follow. Noting Slie's insistence to "tame" his wife, the Tapster's response is to call him back:

> Nay tarry Slie for Ile go home with thee,
> And here the rest that thou hast dreamt to night. (89)

The Tapster's desire to hear Slie's recounting of his transformation validates the instructive power of theatre to a point. Accompanying the drunk back into his domestic space is a kind of communal policing, which we hope will distract and protect Slie's wife with the presence of a witness in a model of public, group advocacy. For the moral instruction of theatre to take, as it were, it needs to be mediated through a group environment. As playgoers, *A Shrew* audiences are put in the position to accept or resist the taming instruction of the drama, implicated in the ethics of domestic violence depending on whom we decide, as a group, is more socially aberrant: independent Kate or drunken Slie. Situating *A Shrew* within the larger Pembroke repertory, the play can be understood as presenting us with three factions, emblematized by the Duke, Slie, and the Tapster as models for approaching the problem of the historically pervasive association of masculine violence with female agency.

Notes

1. On the complex history of dating these two plays in relation to one another using player records, see James J. Marino's "The Anachronistic Shrews" in *Shakespeare Quarterly* 60, no. 1 (Spring 2009): 25-46.

2. Jonathan Burton, "Christopher Sly's Arabian Night: Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* as World Literature," *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies* 14, no. 3 (2014): 5.

3. William Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew: Texts and Contexts*, ed. David Bevington (New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1996). In-text citations to Shakespeare's *The Shrew* refer to this edition.

4. Gary Schneider, "The Public, the Private, and the Shaming of the Shrew," *SEL* 42, no. 2 (Spring 2002): 251.

5. Holly A. Crocker, "Affective Resistance: Performing Passivity and Playing A-Part in *The Taming of the Shrew*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 54, no. 2 (Summer 2003): 155.

6. Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearian Playing Companies* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 270.

7. Scott McMillin, "Casting for Pembroke's Men: The *Henry VI* Quartos and *The Taming of A Shrew*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 23, no. 2 (Spring 1972): 149.

8. "The Isle of Dogs," *Lost Plays Database*, June 4, 2015, http://www.lostplays.org/index.php/Isle_of_Dogs,_The.

9. Scott McMillin, "The Plots of 'The Dead Man's Fortune' and '2 Seven Deadly Sins': Inferences for Theatre Historians," *Studies in Bibliography* 26 (1973): 243.

10. These include Christopher Marlowe's *Edward II*; William Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Titus Andronicus*, *2 Henry VI*, and *3 Henry VI*; Thomas Nashe and Ben Jonson's *The Isle of Dogs*; and the anonymous *The Taming of a Shrew*, *The Dead Man's Fortune*, *The True Tragedy of Richard III*, and *The First Part of the Contention betwixt the Two Famous Houses of York and Lancaster*.

11. Siobhan Keenan, *Acting Companies and their Plays in Shakespeare's London* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014), 129.

12. The literature surrounding Pembroke's players is swallowed by debates regarding "bad" Shakespeare quartos and the company's "breaking" or failure, promoted by A. S. Cairncross, M. P. Jackson, Mary Edmond, and David George, among others. In the last two decades, these claims have been problematized and refuted by Scott McMillin, Roslyn Knutson, Leah Marcus, and Janet Claire.

13. David George, "Shakespeare and Pembroke's Men," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 32, no. 3 (Autumn 1981): 307.

14. Leah S. Marcus, *Unediting the Renaissance: Shakespeare, Marlowe, Milton* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 101.

15. Ibid., 102.

16. Ibid., 108.

17. Ibid.

18. Roslyn L. Knutson, "Pembroke's Men in 1592-3, Their Repertory and Touring Schedule," *Early Theatre* 4, no. 1 (2001): 135.

19. Ibid.

20. Ibid.

21. In both Knutson's monographs, *Playing Companies and Commerce in Shakespeare's Time* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001) and *The Repertory*

of Shakespeare's Company, 1594-1613 (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1991), Pembroke's War of the Roses plays are key pieces of evidence to support her claim that necessary features of the vitality of the London marketplace that developed were imitation, cooperation, and variety in company repertory.

22. Knutson, "Pembroke's Men in 1592-3," 133.

23. Sally Templeman, "'What's this? Mutton?': Food, Bodies, and Inn-Yard Performance Spaces in Shakespearean Drama," *Shakespeare Bulletin* 31, no.1 (March 2013): 89-90.

24. Penry Williams, "Herbert, Henry, second earl of Pembroke (*b.* In or after 1538, *d.* 1601)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, January 2008, http://www.oxforddnb.com.proxy2.library.illinois.edu/view/article/13028.

25. *Records of Early English Drama* (Toronto and London: The British Library and University of Toronto Press, 1979-2002), *Sussex*, 47.

26. REED, *Shropshire*, 140.

27. REED, *Oxford*, 576 and 383; *Cambridge*, 584.

28. There are 18 individual recorded payments to Pembroke's players on tour outside of London: REED, *Kent*, 270; *Somerset*, 15; *Coventry*, 338; *York*, 455; *Sussex*, 136; *Oxford*, 240; *Somerset*, 17; *Bristol*, 150 and 152; *Coventry*, 353; *Kent*, 485; *Coventry*, 353; *Heref/Worc,* 362; *Norwich*, 113; *Bristol*, 154; *Newcastle upon Tyne*, 131; *York*, 491; *Bristol*, 155.

29. In April 2015, I presented a paper entitled "'Drum and Trumpets, and to London all': Sound, Social Blocking, and the Lord Pembroke's Players" at the Early Modern Reading Group's annual conference in Urbana, IL. It articulates in a detailed survey of the company's repertory these related strategies of factional blocking and trumpet calls in an effort to contextualize *The Isle of Dogs* within a larger set of plays. Arguments from that paper and this constitute a chapter, "Sounds and Sennets: Factional Politics and the Lord Pembroke's Players, 1597-1591," in my dissertation project, "Acts of Imagination: Curating the Early Elizabethan Repertories, 1582-1594."

30. *A Pleasant Conceited Historie, called The Taming of a Shrew*, Shakespearean Originals: First Editions, ed. Graham Holderness and Bryan Loughrey (Lanham, MD: Rowan & Littlefield, 1992). All in-text citations for the anoymous *A Shrew* refer to this edition.

31. Emily Detmer, "Civilizing Subordination: Domestic Violence and The Taming of the Shrew," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 48, no. 3 (Autumn 1997): 289.

32. "murrain, n., adj., and adv.," *OED Online*, June 2015, http://www.oed.com.proxy2.library.illinois.edu/view/Entry/123953.

ACTING SHAKESPEARE: A Roundtable Discussion with Artists from the Utah Shakespeare Festival's 2015 Production of *King Lear*

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Featuring: Tony Amendola (King Lear), James Newcomb (Earl of Gloucester), Melinda Pfundstein (Goneril), Saren Nofs-Snyder (Regan), Kelly Rogers (Cordelia)

Bahr: Welcome to the culminating event in our 2015 Wooden O Symposium, the Actors' Roundtable Discussion on *King Lear*. We are grateful to have you here and especially grateful to have actors you had the opportunity to see last night onstage. [*Applause*] First, I'd like to ask the actors to introduce themselves, starting with Saren. Next, we'll have them talk about the roles they play, how they came here to Utah, and where home-base is. Then I'll open it up to you for questions. Saren, would you begin?

Nofs-Snyder: As Michael said, my name is Saren Nofs-Snyder. This is my second season at the Festival, although my first was in 2002, so it's been thirteen years since my first season. Last night you saw me as Regan in *King Lear*. I also play Lady Percy and Doll Tearsheet in *Henry IV, Part 2*, and Salieri's wife, Teresa, in *Amadeus*. I originally came to the festival in 2002 right out of graduate school at the University of Missouri-Kansas City. At that time the casting director, Kathleen Conlin, traveled to many graduate programs to audition students; I believe that's still a tradition at the

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festival. Students with master's degrees are highly sought after for the Shakespeare work here, and I was chosen for that season. The interesting thing about this year is that I didn't audition. Artistic Directors David Ivers and Brian Vaughn knew me from past work here and from work outside the festival and gave me a call. When I saw the message on my voicemail, I recognized the area code and thought, "That's Cedar City! I know Cedar City's area code." Brian's voice said, "I'd like to talk to you about the season," so I quickly went online to look up the season's plays and said, "If they're not offering me Regan or Goneril this year, I don't know if I'm interested in going." Regan has been a bucket-list dream for years and years, so I'm just thrilled to be playing her this year.

Rogers: I'm Kelly Rogers. You saw me last night as Cordelia, and I'm also playing Amy Spettigue in *Charley's Aunt*. I'm currently based in New York. How did I get here? I first auditioned for David and Brian when they came to my BFA Program in 2010, and I came to visit also in 2010 when one of my directors directed *Merchant of Venice*. This year she sent me an e-mail saying that she was directing this year's *Lear* and that it might work out for me. I'd been trying to get an audition with Utah for the past three years in New York and hadn't even been seen, so I finally got seen, then got the call, and now I'm here.

Newcomb: My name is James Newcomb. I play the Earl of Gloucester in *Lear*. This is my fourth season, and I drove here. [*Laughter*]

Pfundstein: I'm Melinda Pfundstein. I was Goneril last night and also playing Kate in *Shrew*. This is my 18th season. I started as a student at Southern Utah University.

Amendola: I'm Tony Amendola, and I play Lear. I was here in 2010 as Shylock in *Merchant of Venice*. I had worked with Sharon Ott, who directed both *Lear* and *Merchant of Venice* here, at Berkeley Rep for a number of years. I live in Los Angeles now.

Bahr: Any questions from the audience? [*Silence*]. All right, then I'll start. First question—starting with Tony: This is a big play for you as an actor, so when you say, "I'm going to be doing Lear," what do you have to do as an actor to prepare for a role of such breadth?

Amendola: I had a lot of friends who, when they found out I was playing Lear, said, "Well, why didn't you tell us? Why didn't you?" So how do you open a conversation? "Hi, it's great to see you. I'm doing Lear." [*Laughter*] How do you say that without

sounding like you're inflating your tire? You just buckle down. It's awkward because you have to realize that it is one of the great plays. If there's a masterpiece of youth it's *Hamlet*: examination of youth and becoming a man, becoming/coming of age. The perspective reverses with Lear: The mistakes you've made, the regrets, and how you can finally become human as an old man—which shouldn't be the case; we should be so evolved, right? Old people should not need love; they should not need validation. Lear was daunting, but I knew I had to do it while I still had the physical ability and the memory so I wouldn't inflict infirmities upon the other actors.

Bahr: Is this your first Lear?

Amendola: Yes, my first Lear. I had done a little bit of workshop on it, but never, never. I worked on a version a little bit 30 years ago that was an hour long, if you can imagine. It was not a good experience. [*Laughter*] Anyway, you just read a lot. Then when you know what role you'll be playing, all of a sudden the actor's eye goes to the gentleman in the back who's slouching on his chair because he could be a Lear. They say every older man is Lear. All at once your body becomes a sponge for Lear-isms and mannerisms and vocal ticks and all of those things; you need a sort of ladder to get away from "the big role" because "the big role" idea will paralyze you. It becomes this nebulous sort of thing. I envy scholars because you can write and it's there and it's done. An actor has to imagine and then do, and it's a very difficult step. In other words, I had this image and I had the three daughters, and the three daughters are treating me this way so I can respond that way. If you're writing a paper, depending upon your perspective—be it a daughter or be it Lear—it happens, it's done. That's not the way it happens in a rehearsal hall. I have to absorb the various personalities that the daughters are creating and make that part of it. So there are a lot of things. You read a lot. You remember back to anyone that you had seen do it, and maybe there was a moment you liked. Why did you like it? You steal it, if you can, because these classic plays are built on the backs of each other. There are histories—I can tell you what Henry Irving did with this role. Every so often someone wipes the slate clean—for example, Peter Brook, not with *Lear*, but with *A Midsummer Night's Dream*—and then all bets are off and you start again. But you just get as much information as you can, and observe life, and good luck.

Bahr: Anyone else have comments on that question? Did you have a question?

Audience Member: This is the first time I've actually seen *Lear*. I thought it was great, so thank you very much. As I went in to see it I was thinking of a movie that must have come out fifteen or twenty years ago called *The Dresser*. Was it the movie that has the great Shakespearean actor who says, "I've done 250 *Lears*," and it's almost like it's killing him? Do you think that's an exaggeration, the idea that repeated performances of Lear drain you?

Amendola: The role will take as much as you can give it—as much voice, as much physical, as much wherever you can get emotionally. If you ever thought you were contained by a role, it won't happen in Lear. But, as I said, you don't want to get lost. It's like kingship to me: that's not really the important issue in Lear. That may have been the important issue in Shakespeare, but to our audience I think it's about being a father. It's about giving up power; being a CEO, then not being a CEO. But, yes: You can be exhausted after the show. It's a wonderful exhaustion, though. You can take yourself on a sort of mental, physical journey, then all of a sudden, when I look across at Poor Tom, I see the immigrants trying to escape into Greece, into Italy, and now into Hungary. That's what I see, and it can get to you. Yet I don't want to give you the wrong impression: If you act correctly, it's really liberating and not neurotic because you're getting to release all of it.

Audience Member: This is for James and Saren. How do you prepare yourselves for the gouging scene, which is such a violent act? At one point, I thought I was actually going to have to close my eyes, even though I knew it was coming. How do you get yourself ready to do a scene like that, that you know is going to disturb members of the audience?

Newcomb: In the second part of our play, Gloucester is more demanding physically than in the beginning. I have one big scene with Edmond and then it gets exponentially more difficult so that by the time you get to the gouging, I'm actually relatively pumped up. Those scenes are technically specific, so we spent a great deal of time working technically on exactly what happens—who's where, where my head is, what the blood delivery system will be, making sure those details are consistent. Only when you have all that in place can you let yourself go emotionally into what happens. The people around me who are doing the gouging and helping with that have been terrific. It's a kind of irony that this is

happening to me, but I'm not aware of what it looks like because the blood is—I'm hoping it's in the sock, that it looks effective, and that it's stomach-churning. [*Laughter*] But an interesting feature of the process of acting is that it's a schizophrenic experience. There you are, playing the character and engaging in what's happening emotionally, but also technically needing to make the language clear—using the language, connecting with your scene partner, responding to what's being given that particular night. There's always a variation even though it's in a context of the familiar. But all the time you're doing it, there's a little voice in the back of your head going, "Yaba yaba yaba yaba— Boy, I landed that one!" [*Laughter*] "What is that guy in the front row wearing?" "Is that my line?" When you first start acting, you are so self-conscious that all the voice is saying is, "They're looking at me, they're looking at me, they're looking at me." But after a while you relax, and the more you can let that voice go—that voice that's sort of monitoring the craft of the performance—the better. I know that for Tony, too, these big roles—I've done Richard III and Iago—they're a Sisyphean endeavor because you face the demand of Lear that night and—if you're going back to *The Dresser*, he comes off stage and says, "Where was the storm?"— you think, "I was that *close*. I was *that* close. I had it in my grasp." And always—it's just out of reach. Truly, the nobility is in the attempt.

Nofs-Snyder: That's a really great question, actually because of what Jamie [Newcomb] was saying, that it is technically the tightest moment onstage, to keep everyone safe. We work with a fight choreographer who has choreographed very specific moves so that everyone feels safe and in control. That scene is one of two touchstone moments for me as Regan, the first being the prologue where the sisters and the Fool are on stage while the audience is coming into the space. That's a moment for me to be able to ground into a character. It's an unusual experience, but I really enjoy it because I have ten minutes of emotionally warming up to who Regan is and what her experience is at this given moment. It's kind of like a car. I feel like I get a chance to idle the engine a little bit before we really dive into that first scene—which is a doozy. Then the second scene that's really touchstone for me is the eye-gouging because it's so technically specific. For me, my Regan is really lost, adrift at sea, in the first half of the play. I feel an obligation to my older sister who, I think, has better ideas than I do. I have an obligation to my husband who, in our production, is

very controlling and has a lot more of the power lust than I do. So I feel Regan's adrift and following other people's examples. Once that gouging comes, because it's so tightly wound, the second it's done, and after I stab the servant and we've gouged out that second eye—this is going to sound so strange—but I release and relax because once that's happened there's nowhere else to go for Regan. She has jumped off the cliff, and the rest of the play for me is kind of this lovely, relaxed cakewalk. But that's a great question and because we've worked that so intensely, it allows me to have an entirely different Regan for the second half of the play.

Audience Member: This relates to the ensemble and I'd like to hear from all of you. You do your homework and you have some idea of the character you're going to be portraying, and the director does her homework and has an idea of the production she wants to get out there—talk a little bit about the modification effects of the ensemble as you go through the initial readings to the presentation we see.

Newcomb: You get hired to do a part in a play, and you show up at the first read-through. You might have gotten some information about what the period was going to be, what the look was going to be—but more often than not, you don't. You show up and the first read-through is when you see everybody who's reading those parts and the director who's talking about her vision for the play. You get a good indication—especially now that I've been doing this for quite some time—of what the dynamic of the process is going to be. All directors have different processes. Some are architects who have it all planned out from the beginning to the end—how it's going to look, how they want to pace it, how they want to stage it. Others are craftsman and it's pretty much technical. They're not that interested in complexity of interpretation, but mostly just getting it out. So you're always adapting as an actor within the context of that process. In order to do the best you can with your interpretation and the other people's take on the play, it truly is a collaborative effort. Sometimes the processes are smooth, and sometimes they're not. That doesn't necessarily mean that the smooth ones always turn out to be good, nor do the complex ones or the conflicting ones. I've seen both. What I do know is that doing a production with an ensemble is like going to war in the sense that we don't do this for you. Our performances are for us, for the ensemble, for the group. One

reason we panic about going up is that we don't want to let our fellow actors down. We want to give a good show, we want you to get your money's worth, but in my opinion it's all about the actress to my right and the actors to my left and not wanting to let them down. So however frustrating the process might be when you're working with the director, that's the core of it: you want this group of people to give the best show that they can and you adapt.

Bahr: Anyone else want to add to that?

Pfundstein: When I heard I was playing Goneril, what I heard from everyone was, "Oh, the evil one," "That evil sister," or "Who's playing Regan?" Always paired together, Regan and Goneril are this evil pair. When we came in, I thought that's so boring: If they're all evil when we walk in, the audience knows what it's going to be at the end; we all know where it goes. So the sisters and I sat down with Sharon [*Ott, the director*] a few times to talk about how we are different and how we are individuals, what the relationship with our father was like that helped lead to who we are as sisters, helped shape us into the individuals we are and what we think our expectations are when we see the map laid out on the ground. We all had different ideas of what we expected to come out of Lear's mouth. None of that, of course, is in the text, but it gives us all context to work with as we're building moments together. That was all very collaborative; we still talk about the intricacies of those relationships, especially among the sisters. And as for being an ensemble, Jamie's absolutely right. The fear comes because we are working as a team and we don't want to let our teammates down, and we have to lift each other in order to make the scenes fly. So when one thing goes wrong, everybody starts to shift around to help fix the dynamic, or help to alter the dynamic into something that is usable for us and useful for the audience to get a good, clear story. That's where the pressure and the victory come from working as an ensemble.

Amendola: I agree completely. I have to tell you a story. I did two plays in Rep at La Jolla. It was an ensemble and in the morning I would hear all the actors saying, "If that guy doesn't stop telling me what to do, I'm going to strangle him." Then at the afternoon rehearsal, a completely different play, the same actors would say, "If that woman doesn't start telling me what to do, I'm going to strangle her." It's a strange dance with the director. Ideally, all I ask is to be heard. I often will talk privately. It's not something to be done in rehearsal because you don't want to get into a contest

of who knows more about a role or more about the play. It's completely useless, particularly for the actor, because you have no power really in the framework that it is. You try to negotiate and advocate for your character, so if they ask you to do something, ideally, it's great if you do it. Sometimes you say, "Hmm, no, it really doesn't—and here's why it doesn't feel good." That's a negotiation. The problem is many actors think directors should be acting coaches, and it's wonderful when they are, because if the director has the skill to coach the actor as well as direct the play, that's very comfortable for us. But you can't put it on directors. All directors have a completely different vocabulary. So it's a strange dance. For example, when I was here five years ago, Sharon Ott, our director, wanted to take the intermission before the "Hath not a Jew eyes" scene. She was convinced that's where it should be. As an actor, all I could see is the people coming back from the john in the middle of the "Hath not a Jew eyes" speech. Coming back, zipping up, "Oh, am I late?" People coming in with their coffee. I advocated once and she said, "No, no. Really"; I advocated again, gently, and finally I was able to convince her. That was a small victory, but a wonderful one. That said, in this play, she wanted to take the intermission, because the play actually splits this way, after the blinding. But that is more than two hours into the play—far too long for our bladders. So we pushed it back, first to after the trial scene, and then she wanted to move it to where Lear is coming off the "reason not the need" and then needs to go out into the storm. She asked me, "Would you mind terribly if we took the intermission there?" and I said, "No, of course not." It's good for the play. So you have that conversation, if you're lucky. Other times, it's just the way it is; it's my way or the highway. As Jamie says, you're here to do a job. If you want the contract take it; if you don't, there are plenty of others behind you.

Newcomb: George Bernard Shaw said that the relationship of an actor to a director, and a director to an actor is directly analogous to a mongoose and cobra. [*Laughter*] He's absolutely right. It's about negotiation and compromise and diplomacy.

Rogers: Cordelia is an interesting part because I really interact only with Lear in this play, even though in the first scene I feel I'm directed much more by the people who are in the scene with me. At this point, I don't remember everything that happened in the rehearsal room, but I try to open myself up to what everyone else in the room is doing and what happens when I look at them,

especially Tony. He throws me very different things every night. Sharon was a professor of mine in school and the first experience I had with her was her telling me not to be so mean in an audition. From a very young age, 18, I learned how not to get my feelings hurt by her. Now I understand that the director leaves after opening night and we have to continue to make this thing happen every night. At this point, I'm very disconnected from what happened in the rehearsal room because my information comes from the people around me. Tony is my director every night.

Audience Member: I spoke to Melinda last night about the repertory system, and she gave me a great technical answer. Several of you mentioned being in two, maybe three productions. I'm interested in how that changes your mental landscape or mental furniture when you're preparing roles. Are you just professionals and able to segregate all the parts? Do pieces bleed? Melinda, you're playing two bad (or bad-ass) older sisters in the two productions. So if there's bleed-over, how does that change your process in repertory versus a stand-alone, seven or eight shows per week production?

Rogers: I'm really loving it. I don't know if any of you have seen *Charley's Aunt* yet, but it's a hysterical farce. I play a somewhat ridiculous young woman who is optimistic and eager and gets what she wants at the end and survives, you know? [*Laughter*] I joke that I was always laughing in *Charley's Aunt* rehearsals and always crying in *Lear* rehearsals. I mean it's written into the text, "Wipe thine eye if be your tears wet." Okay, Shakespeare, I get it: I'm crying all the time. So balancing the comedy and the tragedy in the season has been so healthy for me because I want to be grounded by *Lear* and I want to be released in *Charley's Aunt*. Every single time I do *Lear*, I've had a matinee of *Charley's Aunt* in the afternoon—that's how our schedules worked out. It's been really great. I don't think they're actually that different though. The stakes are just as high in the comedy as the tragedy; just the consequences are different. Does Cordelia leak into Amy Spettigue? No. I don't think that there's really any leakage other than they both care a lot about what happens.

Nofs-Snyder: I adore working in the repertory system if only because it gives you a chance to step away from a role for a time. It's not every day that I was working on Regan. I got to go to two other rehearsals and look at two other entirely different worlds. I found that some of the most informative moments for Regan, for

example, would happen in the rehearsal for *Amadeus* just because I could let go of the actor brain that's constantly working: "Am I doing this right? Am I making good choices? Is this okay?" When you can step away from it and look at a different role, for some reason it really helps to inform opposite things. It's also like a good lasagna: You get to bake it and put it away for the night, and then the next morning it's in much better shape. So if I could put Regan away for a little bit, I could come back a day or day and a half later with a fresh pair of eyes. And purely in the performance, it's really lovely to not have to gouge out eyes eight times a week. It is exhausting. I know there was that question about *The Dresser*: Does it? The shows do exhaust you. I think there's much less fatigue in going back and forth between characters. It's also just a damn delight to be able to play, in my case, five different characters a week. I wish the repertory system were more prevalent in American theatre. I think it's perfect for me. It's a really easy way to work.

Bahr: Any other comments on the repertory system?

Amendola: It's what we were trained to do. At most of the schools we went to, that was the ideal, and then it disappeared. Now so many people train for repertory and then go to LA or New York and someone hands them an audition for a commercial. That's part of the reality of our world. Another thing is that *these* plays were not meant to be done eight times a week. They weren't. To actually perform them eight times a week, people pay a price for that, and generally they have to pull back mid-week—because your body does ache. My body aches right now. You know that scene with Nick Nolte at the beginning of *North Dallas 40*? Nolte has a scene where he wakes up and the first three minutes are all in silence about him dealing with his body. For me at my age, I feel it in my neck, back, voice—but I'm so grateful to have the opportunity to do it. It's not a burden. I don't want you to feel sorry for me or anything like that, or any of us. We're sort of the top five percent in our profession right now.

Audience Member: I want to comment about what Melinda said about the two evil sisters being grouped together. This production did a really good job of distinguishing Goneril from Regan. Part of it was that Goneril was crowned by her father, but you [*points to Nofs-Snyder*] weren't and for a minute I saw them as distinctly different. But what I really wanted to discuss was Tony's comment at the beginning about when you see an older man in the audience, immediately that's your Lear, someone you

can relate to. But you were an incredibly robust Lear. When you made the comment about creeping to death, I thought, "Bullshit," and people were laughing in the audience. You're vigorous, robust, physically powerful, violent (you knock furniture around), your daughters are frightened of you, not just because of the horrible things you say to them, but the physical part of it. That made, of course, the demise of Lear, both physically and mentally as you struggle through the play, so much more extreme. I don't think I've ever seen a Lear that was so robust at the beginning of the play. I get that you want to retire early, but the idea that you're really going to sort of creep up to death doesn't work. I see Lear as far more frail when I read the text.

Amendola: First of all, all these characters in Shakespeare—they're exceptional—they are not us. They're larger than life. So he's 80. Do you know how long the play would be if I played him realistically as an 80-year-old man? To me, that whole line about "crawl towards death" is sarcasm, and there's a sense of, "Oh yeah, you're listening. I know some of you want me out and think they can do the job better, and probably could. This one [*points to Pfundstein*] without question." But I think Lear's a man who abruptly made up his mind; he's a very rash man. He loves rash men. He loves chaos in Kent. He loves that kind of guy. Also, he hunts. He's going to go out carousing because, although he's probably been a carouser, his carousing has been dented by his kingship, so he's going to go out carousing. Consequently, I chose not to play up the age. Again, it can be done that way, but you have to remember, Lear is often done as kind Lear. He's a kind, old man inflicted on by his daughters. You inherit these images and you read them from criticisms and scholarship and you ask, "Am I reading the same play they were?" So you want to start there. There's a tradition now, and this is something I really played with, of dementia in the role. Statistically, there's probably something going on. I think one out of six, if you reach 80, has some level of dementia. But I wanted to be very careful. Although I knew it was there, I think this has to be the journey of the man or woman—us. If we in any way could say, "Oh it's the disease," that's why he's mistreating these girls—it's that. Then it lets the character off the hook and there's nothing for him to learn. So I thought of my own father. I've thought of many, many people who had humungous hearts when you finally got to it, but there were a lot of layers because of their particular life, and I think the same thing is true

of Lear. I think it's an awkward situation to have three daughters. He tries to make them bend in a kind of way that is the only way he can relate, and Shakespeare purposefully doesn't give Jamie or myself a lot to go on. The need for love, the need for this display—there's a hole in it somehow. So much has been written.

Rogers: If you want a younger perspective, I particularly enjoy working here because in New York I tend to work with my peers a lot. In college you do plays in which your father is someone two years older than you are. There's something really beautiful about standing onstage with someone who *could* be my father. And going to panels like this reminds me how little I know, how young I am. That's important because in my life, in New York where I'm based, it's really easy to think, "Everyone's young and everyone's running around and everyone's going to live forever," because that's what New York does to you. But this experience grounds me so much. It's humbling to be the young one in the room, and that's something important to learn.

Bahr: Any other comments?

Amendola: I know exactly what Jamie's talking about and that realism is in the play. The Great Truth is spoken by a madman in our scene. But his words are the truth. I love the play in part because it's generational. Although it's the first time I've done it, you can grow up in this play. Kelly can play every single sister and in our society, eventually you could play Lear. It's been done. As painful as the journey is, I love doing it. Certainly in these tragedies—I think it's great to do *Othello*, but in the Scottish Play, in *Lear*, and in *Hamlet* there is a feeling if the production is good or bad it doesn't make a difference. I remember sitting through terrible productions, and when the play was over I always felt like I'd been somewhere. I think this play does it. It's just a reminder of what's to come; it's a harsh lesson because the man is very old. I mean he needs to be shaken and he needs to have this lesson of humanity, and yet I think it's a very, very oddly beautiful and elevating experience.

Audience Member: I've read the play. I've never seen it before. As a reader of Shakespeare, I have to make decisions about interior lives and interior motives. Often I have a little anxiety that maybe I'm putting more of myself into the characters, that it's more about me as a person than about what Shakespeare is writing. As actors, you've talked about how you created these back

stories that aren't in the text, but inform what you're trying to do as an actor. I loved what you said, Tony, about "Have I read the same play? What are you guys talking about?" So do you have those same anxieties about saying more about yourself than the character, and if so, how do you negotiate where that boundary might be?

Amendola: You can read all these plays at home. You don't need to come to the Utah Shakespeare Festival or anywhere else. You can read them. So the reason you come is to hear the subtext, to see those choices, and no matter how bad the choices are, the text is still not destroyed. Thank God. Yet you can see it eight times because—just the relationships with the daughters alone, you can see what they're trying to get at. It's the subtext that goes on between the actor, the director, and the designers to present this world-view.

Pfundstein: It's what we do. All we have to pull on is our own reference points and experiences. This body. This voice. This imagination. Anything I can imagine outside of what I have experienced. In that way, to try not to bring yourself to the role, I think, would be cheating. That's where I always start. That's what we have to work with. Eventually the imagination kind of fills in the gaps or you go really far and then sort of step it back to what a real human being would do. I guess the way we keep it *not* about ourselves is what Jamie talked about: making it about the other people on the stage with us. If we're thinking, "This is how I'm reacting here. This is what I'm doing here," that lines up with what you're talking about, when it's about us. But our job as actors is to make it about the other. That's acting 101 for us. Making things happen for the other person and giving, throwing things against the people that are on stage with you. So I guess that's the way we deal with trying to check ourselves as actors.

Bahr: Great. Anybody else want to add to that?

Rogers: I think also that anxiety about whether or not you're serving the text can always be checked by going back to the text. There's a lot to find there.

Bahr: Saren, I saw you nod your head.

Nofs-Snyder: The thing about humanity is that all of us have inside a lover or a scorned lover. We all have jealousy. All the emotions that happen are universal. So what I have to do is pick and choose. At this moment Regan is not most a lover. So, I get rid of a little bit of Saren's sets of love and compassion

and increase the jealousy. I've also been incredibly jealous, had moments where I probably wanted to injure people. You draw upon that from your own personal experience. You highlight the ones that serve the play more, and let go of some of the things that don't serve. But it absolutely comes from you as a person. I happen to be an oldest sister, not a middle child, but I went into the experience of what my middle brother acts like and used some of that. But it has to be from the self, and not only from the self, but also from the people you are playing with onstage. I don't ever come into a rehearsal having really memorized any of my lines (which can be dangerous as we get near performance), because I can't decide who this particular Regan is until I know who my father is and until I know who my sisters are. I've played Titania numerous times. Just when I think I know that character, I'm put in a room with entirely different actors and my Titania becomes entirely different every time, just as my Regan is different every night. Sometimes she gets a little more blood-thirsty. Sometimes she's really terrified of her sister and her father. It shifts because it's me onstage. There's no magic wand that's waved. I do not transform. I am always myself onstage and that's where it comes from. Jamie you figured something out, didn't you?

Newcomb: What I was trying to articulate was that this is a definitive production of Lear. Every production is definitive because it's this group of people, at this venue, at this time doing it. It will never be repeated, can never be repeated. So by definition it is definitive in the way that we do it every night.

Bahr: And that is a great place to close. Please thank these wonderful actors for their performance and the audience for their enthusiastic and informed participation. Thank you very much. [*Applause*]

2015 Undergraduate Paper

Queering Mercutio: Baz Luhrmann's Textually Inaccurate Take on Romeo's Best Friend

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Baz Luhrmann's 1996 film, *William Shakespeare's Romeo + JulietI,* is a *tour de force* in the field of Shakespeare film adaptations. With an all-star cast and a cinematographic style aimed at attracting a younger audience to the world of Shakespearean drama, Luhrmann's film is considered one of the best, if not the best, of film adaptations of Shakespeare's classic tragedy. One of Luhrmann's most interesting choices in the presentation of characters for his film is portraying Mercutio as homosexual.[1] Harold Perrineau, Jr., plays the role of Romeo's best friend wonderfully, and he really sells the idea of a homosexual Mercutio. However, this was the first time Mercutio had been portrayed as a homosexual, at least for any on-screen performance. Not long after the film was released, American LGBT-interest magazine *The Advocate* asked Luhrmann about his choice for Mercutio's portrayal. Luhrmann responded, "It's in the text . . . there's no question he is [gay]."[2] This claim of an obviously homosexual Mercutio based on the source text is certainly an interesting argument, especially since there is little scholarship to be found on the subject. After reading and re-reading the text looking for specific incidences that reveal a homosexual Mercutio, reading scholarship about both queer theory and the application of queer theory to Shakespeare's works, and reviewing the history of homosexuality in both Renaissance and twenty-first century literature, I found no evidence supporting Luhrmann's claim.

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To begin, Luhrmann's film adaptation is not the only high-grossing theatrical release of *Romeo and Juliet*. In 1968, director Franco Zeffirelli's version of *Romeo and Juliet* hit the silver screen. In this film adaptation, Mercutio is played by John McEnery. McEnery portrays the character as gregarious, convivial, and a little bawdy.[3] However, there is no implication, at least in McEnery's performance, that Mercutio is homosexual. If the source text makes it clear that Mercutio is, in fact, a homosexual, all productions will portray the character similarly. The fact that the two highest-grossing film adaptations of *Romeo and Juliet* approach the character differently suggests that perhaps there is more to Mercutio than Luhrmann believes.

Because of this discrepancy in the portrayal of Mercutio on-screen, the application of queer theory to Shakespeare's work must be addressed in order to further understand how to examine the character in both historical and modern contexts. In "Queer Shakes," Shakespearean queer theorist Madhavi Menon's introduction to the anthology *Shakesqueer*, she argues that while queer theory is easily applied to the works of Shakespeare, queer theorists must be careful in their applications. Finding homosexual characters and homosexual undertones is not useful when taking a queer approach to Shakespeare; finding out more about queer theory through the study of Shakespeare's works is the most important use of queer theory when applied to Shakespeare.[4] This argument points out an inherent flaw in modern queer theory, especially when queer theory is applied to texts that existed before the term *homosexual* was even a word. When one incorrectly applies queer theory to Shakespeare's work, he or she may be viewing characters or situations that might appear to be homosexual or homoerotic through a clouded lens. In order to better explain the misunderstanding and incorrect portrayal of Mercutio as a homosexual, the textual "evidence" must be discussed.

The first piece of evidence used by many to illustrate Mercutio's supposed queerness is his attitude towards women. In *Shakespeare, Sex, & Love*, Stanley Wells argues that "Mercutio's cynical attitude to women and to love . . . has given rise to elaborative stage business and to speculation about his own sexuality."[5] However, the fact that someone is a misogynist does not mean he or she is automatically homosexual. Where did this idea of misogyny equating to homosexuality come from? Wells places the blame for a queer interpretation of Mercutio squarely on the shoulders of

the actors portraying him: "An actor, needing to imagine a fully rounded personality, is naturally liable to extrapolate information not directly provided by the text."[6] The problem with inferring information not directly provided by the text, as Wells says, is that actors can and do come up with their own, often faulty, ideas of what a character should be. There is nothing in the actual text about a queer Mercutio, but by trying to create the on-stage persona for Mercutio, actors are inaccurately reading more into the character than is actually present in the text. This false reading of Mercutio's character creates a precedence through which other actors may see a queer performance of Mercutio and follow suit without taking the time to actually examine the text for what is, or in this case is not, actually there. By reading more into the actions and attitude of Mercutio in his dealings with the women in *Romeo and Juliet*, actors create a queer Mercutio where one does not truly exist.

The second, and supposedly most damning, piece of evidence used when "proving" Mercutio's queerness is one line from the play. In act 3, scene 1, Tybalt tells Mercutio, "Thou consortest with Romeo" (3.1.42).[7] However, *consort* did not always have the meaning it does now. A reading of *The Oxford English Dictionary* reveals that the verb form of *consort* did not mean "to have intercourse with" until 1600, or "to be a consort or spouse to, to espouse; to have sexual commerce with" until 1615. Tybalt's use of the word more likely meant "to accompany, keep company with; to escort, attend" or "to combine in musical harmony; to play, sing or sound together," the latter being the way Mercutio uses the word in his response to Tybalt. He says, "Consort? What? Dost thou make us minstrels? An thou / Make minstrels of us, look to hear nothing but discords. / [*indicating his sword*] Here's my fiddlestick. Here's that / Shall make you dance. Zounds, 'consort'" (3.1.43-46). In his footnotes, editor Mario DiGangi discusses the possibility that Tybalt's accusation is one implying a "socially disorderly, or, in Renaissance terms, a 'sodomitical' relationship." However, this explanation is not the primary one DiGangi offers; he explains that Mercutio's angry response is not due to a slight concerning his sexuality, but rather the "social slur" that denigrates the otherwise aristocratic Mercutio.[8]

DiGangi's social slur argument is supported by another important word from the conversation between Mercutio and Tybalt: *thou*. "The basic factor determining choice of the *th-* or *y-* pronoun in Early Modern English is social relationship:

th- forms are used *down* the social hierarchy. . . . Social equals usually exchange mutual *y-* forms in the Early Modern Period."[9] Tybalt's use of the word *thou* in his accusation is meant to express his belief that Mercutio is not his social equal. While Mercutio does use *thou* in his response, twice actually, he ends it with the *y-* form pronoun *you*. Mercutio's use of the *y-* form pronoun is his reminder to Tybalt that the two are of the same social status. By reexamining Tybalt's accusation and Mercutio's response with regard for the historical context of the language, readers see that Tybalt is accusing Mercutio of being beneath him socially, not that Mercutio and Romeo are involved in a homosexual relationship.

The fact that dialogue in *Romeo and Juliet* supposedly reveals Mercutio's homosexuality without any other textual evidence to back it up suggests a need for the examination of sexual rhetoric in Renaissance England because the rhetoric of sexuality in Shakespeare's time is drastically different from the rhetoric used when discussing sexuality in more modern times. In *Wanton Words: Rhetoric and Sexuality in English Renaissance Drama*, Menon discusses and demonstrates the use of sexual rhetoric in the drama of Shakespeare's time. While Shakespeare was certainly a master of wordplay and there are numerous examples of sexual innuendo in many of his works, Menon argues that many readers try to find sexual innuendo where it does not exist. In her discussion, Menon explains that the difficulty in dealing with rhetoric and drama from this period "is a difficulty that inheres in the idea of the performance itself and in the difficulty of pinning down the limits of performance" and that "performative mobility parallels Renaissance reiterability and rhetorical instability."[10] This rhetorical instability is nowhere more apparent than in the previous discussion of word meaning and the historical context in which it is used. By focusing so much on the rhetorical analysis of modern vocabularies and vernaculars, readers from all educational backgrounds project their own understood meanings of words, phrases, and actions onto a text. The projection of their own rhetorical structures onto a text as old as that of *Romeo and Juliet* produces inaccurate readings and misunderstandings of characters, actions, plots, and other thematic devices. A queer reading of Mercutio can happen only through an inaccurate rhetorical analysis. Textually inaccurate readings of Mercutio create a homosexual character that is not truly homosexual. If readers closely examine the character using

the contextual sexual rhetoric of English Renaissance drama, they will see that Mercutio is, in fact, not a homosexual character.

To take this idea one step further, an examination of what exactly makes a character homosexual needs to take place. In *Unhistorical Shakespeare: Queer Theory in Shakespearean Literature and Film*, Menon argues that by applying a heteronormative stance to the works of Shakespeare, readers may miss out on the subtleties Shakespeare presented in his works. However, Menon also argues that the misapplication of queer theory can lead to misconstrued notions about what Shakespeare intended when he wrote his plays.[11] It is this misapplication that leads to a queer reading of Mercutio. Menon states that "the way in which we study history has significant bearing on what we study and how we study it."[12] When queer theorists attempt a queer reading of any text, their interests in this field of literary theory can and do get in the way of what the source text actually says. When readers do not take the historical context of the language, rhetoric, and societal and socioeconomic norms into account, queer readings often turn into inaccurate readings of older texts. The idea of Mercutio as a homosexual is a projection of twentieth and twenty-first century ideas of what is queer and what is not. By applying modern interpretations of the homosexual to texts over four hundred years old, readers are misinterpreting what was originally intended in the source text. Mercutio was not written as a homosexual character; he was not in a sexual relationship with Romeo. Projecting these modern ideas of homosexuality onto characters, especially by taking the characters out of context, creates a falsehood of queerness and a takeover of the heteronormativity of a character.

Another queer theorist who tackles the issue of projection is Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick. In "Queer and Now," Sedgwick discusses the nature of heterosexuality when compared to non-heteronormative sexualities: "If we are receptive to Foucault's understanding of modern sexuality as the most intensive site of the demand for, and detection or discursive production of, the Truth of the individual identity, it seems as though this silent, normative, uninterrogated 'regular' heterosexuality may not function as a sexuality at all."[13] By striving to understand what is queer and what is not, Sedgwick argues, readers miss the underlying components that actually make one queer. This argument is easily applied to the discussion of a queer Mercutio. By spending so much time and effort determining what is queer and what is not, and then

applying these modern interpretations of queerness to decidedly non-modern literary characters, readers can and do miss out on the obvious heterosexual characteristics that appear in the texts they are reading.

As noted previously, the suggested proof of Mercutio's queerness comes only from his misogynistic lines and the one accusation that he *consortest* with Romeo. What about the rest of the text that suggests otherwise? If Mercutio and Romeo are truly in a homosexual relationship, that evidence would surface in other parts of the text and not just those few passages. Sedgwick's argument is similar to that of Wells; sometimes reading between the lines creates character traits, subtleties, and a litany of other things that are not actually in the text itself. Sedgwick takes the argument one step further and places the blame not on the individual actors, as Wells did, but on the division of heteronormativity and homosexuality in modern literary interpretations. Trying to remove heteronormativity from literature creates a false queerness that, in the case of Mercutio, leads to the portrayal of a character in ways Shakespeare probably never intended.

Carla Freccero's *Queer/Early/Modern* makes similar arguments and critiques of heteronormativity's influence on queer readings. Freccero opens chapter 3, entitled "Undoing the Histories of Homosexuality," with the following: "If one of the things an analysis of early modern lyric produces is a queered understanding of the subject, . . . then perhaps alternative histories might be generated to account for and critique heteronormativity's seemingly long-standing regime in the West."[14] In this chapter in particular, Freccero argues that many texts and characters are queered even though there is no historical basis for a queering of said text or character. In the same vein as Sedgwick, the desire to stand up to and fight against heteronormativity's domination of Western literature has created a vacuum that non-heteronormative characters must supposedly fill. This vacuum creates a problem: by removing the heteronormative qualities of characters, readers falsely queer characters who have no homosexual traits. Mercutio becomes a victim of this vacuum when he is read as a queer character. In removing the heteronormative aspects of the relationship between Mercutio and Romeo, a false queerness arises where one does not exist. It is the removal of the heteronormative that creates the homosexual in texts wherein the homosexual does not even exist, as is the case with Mercutio.

So, if Mercutio is not a homosexual and did not have a sexual relationship with Romeo, what kind of relationship did they have? They had a deep and loving friendship without any kind of sexual connection. In *Friendship and Queer Theory in the Renaissance: Gender and Sexuality in Early Modern England*, John S. Garrison challenges the notions that all same-sex relationships should fall under the realm of queer theory. While there certainly are various same-sex relationships found throughout Renaissance literature, Garrison argues, queer theorists need to stop considering every same-sex relationship to be sexual in nature. In his discussion concerning *The Masque of Amity*, Garrison says that queering the "classical friendship tradition . . . conflicts with classical treatises on friendship that emphasize a lack of self-interest as a key characteristic of ideal friendship."[15] Confusing Mercutio's misogyny with homosexuality and taking Tybalt's *consortest* line out of historical context alter the non-sexual relationship between Mercutio and Romeo. This misapplication of queer theory takes away from the type of relationship actually written into the play and is one of the primary examples of how applying queer theory to older texts can create a false sense of queerness where there is really none to be found.

On the subject of confusing same-sex friendships with homosexual relationships, Sedgwick's book, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*, provides evidence to support the idea of a homosocial relationship between Romeo and Mercutio rather than a homosexual one. Since one person may consider a relationship to be erotic and another person may consider that same relationship to be platonic, labels like *homosexual* cannot be applied to male/male relationships without serious study into the nature of the relationship itself. When it comes to same-sex friendships, Sedgwick argues, the difference between homosocial and homosexual relationships between men are often confused, and a simple same-sex friendship is often misconstrued to be a homosexual relationship.[16] This is no more evident than in the misapplication of queer theory to determine Mercutio's supposed queerness and the textually inaccurate description of Mercutio and Romeo's relationship as homosexual rather than homosocial in nature. The confusion comes from modern interpretations of what is *homosexual* and what is not, just as modern interpretations of what is *consorting* and what is not, have led to misinterpretations

of Mercutio's sexuality. Because of the misuse of sexual rhetoric and the misunderstanding of the differences between homosocial and homosexual relationships, Mercutio's relationship with Romeo has been inaccurately made into a sexual relationship rather than a friendship shared between two men who care deeply for one another.

To further examine the idea of *homosocial* versus *homosexual*, David M. Halperin discusses five categories of same-sex relationships in his article "How to do the History of Male Homosexuality." Halperin says there are four "traditional, postclassical, or premodern categories," and those are effeminacy, pederastry/sodomy, friendship/love, and passivity/inversion. The fifth category, Halperin says, is what we know today as homosexuality.[17] Comparing the requirements for each category to Mercutio's and Romeo's relationship makes it apparent that their relationship does not fit anywhere other than the *friendship* category. There is no touching of genitalia between the two.[18] Additionally, there is nothing in the source text that indicates the relationship fits any of the other categories. The only way it would be possible to read the relationship between Mercutio and Romeo as anything outside of the *friendship* category would be to infer false information, as discussed by Wells, misapply queer theory, as discussed by Menon and Sedgwick, or to remove the heteronormative aspects of the relationship between Mercutio and Romeo, as discussed by Freccero. Mercutio may simply be a misogynist who loves his best friend very much; he is not, as Luhrmann would like his viewers to think, a homosexual.

In short, Baz Luhrmann's desire to portray Mercutio as a homosexual has no contextual or textual basis. The interpretation of Mercutio as queer is the result of many failings on the parts of readers, actors, and scholars who try to find things in texts that are not really there. However, this interpretation does not mean that the application of queer theory to Shakespeare's work should be abandoned. Even reexamining Mercutio through the lens of queer theory could create a new way to look at the relationship between two men who do love each other, but are not homosexuals. The desire to know more about the inner workings of Mercutio and how his relationship with Romeo affects the play needs to be addressed without blaming an oppressive heteronormative literary tradition. As queer theory moves forward, close attention needs to be paid to the results of studying Shakespeare's characters

in-depth. What might start as a study intended to praise Baz Luhrmann's radical decision to portray Mercutio as homosexual may evolve into a criticism of misreadings and misapplications of queer theory involved in that portrayal. Queer theory and its applications to Shakespearean texts should not become a joke because of inabilities to remove bias from the discussion. Keeping that biased "got to find the gay character" idea away from queer theory and its applications to Shakespeare helps prevent textually inaccurate readings, such as that of a queer Mercutio.

Notes

1. Leonardo DiCaprio and Claire Danes, *William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet*, directed by Baz Luhrmann (1996; Los Angeles: 20th Century Fox, 2010), Blu-ray.

2. "Homeo, Homeo," *The Advocate,* November 23, 1996, 84. https://books.google.com/books?id=PWQEAAAAMBAJ&lpg=PT85&ots=sXehiHOcfr&dq=baz%20lurhmann%20mercutio%20gay&pg=PT85#v=onepage&q&f=false.

3. Leonard Whiting and Olivia Hussey, *Romeo and Juliet*, directed by Franco Zeffirelli (1968; Los Angeles: Paramount, 2000), DVD.

4. Madhavi Menon, "Queer Shakes," in *Shakesqueer*, ed. Madhavi Menon (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 3-4.

5. Stanley Wells, *Shakespeare, Sex, & Love*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 157.

6. Ibid., 158.

7. William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, ed. Mario DiGangi (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2007), 3.1.42. In-text citations refer to this edition.

8. Ibid., 180n4.

9. Jonathan Hope, *Shakespeare's Grammar* (London: Thomson, 2003), 73.

10. Madhavi Menon, *Wanton Words: Rhetoric and Sexuality in English Renaissance Drama* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2004), 12.

11. Madhavi Menon, *Unhistorical Shakespeare: Queer Theory in Shakespearean Literature and Film* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 18-21.

12. Ibid., 1.

13. Eve K. Sedgwick, "Queer and Now," in *The Routledge Queer Studies Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 9.

14. Carla Freccero, *Queer/Early/Modern* (Durham: Duke Universisty Press, 2006), 31.

15. John S. Garrison, *Friendship and Queer Theory in the Renaissance: Gender and Sexuality in Early Modern England* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 3.

16. Eve K. Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 2.

17. David M. Halperin, "How to do the History of Male Homosexuality," in *The Routledge Queer Studies Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 280.

18. Ibid, Table 1.