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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."

The Elements of Ecological Style: Poetic Contagion and Epidemiological Witches in *Macbeth*

Jeremy Cornelius
Louisiana State University

> "The widely acknowledged powers of witches to heal as well as harm inhabited an uneasy space between the natural and the demonic. A strong imagination could infect others with dangerous religious enthusiasms, perhaps even change the weather, but it did so by natural, not supernatural, means" (Haskell 5)
>
> "the witches and evil spirits in Macbeth are predominantly elemental—they command and sometimes even embody the weather" (Floyd-Wilson 136)
>
> "Foul is fair and fair is foul,
> Hover through the fog and filthy air" (Shakespeare 1.1.9-10)

The infamous lines delivered by the three witches in the opening scene of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* establish the atmosphere of the entire play, an atmosphere which may be literal or metaphorical. The witches prophesize the contagious air to come. They begin by confusing "fair," possibly related to eloquence or sound, with "foul," defined by the OED "as a disease, or person affected by disease; Loathsome. . . 'full of gross humors' (Johnson)," "tainted with disease," or in another early modern definition, a pathology "of the tongue" (OED). They then place themselves in the "filthy air," demonstrating their ability to move

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through a "foul" and "fair" environment both in the play and in the political landscape of Scotland, a connection suggested by the rhyming couplet. As they eventually "vanish into air," their prophecy circulates throughout the air, its unseen force manifested through Macbeth's ambitious actions. To read these lines eco-materially calls attention to the miasmic air of the play. These lines encapsulate one running theme of the play: the dualism of terms signifying morality and contagious air. The play's formal elements echo this theme of turning morality upside down as ecologically metaphorized by birds flipping in mid-flight and horses turning violent and cannibalistic after Duncan's murder "as they would / Make war with mankind" (2.4.17-18).[1]

In this essay, I return to a lingering concern that haunts early modern scholarship: how to interpret the roles of the witches and Lady Macbeth in the events of the play. While this question has been posed countless times, I add an eco-materialist reading of *Macbeth* along with early modern political and social understandings of witches' and witchcraft's connection to the bodies politic and natural. Drawing connections between the conception of ecology and political power in early modern medical representations of disease, Macbeth draws attention to the devastating and reactionary effects of tyrannical power on ecosystems, or as Macduff frames it, "Boundless intemperance/ In nature is a tyranny" (4.3.66-67). In Shakespeare's Macbeth, this power is tied to representations of contagion. I argue along the lines of Lucinda Cole, who refers to Macbeth as an "epidemiological horror" in her book *Imperfect Creatures,*[2] that language throughout the play suggests a relationship between witches, infection, and corporeal porousness where horror is poetically rendered as circulatory social contagion infecting bodies as a "sightless substance" (1.7.48) in the air. This corruption spreads as an airborne illness, knowing no division between human, animal, and plant and demonstrating the witches' traditional disruption of the Great Chain of Being.

A poetics of contagion invites the possibility of reading the fine lines between the literal and the metaphoric by analyzing the language of disease in the play. This essay engages with the discussion of the literality of the humoral language in Renaissance drama that Gail Kern Paster presents in *Humoring the Body* and further considers the communicability of diseases contained in

early modern poetic form.[3] While I definitely agree with Paster's claim that much of the medical language of drama identifies a literal anatomical understanding of the early modern Galenic frameworks of bodies, there are moments where I believe that the metaphoric and the literal coexist and are not binarily opposed, particularly in the effects of the witches' prophecy to Macbeth and Banquo, which invokes a formal language wrapped in the elemental and the epidemic, but which requires a relationship to metaphoric language in order to read the medical components of it.

From their bodies to their lines in the play, the witches consistently inhabit and relate to space differently than the other characters, a relationship signaled by their indistinct corporeality and their occult influences on the murderous events of the play. Frequently their lines are in trochaic tetrameter while Shakespeare's most frequent metric structure in the rest of the play is iambic pentameter or blank verse.[4] I attend to language and mediation in *Macbeth* by forming a theory on a poetics of contagion and reading formal particulars throughout in order to interpret Renaissance medical understandings of the body. This mode of poetics aims to concentrate on the formal elements of the play as well as the eco-materialist matters presented throughout, drawing largely from approaches in ecocriticism and from the reparative approach in new formalism. If the witches' lines create a turn in the play, influencing the bloody events that develop, then we can consider how all of the characters throughout relate to and alter their ecosystem through the construction of their words.

The etymological roots of "contagion" are visible in the blood-soaked ecology of the play. The historical meaning of the word, according to the OED, is "touch" and "contagion" has social ties to the anxiety about contact[5] in the period as well as to wider ideas of community formation and destruction across time.[6] In *Macbeth*, contagion is directly related to the ecology between things in the play as seen in the effects of touch and the way an entire community is affected by the actions of one tyrannical leader. The effects of touch are seen in the ecological shifts and the destruction that occurs at the hands of Macbeth, both of which externally manifest in Lady Macbeth's blood-red hands. The witches' prophecy invites many speculations from scholars about how the witches influence

Macbeth in his ambition to be king of Scotland, and while the speculations feel ultimately unknowable in a direct cause-effect relationship, I suggest that by looking at the ways ecological relations suggest a "sacred contagion," to use Mary Douglas's term, the witches' influence may be explored by examining the moral code written into the play, where "members of a community manipulate each other."[7] What the representation of the witches ultimately demonstrates is the effect of a simple phrase spoken in Macbeth's ear on the environment. An understanding of the occult and contagion in the period is necessary to understanding the formal elements that contagiously communicate these effects from occult to human and finally into their surrounding environment. If we consider these formal dimensions as the *dis*-ease that drives Macbeth then what spurs Macbeth to murder Duncan is the witches' influential and contagious words.

Air, environment, and bodies blur and begin to infect and alter one another in *Macbeth*, beginning with the witches' prophecy. But beyond the culpability of who causes what in the play, a concern about how poetic language in the theater mediates contagion is the prime focus of this essay. By early modern and Galenic conceptions of bodies' relationship to their environments, the humors correlated with seasons as well as the internal temper of the individual.[9] Ecosystems affected the individual's bodily humors through the rising vapours of the earth, and the "geohumoral' effects of their surrounding environments.

I suggest that in the case of the witches, the relationship between the two flips—human bodies directly affect, alter, and *infect* their own ecosystems by their actions, particularly through forms of power and prophetic mediation in poetic utterance. The witches themselves blur the boundaries between bodies and environments through the effect of their words. Upon first encountering them, Banquo describes them as "not like the'inhabitants o'th' earth" (1.3.41) and this alien image aligns with gender confusion in the lines that follow: "You should be women, / And yet your beards forbid me to interpret / That you are so" (1.3..45-46). Banquo's confusion at encountering the witches leaves him unable to read their gender or the signs of their embodiment, or even their species. He attempts to describe them as water: "The earth has bubbles, as the water has, / And these are of them. whither are they vanished?" (1.3.79-80). When Macbeth answers Banquo, he also describes them as elemental: "Into the air; and what seemed corporal, / Melted, as breath into the wind" (1.3.81-83). Banquo and Macbeth render the witches as composed of or decomposing into water and air, and Banquo, while first

describing them as not of earth, can only interpret them as "bubbles" of the earth. Macbeth follows up by interpreting their vanishing as a melting "into the air." Based on Macbeth and Banquo's descriptions, the witches geohumorally blend into their environments. They are more than naturally shaped by it and are actually physically malleable and able to transform into parts of environment, porously breaching the boundaries of the body and becoming incorporated into the surrounding air as a lingering elemental influence on the ecosystem itself.

The witches render the dimensions of bodies and space through eco-poetic language in the play. They describe and mix features of human bodily entanglements with both human and non-human landscape:

2 Witch: I'll give thee a wind.

1 Withc: Th'art kind.

3 Witch: And I another.

1 Witch: I myself have all the other,
And the very ports they blow,
All the quarters they know,
I'th' shipman's card.
I'll drain him dry as hay:
Sleep shall neither night nor day
Hang upon his penthouse lid:
He shall live a man forbid.
Weary sev'nights nine times nine
Shall he dwindle, peak, and pine:
Though his bark cannot be lost,
Yet it shall be tempest-tossed.
Look what I have.

2 Witch: Show me, show me,

1 Witch: Here I have a pilot's thumb,
Wrecked as homeward he did come.

3 Witch: A drum, a drum:
Macbeth doth come.

All: The Weïrd sisters, hand in hand,
Posters of the sea and land,
Thus do go, about, about,
Thrice to thine, and thrice to mine,
And thrice again, to make up nine.
Peace, the charm's wound up (1.3.11-37).

By the end of their chant, "the charm's wound up," an idea the Arden edition explains as "perhaps a metaphor from the tightening

of strings on a musical instrument to make them ready to play" (140). Their spell does poetically summon up the potential for their target to be "tempest-tossed." While the pronoun "he" at the beginning does not have a specific referent, their charm at the end suggests their target as Macbeth. I do not claim here to have *solved* the questions around the witches' involvement in the murder plot, but simply to direct attention to how the witches configure their spell and what these points suggest about early modern notions of disease and its relation to contagion.

Witches in early modern thought were believed to be able to control the wind,[10] and here we see echoes of this in "I'll give thee a wind" and the reference to a sailor's thumb. The witches evoke the early modern fear of contagious disease spreading through evil "tainted" air,[11] as infectious plague was thought to spread via miasma.

Lucinda Cole directs scholarly attention to this point in "Of Mice and Moisture," where she claims that "Supernatural explanations of the plague vied with material analyses and especially with theories of 'bad air' that marked the corruption of a fallen, postlapsarian earth."[12] According to germs theories and bacteriology that emerged in the 19th and 20th centuries, infection can indeed travel and circulate through the air. Air transmits disease and infection from body to body, as we have learned in fields such as virology. Early modern scholars have discussed historical interpretations of the body under the Galenic medical model, as Floyd-Wilson's explores in her notion of geohumoral influences on individuals. In this conception, disease loosely emerges in two ways: external touch (the etymological roots for the word, "contagion") and internal humoral imbalance affected by external factors.[13] Following this understanding and reading the poetics of the play as more directly literal allows entry into the ecological components of Macbeth as a proto-outbreak narrative.[14]

The word "contagion" appears very few times in Shakespeare's body of work and even in early modern poetics more broadly, and when the word does appear it demands attention. In *Macbeth*, the surrounding physical environment affects the corrupt motivations of individuals in a manner that is linked to the human relationship with the divine. Hamlet addresses this autochthonous relationship between infection, religion, and the earth: "'Tis now the very

witching time of night, / When churchyards yawn and hell itself breathes out contagion to this world" (*Hamlet* 3.2.371-373). As Cole and Floyd-Wilson point out, "bad air" became associated with the decay of the earth as well as the will of humanity. The witches' opening dialogue addresses the association between the environment and moral corruption. When they speak the opening quote in this essay, "foul is fair and fair is foul," they create a direct correlative to the "filthy air" that surrounds all of the characters on the Renaissance stage as well as the imagined space in the play. In some historical understandings of the four elements, as in Hebrew, air bound the other three together and created causal relationships between them.[15] This raises questions about whether the metaphoric language of disease throughout the play can be seen as a literal interpretation of early modern notions of medicine and disease.

The contagious aspects of theater, poetics, and the body figured in *Macbeth* as—to return to Cole's description of the play—an "epidemiological horror,"[16] structure the relationship between the witches and disease,[17] and invite ecological relationships between poetic mediation and medical epidemic. In the play, the witches' prophecy to Macbeth and Banquo serves as an infection of the entire ecosystem, creating what Macduff refers to as "nation miserable! / With a untitled tyrant bloody-sceptred," and raising the question "When shalt thou see thy wholesome days again" (4.3.103-105). Once the seeds of ambition and power are planted, the country suffers, as Ross renders it in the same scene:

> Alas, poor country,
> Almost afraid to know itself. It cannot
> Be called our mother, but our grave. Where nothing,
> But who knows nothing, is once seen to smile;
> Where sighs, and groans, and shrieks that rend the air,
> Are made, not marked; where violent sorrow seems
> A modern ecstasy. The deadman's knell
> Is there scarce asked for who, and good men's lives
> Expire before the flowers in their caps,
> Dying or ere they sicken (4.3.164-173).

These lines attest to the effect of health on the nation, but the ever-present question is: do these feelings stem from the witches' prophecy?

In Macbeth's letter to Lady Macbeth, he outlines their prophecy to her and then states, "When I burned in desire to question them further, they made themselves air, into which they vanished" (1.5.3-5). Macbeth describes the witches' exit from the state as not just a vanishing act, but instead a dissolving *into* air, an extension beyond the boundedness of the body. Their corporeal transgressions between form mirror the structural design of their lines. The porosity in the geohumoral definition of the early modern human body left it vulnerable to corrupting agents that could permeate the barriers of bodies, including both the physical and moral of illness, and here I suggest a two-way influence where the witches' words influence the state of the environment. Lady Macbeth responds to Macbeth's letter by soliloquizing, "Thou wouldst be great, / Art not without ambition, but without / The illness should attend it" (1.5.18-20). Lady Macbeth demonstrates the metaphoric use of illness and disease in early modern conceptions of morality. To behave "badly" or in "ill" ways leaves the bodily humors out of balance.[18]

The close proximity between these two modes of contagion may be related to King James's views on the occult and illness in his treatise on witches, *Daemonologie*. Looking back to James I's writing on the themes Shakespeare presented him with during Jacobian performances of *Macbeth* will help better situate the themes of this essay. King James I was king of England when *Macbeth* was first performed in 1606. Prior to Shakespeare's play "witchcraft was not only a frightening danger; it was also a wonderful show."[19] Scholars have recently discovered that the lines Shakespeare's witches speak were most likely taken from Thomas Middleton's *The Witch,* and the lines themselves were believed to be real spells and incantations from the Middle Ages.[20] Through a more ecocritical approach, *Macbeth*'s representation of the interstice between witches and illness provides an entry point into considering the relationship between power and the environment.

Even though the witches have a hand in the plot development of the play, as Greenblatt astutely points out, "though many of the demonic powers listed by the Scots [The King's Men] as the inventions of poets are alluded to in *Macbeth*, it is oddly difficult to determine what, if anything, the witches actually do in the play."[21] This enduring uncertainty about the witches guides key

concepts in this article. While the witches are materialized on the stage, early modern scholarship struggles with an ongoing conundrum about how to interpret them in relation to Macbeth's murderous and rebellious actions. Greenblatt acknowledges at the end of the chapter that, of course, the witches do have a part in the treasonous plot; however, "*Macbeth* leaves the weird sisters unpunished but manages to implicate them in a monstrous threat to the fabric of civilized life."[22] The sisters present many layers of confusion: their gender, their relationship to the environment, and the legitimacy of their own prophesizing. They consistently move between boundaries, exceeding possibilities and transforming their bodies as they go.

The dimensions of the bodies politic and natural are tied to the ways in which the witches' prophecy becomes a pathogenic actant that penetrates the boundaries of the material body and eventually affects the surrounding environments. Christian theology and epidemiology intersect in Jonathan Gil Harris's reading of early modern witches' utterances. By his reading, the witches radically alter the course of Macbeth's life through the animating language of illness.[23] The feminine mouth here acts a point of "access" where the devil can enter through an air of possession and circulate throughout the body. The containment of the tongue, mouth, and devil in the feminine body makes the ideal site of overlap between political ideology, contamination, and theology. Importantly, Harris makes a connection between language and materiality: "The witch's language was thus doubly physical. Not only did it intervene in and transform the material world; by resorting to 'unknowne' tongues, 'without understanding,' it privileged the materiality of utterance over the ineffability of reason, the carnality of the signifier over the spirt of the signified."[24] Harris asks where the source of moral corruption and infection emerges and how it is allowed to continue throughout the play without a cure. Lady Macbeth provides one answer to this as she takes the place of the witches and furthers the language and corporeal effects of infection in the developing murder plot against Duncan.

While ongoing debates persist about the function of witches' prophecy in relation to Macbeth's murderous ambitions, Harris's account of witches in early modern thought sees their utterance as reorienting the will and directions of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth.

One prime example of this is in Act 1, Scene 5 during and after Lady Macbeth's soliloquy:

> Come, you spirits
> That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,
> And fill me, from the crown to the toe, top full
> Of direst cruelty! Make thick my blood,
> Stop up the access and passage to remorse,
> That no compunctious visitings of nature
> Shake my fell purpose, nor keep peace between
> The effect and it. Come to my woman's breasts
> And take my milk for gall, you murd'ring ministers,
> Wherever in your sightless substances
> You wait on nature's mischief! 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" (1.5.36-52).

Peter Stallybrass's interpretation of this speech in "*Macbeth* and Witchcraft" situates Lady Macbeth as replacing the role of the witches through her unsexing invocation of the spirit.[25] After the witches have willed Macbeth toward power through deceit and murder, Lady Macbeth's spellbinding soliloquy emphasizes a porosity between the body and the environment. She apostrophizes in order to both unsex herself and take the milk from her breasts. Through her invocation, the boundary between the material and ethereal breaks down, eventually resulting in a "disease of the mind" when she perceives her hands as being permanently stained by blood. As Stallybrass insists, by entering the metaphysical dimension, Lady Macbeth implicitly "subverts patriarchal authority in a manner typically associated with witchcraft."[26] Her subversion of gender requires a look to the more ecological relationship to her surroundings. It is only through her call to the "thick night" that she accesses the spirit. The thick night air which Lady Macbeth invokes returns her from the supernatural to the natural. The entry point into the spirit comes through the opacity of the air, the "smoke of hell" and the "blanket of the dark." While Lady Macbeth and the witches arguably bend the will of Macbeth, their power relies on the geohumoral influences of the environment. When she calls upon the "murd'ring ministers" in "sightless substances," this alliterative spirit is defined in terms of the supernatural or the

air. The air, then, leads to "nature's mischief," echoing the inversion present in the witches' initial lines in the first act and scene: "foul is fair and fair is foul." The "agents" could be natural, physical agents that perform the requested stripping of milk from her material body. This is not a spiritual changing, but instead, an alteration of her material body.[27]

Infection consistently materializes in different forms throughout the play, so much so that a doctor is called to diagnose Macbeth and the current state of the body politic.[28] In Act 4, Scene 3, Banquo and Macduff discuss the fallen state of Scotland under Macbeth's reign. While they are expressing their discontent, a doctor enters on stage and diagnoses the king's state:

Malcolm: Well, anon. *(To Doctor)* Comes the king
Forth, I pray you?

Doctor: Ay, sir. There are a crew of wretched souls
That stay his cure. Their malady convinces
The great assay of art, but at his touch,
Such sancity hath heaven given his hand,
They presently amend.

Malcolm: I thank you, doctor
Exit DOCTOR

Macduff: What's the disease he means?

Malcolm: 'Tis called the Evil.
A most miraculous work in this good king,
Which often, since my here remain in England,
I have seen him do. How he solicits heaven,
Himself best knows. But strangely visited people,
All swol'n and ulcerous, pitiful to the eye,
The mere despair of surgery, he cures,
Hanging a golden stamp about their necks,
Put on with holy prayers. And 'tis spoken
To the succeeding royalty he leaves
The healing benediction. With this strange virtue
He hath a heavenly gift of prophecy,
And sundry blessings hang about his throne
That speak him full of grace" (4.3. 140-59).

Initially, when explaining his diagnosis, the doctor refers to "souls" inhibiting his recovery. As spirits animated all things in the Great Chain of Being, the early modern conception of the body leaves it vulnerable to infectious influence or corruption in the form of

"Evil." In the Arden Shakespeare edition of *Macbeth*, the footnotes define the "Evil" as the King's Evil otherwise known as scrofula. This disease is "a tubercular infection of the lymph nodes, swollen, or diseased glands of the neck."[29] According to the Arden footnotes, "'Touching' for the Kings Evil by the monarch, who was believed during the medieval period and up to the eighteenth century in England and France to possess miraculous powers of healing, was ascribed first to Edward the Confessor, and also practiced by King James."[30] The proposed tradition of a sovereign cure through touch, however, is impossible for Macbeth as the disease dwells within him.

Malcolm's lines point to the king's belief in his own, divinely influenced, ability to cure. However, Malcolm reaches an inconclusive end in his speech on the king's ability to cure. He praises the monarch as the cure, but since Macbeth is the infected, this leaves any cure impossible for the entire ecosystem of the play. The impossibility of curing the play's disease was predicted earlier by Lady Macbeth, who states, "Things without all remedy / Should be without regard: what's done is done" (3.2.12-13). By this logic, the king acts as a failed curing conduit between the human and the divine. Because of his actions, he cannot cure the infected body politic. Taking into consideration the Nietzschean social body as a model for sovereign power,[31] Scrofula's position in the lymph nodes on the neck becomes important. If we are to consider the head of the body as symbolic of the sovereign and the neck as that which connect the rest of the social body or his kingdom, scrofula is the metaphorical break or wound between Macbeth and Scotland.

The impossibility of a cure for an infected nation drives the final act of the play, or as Marjorie Garber claims:

> In the fifth act of the play the language of disease is everywhere. Macbeth asks the Scottish doctor to 'cast the water of my land' and 'purge it.' Lady Macbeth is ill, and her husband demands, impatiently, 'Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased…?' (*Macbeth* 5.3.42). But the 'king's evil' that afflicts Macbeth is not so easily cured, because he is himself the sickness in the state, the disease that must be purged.[32]

No scene in the play better encapsulates this realization of infection with no possible cure than Act 5, Scene 1 when the

doctor encounters Lady Macbeth sleepwalking and describing her stained hands that mark her disease: "Here's the smell of blood, still. All the perfumes / of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand. Oh, oh, oh!" (5.1.44-45). Returning to my earlier point on smell and bodily incorporation, Lady Macbeth smells her sins through her bodily sensations. Just as I argue that her physical space and porous body invite the spirit in the first act of the play, here Lady Macbeth has her moment of recognition through her senses and her body. As Garber points out about Macbeth's similar reaction to his stained hands in Act 2, Scene 2, "Rather than being cleansed, his bloody hand will infect and color the world." Garber explains their different directions in the play: "As Macbeth moves downward toward inhumanity and loss of affect, Lady Macbeth moves upward, toward feeling and horror."[34] Only at this moment in the play, now that this infection has spread, does Lady Macbeth have her moment of recognition. While Macbeth has his moment of recognition early in the play, he seems to not be affected by this manifestation of guilt like Lady Macbeth.

As Lady Macbeth's anxieties manifest through her sleepwalking and visions of stained hands, the question of the border between the spiritual and material comes into question. The doctor's attempted diagnosis and explanation to Macbeth further prove that the circulation of disease has festered in their bodies and the state over the course of the play and there is no hope for purgation. After Lady Macbeth leaves the doctor in Act 5, Scene 1, he hopelessly responds, "Foul whisperings are abroad. Unnatural deeds / Do breed unnatural troubles. Infected minds/ To their deaf pillows will discharge their secrets. / More needs she the divine than the physician" (5.1.63-66). After her overwhelming recognition that her hands, like Macbeth's, will be forever stained, the doctor diagnoses her illness as one that is spiritual.[35] Earlier when Lady Macbeth invokes the spirit, she begs for her body to physically transformed, and now this has happened within her mind. The only hope for both Macbeth and Lady Macbeth is the divine.

The spiritual affects the material throughout the play, but what if Lady Macbeth's illness could be relocated to the material body? The King's Evil, or scrofula, is a physical ailment that by early modern medical theory could only be cured by the divinely infused touch of the monarch. However, even as a historical misreading,

could Lady Macbeth's disease of the mind, instead be just that—a materialized illness that affects the social and physical landscape of the play? Lady Macbeth's body is marked and recognized throughout. This entanglement of religious and medical discourses creates a rich overlap, inviting a reading of her body that takes into account not only the spiritual but also the lasting material effects.

Macbeth's conversation with the doctor about Lady Macbeth's illness is about purgation and the early modern approach to healing, explained through the ecological images of landscape, water, and plants:

Macbeth: Cure her of that
Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased.
Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow,
Raze out the written troubles of the brain
And with some sweet oblivious anecdote
Cleansed the stuffed bosom of that perilous stuff
Which weighs upon the heart

Doctor: Therein the patient
must minister to himself.

Macbeth: Throw physic to the dogs, I'll none of it.
(To Seyton) Come, put mine armor on, Give me
my staff.
Seyton, send out—Doctor, the thanes fly from me.
—(to Seyton) Come, sir, dispatch—if thou couldst,
doctor,
cast
The water of my land, find her disease
And purge it to a sound and pristine health,
I would applaud thee to the very echo.,
That should rhubarb, cyme, or what purgative drug,
Would scour these English hence? Hear'st thou of
them? (5.3.39-56).

In Macbeth's words before traveling to Birnam Wood where he meets his death at the vengeful hands of Macduff, Lady Macbeth must be cured of "thick coming fantasies" (5.3.38). His language throughout confuses Lady Macbeth's body and health with the material landscape of Scotland, particularly when he states, "Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow" and "the water of my land, find her disease/ And purge it to a sound and pristine health." These three lines in particular use Lady Macbeth to show a blurred

boundary between the bodies natural and politic. After the caesura in the center of the line, the noun switches to "her" in order to diagnose her disease. This division in the line between the land and Lady Macbeth, may separate but it also makes them dependent on one another at the level of the sentence. If "water" does refer to "the analysis of urine,"[36] then in the end, Lady Macbeth's body is blurred with the landscape of Scotland. Macbeth's confusion is noted in this passage through his orders, which seem to be directed at Seyton, but which are ultimately unclear. When he lists plants used for purgation in the early modern medicinal practice, the oversaturation of medical diagnosis and cure in the sentence ends with the word "scour," meaning "to purge."

Macbeth functions as an outbreak narrative where the characters are excessively saturated with medical discourse from the beginning to the end of the play. The frequency of language on contagion increases as the play continues, so that by the fifth and final act, their words are as diseased as their spirits, minds, and bodies. The political state of Scotland itself becomes a site of infection through Macbeth and Lady Macbeth's treasonous plot. Looking at air and circulation along with the witches' relationship to their surrounding environment demonstrates the loose barriers between the corporeal body and the environment. The witches' prophecy given to Macbeth at the beginning of the play never fully leaves the play, but instead festers within Macbeth, infecting him and Lady Macbeth. The witches' relationship to their environmental surroundings is fluid and is based on historical beliefs about their ability to control the weather, ruin crops, and poison the environment. These concepts circulate through an infectious poetic language. There is a heightened sense of ecology throughout the play where human interaction with things, landscape, medicine, disease, and each other feels more palpable, and their relationships become incredibly porous. In some instances, the environment responds to violence before the human. In the lines immediately preceding Macduff's emergence to announce Duncan's murder, Lennox describes the unsettled landscape,

> The night has been unruly: where we lay
> Our chimneys were blown down and, as they say,
> Lamentings heard in the air, strange screams of death,

> and prophesying, with accents terrible,
> Of dire combustion, and confused events
> New hatched to th'woeful time. The obscure bird
> Clamoured the livelong night. Some say the earth
> Was feverish and did shake (2.3.54-61).

Lennox identifies the "feverish" earth during unruly—or disordered—night, pointing out that the environmental response to violence serves as a precursor to the characters' responses to Duncan's death. The "lamentings" and "strange screams of death" travel through the air much like the witches melting into air. These lines alone reassess the relationship between the human and the non-human, where words, things, and environments have agentic and contagious qualities. Prophecy, by this ecocritical account, takes Macbeth's lust for power as sovereign of Scotland to a different theoretical location where the environment of Scotland reacts to the power of tyranny that Macbeth begins to impose and this reactionary infection discursively and literally affects the entirety of the ecosystem of the play.

Notes

1. All quotes from Shakespeare are from *The Norton Shakespeare,* ed. Stephen Greenblatt (New York: Norton, 2015).

2. Lucinda Cole, *Imperfect Creatures: Vermin, Literature, and the Sciences of Life, 1600-1740* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2016).

3. Gail Kern Paster, *Humoring the Body: Emotions and the Shakespearean Stage* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004).

4. The reason for this difference has been argued extensively. Authorship and print history are uncertain because of the included song with Hecate in the 1623 folio edition, now been believed to have been written by Thomas Middleton because of its appearance in his play *The Witch.* I do read the play with this historical debate in mind, but also read the formal differences between the witches and other characters as largely significant for their unique ecology.

5. See Margaret Healy, "Anxious and Fatal Contacts: Taming the Contagious Touch," *in Sensible Flesh: On Touch in Early Modern Culture,* ed. Elizabeth D. Harvey (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002) for concepts of epidemics and disease transmissions: "Intimately implicated in the transmission from body to body of material, supernatural and moral 'evil qualities' circa 1600, 'touch' was undoubtedly experienced as the most hazardous of the senses and was the source of considerable individual and collective anxiety. Indeed, intense fear about harmful contagious bodies and their effects was rife in the early modern period, producing its own epidemic of discursive speculation about where harmful 'venoms' originated, how they were 'caught,' and how best to avoid them" (22).

6. See Priscilla Wald, *Contagious: Cultures, Carriers, and the Outbreak Narrative* (North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2007), where Wald describes contagion's role in narrative by saying that "disease emergence dramatizes the dilemma that inspires the most basic human narratives: the necessity and danger of human contact" (2).

7. See Mary Douglas, *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology* (New York: Routledge, 1996) which defines sacred contagion as "a moral theory of connections and causes" (xv).

8. For more on affect and contagion, see Mary Floyd-Wilson, *Occult Knowledge, Science, and Gender on the Shakespearean Stage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); for histories of science and magic during the Middle Ages and Renaissance across Europe, see Gary Waite, *Heresy, Magic, and Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003) and Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (London: Penguin Books, 2003).

9. Mary Floyd-Wilson, "English Epicures and Scottish Witches," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 57.2 (2006) helps clarify the different ethnic and geohumoral concepts of the effects of the environment on the individual, particularly the differences between Scottish and English environments on the individual: "as the health manuals and medical treatises of the period repeatedly state, temperance was achieved by properly managing the non-naturals: air, diet, sleep and waking, rest and activity, excretion and retention, and the passions [. . .] moreover the non-naturals functioned interdependently" (134).

10. See Thomas Nashe's *Summer's Last Will and Testament* (London, 1600).

11. Margaret Healy, "Body Regimens and Fear of the Beast," in *At the Borders of the Human*, ed. Erica Fudge, Ruth Gilbert, and Susan Wiseman (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999): "if the body is insufficiently disciplined through proper regimen, it is possible to catch disastrous moral contagion (which can lead to domination) in the same manner as a cold or plague—through 'evil,' tainted air" (62).

12. Lucinda Cole, "Of Mice and Moisture: Rats, Witches, Miasma, and Early Modern Theories of Contagion," *Journal of Early Modern Cultural Studies* 2.10 (2010): 66. Additionally, witches were often compared to Eve as the causes of disease in the world as Harris discusses. Jonathan Gil Harris, *Foreign Bodies and the Body Politic* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), (118).

13. The exogenous and endogenous models for disease emerge during this period, both attempting to explain the high rates of infection due to the plague and disease outbreaks primarily occurring in the south of London, the same location as the theaters. For more information on this, see Harris's *Foreign Bodies and the Body Politic.*

14. Wald defines outbreak narratives as "follow[ing] a formulaic plot that begins with the identification of an emerging infection, includes discussion of the global networks throughout which it travels, and chronicles the epidemiological work that ends in its containment" (2). In much the same way that Wald describes the 20th century anxieties around infection and disease with the rise of bacteriology and the identification of how diseases emerge and infect, the rhetoric around the early modern theater often utilizes these metaphors of illness to evoke what Susan Sontag's foundational essay calls "Illness as Metaphor," particularly in critiques of the theatres such as Stephen Gosson's *The School of Abuse* (1579) and

Plays Confuted in Five Actions (1582). Susan Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor and AIDS and Its Metaphors* (Picador, 2001).

15. Gary Waite, *Heresy, Magic, and Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe.* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

16. Cole, "Of Mice and Moisture," 72.

17. Francis Dolan, D*angerous Familiars: Representations of Domestic Crime, 1550-1700* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1994) analogizes the relationship between witches and disease: "Like our conception of the virus, alien but inside, hostile but included, the construction of the witch attempted to describe a threat perceived as not precisely locatable, a consequence of the unfixed boundary between self and other. This conception of witches as invading and undermining their victims' bodies corresponds to the cultural of witches as inside (well-known members of the community and near neighbors) and outside (perceived enemies and sources of threat). The fear of intimacy crucial to representations of spousal and master-servant conflict here extends outside the household and beyond the skin" (184).

18. Noga Arikha, *Passions and Tempers: A History of the Humours* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2008).

19. Stephen Greenblatt, *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare* (New York: Norton, 2016), 348.

20. Stephen Greenblatt dedicates a chapter, "Bewitching the King," to looking at Shakespeare's sources and inspiration for *Macbeth*. Drawing from King James's own three-part dialogue *Daemonologie* and the famous witchcraft manual, the *Malleus maleficarum,* Shakespeare tapped into the fears and anxieties of King James himself through "Ambiguous and deceptive prophecies; seductive pleasures; airy, insubstantial illusions—these are among the devices witches employ, James thought, when they set out to destroy someone." Greenblatt's identification of the "airy" illusions with "deceptive prophecies" will guide the direction of this paper. Greenblatt, *Will in the World,* 346.

21. Ibid, 354.

22. Ibid, 355.

23. Harris, *Foreign Bodies and the Body Politic,* 118. Harris analyzes witches' materiality and language in relation to prophecy and anti-Christian philosophy. Harris points to the mouth and tongue as two specific physical parts of witches' feminized bodies in order to interpret their contagious aspects. Early moderns regarded the feminine tongue as poisonous: "From the author of *The Anatomy,* the medicinal property of the woman's tongue is, in a certain sense no different from its poisonous one." Harris' second major point about the mouth applies to the witches in *Macbeth:* "The witch's mouth was frequently regarded as a dangerous point of access through which the devil could poisonously infiltrate bodies natural and politic" (118).

24. Ibid, 120.

25. Peter Stallybrass, "*Macbeth* and Witchcraft" in *Focus on Macbeth,* ed. John Russel Brown (Boston: Routledge, 1992): 197.

26. Ibid, 197.

27. Heather Love has read in "Milk" specifically as a queering of Lady Macbeth's body. Heather Love, "Milk," in *Shakesqueer: A Queer Companion to the Complete Works of Shakespeare,* ed. Madhavi Menon (Durham and London:

Duke University Press, 2011). Marjorie Garber describes the distinction between the physical and the metaphysical spirit of Lady Macbeth as "physically a woman but, as she claims, mentally and spiritually a man." Marjorie Garber. "*Macbeth*." *Shakespeare After All.* (New York: Anchor, 2012): 713.

28. Shakespeare and other playwrights often make humorous use of doctors and physicians in the period, making sure to emphasize their uselessness and even their exploitative features as in Jonson's *Volpone*. While this satirical rendering of doctors is common, I wonder about how a satire of a doctor in a tragedy reads differently in metaphoric and literal readings.

29. Frank Barlow, "The King's Evil," *English Historical Review* 95 (1980): 3.

30. William Shakespeare, *Macbeth* (New York: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2015): 262.

31. Sara Ahmed, *Willful Subjects* (North Carolina: Duke University Press, 26, 102-103).

32. Garber. *Shakespeare After All,* 718.

33. Ibid, 717.

34. Ibid, 712.

35. In the Arden *Macbeth*, the notes clarify the line "more needs she the divine than the physician," which points out the limitations of the physician. This interpretation comes from the commonly known phrase "where the Philosopher ends, the Physician begins; and he ends (they say) where the divine begins" from the 1619 *Purchas his Pilgrim*. While the doctor's diagnosis is clear and the exegetical reading provides an excellent historical referent to the limitations of the human in relation to the divine, where does the material body fit into this schema?

36. The purgation of "water" is defined as "urine" in the Yale and Arden editions of the play, but then in the same line, water is specifically connected to the land (282).

The Danger of Nobility in *Titus Andronicus*

Philip Goldfarb Styrt
St. Ambrose University

"Noble" is a pregnant term in Shakespeare, particularly in his Roman plays. The most famous use of it is likely Antony's declaration in *Julius Caesar* that Brutus was "the noblest Roman of them all" (5.5.67),[1] but the significance of the term is not limited to one line in one play, no matter how frequently quoted. Across the Roman plays, nobility serves as a contested space in which virtue and authority can be expressed, but which is frequently (as in the description of Brutus) ironized or otherwise complicated along the way. Many critics have noted the significance of nobility to Shakespeare's Rome, and indeed to Renaissance imaginings of Rome beyond Shakespeare, frequently connecting it to the ideals of *Romanitas* and *virtus* that made up a neoclassical sense of Roman virtue.[2]

In this article, I will look at Shakespeare's first Roman play, *Titus Andronicus,* which he co-wrote with George Peele, and which was first recorded in the Stationers' Register as a "Noble Roman History."[3] I argue that *Titus Andronicus* is particularly ambiguous about the value of nobility. Specifically, I wish to suggest that the play uses nobility, and cognate terms like noble, noblest, nobly, and so forth to indicate not only characters who demonstrate the traditional Roman *virtus*, as we might expect, but those for whom that *virtus* will be insufficient to help them against whatever

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obstacles they encounter. In this, I agree with Coppélia Kahn that the play stages a critique of *virtus*, which critique I see signaled by the use of "noble" in place of other terms for *virtus*.[4] In some cases the doomed aspect of nobility applies to those already dead or damaged, but frequently it attaches to those whose very nobility leads them astray by causing them to misunderstand the world around them. In *Titus*, being identified as noble is dangerous.

Of course, in order to show how nobility identifies characters who misunderstand the world, we must begin by at least attempting to understand that world ourselves. This has proven remarkably difficult for scholars of *Titus Andronicus,* as the play seems at first glance to defy historical particularization. The most famous take on this difficulty is the much-quoted dictum that the play "seems anxious, not to get it [Roman history] all right, but to get it all in."[5] This is, of course, hyperbolic, and scholars have suggested historical intertexts for the play that may help ground our interpretations in history, if not necessarily purely Roman history.[6] But ultimately it matters less when the play takes place in the timeline of Roman history and more what the play itself tells us about the Rome we are encountering in the text.

In this sense, *Titus Andronicus* is actually surprisingly forthcoming, once we accept the point that while the characters are Shakespeare's invention, "the Rome they inhabit in this play was certainly not."[7] We are clearly and immediately placed in the time of the empire, since the play begins with a face-off between Bassianus and Saturninus for the imperial seat. There are references to senators and tribunes and some expectation that these worthies might in fact do something to help influence the emperor, suggesting though not requiring that we are in the earlier period of the empire (it is not quite accurate to say that the two offices never coexisted with the empire,[8] but they did decline in influence over time). At the same time, the presence of Goths and the many gestures towards election of emperors by some kind of amassed popular-cum-aristocratic voice in the first scene strongly suggest the later empire. Whatever specific period we might best identify it with, the key point is that the play presents itself as portraying an individualized moment in Roman history, if a fictionalized one, and not a smorgasbord of multiple eras superimposed on each other.

In particular, *Titus Andronicus* represents a moment of transition and crisis where the governing system of the state is in question. In this play, the crisis is a moment of uncertain interregnum between two emperors, but this kind of situation (broadly described) is typical of Shakespeare's Roman plays: *Coriolanus* gives us the origin of the tribunes after the fall of the kings, *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra* the fall of the Republic via the second triumvirate. *Titus Andronicus* makes, in this sense, a tidy pre-parallel by showing the empire in crisis. In this sense, then, the play fits naturally into the historical arc of Shakespeare's Roman plays despite depicting a fictionalized version of Roman history.[9]

Because *Titus*, like the other Roman plays, gives us Rome in a period of political transition, the questions of which characters adapt to this transition, how, and how well naturally arise. These sorts of questions are frequently raised in criticism regarding Shakespeare's other Roman plays about characters like Brutus, Antony, and Coriolanus, but they are equally pertinent to *Titus Andronicus.* Understanding *Titus* through this lens means that we should look at flexibility in response to changing circumstances as a desirable quality in the play, at least in practical if not ethical terms.

I suggest that the play makes this easy for us by marking those characters who cling to antiquated political instincts with the word "noble" and its cognates. In doing so, I argue, the play marks the distinction between moral and practical considerations, because "noble" characters often act in ways that seem in line with what we might think of as traditional values but lead to dangerous outcomes for themselves and others. Of course, there are relatively few actions in *Titus* that do not lead to bad outcomes, and there are accordingly few characters who do not, at some point, get called "noble." But I argue that the timing and the intensity of this attributed nobility matters: characters are nobler when they have just done or are just about to do something politically unwise but traditionally virtuous, and the more a character is associated with nobility the more likely they are to carry out these actions.

The chief exemplar of this trend is Titus himself, who is the central figure in the play's pageant of nobility, both being described as noble and attributing the trait to others. Regarding

Titus, his brother Marcus tells us "A nobler man. . . / Lives not this day within the city walls" (1.1.25) and calls him "noble Titus" (1.1.359); Bassianus agrees he is Marcus's "noble brother" (1.1.50) and "noble Titus" (1.1.278), one of the "men / Of noble minds" (1.1.215-6) in the state, and "this noble gentleman" (1.1.412); Lavinia calls him her "noble lord and father" (1.1.158), while her brother Lucius opts for "noble-minded Titus" (1.1.209); Saturninus declares him "noble Titus" (1.1.253); and Tamora outdoes them all with "Thrice-noble Titus" (1.1.120). Nor are we allowed to forget his nobility later in the play (though, as I will examine, it is significant how much his nobility is emphasized in that first scene). It is Titus's "noble hand" (3.1.162) that is cut off when he falls for Aaron's trickery, while Lucius calls him his "noble father" as they part (3.1.287) and Marcus later asks his son Publius what he thinks of his "noble uncle" (4.3.26). References to his nobility taper off in act five, when he starts achieving his (now much more nihilistic) goals but by then the pattern has been well established. Titus is a noble man.

But of course he is not the only one. He liberally uses the same terms for others: his "noble brother Marcus" (1.1.171), the "noble country" of Rome (1.1.197), even Saturninus, whom he says will treat Tamora and her Goths "nobly" (1.1.260). In fact, Saturninus receives the epithet repeatedly since Lavinia also takes Saturninus's offer to treat Tamora well as a sign of "true nobility" (1.1.271) and he later declares himself "Your noble emperor" (1.1.332). How should we take all this nobility?

As I have proposed above, I believe we need to take the use of this term seriously by examining not just the frequency with which it is used, but the timing.[10] When we do, I suggest, we find that characters are described as noble at the moments when they make major miscalculations or errors related to that very nobility. We are introduced to Titus as noble before he ever enters onstage, with Marcus's homage to his unmatched nobility combining with Bassianus's use of similar terms to contextualize our understanding of his behavior. Even those tributes to Titus's nobility that come after his entrance crowd in early, as we have seen above. This draws our attention to his earliest behavior. And, indeed, we see Titus enter in a pageant of Roman honor, as we might expect from one so virtuously noble.

But we also see him make major miscalculations as soon as he has the chance. He ignores Tamora's pleas to save her son even as she reminds us once more of his nobility. This might not seem a bad decision in the immediate moment but will have long-lasting effects in the new Rome which will rebound on both him and his daughter, and it is marked in the moment as a bad decision: as "irreligious piety" (1.1.130) and a "barbarous" choice (1.1.131).[11] Then he proceeds to turn down the empire with an excuse that cannot help but feel weak in the context of his triumphant military entrance a hundred lines before: he is too old, his body "shakes for age and feebleness" (1.1.188-189). It seems strange that someone who just won a war would claim to be too old to serve his country. But at this point, we might still sympathize with Titus's perspective and see in this refusal a proper humility, not a miscalculation.

It is Titus's next action that most obviously shows that Titus misunderstands the political world in which he is operating. He plans to give the empire to Saturninus, the eldest son of the prior emperor. The first inkling of this comes when he declares that "Upright he held it [the scepter of empire], lords, that held it last" (1.1.200). Before he can continue to offer the scepter to Saturninus, though, that worthy interrupts him with intemperate anger, telling his supporters to "draw your swords, and sheathe them not / Till Saturninus be Rome's emperor" and then cursing "Andronicus, would thou were shipped to hell" (1.1.204-05, 206). Lucius chides Saturninus, pointing out that he is an "interrupter of the good" that Titus intends towards him (1.1.208). This creates the space in which Titus can complete his earlier thought, asking the people to "create our emperor's eldest son / Lord Saturnine" and "Crown him" (1.1.224-25, 229). They, through Marcus's voice, do so.

This is a clear and obvious political miscalculation both in retrospect and in the moment. Saturninus has, from the first, shown himself to be—and to be thought to be by others to be—unworthy of the empire. His is a purely "successive title" (1.1.4), and his only virtue lies in "my father's honours" (1.1.7). His brother Bassianus argues his own claim precisely from Saturninus's own lack of honor, asking the people to "suffer not dishonour to approach / The imperial seat" and arguing for "let[ting] desert in pure election shine" (1.1.13-14, 16). Perhaps Bassianus would also

make a bad emperor—after all, the people seem to favor neither son—but we are not set up to think kindly of Saturninus. Nor does his intemperate eruption in the face of Titus's "Patience, Prince Saturninus" speak well of him (1.1.203). He literally cannot wait for Titus—who has already said he does not want to be emperor—to announce his support for him, but assumes Titus must be about to "rob me of the people's hearts" (1.1.207). This is a fascinating accusation given that the scene has already established that Saturninus has none of their hearts to begin with, and indeed Titus is the one about to give them to him. In short, Saturninus is a hot-headed man who is clearly a bad choice here, for reasons that are obviously known to Titus. And yet he makes him emperor.

Why does he do so? His choice is a matter of primogeniture, the "successive title" Saturninus claimed for himself. The play is somewhat ambiguous about how legitimate an argument this is, and if we are to take seriously its claim to be set in Rome (rather than to be rehashing purely Elizabethan English concerns in a Roman context) that ambiguity is justified, since in early modern times the Roman empire was believed to have had a very inconsistent sense of lineal succession.[12] Crucially, in this context, the play appears to go out of the way to suggest that this is Saturninus's *only* argument for the empire (beyond force, as he is repeatedly the first to call on his supporters to commit violence on his behalf). At the same time the scene stages a number of other options for the succession, including the election that ultimately carries the day through Titus's intervention.[13] This has the effect of making Titus's decision seem out of step with what is happening onstage, because he asserts the primacy of a principle that, while recognizable and perhaps compelling to an Elizabethan audience, is no longer the decisive one in the world portrayed onstage.

Some critics have held that Titus's decision here is actually correct for Rome, if not for him: that it is a triumph of "public order before self-gratification."[14] In this reading, Titus's crowning of Saturninus "nobly privileges the ethos of gratitude over unrestrained self-interest.[15] But this can only be true if Saturninus's election actually tends towards the civic good and the maintenance of public order, and there are clear signs that it does not. We can see that it does not, even if we cannot know that any of the other candidates will make a good emperor.[16] The others are an

unknown quantity, and we can certainly critique them all: after all, I am suggesting that Titus himself is out of touch politically, hardly the ideal quality in an emperor. But only Saturninus is marked for us as actively harmful. Furthermore, the primogeniture which Titus uses to make his choice appears throughout the play to be a failure, and blindly following it is a clear error.[17] Titus may think he is preserving the social order, but he brings about the downfall of that social order by a failure to adapt to the situation in front of him. In light of this, I would agree with those who suggest that "Titus no longer knows what 'Roman' means," though I would disagree with the suggestion that "neither do we."[18] Rather, I propose, Titus no longer knows what the proper, Roman action would be in this situation, but the audience does. Or at least we know what *improper* action is: putting Saturninus on the throne. Titus only chooses primogeniture, and thus Saturninus, because he is still working with an outdated sense of proper Roman action.

I suggest that Titus's overly conservative choice of political principles is closely tied to his perceived nobility: that is, that here being noble means holding to an outdated set of political values. His son Lucius, in the middle of Saturninus's interruption and thus in the middle of Titus's decision, declares he is acting as "noble-minded Titus" (1.1.209). Bassianus doubles down on this terminology in the same interval when he refers to Titus as one of the "men / Of noble minds" (1.1.215-16). Titus is thereby marked for us in this crucial moment as thinking noble thoughts. This sense that this is a particularly noble moment is reinforced by Saturninus's joining the chorus, choosing the aftermath of his election as the time to first call Titus "noble Titus" (1.1.253). Yet this is Titus's greatest error—or if it is not, the other was when he made a personal (as opposed to political) enemy of Tamora by killing her son, which was also described as a "noble" act. As everyone else apparently knows, Saturninus will not make a good emperor, and his tyranny will fall hardest on Titus. We get a hint of this when Tamora makes ironic reference to Titus's choice, and to what will ensue for him from it, by first publicly telling her new husband to "lose not so noble a friend" and then assuring him in an aside that she will "massacre them all" (1.1.437, 447).

Although Saturninus is a bad emperor, he is the other major character who attracts repeated reference to his nobility, and he too

makes a critical mistake around the same moment that the term is applied to him. For Saturninus, this error is setting aside Lavinia for Tamora. Despite Saturninus's own vices, this seems at first like a virtuous choice, showing magnanimity to his brother Bassanius and Lavinia and allowing their already contracted marriage to go forward. And, indeed, it is coded for us as virtuous, since the first references to Saturninus's nobility accompany this decision. But this decision, or at least the part that involves marrying Tamora, is disastrous—in a way that is *also* coded as noble. The first suggestion of this is immediately after Saturninus's election, when Titus tells Tamora he will treat her "nobly" (1.1.260) and Lavinia describes Saturninus's affectionate words to the Goth queen as "true nobility" (1.1.271). He himself adopts this language after he has proposed marriage to her, asking the patricians (he never did like the people) to "accompany / Your noble emperor and his lovely bride" as they exit (1.1.330-31). For Saturninus, then, the moments where he is most associated with nobility are exactly the moments when he sows the seeds of his own destruction by turning from the Andronici to Tamora.

For other characters, it is more directly obvious that being referred to as "noble" is dangerous. Alarbus, eldest son of Tamora, is also noble, "the noblest that survives" among the Goths (1.1.102), and all his nobility brings him is a swifter butchery. This also connects to nobility as misunderstanding the political world, since the noble Alarbus, or at least those who speak for him, seem to think that Titus will not actually kill him—and indeed, as several critics have noted, this would be the traditional Roman view, which held that human sacrifice was un-Roman.[19] But they are wrong to assume that Titus will follow the old ways. He shows no mercy, and Alarbus dies horribly. Likewise Mutius, Titus's most unfortunate son (though not his most unfortunate child) is killed by his father when Bassianus and Lavinia exit together and Mutius bars Titus's pursuit. Rhetorically, he becomes Marcus's "noble nephew" (1.1.373) and "noble Mutius" (1.1.386) only after his death. Again we see how nobility lines up with misfortune and misunderstanding; despite the kind words his relatives heap on his head afterwards, Mutius still died a tragic, pointless death because he failed to comprehend his father's wrath and the danger it put him in.[20] Bassanius is similarly identified as "noble" at an

unfortunate moment: Lavinia calls him "my noble lord" precisely at the moment when he insults Tamora for the last time, misjudging the danger of the situation he is in (2.3.81). A mere twenty lines later, her sons kill him.

I should pause here to explain that I believe the irony attached to the word "noble" here is dramatic irony experienced by the audience and not the characters. That is, I do not suggest that the characters using the term think of the characters being described as politically incompetent. Rather, I see it marking for the audience that a character is in danger (or has already become doomed), frequently because of their own error. There is at times a mocking or deceptive element in the protestations of nobility, as when Marcus notes that Tamora will "nobly . . . remunerate" (1.1.395) Saturninus for making her empress, and in Tamora's comment on Titus's nobility to Saturninus. But the overall thrust of the term is positive within the world of the characters; it is only from our outside perspective that we can recognize the dangers of being noble. When Titus, Alarbus, and the others are called noble, the characters using the term think they are delivering a compliment; we as the audience, however, quickly begin to pick up on the danger inherent in the description. From Alarbus's death to Titus's miscalculations and beyond, the audience consistently sees the noble characters come to bad ends that are directly related to what made them noble, alerting us to the dangers inherent in that seemingly positive term.

And, indeed, nobility continues to be a dangerous attribute as the play progresses. Lucius calls the raped (and later to be murdered by their own father) Lavinia his "noble sister" (3.1.291), and his son recalls this with a later reference to "my noble aunt" (4.1.22). Like Mutius, her nobility here consists not only in right action (he in protecting her, she in trying to right her wrongs), but also in having earlier misidentified the danger of the situations she was in (though she, like he, is not responsible for her own assault). A similar error, though in this case among the villains, is marked when Demetrius calls his mother Aaron's "noble mistress" whom he "betray[s]" by not killing the baby that proves her infidelity (4.2.105)—she misunderstood how Aaron would react to the situation, judging him by her own assumptions even as (by trying to eliminate a bastard) she acted in a way that might have seemed right to her.

Indeed, the only "noble" people who do not at first glance seem to be doomed in their nobility are the Romans taken as a body: the "noble patricians" (1.1.1) in Saturninus's appeal at the beginning of the play, the country whose "imperial seat" is "to virtue consecrate, / To justice, continence, and nobility" (1.1.14-5) and which Titus calls a "noble country" (1.1.197), and the "noble tribunes" (3.1.1) who ignore the desperate Titus after his daughter's rape. Yet in this play, as in all Shakespeare's Roman plays, the country hardly emerges unscathed—and these nameless Romans make the same sort of political miscalculations we see in Titus, Saturninus, and the rest. The people and patricians both put their trust in Titus's choice of emperor and proclaim Saturninus; the tribunes might have saved the country some bloodshed and a great deal of disgusting spectacle if they had paid attention to Titus in his woe; and the country as a whole goes through first a period of tyrannous rule and then an overthrow at the hands of the very enemy they began the play in triumph over. Would any Roman at the start of the play have viewed the sight of Lucius Andronicus holding the throne with the forcible backing of a Goth army ensconced in the very seat of Rome with anything but horror? While Rome itself may not die, unlike Titus, Saturninus, Lavinia, Bassianus, Tamora, Mutius, and Alarbus, it certainly does not escape the play unharmed as a result of these miscalculations.

Nor should we think the end of the play promises Rome hope, since Shakespeare's Rome should fear the judgment of the very man who has ascended to the imperial seat. Lucius's final tribute to Titus is to call himself his "noble son" (5.3.154). This might, if we are optimistic, signal a return to the Roman values Titus seemed to embody at the start of the play, "drawing on the dutifulness of the past to secure the dutifulness of the future."[21] But when we remember all the trouble that nobility has brought to Titus and the rest, there is reason to worry that it rather heralds the continuation of the play's bloody mistakes into its aftermath. Even as the play demonstrates its characters' attachment to the Roman past, it critiques that choice.[22] And if *Titus Andronicus* is, as I've suggested here, a play concerned with what it means to be out of step with the times, this problem does not seem to be solved by play's end. A recent Broadway production, *Gary: A Sequel to Titus Andronicus,* declared its interest in what it means to "pick up

the pieces" when the play's bloodshed finally ends.[23] Perhaps an equally important question would be what we ought to do when the bloodshed doesn't stop, and those in power still cling to the same "noble" rules of political operation that proved faulty in the first place.

But as Lucius's wish to reclaim the word at the end of the play suggests, being "noble" in *Titus Andronicus* is not, inherently, a bad thing. The characters in the play continually use "noble" as a form of praise, and it is unlikely that an Elizabethan audience, listening with Elizabethan ears, would have missed the positive connotations of the word. But it is this very positivity that makes nobility in the play so dangerous. Nobility is an ironic attribute in *Titus Andronicus,* one that simultaneously indicates personal rectitude and virtue while also suggesting that those personal characteristics are harmful to the character's participation in the larger society. As we see with Titus, Saturninus, and the rest, being noble—or being thought noble—is an indication that a character is somehow misjudging the world around them, with tragic results.

Notes

1. References to all plays are from William Shakespeare, *The Complete Oxford Shakespeare,* ed. Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1987). Hereafter cited in text.

2. For a summary of the interplay between Rome and nobility in early modern drama, see Clifford Ronan, *"Antike Roman": Power Symbology and the Roman Play in Early Modern England, 1585-1635* (University of Georgia Press, 1995), 71-86, and Benjamin T. Spencer, "Shakespeare and the Hazards of Nobility," *The Centennial Review* 17.1 (1973): 24-34. For a good summary of how nobility relates to virtue specifically in these texts, see Curtis Brown Watson, *Shakespeare and the Renaissance Concept of Honor* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960), 76-81, 174-80.

3. Robert S. Miola, "Shakespeare's Ancient Rome: Difference and Identity," in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare's History Plays,* ed. Michael Hattaway (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 193.

4. Coppélia Kahn, "Shakespeare's Classical Tragedies," in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespearean Tragedy,* 2nd edition, ed. Claire McEachern (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 224. While I suggest that "noble" is used ironically, other terms for *virtus*, like "good" and "virtuous," appear to be used more sincerely in the play.

5. T.J.B. Spencer, "Shakespeare and the Elizabethan Romans," *Shakespeare Survey* 10 (1957): 32.

6. Naomi Conn Liebler, "Getting It All Right: *Titus Andronicus* and Roman History," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 45.3 (1994): 263-78; Jane Grogan, "'Headless

Rome' and Hungry Goths: Herodotus and *Titus Andronicus," English Literary Renaissance* 43.1 (2013): 30-61.

7. Liebler, 267.

8. Paulina Kewes, "'I Ask Your Voices and Your Suffrages': The Bogus Rome of Peele and Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus,*" *The Review of Politics* 78, (2016): 553. Kewes's larger point that the offices were much less powerful under the empire is, of course, still correct, but the mere use of the terms is not the anachronism she suggests, and should not bias us towards thinking that the play's Rome is inherently ahistorical.

9. It is noteworthy, I think, that this kind of transitional political crisis is a feature of Shakespeare's Roman plays and English histories, but less so in the non-Roman tragedies (I count about half: *Macbeth, King Lear,* and *Hamlet,* on the one side, and *Othello, Timon*, and *Romeo and Juliet* on the other, with *Troilus and Cressida* in an ambiguous position) and even less in the comedies (perhaps *As You Like It*) and romances.

10. Brian Boyd has suggested that the use of "noble" in this scene is a verbal tic of Peele's, stemming from an attempt to mimic a high style While this may be true, I believe that focusing on when the term is used, rather than simply its frequency, allows us to see the work that it does in the play regardless of the reason for its initial inclusion, and to see the continued significance of the term in the play beyond the first act. Brian Boyd, "Mutius: An Obstacle Removed in *Titus Andronicus,*" *The Review of English Studies, New Series* 55.219 (2004): 200.

11. The characters who make these comparisons turn out to be evil, but for the audience in the moment they are as yet unmarked as such, and the practice of human sacrifice to which they object is troubling to most audiences.

12. Liebler, 268-74; Kewes, 565-67.

13. It is I think valuable to emphasize that while Titus's reason for casting the election towards Saturninus is based in primogeniture, Saturninus does not become king by lineal succession alone, but by "our election this day" (1.1.235).

14. Christopher Crosbie, "Fixing Moderation: *Titus Andronicus* and the Aristotelian Determination of Value," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 58.2 (2007): 158.

15. Ibid, 159.

16. Kewes, 564.

17. Kay Stanton, "Intersections of Politics, Culture, Class, and Gender in Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus, The Taming of the Shrew,* and *The Merchant of Venice,*" *Multicultural Shakespeare: Translation, Appropriation, and Performance* 12.27 (2015): 46; Vernon Guy Dickson, "'A Pattern, Precedent, and Lively Warrant': Emulation, Rhetoric, and Cruel Propriety in *Titus Andronicus,*" *Renaissance Quarterly* 62.2 (2009): 395.

18. Brian J. Harries, "The Fall of Mediterranean Rome in *Titus Andronicus,*" *Mediterranean Studies* 26.2 (2018): 199.

19. Grogan, 30; Miola, 196; Curtis Perry, "Senecan Belatedness and *Titus Andronicus,*" in Titus Andronicus: *The State of the Play,* ed. Farah Karim-Cooper (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2019), 29.

20. Boyd, 197. In this sense, I would suggest, the role of Mutius is not an "textual afterthought" to be overcome, as Boyd would have it, but a further indication along with Alarbus of how Titus's own behavior deviates from the Roman norm even as he expects others to adhere to it.

21. G. K. Hunter, "Shakespeare's Earliest Tragedies: *Titus Andronicus* and *Romeo and Juliet,*" in *Shakespeare's Early Tragedies: A Collection of Critical Essays,* ed. Mark Rose (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1995), 10.

22. See Goran Stanivukovic, "*Titus Andronicus:* Elizabethan Classicism and the Styles of New Tragedy," in Titus Andronicus: *The State of the Play,* ed. Farah Karim-Cooper (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2019), 52.

23. Ruthie Fierberg, "Taylor Mac Explains Broadway's *Gary: A Sequel to Titus Andronicus,*" Playbill, 29 April 2019, http://www.playbill.com/article/taylor-mac-explains-broadways-gary-a-sequel-to-titus-andronicus.

"One touch of nature makes the whole world kin": Shakespeare and the Construction of Race in Charles W. Chesnutt's *The House Behind the Cedars*

Jess Hamlet
University of Alabama

Smack dab in the middle of Charles W. Chesnutt's 1900 novel of racial passing in the postbellum South is the omniscient narrator's catalog of the main characters' childhood library. John and Rena, growing up on the outskirts of town as the children of a black mother and a white father, had access to a wonderful library of books: Walter Scott's novels, *Arabian Nights, Don Quixote,* the Bible, John Milton, Thomas Paine, books on history, the plays of Beaumont and Fletcher, and Shakespeare, who "reigned over a silent kingdom" of pages and quires. This characterization of Shakespeare as king of the library is intriguing both because it indicates to the reader a bit of Chesnutt's own literary interests and ideas, and also because Shakespeare allusions and quotations are such an integral part of this novel.

Many nineteenth-century novelists use Shakespeare to create and reinforce boundaries, intimacies, and identities—political, cultural, racial, social—while at the same time congratulating themselves, their readers, and their characters for using Shakespeare to break down divisions and create unity. Conversely, Chesnutt uses Shakespeare in his novel to construct racial identities and

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expose the arbitrary divisions between the political, cultural, social, and racial classes to which his characters belong. In this novel, Shakespeare is a tool of identity-creation, intended to both enhance the plot and ingratiate the novel with its readers. Chesnutt's novel demonstrates how Shakespeare can reflect white Southerners' rejection of a unified, national culture. He borrows from *Hamlet, 1 Henry IV, King Lear, The Merchant of Venice, A Midsummer Night's Dream, The Tempest, Troilus and Cressida,* and *Twelfth Night.* With Shakespeare's plays working almost as another character in the novel, Chesnutt's engagement with these pieces of early modern poetry is part and parcel of the novel's racial politics, and the risks and rewards of racial passing for the book's main characters are inherently tied to and illuminated by the idea of Shakespeare as a gatekeeper of polite, educated, white society. The way Chesnutt appropriates and marshals Shakespeare spotlights how hard white, postbellum Southern society worked to keep the races separate.

While Chesnutt's body of work has elicited a healthy amount of scholarship, *The House Behind the Cedars* is one of his less well-considered texts, and as far as I can tell, no one has talked about this novel in relation to the Shakespeare it relies on so heavily. Shakespeare is an integral part of the textual experience of this novel, not only because the plot itself falls into the star-crossed lovers genre but also because Chesnutt relies on Shakespeare to help build interiority for his characters, most of whom are navigating a minefield of racial identity. At its core, this novel is about the tragedy that comes from hiding one's true identity in a world that will punish both deception and revelation. Chesnutt's borrowings from Shakespeare at key moments throughout prop up the racial politics of the novel, which I take to be aligned with racial equality and invested in dismantling racism and segregation through education and contact between blacks and whites. Parsing how Chesnutt uses Shakespeare to build and break racial constructions throughout the novel is important to understanding both how Chesnutt, himself a biracial man, hoped his literature could function in a white man's world and how the novel reflects Shakespeare's function in the construction of race and otherness during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The fact that we have not yet paid attention to Shakespeare's role in this

novel means we have neglected a rich store of knowledge about how Shakespeare has been used to construct racial identities in the American South.

The House Behind the Cedars tells the story of two siblings, John and Rena, raised in poverty in Reconstruction-era North Carolina by their single mother, Molly, and slowly reveals to the reader that John and Rena are mixed-race. Their skin, however, is light enough that John has been able to successfully pass as white and has set himself up as a lawyer in the white, upper-class society world of Charleston, South Carolina. He returns to his home to "rescue" his sister from a life of racial stigma and segregation and give her the opportunity for education and a "good" marriage among white society. The novel then follows Rena's anxieties about trying to pass while living in fear of being found out by her new fiancé, George. The turning point comes when Rena takes a risk to revisit her family home and events conspire to expose her familial origins to George. The second half of the novel follows the social and emotional fallout from these events: George's shock and immediate breaking of his promises to Rena, Rena's attempts to put her life back together by becoming a teacher, George's repentance and pining for Rena, Rena's encounters with the evil Jeff Wain (her second suitor), her flight into the woods where she suffers an accident, and her deterioration and death.

Nothing[1] has been written about Shakespeare's presence in this novel even though the playwright's instrumentality in the formation of a national identity during the United States' nascent years is well documented.[2] For example, Lawrence W. Levine examines how Shakespeare participated in American culture during the nineteenth century: "Shakespeare's popularity in frontier communities in all sections of the country. . .does fit our knowledge of human beings and their need for the comfort of familiar things under the pressure of new circumstances and surroundings. . . . If Shakespeare originally came to America as *Culture* in the libraries of the educated, he existed in pre-Civil War America as *culture*."[3] Writing his foundational work in the 1980s, Levine takes a humanist and classicist view of Shakespeare, arguing that he was a unifying force for (mostly white) Americans struggling to assert themselves as a new nation on the global stage—a united body rather than a rag-tag collection of frontier

states. Levine acknowledges the shifting role of Shakespeare from the great unifier of the early nineteenth century to something more complicated in the late nineteenth century, but what he misses is that in the mid-nineteenth-century South, Shakespeare's role as a unifier was different: more problematic and political than elsewhere. In the South during the years surrounding the Civil War, Shakespeare was used to create division and boundaries, most often to codify elite groups (whites, the rich, the educated) and reinforce white, privileged opinions about their own superiority. As *The House Behind the Cedars* demonstrates, the American South used Shakespeare as a means to separate, divide, and classify just as often as it used him to come together.

Audience and Goal

Charles W. Chesnutt's novel of identity creation and the consequences of trying to outrun one's past uses Shakespeare to delineate along racial and class lines. As James R. Andreas, Sr., writes, Chesnutt's "literary progeny were often interested in erasing the trace of race, or of inverting its influence, in their appropriations and adaptations of the plays."[4] Chesnutt certainly employs Shakespeare to make points about racial and social separation throughout this novel (which I explore fully below); understanding his use of Shakespeare here is part and parcel of understanding Chesnutt's racial politics. Exploring Chesnutt's literary agenda further, Veronica T. Watson questions this "appropriation and adaptation" of Shakespeare's plays in what she calls "the literature of white exposure," which is

> the larger collection of materials from practically every conceivable written genre. . .that critically engages whiteness as a social construction. They challenge the myths and mythologies of whiteness and the meanings that are ascribed to it within American society at various historical moments by forcing readers to confront the regressive, destructive and often uncivilized 'nature' of whiteness as it is constructed in their worlds. Many texts within the tradition are also implicitly aimed toward white readers, part of an effort to engage white people in the process of reflecting upon their own lives and culture.[5]

Chesnutt reflects this idea of capturing white attention for his novels in his journal. He says, "If I do write, I shall write for a

purpose. . . . The object of my writings would not be so much the elevation of the colored people as the elevation of the whites,—for I consider the unjust spirit of caste which is so insidious as to pervade a whole nation, and so powerful as to subject a whole race. . . to scorn and social ostracism."[6] He takes a gentle approach to teaching white readers to confront their "regressive, destructive" whiteness by aiming for a mental or moral elevation of white attitudes toward blackness and white beliefs in non-white inferiority. *The House Behind the Cedars* is one of several of his novels to take on the task of elevating its white readers.

Chesnutt's journals express a desire to "secure a profitable niche among the reading public while altering his audience's attitudes about race."[7] No wonder, then, that Shakespeare became the vehicle for this project of alteration in *The House Behind the Cedars*. What better way to endeavor to change white hearts and minds than by using that bastion of white culture, Shakespeare? Writing in his journal in the spring of 1881, Chesnutt meditated on Shakespeare's utility, universality, and impact:

> To Shakespeare
> Illustrious poet! thine the pen,
> Which paints the minds and heart of men;
> Thy lines shall future ages trace,
> The Homer of the Saxon race![8]

Later that same year, he spoke of taking "a Latin method, a Greek grammar, Shakespeare, and a few other books" on a summer trip to Carthage, North Carolina, during which he would be able to "store away a vast amount of mental pabulum, which will provision my mind for future voyages."[9] He ended 1881 with Shakespeare as well, writing on New Year's Eve that he would close his journal "and read King Henry the Sixth" to follow his reading of *Henry V* "the other night."[10] Of the latter, he thought "Falstaff was a jolly old rogue, ancient Pistol a cowardly braggart, Fluellen an amusing character."[11] This year of meditating on Shakespeare was accompanied by thoughts about slowly luring white readers into changing their opinions: he saw literature as the vehicle by which "to accustom the public mind to the idea [of racial equality]; and while amusing them to lead them on imperceptibly, unconsciously step by step to the desired state of feeling."[12] Chesnutt's use of Shakespeare in his own life, as reflected in his journal, is a neat

reflection of how Chesnutt wanted Shakespeare to function in *The House Behind the Cedars.*

Using Shakespeare for this purpose, however, engages in a kind of respectability politics. Chesnutt, a biracial man, intended for Shakespeare to help his novels make the case that people of color are capable of liking and understanding Shakespeare, and to increase white sympathy this way. Chesnutt's deliberate, methodical, and thorough deployment of Shakespeare in this novel, coupled with Chesnutt's delayed reveal of John and Rena's parentage, works by turns to capture the interest of the target white reader, ingratiate both the characters and the novel with the reader, and then carry the reader through to the end, when the toxic effects of racial segregation and hierarchy come to a head.

The House Behind the Cedars, which takes as its goal the overarching desire to change (white) minds about (false) perceptions of black inferiority and racial othering, stems from Chesnutt's background as an educator. In his journal, Chesnutt expresses frustration with the ignorance among rural black populations in North Carolina: "Well! Uneducated people are the most bigoted, superstitious, hard-headed people in the world!"[13] This sentiment is directly tied to Chesnutt's perception that these rural blacks persisted in clinging to superstitious beliefs, but his frustration with uneducated people leads to the novel's attempts to create sympathetic mixed-race characters that appeal to both black and white readers. Shirley Moody-Turner articulates Chesnutt's "literary strategy" as aiming to "expose and subvert the protocols of authenticity influencing African American literary and cultural representation."[14] Though her essay focuses on other Chesnutt works and not *The House Behind the Cedars,* the rhetorical project of this novel is perfectly in line with exposing (the damage done by white supremacy) and subverting (the notion that mixed-race people are somehow lesser) for the purpose of encouraging his white readers to recognize and discard their prejudices about skin color. Moody-Turner sums up Chesnutt's overall writing goals best: "In his literary works, Chesnutt exposes the biases inherent in supposedly objective knowledge practices associated with the social sciences, revealing how the objectifying gaze often operates as a part of a system of domination and oppression."[15] In *The House Behind the Cedars,* as I will explore more fully below, Chesnutt uses

Shakespeare to expose and subvert the problems associated with categorizing people based on perceptions about their race.

Writing about the function of race in this novel, Melissa Asher Rauterkaus argues that "documenting the unbelievably horrific conditions under which most black people suffer may be the single most effective strategy for softening white people's feelings toward blacks and stamping out racial injustice. . .the text makes the point that genre can perform important social and metafictional work in the way of ridding the world of racism."[16] Her invocation of genre here highlights the way the novel swings between romance and realism, challenging questions of identity at each turn and bringing what she calls "the fictions of race" into focus.[17] The novel does not often feel overtly political or challenging to conceptions of whiteness and race, which points to Chesnutt's masterful integration of Shakespeare as a double agent that both placates delicate white feelings of superiority and at the same time provokes white intellectual engagement.

Tragedy

Chesnutt begins his skillful deployment of Shakespeare as a double agent for hooking the interest of white readers and then changing their hearts and minds by using Shakespeare's great tragedies to highlight racial, social, and national divisions in his novel's world. The Shakespearean references begin in the book's second chapter, with a direct quote from *Hamlet,* offset from the surrounding passage about this part of the South keeping to the old ways even after losing the Civil War. As one of the book's protagonists, John Warwick, visits his childhood home, he notices that the house contains "Confederate bank-notes of various denominations and designs, in which the heads of Jefferson Davis and other Confederate leaders were conspicuous."[18] This observation motivates John to utter a line from *Hamlet* as a response to what he sees: "Imperious Cæsar, dead, and turned to clay, / Might stop a hole to keep the wind away" (5.1.202-3).[19] At a glance, this first quote appears to mostly draw upon an appropriate Shakespearean line for the moment, with not much other motive than to set a mood. It also, however, illustrates John's total rejection of his upbringing. As Dean McWilliams asserts, John "inscribes himself within the dominant cultural narrative, the

racist ideology that consigns his mother to inferior status."[20] This early invocation of *Hamlet* perfectly encapsulates how John uses Shakespeare to envision the social and racial divide separating him from his mother and his upbringing: by calling upon Shakespeare and *Hamlet* to make sense of his return to his rejected boyhood home he invokes a touchstone of cultured, educated white society. In turn, John's use of Shakespeare invites the reader to view the novel through their own experiences of and with Shakespeare and find ways to see themselves in the characters who use Shakespeare's words and works. This careful deployment of Shakespeare to ask readers to cast themselves alongside the characters is designed to create a sense of intimacy between the reader, the novel, and the characters.

Later in the same chapter, Chesnutt turns to *King Lear* to help John process his mother's circumstances, and by extension, his own and his sister's. As his mother agrees to let John take Rena to Charleston with him in hopes of making a financially and socially advantageous marriage and assimilating into white society, she says, "I'll not stand in her way—I've got sins enough to answer to already."[21] John's pitying reaction to this statement is to note, internally, "If she had sinned, she had been more sinned against than sinning."[22] Likening John's mother, Molly, to Lear in this moment conveys shades of meaning to the reader. First, by aligning Molly with Lear, Chesnutt also aligns John and Rena with Lear's daughters. Though both John and Rena are more like Cordelia than Goneril or Regan, the suggestion of ungrateful, scheming children hangs in the ether. Is John, who has left his mother and his heritage behind, ungrateful? Is he seeking to erase her from the narrative of his life? Does his plan to "save" Rena reflect a betrayal of his mother? It could be that John struggles with internalized racism and guilt over his separation from his mother and sister and likens himself to Goneril and Regan as a form of penitence. Shakespeare helps build the intimacy between reader and character here, by offering interpretive choices to the reader that call on their own knowledge and experience of Shakespeare's play. Second, this line, pulled from the storm scene in which Lear's senses begin to abandon him, also provides a moment of foreshadowing the misfortune that will befall Molly. The original line comes at the end of a short speech in which Lear calls on the gods to "find

out our enemies" and deliver justice (3.2.51). It ends, "I am a man / More sinned against than sinning" (3.2.59–60). Indeed, her health (though not her wit) leaves Molly later in the book, perhaps precipitated by Rena's departure. Rauterkaus focuses on John's "metalevel" observations elsewhere in the novel, but these early moments of Shakespearean invocation also point to "his awareness of the importance of narrative positioning."[23] In this chapter where John Warwick comes to "save" his light-skinned sister from a life of poverty and struggle against racial prejudices, *Hamlet* and *King Lear* both illustrate the divide already evident between John, who has left to seek his fortunes elsewhere, and his family of origin, who stayed behind to struggle against the rules of a society that makes value judgements based on the color of one's skin.

Not only do these incorporations of *Lear* and *Hamlet* serve to build out the interiority of John's character, they also serve to hook the white, educated reader in deeper. By invoking Shakespeare, Chesnutt appeals to the sense of superiority in his readers who understand the references. Additionally, using Shakespeare to explain the inner workings of the mind of a mixed-race character has the benefit of ingratiating the character to Chesnutt's readers and combatting preconceived notions of racial hierarchy. I imagine Chesnutt intended white readers to find common ground with his characters through the vehicle of Shakespeare. I believe Chesnutt intended for his readers (mostly, but not entirely, white) who understood all of the Shakespearean references to feel a deeper kinship with the characters and the novel, but an increased sense of intimacy was available to even the reader who could only make sense of one or two references. Readers who understand Shakespeare, even just a little bit, can find themselves understanding characters who might not feel accessible, were they real people. Because Chesnutt offered Shakespeare as a mediator, he intended his readers to find in Shakespeare the tools to understand and care for John and Rena.

Comedy

While relying mostly on Shakespeare's comedies to inform his novel, Chesnutt chooses dark moments from these lighter plays to complicate the novel's events for his readers. In chapter four, as Rena and John are setting off from the house behind the cedars,

Molly reflects on the departure of her children by alluding to the hardest part of T*he Merchant of Venice.* Chesnutt writes, "She had paid with her heart's blood another installment on the Shylock's bond exacted by society for her own happiness of the past and her children's prospects for the future."[24] Chesnutt's allusion to Shylock's bond for the irredeemable pound of flesh highlights the struggle of a mother who wants her children with her because she loves them but also knows that their presence in her home will prevent them from successfully passing in white circles. She knows their best hope for an upwardly mobile economic and social life is to leave her forever. Chesnutt uses this moment to again reinforce the social and racial divide in the South through the use of Shakespeare's plays, reflecting Shakespeare's function as a tool of division more than of unification in the nineteenth-century South.

Like his use of *Merchant*, Chesnutt uses *Twelfth Night* to complicate the story in chapter nine, though here Shakespeare takes on a sorrowful tone rather than a physically tortuous one. While Rena is worrying over whether or not her beau George might still love her if he knew the full story of her origin, the narrator comments: "Rena's secret was the worm in the bud, the skeleton in the closet."[25] This allusion to the second act of *Twelfth Night* calls up that play's heroine, Viola, who is herself struggling with the concealment of her true identity. In her speech (2.4.110–17), Viola, in disguise as the pageboy Cesario, is talking to her love, Orsino, about the travails of unexpressed and unrequited love:

> She never told her love,
> But let concealment like a worm i'th' bud
> Feed on her damask cheek. (2.4.211–12).

At this moment in Chesnutt's story, Rena is grappling with a similar struggle. Though George certainly knows of her affection for him, Rena is hiding a fundamental part of her identity that lurks among the petals of her outward appearance and gnaws away at the smooth surface of the identity she is trying to project. By likening Rena to *Twelfth Night*'s heroine, Chesnutt uses Shakespeare to telegraph interior monologue and character development. Until this point, Rena is a rather flat character who goes where her mother and brother tell her to and does what they want. This allusion to Viola's precarity communicates Rena's anxiety over the creation of her identity as a white woman, something she sees as a

lie to be protected and maintained at all costs if she wants to live a comfortable life accepted by the Southerners of rank and status around her. By giving her increased dimension, it further heightens the reader's concern for Rena, deepening their investment in her fate.

The most complicated use of Shakespeare's words in this novel comes in chapter eighteen, when Chesnutt provides a catalog of the books in the house behind the cedars. In a list that includes Shakespeare, Chesnutt also uses Shakespeare to govern their organization. He writes: "Among the books were. . . a collection of everything that Walter Scott—the literary idol of the South— had ever written; Beaumont and Fletcher's plays, *cheek by jowl* with the history of the virtuous Clarissa Harlowe. . . Robinson Crusoe and the Arabian Nights. On these secluded shelves. . . Milton's mighty harmonies were dumb, and Shakespeare reigned over a silent kingdom."[26] "Cheek by jowl" comes from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (3.2.338), taken from the end of the "lovers' quarrel" scene.[27] Chesnutt uses the quote to signify the proximity of the books to each other, but the portion of this literary litany that needs the most unpacking is why Shakespeare is the one who governs the "silent kingdom." Is Shakespeare's rule predicated on his literary prestige or reputation, or is it a byproduct of his complete works being the largest text on the shelf? Or, perhaps, is it due to his plays being the oldest English-language work in the list?[28] I suggest that while the characters reap no benefit from this litany of titles (it is information relayed from the omniscient narrator to the reader), this syllabus explains the atmosphere in which Rena and John were raised. John and Rena's white father provided these textual opportunities for in-home learning, and John took advantage of these books as a child, using them as the foundation to escape the life into which he was born. Chesnutt's use of Shakespeare here, then, perpetuates the idea of Shakespeare as a unifying force, allowing John to cross social boundaries—but in the same moment, Chesnutt holds up Shakespeare as racially and socially divisive, implying that it is only by the kindness of John's wealthy, white father that John is able to access Shakespeare and cross racial and social boundaries to become a lawyer and "pass" as white in South Carolina.

Chapter eighteen is the crux of Chesnutt's representation of Shakespeare as contradictory unifier and divider in the postbellum

South. Following the cedar-house's library catalog is a reference to the later, genre-defiant play *Troilus and Cressida,* issued by the town's lawyer. The narrator moves from this list of books to John's childhood engagement with them:

> When John. . .had learned to read, he discovered the library. . . and found in it the portal of a new world, peopled with strange and marvelous beings. . . . Sometimes he read or repeated the simpler stories to his little sister, sitting wide-eyed by his side. When he had read all the books,—indeed, long before he had read them all,—he too had tasted of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge: contentment took its flight, and happiness lay far beyond the sphere where he was born. The blood of his white fathers, the heirs of the ages, cried out for its own, and after the manner of that blood set about getting the object of its desire.[29]

Spurred on by ambition and the lust for knowledge, young John sets out for the town law office and declares to the lawyer he finds there that he wants to grow up to become a lawyer himself. In their initial interview, after discovering John's parentage, Judge Straight quotes *Troilus and Cressida.* The line in question comes toward the end of a lengthy speech by Ulysses (3.3.146–91) in which he is trying to convince Achilles to go to war to cement his fame and reputation. Achilles is resting on his laurels at this point in the play and is angry that all the generals have just walked past his tent and ignored him. Ulysses argues that greatness is only confirmed continual accomplishment of great deeds. Judge Straight misquotes Ulysses's line as evidence that young Warwick cannot rise above his social place as a person of black heritage: "'One touch of nature makes the whole world kin,' says the poet. Somewhere, sometime, you had a black ancestor. One drop of black blood makes the whole man black."[30] Chesnutt here is pulling on what Teresa C. Zackodnik calls "a focus on blood and its so-called admixture," which,

> in the latter half of the nineteenth century, did not quite change from a notion of "a less than reliably read exterior" into "blood as truth."[31] She argues that at this moment in American history, race was a thing often determined legally as "physically inspecting 'tell-tale' characteristics of blackness continued well into the 1920s in cases deciding racial identity."[32] Chesnutt's deployment of Shakespeare in

> an appropriated and weaponized context, designed to keep the races separate, underscores the real problem of white Southerners using Shakespeare to uphold racial divisions.

This moment in the text also serves to allow Chesnutt to subtly undermine the untruths to which whites subscribed in order to uphold their ideas about racial difference. If "one touch of nature makes the whole world kin," then there is nothing actually separating different races. If "one drop of black blood makes the whole man black," why does not one drop of white blood make the whole man white? Rauterkaus sees Chestnut asking the same question in the very beginning of the book; when John catches his first glimpse of Rena after not seeing her for many years he does not recognize her as his sister. John makes careful note of the as-yet unknown woman's "stately beauty," her "promising curves," her hair, her shoulders, and her dress.[33] Rauterkaus notes that this moment, with its intertwined "tropes of incest and miscegenation allows Chesnutt to call into question the scientific fictions regarding racial difference and to express cultural anxieties surrounding family, sexual desire, and racial identity—anxieties exacerbated by the mulatto's invisibility."[34] She does not address the later *Troilus and Cressida* moment, but it functions in the same way, pushing the reader to confront the arbitrary rules forcing separation between races.

The conflict caused by separation between races is most realized in the character of Rena, who spends the entire novel in a state of anxiety over her choice to pass as a white woman. Because Rena is the novel's protagonist and tragic heroine, Chesnutt uses Shakespeare references to track Rena's fortunes—Shakespeare is plentiful when she is accepted into Charleston's white society, representing the bounty of possibility, learning, and culture available to her in her life as a white woman. As her fortunes turn, however, the references drop off, and there are none from the time of her accident in the swamp until her death. This stark absence suggests that Rena might be the novel's source of culture and intimacy as well as the embodied representation of racial politics. As Rena lies on her deathbed at the novel's close, Chesnutt brings in two final Shakespearean allusions.

Denouement

While together these final two references (to *1 Henry IV* and *The Merchant of Venice*) bring Rena back into focus for the reader and tie her once again to a (white) model of intellectual curiosity and culture of education, the first of the two references also strangely negates Rena's death. The narrator trivializes Rena's passing even as Rena draws her last breaths by using an allusion to Shakespeare's first tetralogy of history plays. Chesnutt writes of long-time family friend Frank Fowler and his unrequited love for Rena:

> Frank Fowler's heart was filled with longing for a sight of Rena's face. . . . He had sought work in South Carolina with the hope that he might see her. He had satisfied this hope, and had tried in vain to do her a service; but Fate had been against her; her castle of cards had come tumbling down. He felt that her sorrow had brought her nearer to him. . . . His unselfish desire had reacted to refine and elevate his own spirit. . . . He, Frank, was a man, an honest man—a better man than the shifty scoundrel with whom she had ridden away. She was but a woman, the best and sweetest and loveliest of all women, but yet a woman. After a few short years of happiness or sorrow,—little of joy, perhaps, and much of sadness, which had begun already,—they would both be food for worms.[35]

The phrase "Food for worms", shared between Prince Hal (the future Henry V) and the dying Hotspur (5.4.86), undermines the cause Hotspur and his family were fighting for, trivializes Hotspur's sacrifice for his cause, and allows Hal to place Hotspur squarely on the wrong side of the conflict. Chesnutt's use of the phrase in relation to the love between Rena and Frank illuminates the triviality and impermanence of life and the arbitrary rules that divide races, and asks the reader to consider whether Rena would have been better off with Frank or not. Rena's death also asks the reader to consider the tragedy of her life—did she deserve cruelty at the hands of her second suitor, Jeff Wain, and is death her only reward? If all she ever did was try to fit into her brother's society while not losing her ties to her mother, is it right that Rena should die? Why is it that Rena is punished while her brother John disappears from the novel, presumably with his reputation and livelihood intact? Bringing in Shakespeare for Rena's final moments again calls into

question Shakespeare's role in upward social mobility and the way readers use Shakespeare to code division between different races and classes while those races and classes "worthy" of Shakespeare congratulate themselves on his (and their own) egalitarianism.

As the novel closes, Chesnutt returns to the identity-building power of *The Merchant of Venice* to consider the ways Rena's story might have been different had she embraced her black heritage rather than eschewing it for a chance at the luxurious life of a white society woman in South Carolina. The author riffs on Shylock's "Hath not a Jew eyes?" speech, and, comparing her to Frank, explores the cruelty of separating Rena from her chance at happiness—with either George or Frank—on the basis of her in-between genetics: "They were certainly both made by the same God, in much the same physical and mental mould; they breathed the same air, ate the same food, spoke the same speech, loved and hated, laughed and cried, lived and would die, the same."[36] Chesnutt's reinterpretation asserts that all humans are the same on the inside underscores the struggle at the heart of *The House Behind the Cedars:* Rena, our tragic heroine, is not permitted to belong in either the home of her birth or the high society her brother keeps, all because of the arbitrary genetic hand she was dealt. Aligning Rena's and Shylock's otherness allows Chesnutt to avoid definitively characterizing Rena as a woman who belongs in either place. This resistance on the part of the author means it is the reader who must draw conclusions about where Rena belongs, and by the end of the novel, I believe Chesnutt is clearly trying to engender within his intended audience a feeling that forcing people into one category or another based solely on the color of their skin is wasteful, arbitrary, and can have severe repercussions.

Chesnutt also borrows from another popular English writer, Walter Scott. Chapters five and six, "The Tournament" and "The Queen of Love and Beauty," feel as though they come straight from *Ivanhoe*—because, of course, *Ivanhoe*'s immense popularity in the Civil War-era South meant that any discussion of popular culture—even a fictional one—needed to touch on Walter Scott at least tacitly. Indeed, at the start of "The Tournament," the narrator notes the following:

> The influence of Walter Scott was strong upon the old South. The South before the war was essentially feudal, and Scott's

> novels of chivalry appealed forcefully to the feudal heart. During the month preceding the Clarence tournament, the local bookseller has closed out his entire stock of "Ivanhoe," consisting of five copies, and had taken orders for seven copies more.[37]

Chesnutt incorporates Scott throughout his novel, though to a lesser degree than Shakespeare, and to a different purpose. While Scott lends to Chesnutt local color, world-building, and pop culture tidbits, Shakespeare is woven more fully into the fabric of the novel to comment on the destructive nature of racial politics, to create intimacy with the reader, and to lend credibility to Chesnutt's writing. In much the same way that Phyllis Wheatley evoked classical poets to ground her own poetry in a predominantly white tradition, Chesnutt uses Shakespeare in this novel to align himself with the cultured, educated, well-read and well-spoken, mostly white populations which Shakespeare was coming to represent at the turn of the twentieth century.

Lawrence W. Levine writes that the "ability of Shakespeare to connect with Americans' underlying beliefs is crucial to an understanding of his role in nineteenth-century America."[38] However, as Chesnutt shows, the underlying beliefs to which Shakespeare connected in early America were, more often than not, related to upholding strict divisions along racial and social lines. Levine's work argues for an America that used Shakespeare to unite under a "shared public culture,"[39] but the American South that Chesnutt illustrates uses Shakespeare to divide and separate races. In this novel, Shakespeare works with Chesnutt to build a skillfully crafted story that gives the reader unique insight into what it means to be othered in the postbellum, white, American South. All in all, Chesnutt's novel undermines the idea of Shakespeare as a unifying force, or at least points out that those unifications were within carefully set, established parameters, and used to strengthen already-existing bonds between communities of the same race or social class.

Notes

1. Loath though I am to make such a unilateral statement, as far as I can tell, there has been no work published on Shakespeare and this novel in the last century.

2. Though by 1900 the United States was no longer nascent, the novel takes place in the post-Civil War South, thereby contributing to the idea of a past in which the country was still trying to assert its identity. For more, see Lawrence W. Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988); Michael A. Morrison, "Shakespeare in North America," in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare on Stage,* ed. Stanley Wells and Sarah Stanton (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Kim Sturgess, *Shakespeare and the American Nation* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Virginia Vaughan and Aldan Vaughan, *Shakespeare in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

3. Levine, "William Shakespeare," 40, 42.

4. James R. Andreas, Sr., "Signifyin' on The Tempest in Mama Day," in *Shakespeare and Appropriation,* ed. Christy Desmet and Robert Sawyer (New York: Routledge, 1999), 105.

5. Veronica T. Watson, *The Souls of White Folk: African American Writers Theorize Whiteness.* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2013), 5.

6. Charles W. Chesnutt, *The Journals of Charles W. Chesnutt,* ed. Richard H. Brodhead (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993), 139.

7. Shirley Moody-Turner, "'The Stolen Voice': Charles Chesnutt, Whiteness, and the Politics of Folklore," in *Black Folklore and the Politics of Racial Representation* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2013), 127.

8. Chesnutt, *Journals*, 163.

9. Chesnutt, *Journals*, 168.

10. Chesnutt, *Journals*, 169.

11. Chesnutt, *Journals*, 160.

12. Chesnutt, *Journals*, 140.

13. Chesnutt, *Journals*, 129.

14. Moody-Turner, "The Stolen Voice," 130.

15. Moody-Turner, "The Stolen Voice," 132.

16. Shirley Moody-Turner and Melissa Asher Rauterkaus, "Racial Fictions and the Cultural Work of Genre in Charles W. Chesnutt's The House Behind the Cedars," *American Literary Realism* 48.2 (2016): 129.

17. Moody-Turner and Rauterkaus, 129.

18. Charles W. Chesnutt, *The House Behind the Cedars* (New York: Penguin, 1993), 11.

19. Chesnutt, *The House Behind the Cedars,* 11. All quotations used by Chesnutt follow the spelling and punctuation in the Penguin edition of *The House Behind the Cedars,* but I take line numbers from the Arden editions of the plays. All Shakespeare quotes used in this paper use the Arden editions as their source.

20. Dearn McWilliams, "The House Behind the Cedars: Creatures of our Creation,'" in *Charles W. Chesnutt and the Fictions of Race* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2002), 136.

21. Chesnutt, *The House Behind the Cedars,* 19.

22. Chesnutt, *The House Behind the Cedars,* 19.

23. Moody-Turner and Rauterkaus, 137.

24. Chesnutt, *The House Behind the Cedars,* 28.

25. Chesnutt, *The House Behind the Cedars,* 51.

26. Chesnutt, *The House Behind the Cedars,* 108. Emphasis added.

27. Demetrius and Lysander, both charmed into loving Helena, exit the scene to fight privately and leave Hermia and Helena to sort out what they will do next. Lysander challenges Demetrius, "Now follow, if thou dar'st, to try whose right, / Of thine or mine, is most in Helena" (3.2.336-7). Lysander answers, "Follow? Nay, I'll go with thee, cheek by jowl" (3.2.338).

28. This list includes a Bible and a copy of the *Arabian Nights,* which of course are older than Shakespeare's works, but not originally written in English.

29. Chesnutt, *The House Behind the Cedars,* 109.

30. Chesnutt, *The House Behind the Cedars,* 113.

31. Teresa C. Zackodnik and Dean McWilliams, "Fixing the Color Line: The Mulatta, American Courts, and the Racial Imaginary," in *The Mulatta and the Politics of Race* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2004), 3.

32. Zackodnik and McWilliams, 3.

33. Chesnutt, *The House Behind the Cedars,* 5.

34. Moody-Turner and Rauterkaus, 131.

35. Chesnutt, *The House Behind the Cedars,* 188.

36. Chesnutt, *The House Behind the Cedars,* 188. "I am a Jew. Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? Fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed with the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer winds as a Christian is? If you prick us do we not bleed? If you tickle us do we not laugh? If you poison us do we not die? And if you wrong us shall we not revenge? If we are like you in the rest, we will resemble you in that." (3.1.53-61)

37. Chesnutt, *The House Behind the Cedars,* 31.

38. Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow,* 42.

39. Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow,* 46.

Armin/Shakespeare Collab: "you must allow *vox*"

Leslie S. Katz
Amherst College/University of Toronto

Like Fred Astaire waltzing with an anthropomorphized broom, Robert Armin, in his dedication to *Quips Upon Questions,*[1] performs a tour de force duet, in which he personifies his jester's stick and solicits its favor as a poet would his patron. First, he salutes "the crab-tree countenance" of Sir Timothie Truncheon (alias Bastinado), making a "low congee" in imitation of courtly etiquette. Then, presenting himself as an unemployed performer ("unkindly thrust out of [his] lodging" at the Curtain Theatre, forced to hit the road as an itinerant player), he begs Sir Timothie's protection from a spiteful world: "Guard me through the Spittle fieldes, I beseech yee, least some one in ambush endanger my braynes with a Brickbat unsight or unseen" (Sig. A2). We should imagine that, in actual performance, Armin carried, not a standard jester's wand, but an ordinary, featureless club, such as the one described here.

Quips Upon Questions, published in 1600, tells us something about Armin, the clown: by August of that year, he was working at the Globe Theatre as the comic actor for whom Shakespeare ultimately wrote roles ranging from the Gravedigger in *Hamlet* to Autolycus in *The Winter's Tale.* Two months earlier, however, a city-wide ban had curtailed his solo performances at the

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Curtain Theatre[2] so, at the time the pamphlet was written, he was figuratively roofless and in search of a place to play. Meantime, he turned to writing pamphlets, apparently hoping through this medium to ply his independent stage persona, keeping it present in Londoners' minds. The persona is double-sided: foolish on the one hand, ambitious on the other. Armin plays both the spurned exile and the obsequious wannabe. This doubleness structures the dynamics of the dedicatory skit, in which the clown begs protection in phrases which are hyperbolic, given that his patron is a faceless club. But even as he prostrates himself before the "right worthy stick, he throws in a remark about its rude origins ("whose birth or growth [was] in the open fieldes"); fawning at Sir Timothie's 'feet' ("being stroke down with thy favour"), he recalls their shared abjection ("I sometimes slept with thee in the fieldes, wanting a house ore my head.") While these contradictions ought to parody the overt duplicity of courtly praise, they end up having the opposite effect, making the reader witness, in the complexities of Armin's self-definition, the force of a genuine, if fractious, co-dependency. "Sweete Sir Timothie, kind sir Timothie, tough sir Timothie. . .[3] whose barke I will grate like Ginger, and carrouse it in Ale, and drinke a full cuppe to thy curtesie when I am returned to the Citie againe" (Sig. A2v).

When Armin turns, in the second dedication to the Reader, his tone changes. Gone is the perverse camaraderie shared with Sir Timothie. "Readers," Armin starts, "Revilers, or in deede what not? to you I appeale, either for a quicke-turne over, or a long lookt for loving looke." Posing as though he embodied the pages of the pamphlet itself, Armin makes himself emblematically female, implying that, although resigned to a quick screw, he would prefer a "loving looke." "Well, go on, use me at your pleasure." Armin acts as though antipathy divides him from the race of human beings for whom he writes—not out of mutual sympathy (as he does for his guardian, the stick)—but out of monetary need. He pretends to expect little more than their grudging patience, "but if your patience willingly endure unforst, I shalbe the more beholding to you." Then a nasty afterthought surfaces: "otherwise, let Sir Timothie revenge it." The truncheon lashes out as the material extension of Armin's aggression—as though he were pointing it threateningly at a heckler in the audience. Behind his weapon,

however, the obsequious performer continues to hide: "and so a thousand times making legges, I goe still backward, till I am out of sight, hoping then to be out of minde" (Sig. A3).

The text of *Quips* records a theatrical practice which involved the clown's immediate audience in a participatory role. As part of his solo work, Armin would invite inquiries from the audience—sometimes riddles which begged a lewd response or called attention to a chance disturbance in the theatre (a dog barking or a drunk snoring in the grass), in other cases, risqué questions which singled out a particular spectator ("a man who looks angry, [another] who enters sweating, an over-dressed woman, a prostitute).[4] Armin's responses promised to ring changes—"moralizing metamorphoses"—on each riddle, by entering into an exchange with one or more members of the audience. Typically, the answer ended with a quip which turned the question back, either at the asker or at the object of ridicule. In 1600, Armin transposed the text of his performance to the page, setting out the questions (which—without attribution to specific speakers—appear startlingly, even hauntingly, anonymous), and then reinventing his own replies. As though to capture the actual rhythms of an interactive and improvisational dialogue, Armin used neither punctuation nor line breaks to "disentangle the structure of the dialogue,"[5] but left it to the reader's ear to pick out from the words of a seemingly unitary speaker, the interplay of two antagonistic voices.

> Who began to live in the worlde?
>
> Adam was he, that first livde in the world,
> And Eve was next: Who knowes not this is true?
> But at the last he was from all grace hurld,
> And she for companie, the like did rue.
> Was he the first? I, and was thus disgrast,
> Better for him, that he had been the last. (Sig. A4)

Like learning to see in the dark, reading the verse is a process of natural acclimation: growing used to the registers of a voice adept at ringing changes on itself, a voice fluid at moving through multiple declensions. It helps, moreover, if we read the verse in the context set by the pamphlet, conceiving it, not as exchanges between Armin and members of his audience, but as a dialogue spoken—in anticipation of modern ventriloquial routines—between Armin and his personified slapstick, Sir Timothie.[6]

Who began to live in the worlde?

Arm.: Adam was he, that first livde in the world,
And Eve was next:
Tim.: who knowes not this is true?
Arm.: But at the last he was from all grace hurld,
And she for companie, the like did rue.
Tim.: Was he the first?
Arm.: I, and was thus disgrast.
Tim.: Better for him, that he had been the last.

Timothie reasons that by exiting Eden first, Adam missed the opportunity he might have enjoyed from behind, of sodomizing Eve. (The banter even takes the form of what will become, in the tradition of popular entertainment, stock "dummy" humor.) In the ensuing quip, Armin, turned satirist, comments on the current glut of facile witticisms.

Arm.: Thou art a foole:
Tim.: Why?
Arm.: for reasoning so,
Tim: But not the first,
Arm.: nor last by many mo. (Sig. A4)

How can we account for the fact that the mute truncheon, called upon in the dedication to protect the author from carping critics, speaks now in the voice of a heckling audience member? Sir Timothie interrupts the flow of Armin's answer, turns the meaning of his words around, and frequently goes for the cheapest laugh. Through enacting the truncheon's mutation, Armin puts a spin on the conventional triangulation of patron, public, and performer. The routine, encoded in the pamphlet, renders the position of each role, vis a vis the other, drastically unstable, even—in the final analysis—interchangeable. Although Armin technically bases his art—the art of drawing "three souls" out of one vessel—on the natural promiscuity of voice (its facility for jumping range and changing timbre), that mutability extends, in the imagery of Armin's prose, to physical substances: Sir Timothie's hardwood shaft, grated and dissolved in ale, is imbibed by the actor who carries it (literalizing the incorporation of the patron into the performer); upended, it becomes a cudgel (used to beat unkind spectators); endowed with speech (as we shall see), it turns on

Armin and abuses him in the voice of the public, with an uncouth and impertinent tongue. Armin grounds his satire, questioning the stability or centeredness of social character, in a fantastical physics where natural matter proves equally protean.[7]

The capricious substance of Armin's body, as though in imitation of his ventriloquial voice, did not remain, like that of other clowns, "obstinately anthropomorphic,"[8] but ran a gamut of physical phases, from "forked man" to crouching cur. "[His diminutive] shape and size gave point to the recurring image of the cringing dog,"[9] reinforcing the sense of dangerous likeness between himself and his constituents, "of being surrounded by a fawning audience who might at any moment turn on him... [as in Robert Wilson's:] 'But yonder is a fellow that gapes to bite me, / or else to eat that which I sing. . .'"[10] If we imagine the actor, not only personifying his truncheon through manipulations of gesture and voice, but also causing his own physical presentation to change in response to it, we arrive at a picture of Armin's craft in its peculiar metamorphic quality: which, in turn, gives us a clue to the technique employed in *King Lear,* where the nameless Fool,[11] leading Lear through a devolving spectrum of embodiments, helps to unfold his fall from the throne to the sulphurous pit.

> Why barkes that Dogge?
>
> *Tim.:* Aske him, and he will tell thee why he barkes.
> *Arm.:* Dogges can not speake, although they gape so lowde:
> *Tim.:* Enough to pose the wisest heades of Clarkes,
> To aske this reason,
> *Arm.:* yet it is alowde. (Sig. A4)

The question foregrounds the commotion of a dog barking in earshot of the theatre. The sticks response, which points two ways—first at Armin ("Aske *him*, and he will tell thee...") then in the direction of the noise (". . .why *he* barkes"[my emphases])—carries the unfriendly connotation: take the question to the source. Armin's flesh, falling prey to the suggestion, might have cowered or cringed, while his chastened voice, in sympathy with the body, retaliates, "you can ask, but dogs can't answer." Turning its blind look back to Armin, the stick replies with tart sarcasm that this is a puzzle to perplex the "wisest heades." Again, Armin counters: "yet it is alowde." Thus, the aggression which the performer might

conventionally turn on his public, gets turned back and absorbed by the actor himself, doubly transubstantiating his form—from man to beast, and from professional clown to natural fool.

> *Tim.:* A Dogges skin serves for something when he's dead,
> A Mans for nothing:
> *Arm.:* yet is Mans the better.
> *Tim.:* Nay tis not so, thy skin will stand in stead,
> Tis thicke, rough, strong, and will appease thy debter.
> (Sig. A4v)

Armin goes down another rung in the order of being, metamorphosed from dog to cadaver, whose skin the stick is already tanning in potentia. But, at this point, Armin formulates a cowardly come-back, retreating from the stick as performative object, and comparing it, in its soullessness, to an inkblot. We move from the stage to the page, over which Armin—now the puffed up writer—sits, sheltered from the contingencies of live performance, by his power to scrape out and revise.

> Thou that wilt make comparisons so odious,
> As twixt a Christian and a barking Curre,
> I hold thy wit to be no whit commodious,
> But to be scrapt out like a parchment blurre. (Sig. A4v)

Though posing often, in his stage roles, as a writer/clown who knows Latin (and who strikingly accessorizes his costume, not with the fool's emblematic wooden sword, but with an inkhorn like those worn by the orphans at Christ's Church), Armin's actual prose—as the pamphlet testifies--is steeped in the rhythms and requirements of acting. The fluid positions, changing in tandem with other points in a self-staged triangle, set the pace for rapid-fire physical transformation, where one likeness, no sooner realized, dissolves and gives way to another: all of which, don't forget, is achieved inside the logic of a well-rehearsed persona, moving in regular rotation between three distinct theatrical poses—the convivial, the misanthropic, and the servile. Just as Armin knew how to play the line between performer and audience, so he knew how to sustain a palpable tension between himself and his truncheon, exploiting their reciprocity, without blurring the distinction between their respective identities on stage. Once we, as readers, are able to assign both physical shape and personality

to each of the speakers in *Quips,* the verse comes to life as a canny registration of embodied banter. But this only presents an example of how Armin might perform, mobilizing his repertoire of alter-egos in a solo context, free from the pressure of other autonomous characters and the temporality of dramatic narrative. What would this performance style look like, grafted into the mechanism of a full-blown festive comedy? How might the satirical possibilities of Armin's "protean personae" unfold in Shakespeare's conception of a fictive world and its non-clown characters?

* * *

Maria: Here comes my lady: make your excuse wisely, you were best.
[Enter Lady *Olivia,* with *Malvolio.*]
Clown: Wit, and't be thy will, put me into good fooling! (1.5. 28-30)[12]

The first performance of *Twelfth Night* probably took place on December 29, 1601.[13] The date leads us to imagine that Shakespeare not only wrote the clown part with Armin in mind, but tailored it to the comic persona that we find worked out in the pamphlet. At Olivia's entrance, Feste snaps to attention as a professional jester, prepared to entertain his patroness, not however with the clear conscience of a newcomer to the court, but as a regular retainer with a culpable record—an echo and a portent of the guilty dog which "must to kennel." "*Olivia.* Go to, y'are a dry fool... Besides you grow dishonest" (1.5. 38-39). The triangle instituted in solo performance, between Armin, Timothie, and the reader/audience, becomes internal to the new situation, with Olivia's steward, Malvolio, playing the Puritanical reviler: "I marvel your ladyship takes delight in such a barren rascal: I saw him put down the other day with an ordinary fool, that has no more brain than a stone" (1.5. 81-84), and Olivia herself cast as the patron, alter-ego.

Olivia: Take the fool away.
Clown: Do you not hear, fellows? Take away the lady. (1.5. 36-37)

But is Feste, scripted into this more complex dramatic situation, likely to mingle with extrinsic identities (those of other characters or the audience) in the same way that Armin does when working solo? Can Feste, for example, presume to manipulate Olivia in the

same way that he manipulates the truncheon in the dedication to *Quips*? Olivia's status as a principal character does not allow her to be moved around so freely by the Clown; and while the flatteries paid by Armin to his stick bind the two together in a humble imitation of courtly fashion, Feste's overtures to Olivia serve, albeit in a playful way, to structure the terms of his actual employment:

> *Clown:* Good madonna, why mourn'st thou?
> *Olivia:* Good fool, for my brother's death.
> *Clown:* I think his soul is in hell, madonna.
> *Olivia:* I know his soul is in heaven, fool.
> *Clown:* The more fool, madonna, to mourn for your brother's soul, being in heaven.
> Take away the fool, gentlemen. (1.5. 64-70)

'Good madonna,' Feste begins. 'Good fool,' Olivia echoes, apparently in amiable humor. The titles establish each speaker according to their courtly station. And yet, something both tender and mocking flavors the Clown's use of 'madonna,' a version of 'my lady' which, hovering between official and familiar address, begins to sound like 'mad lady.' Olivia's use of 'fool' in turn grants Feste, over and above the rank of Clown, a subversive latitude. Later in the scene Olivia remarks, 'There is no slander in an allowed fool,' a line which echoes the defensive pun from *Quips:* when Armin, countering Timothie's raillery, protests concerning his own line of reason, 'yet it is alowde.' In short, Shakespeare opens the distance between patron and player-cum-fool, to negotation, and for Olivia, who is—after all—more sensate than Armin's truncheon, the rhythm of Feste's catechism, the tug-of-war over her own authority, proves titillating. His "I think his soul is in hell, madonna," is unabashedly impertinent, as if prodding the lady toward madness, while Olivia's "I know his soul is in heaven, fool," in taking unguarded offense, suggests that the fool has struck a chord. Feste, resuming his professional objectivity, steps back as if to offer a detached critique of his patron's power of reason: "The more fool, madonna, to mourn," etc.

The negotiable distance between the Clown and his benefactor(s)—a more accurate representation, in fact, of late sixteenth century mores1[14]—throws into fanciful relief the picture drawn by *Quips,* of Armin bedding down or carousing with his

inanimate (but intimate) patron. Feste is less "the Lady Olivia's fool" than a promiscuous servant who roams between households, picking up extra money where and from whom he can. While his presence (and later his songs) provoke emotive responses in his interlocutors, he is also isolated, with a double line sketched around him, so that—even within the world of the play—he works in a solo capacity. While the other characters live in a time-scheme of fictive experience (whether Olivia's bereavement or Orsino's disappointed love), Feste's sense of duration is constituted out of what might be termed he play's "professional memory," and the hint it conveys of a repertoire performed in the past (whether of music or gags) for a prior employer: e.g., Olivia's father, "the count / That died some twelvemonth since," or for her brother, "Who shortly also died" (1.2. 37-39). Like the travelling players in *Hamlet,* Feste maintains a strictly professional tie to Illyria: any experience he gathers there, he empties out again in a riddle, pun, or song.

Twelfth Night, commissioned by George Carey, Lord Chamberlain, as Twelfth Night entertainment for the Queen and her attendants, introduced elements of Armin's playing style—already familiar to a public audience—to a courtly clientele. Shakespeare scripts Feste so that he will look to all intents and purposes *like* the clown from the Curtain, but shifted into the guise of a court fool, employed by fictive potentates. With this external reference point, the public audience at subsequent performances could expect to see Armin do what he did best, but this time using the elements of the fictive world to sharpen his material. For instance, the business of projection (i.e., projecting a character onto a stick) might easily, in a situation where the comedian was licensed to play the fool, change to that of impersonation: rather than making fragments of human behavior adhere to an inanimate object, the impersonator steals pieces of behavior away from an unknowing rival, making them adhere to his/her own body, thus giving them a satirical, alien life. This is what happens at the end of *Twelfth Night* when Feste, bearing a letter from "mad" Malvolio, prepares—at Olivia's command—to "open't, and read it."

> *Clown:* Look then to be well edified, when the fool
> delivers the madman. [*Reads*] *By the Lord, madam,—*
> *Olivia:* How now, art thou mad?

Clown: No madam, I do but read madness: and your ladyship will have it as it ought to be, you must allow *vox*.
Olivia: Prithee, read i'thy right wits.
Clown: So I do, madonna. But to read his right wits is to read thus: therefore, perpend my princess, and give ear. (5.1. 288-99)

The implication is that, in reading the letter, Armin begins to ape the voice (and perhaps the behavior) of a madman so that, in place of the epistolary text, we get a theatrical representation of the speaker. The pun on "mad, madam, and madonna" returns, rejuvenated by association with Feste's impersonation of mad Malvolio. Again, we witness Armin's powers of self-transformation, but this time the spectacle is transplanted to the middle of a layered situation, where both on- and off-stage audiences are already occupied with the revelation of Viola's real identity and her reunion with Sebastian. Olivia indicates that the fool has reached the limits of his license, that there is no room in the present situation for the digressions of Feste/Armin's solo performance or the competitive motives which drive it.

"[A]nd your ladyship will have it as it ought to be, you must allow *vox*." Feste's protest singles out voice—gleaned from the actor's other means—as a metonym for theatrical impersonation. Elsewhere in the play, voice, unnaturally estranged from the body, is recognized as a special instrument of invasion (assault and contagion), as when Viola, seeking to breach the melancholic perimeter of Orsino's court, disguises herself and gains employment as a eunuch: "for I can sing, / And speak to him in many sorts of music" (1.1. 56-58). Malvolio's complaint, later in the play, that the "nocturnal roisterers"[15] (Sir Toby, Feste, and Sir Andrew) "squeak out [their] cozier's catches without any mitigation or remorse of voice" (2.3. 91-92), portrays a world in which drunken festive voices are always sounding from somewhere below the platform of the stage. Sir Toby, capping the argument, invokes the properties of Feste's singing voice which make it, like the plague, a transmissible thing. "*Toby*. A contagious breath. *Andrew*. Very sweet and contagious. *Toby*. To hear by the nose, it is dulcet in contagion" (2.3. 55-57).

As arbiter of *vox* in Illyria, Feste receives a challenge from Viola, who likewise passes between the courts of Orsino and

Olivia, disguised as the eunuch, Cesario. In metatheatrical terms, this conflict would have been staged as a confrontation (an exchange of suspicious sidelong glances?) between Armin and the boy-actor playing Viola. Both, in a sense, have donned fictive identities and entered Illyria's mad web under professional pretenses. Within the context of the fiction, their vocal peculiarities represent equally fashionable novelties: while Armin contrives, through artifice, to disguise his voice, the eunuch's vocal maturation has been unnaturally suspended. The clown is thus thrown into competition—for money and courtly favors—with this rival creature, whose voice, in potentia, threatens to prove as preternatural as Armin's, perhaps even less anchored to worldly cadences. Cesario's voice, which is simultaneously Viola's and the voice of the boy actor (one unchanging voice which spans three superimposed incarnations), moves emblematically to the center of the plot, stimulating fantasy and motivating desire.[16]

When Orsino sends Cesario to deliver "the book of his secret soul" to Olivia, he suggests that his/her voice is singularly suited to the task: "thy small pipe / Is as the maiden's organ, shrill and sound, / And all is semblative a woman's part. / I know thy constallation is right apt / For this affair" (1.4. 32-36). In the Duke's fantasy, he takes possession of that (much desired) voice and, with methodical perversion, fits it to his own message: in his ear, he hears his sentiments (those of an adult male) calibrated to Cesario's prodigious vocal cords. The effects of Cesario's voice equally underlie his/her wooing of Olivia in 1.5. Olivia hears the voice from behind her veil and seems to welcome the opportunity to unveil, to bare her face, so as to meet the naked voice on a like plane of exposure.

> *Viola:* Good woman, let me see your face.
> *Olivia:* Have you any commission from your lord to negotiate with my face? You are now out of your text: but we will draw the curtain and show you the picture. [*Unveiling*] Look you, sir, such a one I was this present. Is't not well done?
> *Viola:* Excellently done, if God did all. (1.5. 233-239)

The quibble, with which Olivia compares her face to a painting, serves to reinforce the nature of the eunuch's special appeal. Like Olivia's figurative portrait, in mourning for her brother, Cesario

is unnaturally suspended in time: as Maria says, "'Tis with him in standing water, between boy and man." (1.5. 160-161). But in the act of *facing*—that is, of interpreting past another persona's "fair and outward character," and being interpreted in turn—Olivia is content to stop at the physical surface (in the same way that Viola settles in 1.2. not to pry into the Captain's character, "though that nature with a beauteous wall / Doth oft close in pollution" ([48-49]). Although Viola's feminine character presses, in all sorts of ways, against the limits of her disguise, Olivia's misconstruction smooths over the eruptions. Or rather, reading the erotic possibilities of the liminal voice into Cesario's face, Olivia's libido is launched into a realm of hypothesis and projection: first it becomes possible for her to conceive how a eunuch might desire (in response to Viola's "If I did love you in my master's flame"), then to imagine being literally seduced by the eunuch's voice (Cesario's face and form concealed, all the while, by the fragile lattice of the "willow cabin" at Olivia's gate). The strange way that Viola seizes, in her improvisation, on the image of the willow cabin—a pastoral emblem which, on first impression, does not square with the ambiance of Olivia's milieu—makes more sense if we think of the uncanny power of shepherds' voices, in Virgil or Theocritus, to resurrect the past and bring the dead to life. The willow cabin stands as a figure for the many unassimilated tabernacles—or points of imaginary space—out of which *Twelfth Night,* as an entire play, is comprised. These points might take the form of Orsino imagining the voice of his passion "unsexed," or Olivia fantasizing herself violated by that voice but, in all cases, these windows of projection, inspired by the "dulcet contagion" of an imagined song, come to punctuate the progress of Shakespeare's otherwise straightforward plot of comic disguise and reversal.

Out of these cells, or apertures, of imagined space, Armin's voice physically emerges. For despite all the *talk* of eunuchs and song, it is only Feste who really sings. The desire for a certain kind of music, displaced from the beginning of the play—when Orsino calls for the musicians to continue ("If music be the food of love, play on")—snags on the boy actor's body, but even then fails to be vocalized until Feste, specifically sought out for the purpose, arrives at Orsino's court to perform. His is a strange piece of

music, chosen—as John Hollander says—out of Orsino's "desire for the Good Old Song that nudges the memory, the modern request made of the cocktail pianist."[17] Feste uses the "old, plain" song, however, to mimic the hyperbolic logic according to which the love-sick Illyrians have frozen time. In a way that pertains more immediately to the Clown's professional interests. Feste sings to "face off" with Cesario, impersonating—at the same time undermining—the promise invested in the boy actor's (still unvoiced) song.[18] Again, Armin's voice is used to sing in place of someone else, acting as a metonym for the eunuch who only exists imaginarily, as well as for an extrinsic time-frame, into whose fluid, unmarked parameters Feste fades, whenever he crosses out of the concrete, fictive context.

The play is more lucid about the frame from which Viola's character has entered Illyria. Cast ashore by a storm, and bereft of her brother, she allows her identification with Olivia's mourning to motivate her plan to assume a neutered mask. Within Illyria, the split between what Viola pretends to be and what she really is produces duplicitous speech: "What I am and what I would, are as secret as maidenhead" (1.5. 218-219). Loving Orsino herself, jealousy motivates Viola's desire to look behind Olivia's veil: she wants to get a first-hand glimpse of her rival's beauty, to verify that it is as wondrous as the Duke believes. Thus, beneath the provocation of Cesario/Viola's indeterminate voice, exists a layer of double-sided language, whose intimations Orsino cannot hear any more than Olivia can: "VIOLA. Ay, but I know—ORSINO. What dost thou know? VIOLA. Too well what love women to men may owe. . . My father had a daughter lov'd a man. / As it might be perhaps, were I a woman / I should love your lordship" (2.4. 104-109). Rather than making Orsino consider a level of literal signification (i.e., what if I were *really* a woman?), Viola's "were I" propels the Duke back into ecstatic hypotheses. He hears "were I a woman" as "were I Olivia." No one in Illyria catches onto Viola's innuendo save Feste. After all, artificial folly—the Clown's guise—provides the primordial model of double-edged hypothesis: "Were I a wise man," the fool might say, meaning that he is wiser than his ignorant interlocutor. Whereas, "were I a fool" means that if the fool were really a fool (which he is), he would be wise enough to acknowledge it. In folly, as Feste/Armin practices

it, the conditional mood produces an oscillating effect, so that no speaker is ever just one thing, but (at least) two—simultaneously. Feste's suspicion of the newcomer is therefore heightened by a sense of recognition: where others project raw eroticism, Feste catches the hint of trickery in Viola's voice.

* * *

Another example from *Quips Upon Questions* illustrates how Armin and his truncheon might have played the parts of two fools joined in a mutually unprofitable contract. This quip does not begin with a question, but rather the title of a parable:

Two Fooles well met

Arm.: Two fooles well met, each poynted at the other.
Tim.: Laughing a good to see each others face:
Arm.: The one made vow to call his fellow brother,
And to acknowledge him in every place.
To lend him coyne,
Tim.: though he had none him selfe:
Arm.: To teach him wit,
Tim.: when he himselfe had none. (Sig. Bv)

Each fool laughs at the other's face, unaware that he is looking at a reflection of his own. The first fool, represented by Armin, pretends to be a good-willed simpleton. He says that he wants to befriend his semblance, but as Timothie, who represents the second, savvy fool points out, he has neither the wit nor the money to do so.

Tim.: The other sott
Arm.: like to this former else,
Tim.: To requite his kindnesse, vow'd like love alone.

The truncheon thus picks up the story line, overriding Armin's interruption—which seeks to restore equality between the two fools—and proceeds to turn the moralizing epigram around.

Tim.: Seest thou this bird (quoth he) in yonder wood?
I give thee her to rost.
Arm.: O wilt thou so?
That meat I love, and will not denie her.
Tim.: Take her (quoth he) and if thou canst come by her.

Imagining a dialogue between the two not-so-foolish fools, Timothie shows how the so-called sot (who has gotten wise to the other's tricks) gets revenge on his friend, whose voice presumably

is mimicked by Armin. The double entendre of "rost" (roast/roost) implies a test of the first fool's sexuality, or by extension, of Armin's vs. the stick-cum-dildo's virility. Then, without warning, a third voice intervenes:

> Were not these fooles, to promise what they had not?
> Where such want wit, 'twere better their tongs gad not.

This, the voice of the moralist—perhaps a heckler who has jumped in to mediate the conflict between the two fools—is not immune to this tag game of folly.

> *Tim.:* True hast thou sayd, the first was nothing wise,

The stick sides momentarily with the audience member against the first fool, but Armin has had enough.

> *Arm.:* No more, the second was, let it suffice:

But Timothie prefers to keep the ball in the air.

> *Tim.:* One that gives golde,
> *Arm.:* the next that gives the bird,
> *Tim.:* Three fooles well met,

And thus, Armin concludes, pointing the stick at the luckless spectator:

> for thou shalt be the third.

When Viola and Feste meet in *Twelfth Night* (3.1.), like Armin and Timothie, they move through levels of ritualized aggression. They are both performers, lifted for the moment out of playing for the public, but—as Feste perceives it—in competition for the same patron. "VIOLA. Art not thou the Lady Olivia's fool? CLOWN. No indeed, sir, the Lady Olivia has no folly. She will keep no fool, sir, till she be married, and fools are as like husbands as pilchards are to herrings, the husband's the bigger" (3.1. 32-36). Feste implicitly compares fool sizes to penis sizes, suggesting that—as Olivia's husband—a penis-less Cesario will easily be made a fool (or cuckold) of by a better-hung fool. Just as Feste tries to pin the tag of fool on Cesario, so he tries to negate him/her. "VIOLA. I warrant thou art a merry fellow, and car'st for nothing. CLOWN. Not so, sir, I do care for something; but in my conscience sir, I do not care for you: if that be to care for nothing, sir, I would it would make you invisible" (3.1. 26-31).

In *Quips,* Armin provides a portrait of the court fool as an educated, upwardly mobile performer. With this in mind, it's important to take Shakespeare's scene for what it is: as representing tensions that could have existed, whether at court or in a theatrical company, between two players (who perceive each other as) vying for the office of fool. Like Sir Timothie, Feste does not believe in the possibility of their fellowship. The scene, however, begs a larger question: does something in the role of artificial fool itself defy doubling? The well-oiled joint on which such a fool's speech pivots—whether in Armin's pamphlet or in Shakespeare's play—already implies an intrinsic, uncentered doubleness:

> *Arm.:* give the dry fool drink, then is the fool not dry:
> bid the dishonest man mend himself, if he mend,
> he is no longer dishonest;
> *Tim.:* If he cannot, let the botcher mend
> him. Anything that's mended is but patched. . .
> (1.5. 40-47)

Character like matter, the first fool says, can be "mended" by accretion: if a quality is lacking, add it. But the second fool cuts him off: shoddy repairs never change the substance. What is the lesson taught by a conclusion which inverts its premise? That to walk on the fissure of so many "patches," as Feste does, is to conjure a vertiginous "nothing" in between. Building his persona on a shifting dialectic, the artificial fool must consistently bolster the dynamic that lets him be a fool... rather than something more simple, dangerous, aberrant, or even mad. The materialization (even the gravitational pull) of another licensed fool threatens to undermine the balance, to throw the first fool's privileged obliquity, in a paradoxical sense, off-center. Within the structure of Shakespeare's play, Feste's fears prove unwarranted, for the boy actor does not derange the tactics underpinning the fool's artifice, so much as he replicates them in the territory of gender: Who Viola/Cesario is (what sex, what substance) becomes contingent—within the fictive world—on maintaining something like the fool's precarious obliquity, his skewed position relative to other characters. Upon receiving Olivia's ring, the boy actor (who is both Viola and Cesario) reflects: "As I am man / My state is desperate for my master's love: / As I am woman (now alas the day!) / What thriftless sighs shall poor Olivia breathe?" The impossible paradox

resolves itself, through Shakespeare's acoustical sensibility, into a self-reflexive pun: "O time, thou must untangle this, not I, / It is too hard a knot for me t'untie."

* * *

Love in Illyria flames up around points of infeasible character—epitomized by what others imagine to be Cesario's unearthly voice—while the lovers foment their frenzy by conceiving themselves as victims of erotic, if incorporeal, baitings: Orsino maintains that upon first sight of Olivia, "That instant was I turn'd into a hart, / And my desire, like fell and cruel hounds / E'er since pursued me" (1.1. 21-23), while Olivia solicits Cesario, "Have you not set my honour at the stake, / And baited it with all th'unmuzzled thoughts / That tyrannous heart can think?" (3.1. 120-122).[19] Meantime, the mad quality of this obsessive desire gets absorbed and recycled by Feste and his cohorts. In an outrageous displacement, they transfer the role of lovelorn scapegoat to the person of Malvolio, who has been tricked by the waiting woman, Maria, into believing that Olivia hungers secretly to see him in yellow stockings and cross-garters. When the steward appears on stage sporting, over and above his outlandish trappings, a broad, unchanging smile, Olivia diagnoses his condition as "midsummer madness" and Maria takes her cue to have Malvolio confined to a dark cell. By displacing madness into this corner of the play, Shakespeare gives Armin a spotlight in which to perform his favorite kind of routine. Feste, who has agreed to don a beard and gown and pretend to be the curate, Sir Topas, arrives to conduct an interview with the madman. The clown completes his revenge, for the steward's earlier disparagements, by forcing Malvolio—who cannot see him from the darkness of the cell—to follow a line of lunatic thought couched in the cleric's authoritative voice.[20]

> *Clown:* What is the opinion of Pythagoras concerning wildfowl?
> *Mal.:* That the soul of our grandam might haply inhabit a bird. (4.2. 51-54)

The quality that makes voice sufficient to delineate a fictive persona is related to whatever quality allows the clown to exist in Illyria, playing a fool, but untouched by the consequences

or the connective phenomena which anchor experience for the other characters (whether another character's physical entrance, the delivery of a message, or noise coming from elsewhere in the house). Viola/Cesario is most jarred by her encounter with the liminal fool because she meets him in a place already separate from, or outside of, the play's temporal mechanism. For Malvolio, duped and cloistered in a dark cell, the indicators of the fictive world have equally—if for different reasons—receded, so that his encounter with a purely imaginary voice (i.e., Sir Topas does not even exist as a character in Illyria) represents an idealized version of what Feste calls *vox*. For Malvolio, there is nothing to face, no appearance to interpret 'past,' just a voice onto whose unhinged speech the Puritan latches his thought process, and in step with whose madness he unwittingly falls. At this point, the laughter which Malvolio's ravings provoke in the audience, while not audible to Malvolio himself, finds implicit acknowledgement in the judgment served by Sir Topas. "CLOWN. Malvolio, Malvolio, thy wits the heavens restore: endeavor thyself to sleep, and leave thy vain bibble babble" (4.2. 98-100). Bibble babble is what the artificial fool ideally focuses at the center of any exchange: as when Armin and Sir Timothie stand aside to make room for the captured spectator: "Three fooles well met, for *thou* shalt be the third." Meantime, Armin's own voice, in ongoing dialogue with imaginary proliferations of itself, fades out at the margin:

> *Clown:* [*As Sir Topas*] Maintain no words with him, good fellow!
> [*As himself*] Who, I, sir? Not I, sir! God buy you, good Sir Topas!
> [*As Sir Topas*] Marry, Amen!
> [*As himself*] I will, sir, I will. (4.2. 102-105)

Notes

1. Robert Armin, "Quips Upon Questions, or, A Clownes Conceite on Occasion Offered," in *Collected Works,* ed. J.P. Feather (New York and London: Johnson Reprint Corp., 1972). All citations appear in parentheses.

2. E.K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage,* IV (Oxford: Clarendon Press1923), 330-331.

3. The echo of Falstaff's "but for sweet Jack Falstaff, kind Jack Falstaff, true Jack Falstaff, valiant Jack Falstaff, and therefore more valiant, being as he is old Jack Falstaff. . ." suggests that Armin's rhythms are meant to recall his predecessor, Will Kemp.

4. David Wiles, *Shakespeare's Clown* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 139.

5. Ibid, 138.

6. Nora Johnson, in *The Actor as Playwright* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), reads Quips as a "transcript" of Armin's "improvised jesting," while Richard Preiss, in *Clowning and Authorship in Early Modern Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), sees it as offering the reader an interactive experience, similar to but not identical to live performance. Neither, however, proposes reading individual quips as ventriloquial banter between Armin and Sir Timothie.

7. For a discussion of how Armin's shape-shifting comes up even in his work as a translator, see Alice Equestri, "The Italian Taylor and his Boy or What Robert Armin did to Straporola," *Renaissance Studies* 30 (April 2016), 254-272.

8. Wiles, *Shakespeare's Clown,* 148.

9. Ibid, 148.

10. Meredith Skura, *Shakespeare the Actor and the Purposes of Playing* (Chicago University of Chicago Press, 1993), 167.

11. Preiss speculates that Armin played Edgar in Lear, while the Fool role probably went to a boy apprentice.

12. All citations from *Arden Shakespeare* appear in parentheses.

13. David Wiles, *Shakespeare's Almanac* (Cambridge: Boydell & Brewer Inc., 1993), 11. Wiles contests Hotson's view that the play was commissioned for the Queen's Twelfth Night celebration the previous year. Instead, Wiles argues, the play was written for performance in the following year "to reawaken the memory" of Twelfth Night 1600-1, when "Virginia Orsino, Duke of Bracchiano, visited the Queen as representative of Tuscany" (8).

14. Compare Will Sommers, a regular member of Henry VIII's household, to Tarlton, who came and went from Elizabeth's court (until his death in 1588), often playing truant in order to moonlight as a barkeep and stage actor.

15. Francois Laroque, *Shakespeare's Festive World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 227.

16. The unsexed voice, defying entrapment by physical or ethical constraints, also poses an implicit challenge to the conventions defining courtly status quo. For an example of the capacity of a "border-crossing voice" to challenge socially constructed categories of gender and sexuality, see Elizabeth Wood's "Sapphonics" in the collection, *Queering the Pitch,* ed. Philip Brett, Elizabeth Wood, and Gary C. Thomas (New York: Routledge, 1994), 27-66.

17. John Hollander, *The Untuning of the Sky* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1961), 156.

18. Ibid, 160. Hollander writes, "Among the characters to whom Malvolio refers as 'the lighter people,' it is Feste, the singer and prankster, whose pipe and tabor serve as a travesty of Viola's vocal cords."

19. See Skura, 206. For more on the realization of the bearbaiting metaphor in *Twelfth Night,* see Stephen Dickey, "Shakespeare's Mastiff Comedy," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 42 (1991), 255-275.

20. Because the clown is wearing clerical apparel, the audience is invited to enjoy the parody on pious pretensions. Another tradition on which Armin and Shakespeare played was the pairing of holy mendicant and meddling friar.

Making Romeo a Man: Violence, Sexual Conquest, and the Promise of Marital Promiscuity[1]

Jess Landis
Franklin Pierce University

Readers and critics of Shakespeare's work make much of his take on women's virginity, and for good reason given the historical anxiety that surrounded the subject.[2] The regulation of women's bodies was a deeply ingrained practice tied to a social and political hierarchy based on primogeniture and heredity, and so the subject garners attention. *Romeo and Juliet* and responses to it, of course, figure prominently in the discussion of virginity in Shakespeare's plays, because the play presents a pubescent Juliet as a precious commodity and provides examples of the strict physical and social boundaries that contained women and girls' lives.[3] She is a young woman whose actions and choices are highly policed by her parents, especially her father, who severely restricts her actions. Despite these circumstances, Juliet's sexuality is sometimes characterized as remarkably mature by audiences and scholars because it is a humanized portrayal of a young woman as a sexual being. This often surprises young adult students who come to the play believing it to be a pure love story that relates the innocence of its titular characters. Significantly less attention has been paid to men's virginity in either early modern plays or the critical responses

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they have garnered. However, *Romeo and Juliet* does have things to say on this understudied subject. As the play progresses, Romeo's status as a man hinges on his and Juliet's virginity in more ways than one.

Reading Romeo's and other adolescent male characters' attitudes toward virginity and male sexuality can help us understand the cultural and historical attitude toward promiscuity as a marker of manhood. By extension, Romeo's sexual ideas about himself and his bride demonstrate confused ideas about marriage and its role as a marker of mature manhood. As Ann Jennalie Cook points out, "Full adulthood for both men and women came only with marriage. . . before wedding, individuals were lesser citizens; afterward, they were incorporated into society at a more responsible level."[4] The play makes much of marriage as a rite of passage, and a characteristic early modern anxiety about love and lust in godly union between man and wife exists in the play. Rather than presenting male promiscuity in opposition to marriage, this paper considers how Romeo and Juliet's courtship and eventual marriage offer the young man a way into the sexual world idealized by his young male friends and counterparts. As he seeks to discard his virginity, Juliet shows him that sexual desire is an integral part of a newly emerging idea of marriage rather than an oppositional force within it. In this way, the play presents marriage as a vehicle for the fulfillment of male adolescent sexual fantasies.

The play introduces a youthful vision of male sexuality early on. After the play's famous prologue, it opens on Capulet servingmen Sampson and Gregory ribbing each other with erotic puns that equate sexual conquest with the household feud that drives the play's action. Through their language choices, a rakish, if somewhat naïve, approach to women and their maidenhoods emerges. The boys tease each other about their ability to "stand" and brandish their "naked weapons" (1.1.10, 12, 29, 35).[5] They also plan to "thrust" themselves upon the "heads" of the Montague women (1.1.19, 24-6). When Sampson threatens women—"the weaker vessels"—with this sexual violence, the moment shows the ruthlessness that has been ingrained in the young men involved in this "ancient grudge" (1.1.16-17, Prologue.3). The violence of the conflict extends to their attitudes toward sex: they assault women with "weapons" and "cut off" their "heads" (1.1.34, 24-6). Violence

and sex—particularly violence and virginity—are conflated here, and the young men express a lack of respect for the chastity of their enemies' women. However, Gregory, in a moment that shows a smidgen of mature empathy, reminds Sampson that, "The quarrel is between our masters and us their men," and thus excludes the women. "'Tis all one," (1.1.8-21), Sampson retorts, re-implicating women in the Capulet/Montague feud, but importantly also calling attention to his own boyish status: he would have been "all one" himself. The character/actor is both boy and woman on the early modern stage, a position that reflects adolescents' liminal status in early modern society.

This exchange between these young men provides a glimpse into the nebulous space occupied by young men in feud-riddled Verona and early modern England, a social position that is both empowering and isolating. They lived by different rules of their own making. In her important work on early modern childhood, Kate Chedgzoy claims, "For boys… adolescence was not so much a chronological, developmental stage, as a socially produced time of temporary destabilization of the normal structures of dependence and autonomy that regulate the lives of children and adults."[6] In the play and in early modern England, the in-between state of the adolescent sometimes offered young men a freeing but unregulated social space. Amidst the love speech of *Romeo and Juliet,* there is to be found a picture of violent male adolescent privilege made possible by the liminality of adolescence. Young men attend parties they are not invited to, openly defy the Prince's policies, and assume women are theirs for the taking.

This sense of entitlement extends to occupying space and using it to serve their own ends. The young men in the play hold the public spaces of Verona captive by creating violence in the streets, which is emphasized from the play's beginning. Sexual teasing and the comedic nature of the opening scene discussed above quickly give way to a brawl motivated by young machismo and the infamous feud. The conflation of sex and violence highlights their common motivations: rather than impressing women or their elders with these pursuits, they are out to impress each other. Fighting and pursuing women make them men in each other's eyes partly because they contribute to a sense of group identity. Men cannot rule the city as individuals—as evidenced by the futile

efforts of the Prince to keep the peace—but instead form gangs in order to wield influence and effect change. Romeo's state of grief over Rosaline at the beginning of the play makes him an outsider, a potential liability in their quest. As Benvolio advises, Romeo should "Be ruled by [him]" and his other friends (1.1.233). The idealized courtly love and monogamous sex that Romeo seems to desire with Rosaline hardly seem to be valued amongst this boisterous and rowdy group of young men. A desire to follow suit and be reintegrated into the gang could explain Romeo's rash quickness in choosing a new woman to pursue after being rejected.

The opinion of his cronies matters much to Romeo. Their social cachet is persuasive, yet complex because assimilation into their group paradoxically requires distinction as they vie for top status. Romeo endures good-natured teasing about his melancholy state and poetic nature at his friends' hands, which clearly impacts him and his thinking. In particular, the charismatic Mercutio exerts a lot of influence.

Mercutio is an irresistible character inside and outside the world of the play. Audiences—particularly contemporary audiences—have reveled in his humor and impulsiveness.[7] He must be equally interesting to his male companions. His fierce individuality embodies the lawless freedom the young men crave and which they try to create in the streets of Verona. Despite his kinship with the Prince and Paris, he lives by his own rules, declaring: "Men's eyes were made to look, and let them gaze; / I will not budge for no man's pleasure, I" (3.1.54–55). Mercutio's defiance and unconventionality further become evident in his castigation of the conventional. He mocks Tybalt for being an obedient, exemplary courtier (2.4.19-20) and for fighting "by the book of arithmetic" (3.1.102). He speaks in irreverent sexual puns and lewd teases, a characteristic most prominently on display during his interaction with the nurse (2.4). In this scene, he jokes about heterosexual sex with familiarity in lines like, "the bawdy hand of the dial is now upon the prick of noon" (2.4.57-8). Given his familiarity with Romeo and their mutual affection for each other, it stands to reason that his attitudes toward love and sex would influence the lovelorn protagonist. Romeo's infatuation with Rosaline does not fit in with Mercutio's ideal heterosexual pairing that is dominated by a free sexuality, evidenced by Mercutio's relentless teasing. The

young Montague perhaps turns away from the chaste Rosaline to appease his friends and fit into their world. Perhaps Romeo believes that pursuing Juliet (and her virginity) might establish his role within his group of friends, not only because it would allow him to show off sexually, but also because it would incense their enemies the Capulets. For him, sexual conquest and potential promiscuity promise to establish his place among his friends, who currently mock him for being too much in love with love and not active enough in the hate that surrounds the feud.

Contrary to his friends' descriptions, Romeo does not see himself as someone normally affected by heartbreak. He wants to cast off his lovesick reputation and be seen as a man amongst his friends. Grieving the loss of Rosaline, he laments, "Tut, I have lost myself. I am not here. / This is not Romeo. He's some other where" (1.1.205-6). Romeo's affair with the young woman and his reaction to it fundamentally change him in his own eyes. Perhaps this unidentified shift is a move from childhood to adulthood. In the limbo of adolescent angst, he is no longer a boy, but because Rosaline refuses sex, he is also not a man. Romeo emphasizes Rosaline's chastity as an obstacle to his achievement of his true identity as a grown man, and his description of it involves both sex and violence. He explains his thwarted conquest to Benvolio, his other confidant, thus:

Romeo: She'll not be hit
With Cupid's arrow. She hath Dian's wit,
And, in strong proof of chastity well armed,
From love's weak childish bow she lives uncharmed.
She will not stay the siege of loving terms,
Nor bide th' encounter of assailing eyes,
Nor ope her lap to saint-seducing gold.

Benvolio: Then she hath sworn that she will still live chaste?

Romeo: She hath, and in that sparing [makes] huge waste;
…
She hath forsworn to love, and in that vow
Do I live dead, that live to tell it now. (1.1.216-232)

Through a characteristic adolescent melodrama, Romeo equates being sexually rejected—not romantically rejected—with death: he cannot be himself without sex. Like the opening scene, this passage

describes sex acts using violent metaphors. Men attempt to "hit" women with Cupid's arrow, a thinly veiled, immature symbol for the penis. They "assail" women with their gaze. Sex is to be *taken*, yet Romeo fails to take it, putting not only his sexual courage but also his physical bravery into question and making his masculinity vulnerable. Pining for Rosaline with no satisfaction keeps him "Shut up in prison, kept without [his] food" (1.2.58). Benvolio urges him to get over his love by "giving *liberty* to thine eyes" (1.1.235) to find another lady. In other words, successful sexual conquest can be achieved only through freedom and movement to look at other women. The instruction recalls Romeo's assailing eyes that failed to convince Rosaline to turn on her vow of chastity.

Romeo's frustration about Rosaline's chaste vow, and Sampson and Gregory's sexually charged exchange, unleash sexual energy into the play from the opening scene, and much of this energy is focused on dismantling women's chastity. Allusions to female virginity in several other moments of the play similarly characterize it as a joke, a conquest, or an inconvenient obstacle to true connection. Several of these references indicate that virgin women need to be taught to sexually perform and to be appropriately submissive. For example, the Nurse's repeated bawdy joke about a toddler-aged Juliet mentions her learning to "fall backward" to accommodate a man (1.3.42, 56). Mercutio's Queen Mab, "presses [maids] and learns them first to bear, / Making them women of good carriage" (1.4.98-9). Other references suggest that women need to be "ripe" in order to handle sex, as Capulet comments to Paris at the beginning of the play (1.2.11). In other words, it falls to a man to judge women's ability—not willingness—to please him and teach women how to perform.

For young men, the loss of virginity is a road to the "liberty" and sexual wisdom that comes with being a grownup, but for women, its loss is just another way to acquiesce to men's superiority and remain subordinate. These fates are wrapped up with religious and cultural ideas of marriage. Juliet's vows of love reflect an understanding of this. She says, "All my fortunes at thy foot I lay / And follow thee my lord throughout the world" (2.2.154-155). In their courting exchanges, she expresses a willingness to sleep with him if he promises to marry her and take her away from her controlling parents, seeking to thwart their plan to marry her off

to Paris. She believes that inviting him to take her virginity permits her to become more her own woman outside of their control. Sex is her ticket out, but the ride is short. In their tragic love story, sexual relationships are not sustainable. Once their marriage is consummated, banishment forces the lovers apart. As Stanley Wells claims, the play, "begins with sex without love, and it is to continue with love without sex."[8] A significant tragic element of *Romeo and Juliet* is that their marriage can never be successful because (good) sex and love have little chance to coexist within an antiquated notion of marriage as an exchange chiefly in service of God and family.

Prior to the banishment, characters are impatient about sex, but this is replaced by impatience for union upon Romeo's unwilling exit from Verona. The expression of adult sexuality seems urgent to both lovers as a general tenor of impatience pervades this play. Ben Wiebracht has noticed such restlessness in the play, "Never have swords sat more restlessly in their scabbards than they do in *Romeo and Juliet.* Impatience is the cause of every misery in the play, from the deaths of Mercutio and Tybalt, to the rash challenge of Paris, to the premature suicide of Romeo."[9] But Wiebracht ignores the impatience that characterizes the lovers' interactions. Veronese men's literal *and* metaphorical swords are restless, including Romeo's. Juliet eagerly encourages Romeo to rescue her via marriage by playing on his desires, not only for sexual satisfaction, but also for a promotion into manhood. She works him into a frenzy to the point of begging, and then cleverly turns his sexual desire to a desire to marry. The play complicates sexual impatience with lovesick intemperance, another sign, in the eyes of the early moderns, of inexperience.[10] To be a "proper man" was to be levelheaded and civic-minded; there was little room for passionate love or sex in this ideal. Wiebracht claims, "In the Renaissance, serious love was inherently intense, inherently passionate, and inherently opposed to those domains in which the 'proper man' excelled. . . To truly love was to abandon all other duties and pursuits, and to glory in the sacrifice."[11] Juliet solves this dilemma by turning Romeo's lovesickness first into sexual desire and then into marital intentions.

Juliet begins her quest to get Romeo on her matrimonial page by evocatively pointing out her own passion and its immoderate

strength. She tells him she fears he will "think [her] havior light" and that she "should have been more strange" (2.2.104, 107). She elicits Romeo's impassioned response by denying to confess her love because it is "too rash, too ill-advised, too sudden" (2.2.125), yet she describes it using sexually suggestive language, calling attention to her "blush" and the "mask of night" (2.2.91, 90). Perhaps most suggestively, she implies that the next time they meet, her "beauteous flower" may have "ripened" (2.2.129-130), recalling her own father's reference to her sexual maturation. In response to this, Romeo groans with desire:

> *Romeo:* Wilt thou leave me so unsatisfied?
> *Juliet:* What satisfaction canst thou have tonight?
> *Romeo:* Th' exchange of thy love's faithful vow for mine.
> *Juliet:* I gave thee mine before thou didst request it
> And yet I would it were to give again. (2.2.132-5)

This exchange implies sexual satisfaction pretty clearly, but it also conflates the taking of Juliet's virginity with the vow of marriage. Her desire to be able to give her vow highlights the preciousness of her innocent but tantalizing sexual state. In short, by insinuating a promise of sex and an opportunity to give her virginity to Romeo, she tempts him to marriage with what is essentially a proposal. She instructs him, "If that thy bent of love be honourable / Thy purpose marriage, send me word tomorrow" (2.2.150-1), but she gives him no opportunity to actually reply to her suggestion of marriage. Juliet makes it so Romeo's sexual satisfaction via loss of his own virginity (and therefore his reputation among his friends) depends on their proper union in marriage.

Though Romeo may have to be subtly convinced of the importance of marriage, Juliet needs little instruction about the importance of sex. Despite Wells's claim that the bawdy disappears from the play upon Mercutio's death,[12] Juliet delivers some rather randy lines in the scene that directly follows the deadly fight and Romeo's banishment. Shakespeare provides this young character, barely old enough to be a woman, an almost scandalous understanding of not only her lover's sexual desire, but her own. After their secret marriage, she openly yearns for its consummation. Her own sexual impatience becomes apparent in the soliloquy she delivers as she waits for Romeo to come to her bedchamber, which mimics the language she uses to appeal to Romeo's desire. She says,

> Gallop apace, you fiery-footed steeds,
> Towards Phoebus' lodging: such a wagoner
> As Phaethon would whip you to the west,
> And bring in cloudy night immediately.
> Spread thy close curtain, love-performing night,
> That runaway's eyes may wink and Romeo
> Leap to these arms, untalk'd of and unseen.
> Lovers can see to do their amorous rites
> By their own beauties; or, if love be blind,
> It best agrees with night. Come, civil night,
> Thou sober-suited matron, all in black,
> And learn me how to lose a winning match,
> Play'd for a pair of stainless maidenhoods:
> Hood my unmann'd blood, bating in my cheeks,
> With thy black mantle; till strange love, grown bold,
> Think true love acted simple modesty.
> Come, night; come, Romeo. . .
> . . .
> O, I have bought the mansion of a love,
> But not possess'd it, and, though I am sold,
> Not yet enjoy'd: so tedious is this day
> As is the night before some festival
> To an impatient child that hath new robes
> And may not wear them. (3.2.1-34)

Here, alone on stage, she is much more straightforward about her desire than she is in her sexually suggestive exchange with Romeo because she no longer needs the cloak of modesty to woo her proper man. Recalling her wooing words to Romeo, she again plays on the notion that "love-performing night" is the time for lusty pastimes, and hastens its arrival. She recalls her (and Romeo's) virginity with a "bating" in her cheeks. Sure of her matrimonial bargain, the "mansion" she has purchased, she is impatient for it to be "enjoyed." The simile she uses at the end of this passage, that of the impatient child, emphasizes the idea that having married, the lovers achieved only part of their passage into adulthood. The rest of it will come once their "stainless maidenheads" have been lost in the winning game of sexual enjoyment.

Juliet teaches Romeo that not only sex but that marriage will allow him be seen as a man by his compatriots by proposing a newly emerging model of marriage that could accommodate their love. In the seventeenth century, Protestantism viewed sexual desire

within marriage as sinless. The concept that sex was companionate to a godly type of marriage allowed desire and chaste matrimony to live in consort. This made way for a monogamous marital ideal to emerge while restricting extra-marital relationships in a way that they had not been restricted before. Essentially, the Protestant vision of marriage ushered in the idea that sex between spouses should be pleasurable, therefore limiting the desire to seek satisfaction elsewhere. Philip Mirabelli identifies this new ideal in the play: "in *Romeo and Juliet* and early comedies, Shakespeare fused emerging marital discourse with erotic, mostly adulterous older ones, an ideal we can call *romantic* marriage, which only eventually exerted great social influence."[13] For Mirabelli, *Romeo and Juliet* provides an early model of marriage that encourages passion between partners, a model that would later become the norm. However, I think *Romeo and Juliet* supports a subversive approach to crystallizing strict notions of marriage and sexuality. Romeo and Juliet's rashness in rushing to the altar may be read as a byproduct of the new, church-backed and socially pervasive idea that sexual desire was an essential and encouraged part of marriage, and thus the play is a critique of the changes imposed on marriage as an institution. Because Romeo tried and was refused extramarital sex with Rosaline, he is quick to desire it of Juliet, and so is rife for her suggestion. With this understanding, we can actually equate the adolescent sexual urges that tie him to an adolescent group identity with an adult desire to marry.

Yet, the married Romeo ultimately chooses to distinguish himself from his friends. After he secretly weds his Juliet, he expresses a desire for peace in the streets of Verona, an attitude that contradicts his cohort's esteem for violence as a measure of manhood, as expressed in the play's opening. Romeo discourages conflict in the street, telling Tybalt he "loves" him, and that he "know'st [him] not" if Tybalt thinks he is a violent villain (3.1.32, 35). Once fighting breaks out, Romeo tries to persuade the others not to engage: "Gentlemen, for shame, forbear this outrage! / Tybalt, Mercutio, the prince expressly hath / Forbidden bandying in Verona streets: / Hold, Tybalt! good Mercutio!" (3.1.52-55). These pleas come mere hours after his secret marriage, but Romeo appears to have experienced a change now that he is a husband; he wants nothing to do with adolescent rituals of masculine prowess.

In petitioning for peace, Romeo shows himself to be a man who has transcended adolescent ideals of manhood. This provides hope for his future with his new bride. Of course, this hope is short-lived, and soon Romeo kills Tybalt in anger. The mature man we glimpse at the beginning of the scene falls back into his adolescent ways, ultimately dooming his marriage and passage into adulthood.

The coinciding deaths of the lovers seem to be an inescapable destiny, and Romeo's fatal blow to the Capulet cousin is, at least in part, what seals that fate. Unlike the lovelorn adolescent of the beginning of the play, the adult Romeo cannot slip between childhood and adulthood as it suits him. The "liberty" that Benvolio tempts him with is gone. Because he has married, or completed the ultimate rite of passage, he is no longer free to move about the streets and between life phases. Juliet's suggestion that he can have his wedding cake and eat it too ultimately proves untenable. In fact, the couple's marriage seems to end adolescence across the city; their deaths prompt the Prince to enforce peace in the streets, restricting the actions and movements of the surviving young men.

Notes

1. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 2017 Wooden O Symposium at Southern Utah University. The author wishes to thank her fellow presenters and attendees who offered their helpful feedback that led to this revision.

2. The following sources, among others, provide good discussion of virginity in Shakespeare and the early modern period: Mary Bly's *Queer Virgin and Virgin Queens on the Early Modern Stage* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Frances Dolan's *Marriage and Violence: The Early Modern Legacy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009); Marjorie Garber's *Coming of Age in Shakespeare* (New York: Routledge, 2013); Theodora Jankowski's *Pure Resistance: Queer Virginity in Early Modern English Drama* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000); Marie Loughlin's *Hymeneutics: Interpreting Virginity on the Early Modern Stage* (Cranbury, NJ: Bucknell University Press, 1997); and Sara Luttfring's *Bodies, Speech and Reproductive Knowledge in Early Modern England* (New York: Routlege, 2016).

3. Specifically, see Ursula Potter's "Navigating the Dangers of Female Puberty in Renaissance Drama," *Studies in English Literature* 53:2 (2013): 421-439.

4. Ann Jennalie Cook, *Making a Match: Courtship in Shakespeare and His Society* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), 8.

5. All quotations from *Romeo and Juliet* are taken from the Folger edition, eds. Barbara A. Mowat, and Paul Werstine (New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2009).

6. Kate Chedgzoy, "Introduction: 'What, are they children?'" in *Shakespeare and Childhood,* eds. Kate Chedgzoy, Susanne Greenhalgh, and Robert Shaughnessy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 24.

7. Many critics have commented on Mercutio's charisma as well as his liminality. See especially Joseph Porter's several works on the character, including *Shakespeare's Mercutio: His History and Drama* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1988).

8. Stanley Wells, *Shakespeare, Sex, and Love* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2010), 151.

9. Ben Wiebracht, "'The Vile Conclusion'. Crises of resolution in Shakespeare's love plots," Shakespeare 12.3 (2016): 246.

10. The characters' impatience plays into the early modern idea that holding on to virginity too long caused a host of problems, particularly sickness and unrest. Ursula Potter posits that the play shows girls' virginity in adolescence causing anxiety about health and familial stability. She argues that fear of conditions like greensickness led to extreme policing of young people's behavior. (See "Navigating the Dangers of Female Puberty in Renaissance Drama," *Studies in English Literature* 53.2 (2013): 421-439). The idea that remaining a virgin too long was cause for concern compellingly contradicts accepted ideas about the extreme protection of girls' virginity.

11. Wiebracht, "The Vile Conclusion," 248-9.

12. Wells Stanley, *Shakespeare, Sex, and Love* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 164.

13. Philip Mirabelli, "Shakespeare and Sexual Re-formation," *Modern Language Quarterly* 76:1 (2015): 19.

Gertrude's Tale

Patricia Patrick
Brigham Young University - Hawaii

Ophelia's death takes place decorously offstage. The audience learns about it only through Gertrude's narrative about an innocent young woman who gathers flowers and sings, oblivious to her impending death. This account of Ophelia's apparently benign death raises questions. Why does Gertrude tell this story? Why was she there, and why did no one help Ophelia? Scott Trudell articulates concerns shared by many audience members: "Ophelia's drowning fascinates and disturbs us, especially given the onlookers' perplexing failure to intervene. We wonder how much of Gertrude's portrayal of Ophelia as a harmless aesthetic object 'incapable of her own distress' is calculated to subdue Laertes and the rebellious mob at his heels."[1] The questionable circumstances of this story about an event that the audience does not witness draw attention to the possibly fictionalized nature of this account, and thus to the teller and her motivation. This motivation for her fiction-making goes deeper than political expedience. Gertrude is the appropriate teller for a poetic protest against the vilification of women that she and Ophelia suffer in the fallen Eden of Denmark's corrupted court.

Gertrude recounts Ophelia's death in what is one of her longest speeches:[2]

There is a willow grows aslant a brook,
That shows his (hoar) leaves in the glassy stream;

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> There with fantastic garlands did she come
> Of crow-flowers, nettles, daisies, and long purples
> That liberal shepherds give a grosser name,
> But our cold maids do "dead men's fingers" call them:
>
> There, on the pendent boughs her coronet weeds
> Clamb'ring to hang, an envious sliver broke;
> When down her weedy trophies and herself
> Fell in the weeping brook. Her clothes spread wide;
>
> And, mermaid-like, awhile they bore her up:
> Which time she chanted snatches of old lauds;
> As one incapable of her own distress,
> Or like a creature native and indued
> Unto that element: but long it could not be
>
> Till that her garments, heavy with their drink,
> Pull'd the poor wretch from her melodious lay
> To muddy death.[3]

Gertrude's narrative has a poetic quality. According to Bridget Lyons, "Ophelia's death is 'beautified' by the Queen . . . described visually in terms of the flowers with which she has been associated, and in language that emphasizes the natural beauty rather than the horror of the scene."[4] Maurice Hunt sees "the rich pathos, poignant rhythms, and evocative details of her account of Ophelia's death" as evidence of Gertrude's full and complex interior life. He also points out how her narrative is not only beautiful but also stark; her account begins in "melodious" and ends with "muddy."[5] A. D. Nuttall opens *Shakespeare the Thinker* with an exploration of Gertrude's story, which he calls a "sudden lyric ascent," and an "aria."[6] Nutall adds, however, that this speech is not simply about the "exalting agency of high poetry," but also "intelligently, about the tension between lyric exaltation and cold, muddy water."[7] Gertrude's intensely poetic language suggests that she is not simply lying or embellishing a sordid truth but creating a poetic invention. The tension readers see between lyric and graphic is an important part of a poetics that measures that distance between what should be and what is.

The distance between what is and what ought to be is central to the idealizing poetics Phillip Sidney praises in his "Defense of Poetry." The poet does not simply report what she sees, not "what is or is not, but what should or should not be."[8] Poetry creates a

golden alternative to the fallen world: "Nature never set forth the earth in so rich so rich tapestry as divers poets have done; neither with so pleasant rivers, fruitful trees, sweet-smelling flowers. . . Her world is brazen, the poets only deliver a golden."[9] Gertrude's poetic account of Ophelia's death evokes this fruitful and flowery golden age. However, her poetics have an edge that protests the tragically fallen world in which she finds herself.

The world of *Hamlet* is a fallen world, where human beings are exiled from a garden of innocence. Echoing the story of the Biblical Fall and the first murder, the ghost tells Hamlet that he has been poisoned by his brother in a garden: the "serpent" that poisoned him now possesses his crown and has seduced his Queen (1.5.38-48).[10] Hamlet sees himself as cast out from Eden. The golden world has declined to "an unweeded garden / that grows to seed. Things rank and gross in nature / Possess it merely" (1.2.139-141). Weeds symbolize sinful forgetfulness. The ghost urges Hamlet to vengeance lest he become complacent like the "fat weed / that roots itself in ease on Lethe wharf" (1.5.39-40). When Hamlet upbraids his mother for forgetting his father, he urges her to stop sleeping with Claudius, lest she "spread compost on the weeds / To make them ranker" (3.4.172-73). Hamlet here associates weeds with Gertrude's sexuality as well; fecundity in the fallen world does not breed flowers.

In harsh speeches to Gertrude and Ophelia, Hamlet lays much of the blame for the fallen world on women. As Hannibal Hamlin explains, Hamlet expresses the common belief that woman was responsible for the Fall: "Woman (Eve) was, after all, the reason the world is an 'unweeded garden'. . . This garden is described as 'rank and gross' not simply because it is untended but because in Nature itself 'something is rotten.'"[11] Woman is not only responsible for, but also identified with, this fallen state of nature. For Hamlet, "Gertrude is both Eve and the fallen garden itself."[12] As woman embodies the fallen state of nature, the flowering garden becomes choked with weeds.

Ophelia attempts a counter-narrative to this jaundiced view of fallen nature and fallen women. Rebecca LaRouche argues that Ophelia's distribution of flowers in Act Four is informed by Ophelia's knowledge of the healing properties of plants. Her flowers offer an alternative language and vision to the "ego-, andro-, and

anthropocentric view of the world that is Hamlet's." In contrast to the tragic, poisonous world of the court, she argues, "Ophelia belongs to another, perhaps more simple, herb-filled world, in which plants can restore one's stability of mind and can ease pain and are not used for, but are rather used against, poisoning."[13] Ophelia's flower language attempts to transform the fallen world into a fruitful Eden, but she is unable to heal herself or, apparently, to get anyone to hear her.

The story that Ophelia tries to tell gets a fuller hearing in a later play. In *The Winter's Tale,* propagating the story of woman as temptress and originator of the Fall spreads winter while women's tales about themselves bring back spring. Polixenes's joke that women are the source of the Fall turns deadly serious when Leontes accuses Hermione of adultery.[14] His unfounded accusation brings deathly winter, loss, and death to his family. When the lost Perdita is finally found, the play fills with imagery of spring.

The Winter's Tale presents this redemptive story in a genre that is often considered especially sympathetic to women. Claire Dawkins expounds on how Romance validates a woman's tale and thus brings healing rather than tragedy:

> The genre of romance—so often denigrated as being feminine in its form or aimed at a female or effeminate audience who merely read for pleasure—is what brings about virtue in Leontes when tragedy could not. Whereas tragedy has taught him to be a suspicious reader of the women around him, romance re-teaches him to look at women with faith. It teaches Leontes to approach his wife as someone to listen to, rather than as someone with whom he is locked in a zero-sum game of power with the end result of either kill or be killed.[15]

In this romance, Paulina reverses the effects of the Fall. Her words create the possibility of redemption for Leontes, and she revises his corrupted view of women.

The Winter's Tale validates women's virtues, voices and poetics. Hermione's virtue and her word are proven true. Paulina's insistence on Hermione's virtue are vindicated. Paulina not only defends Hermione with words that keep her injured virtue alive, but she also poetically reaches beyond the wintery, fallen nature of the play to create a story of what should be. The play reaches its happy ending as she artfully stages Hermione's transformation from

lifeless statue to living woman. As Jonathan Bate explains, Paulina's art does what nature cannot as she apparently restores Hermione to life.[16] "Nowhere," Bate affirms, "is there more powerful testimony to the creative, even redemptive, power of drama."[17] Nevertheless, as Bate points out, Shakespeare highlights how human this art-making is. Antigonus and Mamillius are not resurrected, and Hermione's wrinkles witness lost time that will not be recovered.[18] *The Winter's Tale* ends with renewal only insofar as it is available in the mortal world; time and time's irrevocable passage is not abolished. The play offers both rejoicing and lamentation for what is lost. It celebrates the power of artifice but also acknowledges its limitations.

The Winter's Tale connects the restorative return of the seasons with women's creative powers, both as poets and mothers. Mary Ellen Lamb suggests that *The Winter's Tale* demonstrates "the supposed feminine orientation of prose romance" not only through "the considerable narrative authority wielded by Paulina," but also through the subject matter of the play, "supporting the maternal condition as a legitimate topic and in valuing the recovery of a daughter."[19] This story of the lost daughter whose return transforms winter to spring alludes to what might be considered another women's tale—how Ceres secures the return of her daughter Proserpina from the underworld. Critics of *The Winter's Tale* have commented on links between the play and this story. Like Proserpina, Perdita is associated with flowers.[20] Like Proserpina, she goes to a sort of underworld and returns with the spring.[21]

The story in Ovid is about mothers and daughters, about women's hopes and fears, and about the worth of their words—themes that are important for both *The Winter's Tale* and *Hamlet*. In Ovid, the separation of a mother and daughter is set in motion because Venus is playing for power, but this trauma draws the sympathy and intervention of other women. When Proserpina is snatched by Dis, female characters rise up in protest. Cyane upbraids Dis for his failure to woo courteously and even tries to block his path.[22] Like Proserpina, Cyane is a victim of sexual violence. Dis not only snatches Proserpina, but violates Cyane's pool, blasting a path to the underworld (5. 524-528). When Ceres, goddess of fertility, vengefully curses the earth, Arethusa

appeals to Ceres's motherhood and implores her compassion for the violated earth:

> O thou that art the mother dear
> Both of the maiden sought through all the world both far and near
> And eke of all the earthly fruits, forbear thine endless toil
> And be not wroth without a cause with this thy faithful soil.
> The land deserves no punishment. Unwillingly, God wot,
> She opened to the ravisher that violently her smote.
> (5. 607-612)

Proserpina's defenders call for sympathy shared among women, protest violence against women, and appeal to maternal values.

Ovid's story inquires into the value and efficacy of these women's words. When Dis attacks Cyane, she loses her human form and her ability to speak, "melting into tears, consumed away with smart. / The selfsame waters of the which she was but late ago / The mighty goddess now she pines and wastes herself into" (5. 533-35). Cyane loses her ability to speak. When Ceres comes searching for her daughter, she "would assuredly, / Have told her all things had she not transformèd been before. / Her mouth and tongue for utterance now would serve her turn no more" (5.580-582). Cyane can no longer speak, but Ceres's words have some power. When she "curse[s] all lands," the earth languishes (5. 591-598). Arethusa eloquently appeals to Ceres's motherhood, and promises to tell her another narrative in better times (5. 620- 625). Finally, Ceres is at least partially successful when she eloquently argues that Jove do his duty by her and her daughter (5. 637-682).

In *The Winter's Tale,* the story of Ceres and Proserpina foreshadows a happy ending in which the dead are restored to life and women's tales are vindicated. *Hamlet* presents the tragic version of the story. As Linda Bamber argues, "Ophelia is a kind of inverse Perdita . . . [who] represents possibilities that have been lost in the *Hamlet* world, whereas Perdita stands for triumphant fertility, rebirth, renewal."[23] Citing Bridget Lyons, Bamber notes how both characters hand out flowers, even some of the same flowers.[24] Lyons argues that Perdita represents a straightforward celebration of the fertility and freedom of pastoral whereas Ophelia's character is more vulnerable to being misread. She concludes that Ophelia's story is at odds with the treacherous setting of the rest of the play: "Ophelia is made to suggest mythical and symbolic meanings

more appropriate to pastoral comedy than to the realistic world of political intrigue and sexual danger in which she actually finds herself."[25] Ophelia's voice seems to be drowned out as *Hamlet* spirals towards the many deaths of its tragic conclusion. However, Gertrude's narrative of her death shows that Ophelia has had at least one attentive listener. Gertrude's framing of Ophelia's death links herself and Ophelia to the story of Proserpina and Demeter. Her poetic narrative mourns lost possibilities and protests the silencing of women's voices.

In Gertrude's narrative, Ophelia is dragged into the depth of the water like Proserpina was dragged into the depths of the underworld, innocently gathering flowers. Throughout *Hamlet*, Ophelia is associated with one Proserpina's flowers. Ovid's Proserpina is gathering lilies and violets before Dis snatches her (5. 492). In *Hamlet*, Ophelia declares herself a lost Proserpina who has already encountered the kingdom of death. She tells Laertes: "I would give you some violets, but they withered all when my father died" (4.5.207-209). At her grave, Laertes affirms her innocence and connects her to the powers of regeneration and renewal that are so important in Proserpina's story: "And from her fair and unpolluted flesh / May violets spring" (5.1.249-50). Unlike Proserpina, though, Ophelia never will come back.

In contrast to Proserpina and Hermione, the woman Gertrude would resurrect is actually, irrevocably dead. Human art cannot bring her back to life. However, Gertrude can still create a powerful protest for what has been lost. She crafts a tragic version of Proserpina's story that replaces Proserpina's innocent violets with weeds and more sinister plants. Ophelia hangs "weedy trophies" on the willow tree (4.7.199). Margreta de Grazia points out persistent images of sterility in Gertrude's story: Ophelia is decking a willow, a "fruitless emblem of sterility," with weeds.[26] Gertrude renames the "long purples" that Ophelia gathers (4.7.193). Instead of the "grosser name" that shepherds give them, she says "our cold maids do 'dead men's fingers call them" (4.7.194-195). Gertrude's renaming of these flowers been read as a sign of her "refinement."[27] However, her renaming might also reflect that state of what she calls her own "sick soul" (4.5.22). Perhaps Gertrude is infected by the debased view of sexuality taken in the fallen world of Denmark, and she too sees only weeds where there could be flowers.

However, Gertrude may also be protesting this view. Her "dead man's fingers" and "cold maids" sounds like a satirically hyperbolic response to the court's obsession with the perils of sexuality. She points out that Ophelia is now finally beyond reproach only when she is cold in death. Gertrude mourns a lost vision of happy fertility at Ophelia's grave. Scattering flowers on the Ophelia's dead body, Gertrude mourns, "I hoped thou should'st been my Hamlet's wife / I thought thy bride-bed to have decked, sweet maid / And not have strewed thy grave" (5.1.255-257). The innocent fecundity associated with an inadmissible "grosser name" has become the macabre image of "dead man's fingers" just as the grave has replaced the bridal bed.

There is a maternal quality to this sad graveside speech. Hunt argues that Gertrude "implicitly suggests that she had wished one day to be a grandmother."[28] Ophelia has lost her chance to become a mother, and Gertrude never will welcome a daughter and her children into her family. In her narrative of Ophelia's death, Gertrude mourns as a thwarted mother to motherless Ophelia. Like Ceres, she protests a daughter's untimely journey to the underworld. The weedy, death-like flowers in her story of Ophelia's death not only allude to nature cursed by the Fall, but also to how Ceres cursed nature as punishment for the loss of a daughter.

Gertrude's account of Ophelia's death ends with her drowning, conflating Proserpina with other female characters in Ovid's story. Drowning, Ophelia makes her journey to the underworld as Proserpina did, through a body of water. Ophelia falls into a "weeping brook" (4.7.200). This personification suggests that nature grieves the untimely death of this woman who should have been a part of flourishing nature. This figure of speech also associates the brook with Ovid's Cyane, who becomes a fountain "melting into tears" when she fails to rescue Proserpina (5, 533-534). Like Cyane, the brook mourns a fellow being. Ophelia is also like Cyane herself. She too is gradually absorbed into a body of water. She loses her voice, as she is dragged "from her melodious lay / To muddy death" (4.7.206-208). Gertrude's depiction of Ophelia singing does not simply prettify this death. She protests a lost voice and the flowery world Ophelia tried to sing back into being. Her story is Gertrude's first significant speech since the end of Act Three.[29] Her narrative is thus also an attempt to claim her own voice.

Ophelia's silencing spurs Gertrude into poetry. Her lyrical narrative is not a factual eyewitness account, nor a palliative softening of a tragic death, nor an expedient political invention. It is poetry aimed at recalling its listeners to what should be. Gertrude's tale attempts to redeem vilified Eve. She reaches towards what should be, a green and fertile garden where innocent Ophelia can realize her promise, an Eden not yet invaded by sin. In the tragic world of *Hamlet*, Ophelia is beyond the restorative powers of human art. Gertrude's lyric shades into dark tones, portraying a distorted image of the golden world that highlights her losses. Her mingling of soaring lyric and dark detail makes a powerful protest against the corruption of the golden world and the vilification of woman.

Notes

1. Scott A. Trudell, "The Mediation of Poesie: Ophelia's Orphic Song," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 63. 1 (2012): 58. While Trudell brings up Gertrude's speech only briefly, his exploration of Ophelia's songs grants considerable power to women's poetics in this play.

2. Maurice Hunt, "Gertrude's Interiority," *Cahiers Elisabéthains: A Biannual Journal of English Renaissance Studies* 78 (2010): 15.

3. William Shakespeare, Hamlet, ed. Barabara Mowat and Paul Werstine. The Folger Shakespeare Library (New York: Washington Square Press, 1992), 4.7.190-208. Subsequent in-text citations refer to act, scene, and line(s) in this edition.

4. Bridget Gellert Lyons, "The Iconography of Ophelia," ELH 44 (1977): 71.

5. Hunt, "Gertrude's Interiority," 26.

6. A. D. Nuttall, *Shakespeare the Thinker* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 7.

7. Ibid, 8, 9.

8. Philip Sidney, *A Defense of Poetry,* ed. J. A. Van Dorsten (1966; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 53.

9. Ibid, 24.

10. The resemblance of the ghost's story to the story of the Fall and first murder in Genesis is discussed by Hannibal Hamlin, *The Bible in Shakespeare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 154 and by Margreta de Grazia, Hamlet *without Hamlet* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 36.

11. Hamlin, *The Bible in Shakespeare,* 159.

12. Ibid, 161.

13. Rebecca Larouche," Ophelia's Plants and the Death of Violets," in *Ecocritical Shakespeare,* ed. Lynne Dickson Bruckner and Daniel Brayton (New York: Routledge, 2011), 220. EBSCOhost, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=e700xna&AN=398161&site=eds-live.

14. William Shakespeare, *The Winter's Tale,* ed. Barabara Mowat and Paul Werstine. The Folger Shakespeare Library (New York: Washington Square Press, 2009), 1.2.78-108.

15. Claire Dawkins, "Gendered Narratives of Marital Dissolution in Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale." Women's Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 46.1–4 (2017): 108. EBSCOhost search.ebscohost.com/login.aspdirect=true&db=mzh&AN=2017395545&site=ehost-live.

16. Jonathan Bate, *Shakespeare and Ovid* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 237.

17. Ibid, 238-239.

18. Ibid, 239.

19. Mary Ellen Lamb, "Virtual Audiences and Virtual Authors: *The Winter's Tale, The Tempest*, and *Old Wives' Tales,*" in *Staging Early Modern Romance: Prose Fiction, Dramatic Romance, and Shakespeare,* ed. Mary Ellen Lamb and Valerie Wayne (New York: Routledge, 2009), 130.

20. Bate, Shakespeare and Ovid, 230-33.

21. A. D. Nuttall "*The Winter's Tale:* Ovid Transformed," in *Shakespeare's Ovid,* ed. A. B. Taylor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 135-36. and Bate, *Shakespeare and Ovid,* 233.

22. *Ovid's Metamorphoses Translated by William Golding,* ed. Madeleine Forey (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), book 5, lines 515-23. Subsequent parenthetical citations refer to book and line number in this edition.

23. Linda Bamber, *Comic Women, Tragic Men: A Study of Gender and Genre in Shakespeare* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1982), 73.

24. Ibid, 73. See Lyons, "The Iconography of Ophelia," 65.

25. Lyons, "The Iconography of Ophelia," 72.

26. de Grazia, *Hamlet*, 119.

27. Hunt, "Gertrude's Interiority," 26.

28. Ibid, 26.

29. Ibid, 15.

Sense and Conscience: *Cymbeline*'s Insensible Bodies on the Indoor Stage

Madeleine Saidenberg
King's College London

After attending Trevor Nunn's 2007 production of *Cymbeline*, Penelope Woods was concerned that the unconscious bodies onstage—particularly the dummy portraying Cloten's headless corpse—excited unintentional laughter. She concludes, in her essay on "The Audience in Indoor Playhouses," that an early modern audience must have experienced the spectacle of tragic unconscious figures differently; they were more affected, or more willing to be affected, by a boy actor playing an unconscious lady than contemporary audiences would be. She persuasively argues that the "spatial coordinates" of the early modern indoor playhouse "framed and produced relational exchanges"[1] that were more intimate than the outdoor theatres; this site-specificity, coupled with a twenty-first century unwillingness to suspend disbelief and a four-hundred-year shift in phenomenological comprehension, must be the reason Trevor Nunn's audience found Cloten's body "titter-generating."[2]

But would Cloten's body have necessarily been un-funny to early modern spectators? The effect of those unconscious bodies was not necessarily pathos-inducing and humorless. Cloten's dummy corpse is sandwiched between Innogen's near-slapstick swoons—in less than forty lines, she wakes from the anesthetic effects of a

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potion, dozes off again, until she realizes she is lying on a corpse, which makes her faint, where a perplexed crew of Romans find her and rouse her. It is difficult to imagine a staging in which that would not be funny. The sheer amount of bodies sleeping, seeming-dead, coming back to life, swooning again, and straddling the borders of consciousness, suggests that *Cymbeline* is exploring and unraveling the conventions of onstage oblivion, rather than simply making use of those tropes. Historical phenomenologists point out that understanding the impact of bodies on the early modern stage requires recovering an early modern phenomenological perspective as well as observing and setting aside our own contemporary presumptions. I want to bring this work together with a close reading of the narrative placement of bodies in *Cymbeline* as a play written for the King's Men's transition from the outdoor to indoor stage.

Cymbeline is full of familiar tropes—drugs that induce living death, a possessive king and an ambitious queen, a wager and a ring, misplaced heirs to the throne… the list is so long as to be, in Valerie Wayne's reckoning, "uncommon."[3] In fact, just as Wayne reflects that Cymbeline is a "play of mixed genres" in which Shakespeare "reflects on, reimagines, and parodies his previous work while making something distinctly new,"[4] the narrative playfully exposes and reworks conventional images and storylines, re-teaching a changing audience how to look at unconscious bodies. In the process, I want to argue, it reveals a changing attitude towards consciousness and bodies themselves. It is difficult to date Cymbeline precisely, but it was certainly written and performed between 1609 and 1611,[5] just as the King's Men were adjusting to playing at—and writing for—both the indoor and outdoor playhouses. As Woods argues, the proximity and intimacy of an indoor theatre changes the way audiences look at unconscious bodies. Up close and by candlelight, an onstage spectator might be able to see the edges of a boy's makeup, or watch him slowly breathing as he plays dead. Contemporaneous King's Men plays like *Philaster* also pile up nostalgic storylines and well-known scenes from the 1580s and 90s. In other words, *Cymbeline* was part of a trend of plays "marked by. . . a tendency to make allusion to generic convention conspicuous."[6] In the midst of this sea change—both because of the new spatial interaction of the

play with its audience, and this new trend in theatrical fashion—Shakespeare cannily exploits this "hodge-podge"[7] style to create layers of dramatic irony throughout the narrative of *Cymbeline* that remove the spectators from the way they once looked at bodies onstage, and offer new ways of looking instead.

Luckily, Shakespeare offers his audience plenty of exemplary spectators (with a difference) in the pile-up of these 'conventional' scenes. Iachimo's speech as he watches the sleeping Innogen echoes Othello's speech before he wakes Desdemona; both reference a similar passage from *The Rape of Lucrece.* Regardless of the self-promotion on Shakespeare's part, audiences would surely have recognized the classical allusion to "Tarquin" at the top of Iachimo's speech. Just as Othello smells Desdemona's "balmy breath"[8] and Tarquin sees Lucrece's 'lily hand' and 'canopied' eyelids,[9] Iachimo realizes "tis [Innogen's] breathing that / perfumes the chamber thus," as he notes her "canopied" lids and "lily" skin.[10] These near-quotations prepare the audience for a *type* of scene, one in which a man pauses to admire the body of the sleeping woman he intends to harm. In all three scenes, the woman is exposed to their unwanted gaze and to almost certain violence; yet the audience or reader sees an intimate close-up of the body (even if they disapprove of speech-maker's actions) through the intruder's eyes.

However, *Cymbeline* creates ironic distance between the audience and the viewer through whose perspective they would usually see. Just as Tarquin and Othello bend to kiss their victim, she wakes; Innogen remains senseless to the danger, and sleeps right through as Iachimo (with a lewd aside around 'slippery' and 'hard') yanks the bracelet off her arm. Not only are the audience's expectations for the scene overturned, Iachimo's repeated and less-than-lofty "come off, come off," as he tugs on her bracelet breaks him out of the classical mode in which he has been speaking.[11] This darkly ironic moment of senselessness punctures the "generic conventions" of this scene. Iachimo violates Innogen, but not as other stage predators violate their victims; instead, a small moment of dark absurdity draws attention to the senselessness of Innogen's body, collapsing the audience's inter-theatrical expectations and modifying them. The strangeness and near-comedy of Innogen's unresponsive body creates an ironic alienation from the convention of how characters look at bodies onstage. The proximity of the

audience to the stage could create a sense of shared experience between spectators and characters; Innogen's senselessness, on the other hand, distances the spectators from her experience, and from this sympathetic perspective.

The narrative leads the audience on a journey from seeing Innogen's unconscious body through the eyes of her onstage observer to feeling more and more distant from the characters who look at and interact with bodies. A less subtle irony occurs when Guiderius and Arviragus mistakenly mourn Innogen's death, though the audience knows she is drugged but alive. Already, then, the audience can empathize with the brothers' grief while remaining distant from it themselves. Unlike the post-death scene in *Romeo and Juliet,* another play that makes use of a similar drug, the emphasis of this scene shifts to watching how the brothers mourn, rather than generating pity for their seeming-dead friend. A nice counterpoint to this moment is an audience account from a 1610 indoor performance of *Othello,* which was by that point a well-known tragedy. Watching the dead Desdemona, Henry Jackson found that "in her death [she] moved us especially when, as she lay in her bed, with her face alone she implored the pity of the spectators."[12] In this conventionally tragic moment, Jackson was drawn in by the corpse, who still seemed lifelike enough to "implore." In *Cymbeline,* by contrast, the audience watches Guiderius and Arviragus entertain the same affective pity that Jackson feels, but does not themselves feel the same supplication from Innogen, whom they know is still alive. The boys' heightened pastoral language and rustic traditions, like laying a corpse's head "to th'east,"[13] add another layer of distance between them and the audience. Their grief is punctured near the end of the scene by an adolescent squabble over whether to reverence and bury the headless corpse of Cloten, as well as Innogen.

Would the dummy, then, have been funny? Fake heads, false limbs, and even wax figures were common on the early modern stage, and were accepted substitutes for the real thing.[14] The doltish Cloten's dummy, however, is sandwiched between jokes about his cowardice; dressed in Posthumus' clothes, he invites ill comparison with the cleverer and more morally sound, if misguided, man. Innogen's nightmarish certainty that this dummy (in all ways) has the "shape of [Posthumus'] leg; this is his hand, / his foot

Mercurial, his Martial thigh, the brawns of Hercules"[15] creates empathy for her situation, but not sympathy with her mistake. As Wayne puts it, "the poignancy of her lament is compromised by the ironies of her confusion."[16] If the effect of this ironization is to place the audience at a deliberate remove from conventional ways of viewing senseless bodies—and to classify those conventions as old and therefore comical—it also suggests a perspective shift, both in style and in ways of seeing. Rather than looking at bodies, the audience looks at people who look at bodies. And there they find people who make a lot of mistakes. The world of *Cymbeline* has an uneasy logic to it: sensory information (particularly about the body) must be relied on, but is also entirely unreliable. These characters' identities are continually condensed and objectified by rings, bracelets, and garments. People—and their reputations—are identified by their garb, their distinctive body parts, their limbs and their moles. Yet these reductions cause crucial errors. The dummy's "shape" and Innogen's mole mischaracterize and misidentify them, rather than elucidate who they truly are. These comic moments, then, are directed at foolish onstage spectators who treat their own external sensory experience of someone's body—what they look like, smell like, and sound like—as infallible proof of identity, and are often wrong.

If the play alienates its audience from spectators who rely on their external senses, it offers an alternative; the same senseless bodies those onstage spectators were watching, the play suggests, have an internal sensory world of their own. The external senses are not the only ones on which to rely. Just as the audience is further and further alienated from conventional onstage spectators, they gain more and more insight into the internal state of characters on the borders of consciousness. Those senseless bodies seem not to be senseless after all.

Iachimo, to whose vision the audience remains closest, is cleverer than most; he is aware of the limits of the external, and imagines "underpeep[ing Innogen's] lids / to see th'enclosed lights."[17] In fact, the audience does get to peep into her lush, inner sensory world when she wakes, half-dreaming, from her living death. "Yes sir, to Milford Haven, which is the way?" she asks a dream character, and then furnishes the audience with a dream geography: "by yond bush. . . six mile yet?" She dreams she has

been walking all night, away from the place where she "was a cave-keeper / and cook to honest creatures. But 'tis not so."[18] She has divided and confused, then, her internal dream senses from her external ones; she believes her dream trek was true, while believing her past and current experiences to be nightmares. Looking at the headless corpse, she cries, "the dream's still here. Even when I wake it is / without me as within me, not imagined, felt."[19] In his new book on fainting, Giulio Pertile uses literary and dramatic accounts of faints and swoons to explore what early modern audiences imagined when "the mind has been cut off from the world around it"—when it is rendered senseless. "It is not arrested altogether," he argues, "but rather plunged into a layer of itself which normally remains invisible."[20] In *Cymbeline,* this invisible layer is not only acknowledged and described, but staged—and acts as an important plot point. The audience is invited even further into Posthumus's inner mind while he is in prison. They too experience the gorgeous, sensory set piece of a dream sequence, complete with thunder, perfumed smells, and a golden eagle stage prop flown down from the ceiling. Yet, though he and the audience experience the sensory climax of the play (one that, though portable between Blackfriars and the Globe, also makes specific use of indoor capacity for smells), Posthumus dismisses the experience when he wakes. Like Innogen, he regrets "dream[ing] as I have done," only to "wake and find nothing."[21]

Innogen and Posthumus' inner lives—and their mistrust, once awake, of both their dreamt and real senses—conjures another account of senses across the borders of consciousness, written about three decades later:

> when I considered that the very same thoughts which we experience when awake may also be experienced when we are asleep, while there is at that time not one of them true, I supposed that all the objects that had ever entered into my mind when awake, had in them no more truth than the illusions of my dreams. But immediately upon this I observed that, whilst I thus wished to think that all was false, it was absolutely necessary that I, who thus thought, should be something. . . I think, therefore I am.[22]

Descartes, who (according to Paster) "begins the gradual epistemic process towards abstraction that overtakes early modern discourses

of body and mind,"[23] wrote this first iteration of his famous "cogito" theory in 1637. Scholars interested in phenomenology are right to warn twenty-first century viewers to approach early modern depictions of the body and consciousness with care; while reading Shakespeare's plays, they argue, we must recover a pre-Cartesian world in which the mind and the body—and indeed, the self—are not separate, but mutually defined by the humours and the senses.

The early modern body, they argue, creates, expresses, and defines the self. *Cymbeline* has its fair share of humoral references: the grieving Guiderius blames his friend's surprising death on melancholy, and Innogen herself explains away her dreams on "fumes"[24] which could rise up and cause confusion in the brain. Yet clearly, like Descartes, Shakespeare and his audience were also grappling with questions about the fallibility of the body and its senses. Inside *Cymbeline*'s seemingly insensible characters lies a rich sensory world; they can experience senses internally while their bodies lie senseless. Which are they to believe? While a pre-Cartesian approach undeniably reminds twenty-first century readers to reckon with distance between contemporary and early modern understandings, some critics, like Pertile and James Knapp, warn against taking too hard a line on excising conversations about internal and external selves from early modern studies before Descartes. Knapp notes that, in turn-of-the-seventeenth century humoral theory, "the idea that the humors could be regulated suggests that something…was doing the regulating."[25] The emphasis on where the self is located, then, shifts slightly from the body, with its humours and sensations, to the "regulator" of those humours and sensations. This is not to argue that Shakespeare is anticipating Descartes by thirty years; rather, it is to temper the idea that, before Descartes, consciousness was solely linked to the sensing body.

Instead, *Cymbeline* is a piece of work sensitive to the shifting circumstances of entertainment and determined to be on the cutting edge, specifically distancing itself from more "conventional" pieces. Rather than considering the audience alienation around conventional scenes simply as a balm to ease the switch to indoor playhouses, perhaps *Cymbeline* has a finger on the pulse of a larger cultural shift: one probing the borders of consciousness and placing

a firmer emphasis on the "regulator of the senses, the humours, and the body. *Cymbeline*—a play that alienates its audience from their usual ways of looking at unconscious bodies while simultaneously giving them ever-more lush sensory experiences that take place in the mind of those seemingly senseless characters—outlines a separation between the internal and external senses, and blurs the lines between these states. The characters, then, must dramatically "regulate" for themselves which experiences are the more "real," just as Descartes does.

Other cultural artefacts from the early 1600s point to a growing movement towards Decartes's emphasis on the internal self by exercising good judgement over the corporeal senses. In a series of engravings in 1544, Georg Pencz allegorized the five senses; immensely popular since the middle ages, series of "five senses" engravings were copied and printed through the eighteenth century.[26] In the 1610s or '20s, Willem van de Passe printed a series as well. Pencz's print personifies Tactus, or Touch, as a female weaver, with coiled braids and an elaborate spiderweb stretched across the window.[27] Here, the sense is transformed into an allegory, surrounded by images that evoke both the sensation of texture (from smooth hair to soft wool) and the idea of touch as sensory knowledge (spiders receive information through the vibrations on their web). By the 1620s, Tactus had morphed into van de Passe's scene of a man, richly clothed, fondling a naked woman's breast while in the corner, the figure of Cupid is bitten by a parrot.[28] The spider and the parrot are both traditional emblems of touch—the spider feels the world through its web, while the parrot is notorious for biting through flesh—but while the first image allegorizes Tactus, the second is a cautionary image to viewers who might overindulge in the sense (even as the depiction of fabric, hair, feathers, and skin invites imagination). The emphasis shifts, then, from the singular senses to the regulation and moderation of those senses.

Rather than think of the decades before 1637 as *non*-Cartesian, then, perhaps it would be helpful to emphasize the "pre-" in pre-Cartesian; this play, and these examples, are not explicitly separating mind from body. Instead, these examples help us see how the cultural, phenomenological emphasis shifts from imagining the senses informing and controlling the self to imagining the senses

as information gatherers which then need to be dissected and judged by a controlling intellect. For example, Bartholomeo del Bene's *Civitas Veri, Sive Morum* (The City of Truth, or Ethics)—a moral poem based on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics—was first published in 1609 along with a series of engravings, depicting the self as a city and its senses as the city's five gates. The protagonist must travel through all of the channels in order to progress to the center, which holds the Temples of Intelligence and Wisdom—the epistemic ability, in other words, to control and interpret sensory information. The central self, then, is this governing part of the body, which not only receives sensation but can assess and evaluate the sensations.

In *Cymbeline,* the ability to govern the senses acts as a rubric for moral judgement as the truth is revealed in the final scene. While the doctor reveals the queen's villainy, Cymbeline himself takes on blame (though not generously, and rather too late) for misinterpreting his sensory experience and being unable to "read a woman." "Mine eyes / were not in fault, for she was beautiful; / [nor] mine ears that heard her flattery." He could not help but believe his own senses, he implies; and yet "it was folly in [him]."[29] Where Posthumus and Innogen, after some thought, are ultimately able to distinguish between their external, real senses and their internal, dream senses, Cymbeline unquestioningly believes his queen's external "seeming" and must ask forgiveness for the harm it caused.

But the end of the play—and indeed, the mercy that Cymbeline grants himself for misjudging his wife's "seeming," and Innogen grants Posthumus for believing Iachimo's evidence—raises questions about what, exactly, these characters ought to base their knowledge on at all. "It had been vicious to have mistrusted her," Cymbeline reasons, just as it was vicious of Posthumus to mistrust Innogen.[30] In a scene where justice should be meted out, the characters are in a double bind. If they cannot believe in their senses—if bodies are not to be trusted, either as indicators of their own identity nor as gatherers of accurate sensory information—how are these characters supposed to know what they know?

Curiously, though many characters disguise themselves successfully throughout the play (Posthumus switches armies, not once, but twice without being suspected), these disguises are often

undercut by what Cymbeline calls "rare instinct."[31] Cymbeline, Guiderius, and Arviragus all sense something about "Fidele"—distinct from all the sensory information about who he is—that draws them to him against their logic. "I know not why / I love this youth,"[32] Arviragus wonders; echoing him, Cymbeline "know[s] not why, wherefore" he is drawn to save Fidele's life.[33] This kind of sixth sense or internal intelligence, accessing senses that the body cannot define, recalls Pertile's "invisible layer."

Innogen and Posthumus attempt to use good judgement to separate out their internal and external sensory experiences. But while their cautious conclusions seem at first to be good judgments, neither one is correct. Innogen's pastoral cave dwelling experience is so far removed from the rest of *Cymbeline*'s Britain in tone and plot that her verdict that they were a dream and the beheaded nightmare reality makes sense; but the audience knows it is not true. Likewise, Posthumus recognizes that his dream, which seemed so real, is "gone / and so I am awake."[34] In fact, however, both dreams were more real than either cautiously judged. Not only did Innogen's "dream" of her friends reveal true brothers with whom, by "rare instinct," she connected, but Posthumus's ghostly vision of his family leaves a wholly real tablet behind. The book, he hopes, will not be a 'garment nobler than it covers' but "most unlike our courtiers, / [be] as good as promise."[35] And it does exactly that: just as the bodies onstage contain hidden worlds, this book holds more insight inside than out.

As audience members, we are supposed to let our external senses trick us into believing that what we see, hear, and smell is true—even if our more metatheatrical intelligence judges it to be false, since we know we are watching a performance. With new proximity, candlelight, and new smells and sounds, even familiar plays and scenes might suddenly seem strange to early modern audiences watching the King's Men play indoors for the first time. If they were concerned about whether to pay more attention to their new external sensory experience or their internal imagined sense of what was happening, *Cymbeline* offers a compromise: metatheatrical laughs, spectacular dreams, and flashes of rare instinct.

Notes

1. Penelope Woods, "The Audience of the Indoor Theatre," in *Moving Shakespeare Indoors,* ed. Andrew Gurr and Farah Karim-Cooper (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 158.

2. Lyn Gardner, "*Cymbeline*—review," *Guardian,* 30 May 2012, quoted in Woods, 158.

3. Valerie Wayne, "Introduction," *Cymbeline,* ed. Valerie Wayne (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2017) 28.

4. Wayne, "Introduction," 30.

5. Wayne "Introduction," 30 and Bart Van Es, "Reviving the Legacy of Indoor Performance," in *Moving Shakespeare Indoors,* ed. Andrew Gurr and Farah Karim-Cooper (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 249.

6. Van Es, "Reviving the Legacy," 248.

7. Wayne, "Introduction," 29.

8. William Shakespeare, "Othello," in *Shakespeare's Plays, Sonnets and Poems*, eds. Barbara Mowat, Paul Werstine, Michael Poston, Rebecca Niles (Washington: Folger Shakespeare Library, 2004), 5.2.17.

9. Ibid, *Lucrece,* lines 397, 386.

10. *Cymbeline,* 2.21.15-24.

11. Ibid, 2.2.36.

12. Quoted in Woods, "Audience," 155. I follow Woods' translation of "spectantium" as "spectators," rather than Antony B. Dawson's "audience."

13. *Cymbeline,*, 4.2.254.

14. Woods, "Audience," 157.

15. *Cymbeline,* 4.2.308-310.

16. Wayne, *Cymbeline,* footnote, 305.

17. *Cymbeline,* 2.2.20-21.

18. Ibid, 4.2.290-299.

19. Ibid, 4.2.379-380.

20. Giulio J. Pertile, *Feeling Faint* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2019), 172.

21. *Cymbeline,* 5.4.131-2.

22. René Descartes, "Discourse on the Method of Rightly Conducting the Reason," trans. John Veitch (Edinburgh: Sutherland and Knox), 74.

23. Gail Kern Paster, *Humouring the Body* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 246.

24. *Cymbeline,* 4.2.300.

25. James Knapp, "Beyond Materiality in Shakespeare Studies," *Literature Compass* 11.10 (November 2014), 684.

26. Carl Nordenfalk. "The Five Senses in Late Medieval and Renaissance Art," *Journal of the Warburg & Courtauld Institute*s 48 (1985), 4.

27. Georg Pencz, "Tactus, from The Five Senses," c. 1544, engraving, 77 x 51 mm (London, British Museum). Accessed 25 April 2019. https://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details/collection_image_gallery.aspx?assetId=621838001&objectId=1569745&partId=1.

28. Willam van de Passe, "Tactus," c. 1620. Engraving, 226 x 167 mm (London, British Museum). Accessed 25 April 2019. https://www.britishmuseum.

org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details/collection_image_gallery.aspx?assetId=127018001&objectId=1351018&partId=1.

29. *Cymbeline,* 5.5.74-79.
30. Ibid, 5.5.109.
31. Ibid, .5.464.
32. Ibid, 4.2.24-5.
33. Ibid, 5.5.110.
34. Ibid, 5.4.137-9.
35. Ibid, 5.4.136-140.

Mischief in the Wood: Pastoral, Domestic Abuse, and the Environment in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

Matthew M. Thiele
Glenville State College

Interplay between urban environments and natural environments in Shakespeare's plays is often presented as evidence of pastoral sensibilities. William Empson appears to be largely responsible. In *Some Versions of Pastoral,* first published in 1935, Empson identifies certain literary themes that show evidence of pastoral sensibilities. The themes can be broad. For example, Empson identifies "as a possible territory of pastoral" "this grand notion of the inadequacy of life, so reliable a bass note in the arts."[1] I understand the impulse to look beyond a specific cultural phenomenon for signs of a broader influence on literature and culture, but I worry that Empson expands the reach of pastoral so far that it ceases to be a useful critical term.

The broad application of the term "pastoral" that Empson ushered in continues in more contemporary criticism.[2] For example, Camille Wells Slights attempts to locate pastoral sensibilities in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* when she notes that

> . . . while Windsor does not provide a wholly natural contrast to urban artificiality, the green world is all around and easily accessible. The basic staples of pastoral landscape are ready

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> to hand: fields with birds, woods with deer, a flowing river, and even an ancient oak all play notable parts in the action and serve the traditional function of bringing sophistication, ambition, and greed to terms with natural simplicity.[3]

While it may be useful to identify the pastoral elements of the play, the elements that Slights identifies are not exclusively or even primarily a reference to the pastoral tradition, and her list of pastoral elements in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* leaves out sheep and shepherds, which are arguably the mode's *sine qua nons.*[4] My point is not to be pedantic about the application of the term "pastoral" but to suggest that a more basic understanding of the forces at work in the play would be more useful. In trying to force *The Merry Wives of Windsor* into an ill-fitting pastoral frame, Slights seems to overlook a more fundamental juxtaposition between the urban domestic environments in the town of Windsor and the more natural environment of Windsor Park.[5]

Equally loose is C.L. Barber's identification of pastoral elements in Shakespeare's fairies in *A Midsummer Night's Dream:*

> His fairies are creatures of pastoral, varied by adapting folk superstitions so as to make a new sort of arcadia. Though they are not shepherds, they lead a life similarly occupied with the pleasures of song and dance and, for king and queen, the vexations and pleasures of love. They have not the pastoral "labours" of tending flocks, but equivalent duties are suggested in the tending of nature's fragile beauties, killing "cankers in the musk-rose buds." They have a freedom like that of shepherds in arcadias, but raised to a higher power: they are free not only of the limitations of place and purse but of space and time[6]

At least *A Midsummer Night's Dream* includes some scenes in court and some in the country, and it blurs the lines between both by presenting the natural environment as the court of Oberon and Titania. But the claim that fairies are creatures of pastoral adds little to our understanding of the play or the pastoral mode. There is little evidence aside from their presence in a more or less natural environment that supports associating them with pastoral, and the pastoral association might actually obscure a different essential function of placing the fairies in Windsor Park. Readers will necessarily reach different conclusions if they think of the fairies

as representatives of England's native pagan mythology instead of representatives of pastoral.

While it is good to highlight the court/country dichotomy as one of the distinguishing features of Renaissance pastoral, failing to move beyond how that dichotomy services the aesthetic ends of the pastoral mode can leave unexamined the practical and political uses of the dichotomy in literature, as Louis Montrose and others have shown.[7] Montrose suggests that the presence of pastoral elements in Elizabethan literature can be political and should be understood as such: "Elizabethan pastoral forms may have worked to mediate differential relationships of power, prestige, and wealth in a variety of social situations, and to have variously marked and obfuscated the hierarchical distinctions—the symbolic boundaries—upon which the Elizabethan social order was predicated."[8] It is problematic enough to see pastoral overtly employed in literature because its presence may obfuscate essential hierarchical distinctions in the culture that created it; it is more complicated and risky when critics apply their own alien values and cultural biases to explore pastoral themes in literature that is written in an entirely different mode. Hunting for pastoral elements often reduces the natural environment to a setting, and, more crucially, can distract critics from seeing native themes and patterns specific to a text or author. As the example from Barber shows, and as William Empson's *Some Versions of Pastoral* demonstrates, this has been going on for a long time.[9]

The court has a presence in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor,* but it is more or less incidental, and focusing too closely on it can distract from considering the concerns of Shakespeare's audience, including the more quotidian concerns of inequality and sustainability. The natural environment, presented for the purposes of this essay as the parts of the environment that are generally free from the structuring labor of humanity, is an important feature of both plays, but the significance of its presence goes beyond its relationship to whatever pastoral conventions it might serve. I propose to reframe the court/country and town/country dichotomies in a way that promotes reflection about justice and fairness along gender and ecological lines. In the words of Sylvia Bowerbank, I would like to perform one of the essential tasks of ecological feminism, "to critique the

very definitions and practices that perpetuate 'nature' as a system of violence and injustice."[10] These two plays frame the natural environment as a beneficial place where women can assert their wishes and pursue justice. The transition from urban to rural environments in these plays signals a transition from traditional proscriptive justice to a more basic sense of fairness that is not compromised by social conventions, traditions, or arbitrary laws and dictates. This serves as a correction to pastoral conventions that are often deployed to justify subjugating women, minorities, and the natural environment.

Contemporary criticism is beginning to rethink the significance of the city/country dichotomy in literature. In *The Shakespearean Wild,* Jeanne Addison Roberts offers an alternative way of looking at the natural environment that avoids easy associations with the pastoral mode or the "green world" of Northrop Frye. Instead, Roberts shows that attitudes about the natural environment in Shakespeare reflect male cultural desires and anxieties about women. She writes, "for Shakespeare the Wild is the locale for the male's necessary, seductive, and terrifying confrontation with the female, his braving of the perils of maternal regression and destructive erotic abandon in order to annex a woman into his cultural context."[11] Even though I find this claim to be accurate in most cases, the two plays under discussion in this essay, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor,* seem to invert this scheme identified by Roberts. Instead of focusing on a male's experience of the feminine wild, projecting male anxieties and desires about women onto nature, these two plays focus on women's encounters with men in a feminine wild. They privilege women's desire and suggest that the natural environment, while sometimes wild and frightening, is a place where women can pursue their own wishes and expect to be treated fairly.

The natural environment in Shakespeare's plays is sometimes fraught with danger, and it is often characterized as lawless and uncontrollable. The rape of Lavinia by Tamora, Chiron, and Demetrius in *Titus Andronicus* is perhaps the most extreme example. Such moments are not only isolated to tragedies and romances as we might expect, either. Demetrius threatens to do Helena "mischief in the wood" in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (2.1.237).[12] Randall Martin notes that in *The Taming of the Shrew,* the isolation

afforded by the rural environment of Petruchio's country house "enables the abuse of the urban Katherine." He continues, "This environmental cause-and-effect suggests Shakespeare's dramatic interest in how shifts in, or detachments from, place could remould personal subjectivity, for better or worse."[13] Martin is careful to characterize this as a two-way street, but relatively little work has been devoted to showing that the urban environment can be every bit as dangerous and wild as the rural, especially for women.[14]

The Merry Wives of Windsor is unique among Shakespeare's play in showing the natural environment to be almost entirely benevolent and the urban and domestic environments to be dangerous. Early in the play, for example, at Caius's house, Mistress Quickly sets Rugby as a lookout so that she will not be caught meeting with Simple. Simple is Parson Hugh Evans's representative in seeking to marry Anne Page, and Quickly knows that if Caius sees Simple, he will be jealous and angry. Quickly says to Rugby, "I pray thee, go to the casement and see if you can see my master, Master Doctor Caius, coming. If he do, i'faith, and find anybody in the house, here will be an old abusing of God's patience and the King's English" (1.4.1-5). In fact, Quickly and Simple also face the threat of physical abuse. Caius does return, and Quickly tries to hide Simple in Caius's closet (1.4.33-118). Caius discovers Simple and commands, "Rugby, my rapier!" (1.4.63-4). Simple is not harmed, but Caius threatens various acts of violence towards Evans: cutting his throat in the park, cutting "all his two stones," and killing him (1.4.102-113). Caius's discovery of Simple in his closet is a function of the limited space and close quarters of the domestic environment, and his threats of violence, including the threat of sexual violence, are not out of place in his home. This scene indicates early in the play that the domestic environment is not a place where characters may successfully hide or feel safe. It is not private; it is open; it is under careful surveillance. It is also a place that will tolerate violence or the threat of violence.

The urban environment in general is set up for careful surveillance. A street in Windsor serves as the setting for an unpleasant encounter between Meg Page and Frank Ford. Frank discovers that Meg is on the way to see his wife, and he fantasizes about catching his wife with Falstaff while his neighbors look on: "Good plots! They are laid; and our revolted wives share damnation

together. Well, I will take him, then torture my wife, pluck the borrowed veil of modesty from the so-seeming Mistress Page, divulge Page himself for a secure and willful Actaeon; and to these violent proceedings all my neighbors shall cry aim" (3.2.34-9). If Frank has anything to say about it, he will show himself to be the master of his domestic environment by publicly torturing his wife and humiliating the Pages as his neighbors cheer him on. In a way, Frank's violent fantasy seems like some kind of disease brought on by the environment itself, as if living in close contact with others both exposes him to ridicule and encourages him to publicly beat and humiliate his wife and her friend. Although the play presents Frank Ford's jealousy as extreme, it is also clear that there are few checks on his extreme behavior; he feels he has the right to suspect his wife, to disrupt her life on the basis of a suspicion, and to involve "all the officers in Windsor" (3.3.98) to expose her. It is doubtful that she would be afforded the same privilege if the situation were reversed.

Even details that may or may not be true suggest plausible actions that are extreme and unreasonable. During Alice Ford's second assignation with Falstaff, Meg Page reports, "three of Master Ford's brothers watch the door with pistols, that none shall issue out" (4.2.44-5), and when Falstaff proposes various hiding places within the house, Alice tells him, "There is no hiding you in the house" (4.2.56-7). These claims are not verified, but they seem to be plausible based on what we are shown about Frank Ford's temperament. In addition, Ford's beating of Falstaff, whom he believes to be a woman, shows that Alice Ford lives under the threat of real violence in her house.

It is possible to object that because they are held up to be laughed at, these situations should be dismissed as comedic fantasies that have no basis in real practice or attitudes. It would be a mistake to do so. As the introduction to *The Woman's Part: Feminist Criticism of Shakespeare* reminds readers, "feminist critics also recognize that the greatest artists do not necessarily duplicate in their art the orthodoxies of their culture; they may exploit them to create character or intensify conflict; they may struggle with, criticize, or transcend them. Shakespeare, it would seem, encompasses more and preaches less than most authors."[15] Shakespeare's plays do not always invite laughter uncritically or unproblematically.[16] The

depiction of domestic abuse and the invitation to laughter about domestic abuse do not necessarily indicate tolerance or acceptance.

Objects of ridicule should also not be dismissed as fantasies that exist entirely outside the realm of the real. Jokes about domestic abuse have currency in the world in which Shakespeare's plays were written because they operate within the boundaries of what is possible and socially acceptable; the jokes about domestic abuse in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* must reflect to some extent Renaissance England's real problems with domestic abuse. The dominant agents in culture define the scope of what is appropriate material for jokes. In our culture as in Shakespeare's, jokes almost always come at the expense of women or minorities. As Angela Watson reminds teachers when encountering defensiveness and denial about racial disparities in America, "I'm also not going to make excuses about how it's just a joke and everyone says it so people should stop being offended by everything. Remember, the offense is rooted in systemic oppression and marginalization over hundreds of years."[17] Like racist humor, domestic abuse humor is rooted in thousands of years of systemic oppression and marginalization, and it goes without saying that it needs to be examined. The work has already begun; Stefan Horlacher points out that laughter has functioned throughout history to reinforce sexism, patriarchal norms, and misogyny, and he brilliantly synthesizes a variety of sources to support his assertion:

> Analysing the possible subversion or affirmation of gender identities through humour, the comic, and laughter becomes even more relevant if we consider Sigmund Freud's line of argument that we 'are inclined to give the *thought* the benefit of what has pleased us in the *form* of the joke', so that we 'are no longer inclined to find anything wrong that has given us enjoyment and so to spoil the source of a pleasure' (162). From this it follows that to 'perceive a situation as humorous causes it to appear less discriminatory, and more acceptable' (Bill and Naus 659). But if sexism 'disguised by and delivered through humor' is potentially interpreted 'as being harmless and innocent' (646), and thus tends to escape criticism altogether, if '[p]erceiving and labeling an incident as humorous appears to diminish its sexist content' (660), this only increases the necessity for a critical analysis of the 'comic mode' (Lodge 170) with special attention to its ability

> to hide patriarchal, sexist, and even misogynist tendencies in literature, plays, films, and other media.[18]

In the preceding ways, *The Merry Wives of Windsor* presents the domestic environment as a place of extreme male violence, almost always directed against women, where women are subject to suspicion and jealousy and where they have no reasonable expectation of privacy. Such living conditions are obviously unjust, and the play suggests that a change of environment is necessary to achieve a fair solution to the problem of injustice in the domestic environment.

Repairing to the more natural environment of Windsor Park at the end of the play serves several purposes. It marks the reconciliation between Frank and Alice Ford; it serves as Falstaff's ultimate punishment for disrupting the domestic environment; most importantly, it provides the cover that Anne Page needs to avoid marrying either of the suitors favored by her parents and assert her own choice of husband. The threat of domestic violence earlier in the play is dissipated by the public shaming and corporal punishment of Falstaff, who deserves his punishment and publicly admits his guilt: "I was three or four times in the thought they were not fairies; and yet the guiltiness of my mind, the sudden surprise of my powers, drove the grossness of the foppery into a received belief, in despite of the teeth of all rhyme and reason, that they were fairies. See now how wit may be made a Jack-a-Lent when 'tis upon ill employment!" (5.5.121-7). Falstaff confesses to guiltiness and admits that his wit was upon ill employment. He does not equivocate, even though he complains a little about being ridiculed by Evans. A little further on in the same scene, he accepts his treatment as fair: "Well, I am your theme. You have the start of me. I am dejected. I am not able to answer the Welsh flannel. Ignorance itself is a plummet o'er me. Use me as you will" (5.5.159-62). Falstaff's remorse eliminates the need for further violence or humiliation. The serious, authoritarian, violent elements of the urban and domestic environment are displaced by the benevolent comic cheer that seems to have been made possible by the natural environment.

There are some complications when thinking of Windsor Park as part of the natural environment; it is obviously some mixture of natural and urban. Can we credibly refer to it as a natural

environment if it is essentially a garden? The deforestation that is still apparent today had already begun; Mistress Quickly and her fairies hide in a saw pit (4.4.53). The fields created when the trees of the park were harvested are clearly delineated today. A satellite photograph shows a cultivated, ordered space, at least in parts. It has just a tiny, tiny bit in common with Heathrow Airport a couple of miles to the east. But Windsor Park was almost certainly "wilder" than it appears today, and it would be a mistake to think of it as an extension of the urban environment of the town. The naturalness of Windsor Forest is emphasized by Mistress Quickly, playing the Fairy Queen. Bespeaking a harmony between the culture of men and the natural environment, she chants:

> The several chairs of order look you scour
> With juice of balm and every precious flower.
> Each fair installment, coat, and several crest
> With loyal blazon evermore be blest!
> And nightly, meadow fairies, look you sing,
> Like to the Garter's compass, in a ring.
> Th'expressure that it bears, green let it be,
> More fertile-fresh than all the field to see;
> And "*Honi soit qui mal y pense*" write
> In em'rald tufts, flow'rs purple, blue, and white,
> Like sapphire, pearl, and rich embroidery,
> Buckled below fair knighthood's bending knee;
> Fairies use flowers for their charactery. (5.5.60-72)

The denizens of the urban environment of Windsor are transformed into representatives of the natural environment of the park. Falstaff's beastly behavior leads to his adoption of beastly language and beastly appendages. The tendency of literature to depict the natural environment as dangerous and mysterious is repurposed to the benefit of Anne Page, who takes advantage of the chaos in the forest to assert her wish to choose her own husband. In the natural environment, removed from the home, city, and court, justice can play out free from the restrictions, obstructions, and obscurities of urban life.

It is interesting that there is a cause-and-effect relationship between the decision of the Fords and Pages to pursue ultimate revenge against Falstaff in the natural environment and Anne Page's ability to choose to marry Fenton. Anne has the freedom to

select her own husband precisely because her parents have chosen to publicly shame Falstaff for pursuing illicit sexual relationships with the two wives. It serves as an interesting critique of parental prerogative to suggest that acceding to her parents' choice of husband is unnatural and to suggest that choosing for herself is natural.

I am surprised by the tendency for critics to see the events of the play through the perspective of the male characters and to treat the women as accessories. Slights, for example, spends most of her time exploring Falstaff's experiences in *The Merry Wives of Windsor,* and her observations about the play privilege the male perspective:

> The narrative patterns of *The Merry Wives* draw heavily on the conventions of the pastoral tradition and dramatize its assumption that outside the pressures and rigidities of sophisticated society people can achieve harmony with their environment. In one line of action, a man embroiled in conflict retires to a natural setting, where, after a period of contemplation, he puts away his sword, makes peace with his enemy, and re-enters society as a peacemaker and moral instructor. In another plot line, a young aristocrat, who is good at heart but corrupted by worldly society (indicated by his mercenary motives and reputation for profligacy), falls in love with a village lass. Purified by the experience, he overcomes obstacles and wins her hand in marriage. In the main plot, a knightly exile from court enters a rural society where, although evil exists, moral issues are simplified and clarified and where his pride is humbled. Impelled by disappointment in love, he moves further from man-made institutions into the natural world until he reaches a sacred place where the human and divine meet. Here he experiences humiliation and a revelation about the natural sources of social harmony and then re-enters society a sadder but wiser man.[19]

This passage begins with an idea that is very much in line with what I am arguing: harmony is to be found in the natural environment through a temporary repudiation of the urban environment's structures of life, thought, and action. But to suggest that it is the experiences of Evans, Fenton, and Falstaff that are central to this idea is to fall into the trap of thinking about the relationship between city and country only in terms of pastoral. It is striking

that in thinking about a play titled *The Merry Wives of Windsor* a critic should focus on the experiences of the male characters and neglect or subordinate the experiences of the female characters.[20] Obviously, Anne Page does not have much to say, and several male characters revolve around her in interesting ways, but her disobedience and assertion of her own wishes are essential features of the play. That Slights treats it as incidental to the fulfillment of Fenton's good nature is surprising. That Slights would ignore the influence that Meg Page and Alice Ford have on the development of Falstaff's character is equally surprising.

This illustrates an important reason why we must develop a different critical approach to the city/country dichotomy in literature. Attributing it to pastoral impulses not only diminishes environments to a binary (nature/not nature), but it tends to privilege a male perspective in a way that is not always appropriate.

The progress of Hermia and Helena in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* contains elements of the progress of Alice Ford and Meg and Anne Page, and it gives the same general impression as *The Merry Wives of Windsor:* that it is necessary for women to leave the urban environment to pursue justice for themselves. The play establishes the injustice and violence of the court in several ways at the beginning. Theseus's statement about his courtship of Hippolyta links marriage and abuse in the play's first lines: "I wooed thee with my sword / And won thy love doing thee injuries; / But I will wed thee in another key, / With pomp, with triumph, and with reveling" (1.1.16-9). And even though Theseus offers to wed Hippolyta in a different key than he wooed her in, the terms he uses to describe the wedding, pomp and triumph, suggest that the reveling will come at her expense.[21] This moment in *A Midsummer Night's Drea*m is evidence of a phenomenon that Jan Kott identifies in *Shakespeare Our Contemporary*: "In no other tragedy, or comedy, of his, except *Troilus and Cressida,* is the eroticism expressed so brutally."[22] Kott, as most others seem to do, examines the eroticism of the play independent from ideas of marriage, but the brutal eroticism of the play has at least something to do with the link between marriage and brutality that Theseus establishes at the outset.

Hermia's treatment early in the play shows the role that the state can have in perpetuating the link between marriage and violence.

Her father Egeus seems willing to see her dead if he cannot bend her to his will: "As she is mine, I may dispose of her, / Which shall be either to this gentleman / Or to her death, according to our law / Immediately provided in that case" (1.1.42-5). Theseus offers Hermia little choice, "Either to die the death or to abjure / Forever the society of men" (1.1.65-6). Facing this threat, Lysander proposes to meet Hermia in the woods outside Athens and flee to the house of his widow aunt. There, they may be married in a place where "the sharp Athenian law / Cannot pursue" them (1.1.162-3). Theseus and Egeus make it clear that the will of the father and the will of the ruler must always override the will of daughters in the ancient Athens of the play. There may be hope that Lysander is not cut from the same cloth as Egeus and Theseus, and that he will remain concerned about what she wants, but there is no way to resist and stay; Hermia and Lysander must leave the city behind and enter the natural environment if they want to live according to their own will.

We could attempt to justify or explain the actions of Theseus and Egeus in a few ways. Egeus invokes "the ancient privilege of Athens" (1.1.41) in his suit to Theseus, and Theseus tells Hermia, "To you your father should be as a god" (1.1.47); they represent ancient attitudes that are not current, one could argue, so we should accept them as relics of a bygone age. On the other hand, maybe we could say that they are not being sincere, and they don't actually intend to harm Hermia. But the point of this moment in the play is that it encourages the audience to sympathize with Hermia; it is her actions we should look to justify and explain. Her treatment by Egeus and Theseus is designed to generate outrage, which justifies her decision to flee to the forest.

Fairness and English law at the time the play was written require Hermia's consent to marry. The removal of her consent would have shocked and worried most audiences for this play when it was first performed. The law allowed a woman to choose her own husband as long as she had reached the age of consent. I like how Stephen Orgel states it in *Impersonations:* "English fathers were legally entitled to arrange their daughters' marriages as they saw fit, and of course had control of all property that accompanied the daughter; but until 1604 the legal age of consent was twelve for women (fourteen for men), which meant that daughters over

the age of twelve were also legally entitled to arrange their own marriages. They might make themselves paupers by doing so, but they could not be stopped."[23] Early modern English audiences would have recognized Hermia's right to arrange her own marriage, and she clearly chooses Lysander. The severe attitude of Egeus and Theseus would heighten the audience's indignation at Hermia's mistreatment. Early modern English audiences would perceive the difference between Theseus's laws and their own laws; the play encourages the audience to take Hermia's side in this dispute.

Hermia's choices may be constrained in various real ways, but Hermia gets what she wants by play's end, just as Alice Ford and Meg and Anne Page get what they want.[24] She flees the restrictive urban environment and enters a natural environment that affords her the freedom to arrange her own marriage.

How then are we to take the removal of Titania's consent? Although she lives in the natural environment, she doesn't enjoy the same freedom that Hermia and Helena do in that environment. Quite the opposite. The natural environment is the setting for Titania's subjugation and humiliation at the hands of Oberon.

In important ways, Titania and Oberon are presented in the play as the masters of the natural environment. They have some ability to consciously control and command it, but the larger part of their power seems to be influencing it indirectly through their state of mind. Titania claims that their quarrel over the changeling Indian boy is reflected in certain irregularities in the environment:

> The seasons alter: hoary-headed frosts
> Fall in the fresh lap of the crimson rose,
> And on old Hiems' thin and icy crown
> An odorous chaplet of sweet summer buds
> Is, as in mockery, set. The spring, the summer,
> The childing autumn, angry winter, change
> Their wonted liveries, and the mazéd world
> By their increase now knows not which is which.
> (2.1.105-114)

Their quarrel is causing the seasons to overlap, and the overlap of the seasons is causing disorder. Titania continues by claiming that the disorder evident in nature is the direct result of their quarrel. She tells Oberon, "And this same progeny of evils comes / From our debate, from our dissension. / We are their parents and original"

(2.1.115-17). That word "parents" comes with a host of associations. As the parents of the natural environment and its problems, their authority and responsibility would not have been considered to be coequal. The play frames their division of responsibility for the natural environment in terms of the division of labor and responsibility in a marital relationship, and the play establishes the power that comes with parental and paternal prerogative at the very beginning. As the natural environment's father, then, Oberon would feel entitled to treat it as his property. As Titania's husband, he would be justified in assuming dominance over her. Titania seems to be urging Oberon to take responsibility for his role in the disarray in the natural environment, but he seems more concerned with taking possession of the Indian child than fixing the disorder that he is responsible for creating. Oberon restores order at the end of the play, but only after he forces Titania to submit to his will. Surely the play can't be suggesting that heteronormative patriarchy must be enforced to maintain order in the natural world.

While *The Merry Wives of Windsor* consistently shows the masculine claim to dominance and superiority to be a sham, Oberon's treatment of Titania might seem to reflect more orthodox patriarchal attitudes. He tries to force her to do something that she doesn't want to do, and when she refuses, he forces her to fall in love with Bottom temporarily. Titania loses what she wants and has her consent taken away by Oberon, who seems to delight in humiliating his wife without having to face any consequences.

From a certain perspective, however, Oberon's triumph over Titania diminishes him. When he fantasizes about forcing Titania to fall in love with animals, he shows how little he cares about his queen and how highly he values his own amusement and his own selfish fancies:

> Having once this juice,
> I'll watch Titania when she is asleep
> And drop the liquor of it in her eyes.
> The next thing then she waking looks upon,
> Be it on lion, bear, or wolf, or bull,
> On meddling monkey, or on busy ape,
> She shall pursue it with the soul of love.
> And ere I take this charm from off her sight,
> As I can take it with another herb,
> I'll make her render up her page to me. (2.1.176-85)

He'll *watch*. He'll *make* her. He seems to be completely unaware that in defiling his queen in this way, he defiles himself. And this is the being who has the privilege of blessing the marriages at the end of the play.

Despite the patriarchal "all-clear" sounded by Theseus and Oberon at play's end, patriarchal prerogative has in fact been significantly diminished. By conflating Oberon's presumed mastery over his wife, and over matrimony in general, with his presumed mastery over the natural environment, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* shows how men act against their own best interests when they perpetuate odious notions of male rapacity and privilege that they are allowed to impose equally on women and the environment.

Shakespeare's plays often show how the uncompromising exercise of patriarchal privilege can be self-defeating. Who can sympathize with Egeus in expressing his desire to have Hermia dead if he cannot force her to marry Demetrius? What reasonable person would consider the annihilation of a family member to be an appropriate consequence of that family member's disobedience? Even as property, it seems reasonable to believe that she would have more value alive than dead. As it is, Hermia flees rather than bend to the will of her father and Theseus, and Egeus stands to lose his daughter one way or another. And as Stephanie Chamberlain points out, Egeus's preference for Demetrius may not even be justifiable from a strictly practical point of view. Citing Lysander's assertion of his fitness as Hermia's suitor in Act 1, Chamberlain writes, "I would have to say that Lysander presents a solid and convincing case for himself as more than qualified to court the much beloved Hermia. . . Based upon Lysander's argument, this father's patriarchal claims seem highly irrational."[25] In seeming to disregard Lysander's fitness as a suitor, Egeus seems determined to act against his own best interests in some ways.

Demetrius attempts to extend the patriarchal authority of Athens into the wild and finds his own consent taken away. Helena gets what she wants through a trick, and even though the source of the trick is naturally derived, she does not get what she wants simply by leaving the urban environment and benefiting from the liberating egalitarianism of the natural environment. Should we see Demetrius's fate as just deserts for telling Helena he is sick when he looks at her (2.1.212), for threatening to leave her "to

the mercy of wild beasts" (2.1.228) and to do her "mischief in the wood" (2.1.237)? That would seem to argue against my claims. Should we just say that all is well that ends well? His motivation matters, and although he finds himself in the forest, he brings with him the constraints that Theseus and Egeus placed on Hermia at the beginning of the play. He says to Helena,

> Where is Lysander and fair Hermia?
> The one I'll slay; the other slayeth me.
> Thou told'st me they were stol'n unto this wood;
> And here am I, and wood within this wood
> Because I cannot meet my Hermia. (2.1.189-93)

Demetrius hasn't come to nature to live beyond the reach of patriarchal society; he has come to extend that reach from the court into the natural environment and impose his will on Hermia and Lysander. In that he is frustrated, driven "wood within this wood."

Oberon's triumph over Titania is as self-defeating as Egeus's and Demetrius's attempts to assert patriarchal prerogatives. He cuckolds himself in the process of asserting his dominance, just as Ford is in the process of doing in *The Merry Wives of Windsor.* The reasonable response is modeled by George Page; when George is confronted by the possibility that Meg is being pursued by Falstaff, he says, "If he should intend this voyage toward my wife, I would turn her loose to him; and what he gets more of her than sharp words, let it lie on my head" (2.1.171-4); when he learns that Anne has eloped with Fenton, his response is, "Well, what remedy? Fenton, heaven give thee joy! / What cannot be eschewed must be embraced" (5.5.230-231). It is this attitude that spurs Frank Ford earlier in the play to dismiss George as "a secure ass" (2.2.288), but obviously it is Frank who appears the greater fool. Better to be a secure ass than an insecure ass, the plays seem to suggest. Or cuckold to an ass.

In *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* men may be the masters of their homes and cities, but when they try to assert their dominance or superiority in the natural environment, they look foolish. For the most part, what women bring to the natural environment in these plays is simply a desire to have their wishes respected. They are often satisfied. Examining these plays in terms of pastoral conventions limits our ability to think about relationships between men and women

outside the narrow confines of patriarchy. It tempts us to privilege a man's perspective and dismiss abuse as humor. It discourages us from questioning relationships between people and the natural environment.

Notes

1. William Empson, *Some Versions of Pastoral,* (1936; New York: New Directions, 1968), 115.

2. For evidence of the critical extension of Empson's basic premise, see Lawrence Lerner, *The Uses of Nostalgia: Studies in Pastoral Poetry* (New York: Schocken Books, 1972). Empson implies that a key feature of pastoral is "putting the complex into the simple" (22), and Lerner writes, "In this book I accept Empson's extension of the term… The starting point of this book is that pastoral is a literary convention that conforms to a social contrast and a psychological attitude; that this attitude outlived the death of the form in the eighteenth century; and that there is therefore a good deal of the pastoral impulse in literature that is not pastoral in form—just as there were pastorals in the sixteenth century that observed no more than the mechanics of the tradition" (39). Lerner also writes, "Much—perhaps most—pastoral is not about the court-country contrast at all, nor even about any similar sophisticated-simple contrast. It is about love and death" (27).

3. Camille Wells Slights, *Shakespeare's Comic Commonwealths* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 155.

4. Louis Montrose, "Of Gentlemen and Shepherds: The Politics of Elizabethan Pastoral Form," ELH 50.3 (1983): 416.

5. "Generous" (415) is the word Louis Montrose uses to describe the increasing use of "pastoral" he observed in the early 1980s.

6. C.L. Barber, S*hakespeare's Festive Comedy: A Study of Dramatic Form and Its Relation to Social Custom,* (1959; New York: World Publishing Company, 1963), 145.

7. In *The Uses of Nostalgia,* Lerner identifies pastoral as a "provincial-mediated" (21) mode, which is a tidy way of making the point, following Empson, that it might be a mistake to think of pastoral as proletarian literature.

8. Montrose, "Of Gentlemen andShepherds," 416-8.

9. Empson seems to doubt his own intuition: "My own difficulty about proletarian literature is that when it comes off I find I am taking it as pastoral literature; I read into it, or find that the author has secretly put into it, these more subtle, more far-reaching, and I think more permanent, ideas" (20).

10. Sylvia Bowerbank, *Speaking for Nature: Women and Ecologies of Early Modern England* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 3.

11. Jeanne Addison Roberts, *The Shakespearean Wild* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991), 24-5.

12. Quotations from Shakespeare's plays are taken from *The Complete Works of Shakespeare,* ed. David Bevington, 7th edition (New York: Pearson, 2014).

13. Randall Martin, *Shakespeare and Ecology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 35.

14. This is aside from the question of whether a male actor can adequately or credibly represent a woman. I would like to sidestep the performance question and treat the identity of characters as a stable fiction. For an exploration of the performance question, see Roberts, *The Shakespearean Wild* 13-14.

15. Carolyn Ruth Swift Lenz, Gayle Green, and Carol Thomas Neely, introduction to *The Woman's Part: Feminist Criticism of Shakespeare* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983), 4.

16. See Ralph Berry, *Shakespeare and the Awareness of the Audience* (New York: MacMillan, 1985). According to Berry, sometimes the invitation to laughter can produce guilt: "in the later stages [of *Twelfth Night*] the ultimate theatrical effect of guilt requires that we should have participated fully in the garden scene. There is a certain moral responsibility, even culpability, which the audience assumes in *Twelfth Night:* I don't think the play can be understood without it" (64).

17. Angela Watson, "10 Things Every Teacher Should Know When Talking About Race," *The Cornerstone for Teachers* (blog), accessed June 24, 2019, http://thecornerstoneforteachers.com/truth-for-teachers-podcast/10-things-every-white-teacher-know-talking-race/.

18. Stephan Horlacher, "A Short Introduction to Theories of Humour, the Comic, and Laughter," in *Gender and Laughter: Comic Affirmation and Subversion in Traditional and Modern Media,* ed. Gaby Pailer, Andreas Böhn, Stephan Horlacher, and Ulrich Scheck (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009), 18.

19. Slights, *Shakespeare's Comic Commonwealths,* 168-7.

20. Slights bases some of her conclusions on the characteristics of Renaissance pastoral established by Walter R. Davis. Slights, *Shakespeare's Comic Commonwealths, 1*64-169. Roberts writes about the limitations of Davis's model for Renaissance pastoral, noting that it calls for a hero who is "always a male." Roberts, *The Shakespearean Wild*, 27.

21. Cleopatra's extreme aversion to being led in triumph through the streets of Rome in *Antony and Cleopatra* comes to mind. She says, "Now, Iras, what think'st thou? / Thou an Egyptian puppet shall be shown / In Rome as well as I. Mechanic slaves / With greasy aprons, rules, and hammers shall / Uplift us to the view. In their thick breaths, / Rank of gross diet, shall we be enclouded / And forced to drink their vapor" (5.2.207-13).

22. Jan Kott, *Shakespeare Our Contemporary* (New York: Norton, 1974), 218.

23. Stephen Orgel, *Impersonations: The Performance of Gender in Shakespeare's England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 37.

24. Hermia and Lysander seem to be constrained by patriarchal heteronormativity, just as Anne Page is in *The Merry Wives of Windsor.*

25. Stephanie Chamberlain, "The Law of the Father: Patriarchal Economy in *A Midsummer Night's Dream,*" *Journal of the Wooden O Symposium* 11 (2011): 35.

ACTING SHAKESPEARE: A Roundtable Discussion with Artists from the Utah Shakespeare Festival's 2019 Production of *Hamlet*

Isabel Smith-Bernstein
USF Dramaturg

Featuring: Michael Don Bahr (USF Education Director), Brian Vaughn (Director), Jacqueline Antaramian (Gertrude), Andrew May (Claudius), Quinn Mattfeld (Hamlet), Emma Geer (Ophelia)

Bahr: We are thrilled with what we're going to hear this morning. Let me introduce Isabel Smith-Bernstein, the dramaturg for the production of *Hamlet* this year. She is torn because she would like to attend the seminar presentation on *Henry VI* so if she leaves in the middle of this roundtable, it's not out of offense. I know we're going to have a great time here, so thank you very much.

Smith-Bernstein: I'm Isabel Smith-Bernstein, I'm one of the dramaturgs here. I've been with the festival for five years and I have been a classical dramaturg for a decade. I'm also currently working on a PhD. in Shakespeare, so "Conference Land" is very familiar to me. I'm going to start this session with a bit of historical context, just very, very lightly, about *Hamlet*. But first I would like everyone to introduce themselves and your role in the production.

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Vaughn: I'm Brian Vaughn. I directed this production.
Antaramian: Jacqueline Antaramian and I played Gertrude.
May: I'm Andrew May and I played Claudius.
Mattfeld: Quinn Mattfeld. I played Hamlet.
Geer: And I'm Emma Geer and I played Ophelia.

Smith-Bernstein: Thank you. *Hamlet*, of course, was written sometime between 1599 and 1602. It really depends on who you ask and what version of the text you are looking at. It comes at a period of Shakespeare's life after one of his twins died, of course Hamnet, and it's a play that is often looked at as the birth of English Renaissance humanism because it's Shakespeare's most interior play. Hamlet really looked inward and is very introspective in a way that a lot of Shakespeare's title characters have not been leading up to this point. *Hamlet* is a remarkable play because the play is kind of like Shakespeare himself. It is like a cypher so the play takes whatever themes and ideas you throw at it and it just sticks to it because it's such a beautifully written play. It is the kind of play that whatever mindset you are in as you arrive to it, the play is going to give you something great. Brian, it would be great if you would talk a little bit about the concept—your idea of the play.

Vaughn: Well, as far as this particular production, I was really drawn to our current world—something that was at the forefront. I knew at first I wanted to make a modern production of *Hamlet* and if we were anywhere else except Utah Shakespeare I might have done that, [laughs] but because of our audience here, they are quick to judge a modern production as sort of negative, which is just a weird thing, something were trying to shift a little bit. I knew I wanted to put it into a period where it was a little bit distanced from our own sort of reality of now and add a beautiful landscape that this was something—a kingdom that actually needed to be upheld. Sometimes it can be bleak, and I've always felt that that's a little odd because why would you be willing to preserve a country that's bleak and not worth saving. I started thinking about the play because it deals with the very idea of being present and seeing what is in front of you in the moment. I was really drawn to Russia, and what is happening in our current global world; about questions that revolve around Russia and our relations with Russia. I started to read the play and felt that Claudius had a kind of tyrannical quality—someone who is willing to kill to get the throne and to

keep people at bay. That sort of led me to Putin, and our relations with Russia right now. There are so many questions that we don't know. What is truth and what is fiction? All of those things are what Hamlet is going through, discovering the truth. So, I was drawn to Russian history. At first, I was looking at a more bleak, sort of Stalin-esq idea, but the more I started thinking about it, the more I was drawn to imperialist Russia during the reign of Nicholas II, because it was very ornate and very beautiful on the outside but the internal elements of it were troubling, as was the populous around those in the country. I was also drawn to Tolstoy and Chekov, who are two of the most brilliant writers the world has ever seen, and how that related to *Hamlet* was something that was I was really drawn to. The play does not take place in Russia [laughs], but I was drawn to creating a landscape that had a mirror to that world—another image in the play is this idea of holding the mirror up to the truth. I was drawn to the theatrical quotients of what that is, with Chekov representing what's really the father of modernism and the naturalist quality that the player king can represent to Hamlet to see truth personified in front of him. The players became the Chekhovian world and the court world became the opulent, beautiful, ornate world, and underneath it is the sea of corruption and fear. That to me was the end point of the production. I knew I wanted it to be operatic because I feel like it's kind of a giant aria within this grand, beautiful landscape that iris's down to the lone individual seeking truth within, and what Shakespeare gives us, which is a revenge tragedy as well as an existential drama and the discovery of self in the midst of that huge revenge tragedy. That's sort of the inkling to where it was. Within that also I was trying to give Ophelia some agency, and the female characters in the play some prominence—another theme in the play that can sometimes be blurred. For me the two female characters are pivotal to Hamlet's journey. They are the two places in the play where Hamlet seeps into madness and slowly gets pulled back out by each of them. He says to Ophelia during the nunnery scene "and made me mad." And he says to his mother "this ecstasy is very coming." Then he says that these two female figures really become links to his own truth—and really his heart—that could slip away. So, I knew I wanted to focus on that, but I probably shouldn't as well just do *Hamlet* [laughter] because it's the greatest

play ever written and it will always be relevant; it will always reveal new things and there is no bad time to do *Hamlet* ever. It's seen right now in our world, a play about people finding authenticity and truth was necessary.

Smith-Bernstein: Thank you. Quinn, in rehearsal Brian often said that the production *Hamlet* really shapes around the actor who plays Hamlet. I was wondering if you could talk a little bit about your process of doing Hamlet this time and also your great use of comedy and humor. Would you could talk a little bit about that in this production?

Mattfeld: Sure. This was a really great process because we treated it like an investigation of the play. I've done it two times before in progressively larger and larger productions, and this felt like a chance to really test the theorems that have come out of those experiences earlier in my life. We had a lot of dialog. Brian and I, and Terry, our stage manager, would sit and talk a lot. We would work on some of the soliloquies—"what do you want to work on today"—we would talk through the issues and I kept a notebook of all it. I was writing all of that stuff down and I was still reviewing it during the show. Tather than just "Oh this role that you're going to do for Utah Shakespeare," I wanted to treat it like an artistic project that doesn't end once we open, that's just the incipient phase of this investigation. So, Brian and I kept charting the simplicity upon which we can layer all the complexity of Hamlet; what is the arc; where does he start; what changes; where does it change; why does it change? Almost every time you think "Oh this thing changes," it's because it is in the middle of a pivotal scene with one of the other characters. For instance, where I was talking with Ophelia and Gertrude. Or, it is because of what Herald Blooms talks about—Shakespeare's characters overhearing themselves. Shakespeare overhears himself saying "to be or not to be, that is the question," there's the rub, right? It's one of the places where character development starts to change in drama because it's self-motivated, it's not the gods are changing you, the circumstances aren't necessarily, it's actually an internal change. It was charting where that change is ,and what the arc of the characters' journey is just as an individual. And it's huge, it's enormous; it's like every human's journey through any kind of crisis—their psychological, their spiritual journey through that—so its huge. It was really

great to be able to approach it like an artistic project rather, than another role that I get to play. The size of it, the scope of it, and the importance and depth of it allowed me to be a little bit selfish and say "let's really take these six months and investigate!"

In terms of the humor, people are surprised by it. When we originally talked about it, Brian said, "You know one of the reasons I think you should play Hamlet is because we see it the same way, you either think irony is humor or you don't." [laughs] At one point Hamlet says "I have of late, but wherefore I know not, lost all my mirth," which tells you that at one point this was a very mirthful person, a very funny guy. With that level of intelligence you know they're probably very smart, or very funny. What happens in the play is that Hamlet takes the humor that clearly has been part of his life—the levity that has been part of his life—and starts using it as a weapon, a defense mechanism, to let steam off and to keep himself sane. For me, I keep finding opportunities where Hamlet is using humor because I don't think that comedy and tragedy are mutually exclusive. In fact, I think that those two mask on stage next to one another, deep in one another, and that Shakespeare does that intentionally. He put a dirty joke in Gertrude's speech about Ophelia dying—he can't help himself. He also knows it's a pressure release valve. And I find that, just for myself, I have more access to the darker or sadder parts of Hamlet's journey when the entrance to that experience is through humor. I always think of the Yorick speech—that it comes from a beautiful memory of this guy who used to make him laugh when he was a kid, who is now gone, and the difference between then and now. He says "now" four times in that speech. It is such an ephemeral, but it is wrapped in humor, and wrapped again in this fun, mirthful experience of the character and of the play.

Smith-Bernstein: I know you have a bunch of questions, but first question is usually about Ophelia's death. It isthe first question I get every seminar, so I think we will just go ahead and talk about it. Brian, can you talk about that a little bit, and then Emma if would you talk about the experience of the madness in creating a strong Ophelia?

Vaughn: Yes. The idea for that came because I find Gertrude's speech confusing. Because, all of a sudden she gives a beautiful description about this death. The whole time I hear it I say, "then

why the hell didn't you do anything about it? Why didn't you describe trying to save her?" Nothing. And so, it just linked this thing. It's such an odd speech. I think it's for Laertes benefit to make it a beautiful thing that he can take with him. But when we were building this world, because I believe the social elements around the play informs all the internal elements inside the play, it made me think, what if she was killed, what if Claudius had her murdered? This is a guy who killed somebody else to get the throne—actually killed his brother to get the throne—and then he starts saying "I'll kill Hamlet because he knows the truth, oh let's get rid of them." That is somebody who would be capable to get rid of anybody who was willing to expose the truth to them. And that's why it's in this play [laughs]. It does make Gertrude's actions suspect, but I also think questions are good because in the very next scene the gravediggers ask, "Is she to be buried in Christian burial when she willfully seeks her own salvation? The crowner has sat on her, and it proves so, but how can that be?" It's questions. They don't know the truth. Nobody knows what happened. It becomes this huge question mark. And to me that was more interesting than putting that element into the play. Because I think Ophelia is a threat to Claudius' journey—a threat to Claudius—because she's one of the closest people with Hamlet, if not the closest. Certainly, the most intimate, I believe. So that was where that came from. Then it became about constructing that, obviously, in the world and what the relation between Andrew and Jackie is in that final moment. How she relates that information, and why and what that threat may be. What I find really sad is Gertrude's unraveling in the course of the play. In fact, I find that sometimes more tragic than any moment and any other journey of the play because it's obviously somebody who, like Ophelia, was falling and was raised up for a brief moment, and then fell back into the abyss. The language that Gertrude uses in the play, to me, is mostly evocative of her own personal journey. Of how she felt like she was drowning in her former relationship with the ghost. She was, for a brief moment, raised up and saved by Claudius, and then the truth about who Claudius was propelled her into the deep abyss where she says twice "drowned… drowned." Three times Shakespeare uses that word right in a row "alas then she is drowned… drowned… drowned." I wanted to put in multiple

layers of reality because it's a confusing event, and I thought it might be dramatic and interesting. Some people don't like it, some people find it confusing, and you know what, great. Because it propels people to go inside the play, and there are things in the play that actually are open to interpretation, and confusing. And so, for this production that was the direction I wanted to go.

Geer: Well I think it makes people angry, and rightly so. A lot of people say it made me want to do something. And it is supposed to make you feel pissed off when things are going really south. I wanted to expand on Brian's thoughts about "yes, I, as Ophelia, am a threat to Claudius because I am so intimate with Hamlet, and I know things, and I'm involved in this world." But I think when Ophelia becomes ill, she's no longer within the normal confines of human—I'm not going to do things the way everybody else is going to do them. I proved that I say things I shouldn't say. I say things that make no sense to everybody in the room. I get angry quickly. I cry quickly. I scream. I laugh. I do things that are not what everyone is comfortable with, and that makes me a threat because who knows what I'll say or what I'll do and he [Hamlet] needs to get rid of me. Making that scene has been really challenging and I'm proud of where it is now, but it is a big hurdle. One of the reasons it is such a hurdle is because there is a lot to achieve in that scene. I have a lot of things I need to say to a lot of people and a lot of things I need to do. What you don't understand is what I'm saying, or they don't understand. It has been very clear to me. I have a couple tasks I need to achieve and until I've done that, I cannot leave the stage. It is incredibly challenging and very cathartic. I get a lot of things out even if they are not understood and she's fighting all the way through it. That is one of the biggest things, in terms of her strength, which a lot of people won't talk about. I think Ophelia is strong, brave—I love her so much. I don't think Hamlet would use somebody who wasn't these things. I think she's very bright and she has a good sense of humor, and I think they would have really made a wonderful husband and wife if they had the chance. I think a lot of people see this production and don't see that in her. I wanted to make that as clear as possible and the way I found—the way we found—to do that was to make her a fighter. To make her fight no matter what. She gets battered and bruised—she is collateral damage. There is no way around

that. That's the play, that's the role—to make her fight all the way through. I loved that she is fighting in the mad scene and I love that I am even fighting when they are killing me. I love that I never stop trying to fix it or make it better, or live, making her a strong Ophelia. I think she is strong. I think she's written strong. We just hope to make you feel that and make it as full as it possibly can be as we try to do it every night.

Smith-Bernstein: Thank you. And one final thing I just want to touch on is the tecnicimos text that Denmark is an elected seat, it's a constitutional monarchy. So, Claudius really becomes a figure who has won an election, probably against Hamlet. He has charisma but we also see in him this kind of impulsive, scary figure. Andrew, if you can talk about that a little bit, and Jackie too, about creating the royal couple and what's in it and a family for Gertrude.

May: Well, what Brian was saying earlier, when you read some of these speeches you can fight against them or you can fight with them. We were talking about Gertrude's speeches so descripted, why? When you look at Claudius's first speech to Hamlet, it's basically a tirade and it is in public, and it is done in front of everybody. My first instinct as an actor is "how do I tone this down?" [laughs] "How do I make this conversational that people wouldn't listen to?" You can do that all day, but you are still saying things like he says. And they are in a row "this, that, this that." "You're wrong, wrong, wrong, wrong, wrong." There's no fighting that. So, when you get into it and you realize, "ok it's a tirade," then it really is very fulfilling. But you know, we can't even play [laughter]. We're just getting to know who these people are, and this guy comes shooting out of the gates screaming at Hamlet, and that's interesting, really, really interesting. This isn't solely my idea. We were talking with Bria and wee wanted to make him very active. All too often Claudius's are benign. They come out and say they're thing and have their one nice speech where ,"boy I killed my brother" [laughter] "is there any chance for me?" Maybe not. And that's really the conflict of the psychotic killer of this play. Because this man has killed his brother, as he says, the primal sin of mankind—Kane and Abel—he killed his brother. And we know that going in. The ghost says it, I say it, everybody says it! It's a proven fact, and so, how is that man benign? I don't know. I have

no idea. Therein lies the some of the truth in the platform from which we can springboard to go into a character. And also, the justification is the relationship between Claudius and Gertrude. There is love there. There is attraction there. There is sex there. It's sexy, as opposed to "Well, will you marry me?" [laughter] "That'll be convenient." It's not that. I think the back story is that they were attracted to each other from the get go. From my story, old Hamlet was a very good warrior, but not a very attentive husband, and that's where I can slip in. There's the background. They had something going. [Laughter]

Antaramian: Yes, in terms of Gertrude, the way I perceive the start of play is that, yes, she loved old Hamlet. Probably was not in love, but loved him—thought he was a good man. But, the way I play it, her son reminds her of her father, of old Hamlet. But, when he dies there was always an attraction. You know you can't help but feel the electricity of attractions of certain people. I mean, I don't know about anybody here, but I've made some bad, uh….

May: Do tell! [laughs]

Antaramian: I've made some bad decisions of people who were not right for me. Now, I never made such a bad decision that someone has killed for me, but I do know that happens. I think Gertrude was very attracted to Claudius and when he is elected and he is wanted by the populous to be king, she loves that. That she thinks it is great and that they should now be husband and wife is also something that actually feeds her heart and the sensuality. And so, the problem is that she is in denial of how it all went down. And when it all starts to unravel, especially in the scene with her son, actually right before, when she sees Claudius's reaction to Hamlet, in the play within the play, and the poisoning, things start to stir up. And, right before the scene with her son, she's thinking "no that can't be possible. Why did he get so mad? No, no. I'm going to put it in the back of my head. I'm just going to chastise my son. Why did you do that?" Then the whole scene unravels and that's why she comes so fast to say, "ok don't say anymore. You have brought all this attention to the forefront. I see the black of what happened." And still he says "a murderer." Gertrude responds "I cannot deny that that's possibly what happened," and she becomes completely her son's ally, knowing that he has offered up the truth for her to see. The rest of it is still—you know, you're in love with

the people you're in love with, whether they're bad people or good people—a little bit of, "I still love this man. I cannot believe he did this. And if he did this, he did this for me. And that everything that has happened thus far is because he did it for to be king and for my love." And so it's a mistake, or it's all my fault. I don't know if I answered anything I was supposed to. [Laughs]

Smith-Bernstein: Thank you. Ok so now I will open it up to audience questions. Yes.

Audience member: I thought overall it was a great production, particularly the energy level. Three things that I particularly liked; you began the opening scene beautifully, created an atmosphere of assistance, and curiousness. . . danger, eeriness, and all that. Nobody knows what's going on. Something is very, very wrong. Then I liked the fact that you start feeling a bond between Hamlet and Ophelia. And also, the fact that you made this menacing force in the character of Claudius very clear. But I was wondering, of course you have to cut the text because it's very long [laughter], given that cutting is inevitable, I did notice that from the opening scene, the whole sequence about the cock's crow, the birth of our Savior, and the rising sun was taken out. There's quite a bit a scholarly commentary about that sequence that it creates a moment of stillness, holiness. The opening scene closes on a note of watchfulness and purity and a note of hope and renewal with the rising sun. Horatio says, before he brings Hamlet's name up, "look the morning was a phantom cloud who walks high on the eastward hill." I was wondering why that—because our Savior—it's the only time in all of Shakespeare, Christmas is directly referred to. It brings, in my opinion, a note of hopefulness, renewal, redemption into the play. I was wondering why that sequence was cut.

Smith-Bernstein: We used that as a hallmark of the timeline of the play interiorly, and personally, to know what time of year it was and what was happening and then cutting the text. There was an interest in preserving as much of it as we could and including moments that are often cut, like the Reynaldo/Ophelia scene, Hamlet's soliloquy after reading Fortinbras. In doing that, all the other scenes just had to get trimmed, and trimmed, and trimmed. If it wasn't directly relevant to the story, it would sometimes get trimmed. That's the short answer. Brian will you…

Vaughn: There's so much exposition in that first scene by Horatio. That he is going first off about Fortinbras and old Fortinbras and this is the situation of the kingdom, and I think it's about this. I just wanted to move it along, because I feel like people will catch up with it. We did have that line in there initially, but, then I compressed it because I wanted the immediacy of those characters. I didn't want them to stop and reflect. I wanted them to propel forward to try to solve. And that to me is indicative of what Hamlet is going through. Unfortunately, I think it's one of those scenarios where, as a scholar you're reading—I will say this, every cut in *Hamlet* bleeds [laughter]—so it doesn't matter what you cut. There's always something that you go "Oh, I love that passage," but we have to get rid of it. The show is about 2:50, without intermission, so its running at 3:05. There is some buffer there. We have a three-hour time gap because of change over for the next show. If I could, I would have a four-plus-hour production of *Hamlet*, because I think it is interesting. But there is stuff that a normal audience just may not need, and it's just one of those little things. I love that line. I have had it in another production that I directed. When we got to it in this, I was concerned with the structural component of where we were in the play, that it's both an interior and exterior world, but I didn't want to draw too much attention to the exterior world of it. I wanted that to be visual, not necessary oral. So, some of those things, like the snow falling and all that, while it's an exterior sort of world, it is not necessarily saying "Oh we're outside now. We're inside," and that was one of those lines that I just wanted to get propelled with momentum of what Horatio is saying, "let's go tell Hamlet what's going on." That's the only reason for the cut. It's not for love of the passage because I get it and I love it. It is also, as Isabel said, that there were structural things I wanted to keep in place in this production, because you don't see them.

Bahr: Can you talk about those?

Vaughn: Well, the play is basically about three sons—Hamlet, Laertes and Fortinbra—avenging the death of their father, and I wanted those three pillars. A lot of times Fortinbras gets cuts, gets left on the table, and I felt that it was important. It's important for Hamlet to see someone else taking action in the height of a military state. That was really, really vital and I think it's one of the most

important monologues—soliloquies—how do all occasions form against me—a speech that often gets thrown away. I think it's such a pivotal moment for him, when he leaves and then comes back, because you see a changed individual when he comes back. And to just see him go away and then come back, it just seemed like the guy, who the entire play that Hamlet/Shakespeare is saying it's all about his conscience, who is doubting with his conscience. Doing what is right and wrong. He's always saying "should I do this, should I not do this" to not have that speech, and to see him come back changed seemed weird to me. So I wanted that. Voltimand and Cornelia were important links to that, because it talks about the military state, and the uncertainty of what Claudius may or may not do by giving Fortinbras passage through his kingdom. By giving him a passage through his kingdom he rallies around the other side and basically comes back. It's a deterrent from Claudius and it's something that is descriptive. That is showing him not thinking about the big picture, but obsessing about the internal picture—which is Hamlet—which is fear of people discovering that he killed somebody to get it. On the outside of that is a whole military world encroaching onto his kingdom, that he's not completely aware of. So that was important and I wanted to put it in there. And then the Reynaldo/Polonius stuff is often cut and I think the hypocrisy of what Polonius says is vital, because you have this guy giving this tremendous, beautiful advice to his son and then at the same time he's saying, "Go spy on my son and see what he says." That is a sycophant, it is a loving father who just makes bad mistakes and is a social climber. I wanted that theme in there. So, some of those things that often get trimmed so you can keep some of the more poetic stuff in the play, it just became a necessity to include it.

Smith-Bernstein: Thank you. We had a question in the back.

Audience member: I had a two-part question, one for the director, one for the actors. Brian, I was wondering if there's any sort of—let me talk through it—so *Hamlet* has a lot of cultural capital in a really bizarre way, not if you think it's the best play ever, but if you don't, it is like a weird thing about *Hamlet* that everyone thinks they know what it is whether they've seen it or not. So, I was wondering if you had any practices in directing that you either had to institute for specifically directing *Hamlet*, or put

aside for specifically directing *Hamlet*? And for the actors, I was wondering, how did you balance expectations of Hamlet versus your own process? Especially in the areas that were cut or that are so standard that you had to fight against them directly.

Vaughn: That's really what this is. It's like having played Hamlet, the fear of playing Hamlet is always in front of me [laughter] because so many people have either seen it, they know it, or they relate to it. It is one of those things Quinn mentioned about how the person embodies the role. Which is the truth. The same thing in directing. YAt some point you just have to relinquish yourself and say this is my production with these people, here, now, telling this story, let it live. Somebody can link on to it. Somebody can hate it. That's their thing. My focus would be on the storytelling of it now, with these people, for this particular thing. It's why we keep coming back to the play. The fear of doing it? Yes! The play is bigger than all of us. It is the most produced play in the world. It is, as they say, done every second of the day. There is production is going on somewhere. You know you will never live up to the expectation of it, so the thing to take away is just to do it and to just be in that. That's hard to do when you want it—when you love it so much. You want it to resonate. You want people to see it. And it is just the struggle of being a director or actor. You have to do what Hamlet does, put it out there and let it be, you know what I mean? But yes, it's daunting; it's scary. I'm guessing the same would be for these monumental pieces of theatre; *King Lear* is another one. You have so many people reading it and identifying with it in their own sort of world, that to match that is really almost impossible, really. You will never have a perfect thing because someone will always relate to something you don't, and that's actually the beauty of the piece. It's why you read it. It's why you keep coming back to it. It's why you have new discoveries. That's why you grow with it in all these things. And it's actually the beauty of playing it. Maybe Quinn should talk about that, but that's Brian.

Mattfeld: Yes, what I said every time in between rogue and peasant slave and to be or not to be, my Quinn brain goes "now I got to go out there and say the most famous speech in the world." [laughter] There's no value in pretending that that isn't the case. But, there's a phrase I keep coming back to—I like to think of

theatre as a ritual, and we do this ritual however many times we do it, sixty, fifty times this month specifically, but the goal of any ritual is to do it a thousand times as if it's the first— and it comes from a nefarious character in history. The goal of any sort of endeavor is to learn to act or to do beyond the lust for result. It really helps me to stay out of the world of worrying about how something is going to be received, or what a preconceived expectation is, verses thinking "I need to figure this thing out. I need to get her to save herself. I need to find a way for him to wander in, to stumble into his own doom. I need to get him to make a mistake." If I can focus on the very practical things that are happening in the show, and Hamlet need, that those things that he needs to achieve, and pursue that with all of the power of my brain and all of the fight in my guts, then I don't have time to worry about—I really like the way you said it—the cultural capital that we have to contend with in this play. But the more that I can keep my brain out of "this is a really important speech or moment," and sometimes I will walk off stage and say "God, that sucked, why did I suck so much," [laughing] because the whole time I'm sitting there thinking [whispers] "how's this going." [laughing] Instead of, and it does happen, it happens to everybody all the time, actors, it's just the battle we constantly go through instead of "Oh my gosh, I just figured it out," there's the rub. The action of discovery as a Shakespearian character is so important, and it's hard, because in a soliloquy it's such a mental game. The action of a scene is different. I have somebody to play off. I have somebody who I know how close I am to getting what I want. When it's a soliloquy, it's me, myself, and the audience, and the action is discovery. Well I already know that stuff [laughs] so I have to play it as if I don't. That mental action is made even more complicated because of the fact that it is *Hamlet* and everybody has a feeling about the way it should go. But really, it's not useful to any of us to worry about how it's going to be received. We just have to go back to the simplicity of telling a good story. That is what we've spent our entire lives working on, and going back to relying on those sorts of tools in that facility is the best way to get around that, or to meet that problem.

Vaughn: What's really funny is the only way to act Shakespeare is on the line. You teach students that. And it's easy to say, and so, so hard to do. But, it is also the simplest thing—act on the line.

Ironically, Hamlet's speech to the players is exactly the roadmap of how to do it. It is really just so all inclusive. It really is a kaleidoscope of morals.

Mattfeld: Yeah and it's such great meta-theater. You know what I mean? The central metaphor of the show is playing within a play, acting and pretending, verses truth, and how sometimes wearing a mask actually represents a kind of truth. [laughs] There are so many layers, and layers, and layers in this matrix. It is such a unique experience. It's unlike anything else you get do in the theatre.

Geer: Well, the mad scene is such a famous scene, and I've seen so many versions of it. I didn't know how to wrap my head around it. When I was on the plane coming here I said "I'm not even going to think about what the heck I'm going to do when I get there. I can't be so intimidated by it." All you can do is approach it like you would any other scene or role, which is to try to not have judgement of it. To try to find your way in, and to try to figure out what you want. To try to understand. So, I sat down and said "Ok, what would I do if I was in her world?" Ultimately her father is murdered, and the person she loves. I don't think I would be immune to losing my way. I'm not above that. I thought ,this is like a schizophrenic episode that was underneath and her father is murdered by the person that she loves. She probably hasn't slept in six or seven days. She's also so completely heartbroken and devastated, that her world is shattered. Her brother is gone. She cannot trust her father before he is killed. She's angry. She's hurt. She's betrayed. She has all these things going on and then this happens. I felt like I just needed to be empathetic to the incredible complications of that in and of itself. She's a victim of trauma and she's grieving. I've seen people act in incredible ways that they can't believe themselves—I can't believe myself when I've been in circumstances that feel larger than life. And I have not been even close to that world. But, whatever grief I have had in my life has changed me and made me unrecognizable to myself for moments of a time. I just try to come at it from as little judgment as possible. That's all you can do in things that are just so large. I know other people will judge it. I know other people have many, many opinions and this is our version of it. It's not going to work for everybody but I can't come at it from that place and analyzation.

Mattfeld: And I think it is cool too that that all works into the rehearsal process, and one of the reasons why this was so great is because we got to challenge a bunch of things. I have a number of very specific beliefs about how this thing works, and Brian will go "well let's try this." and I'd be like "Brian, it's clearly not how this is." [laughs] And then I would do it and go "Oh this kind of works," and it's a much better choice. Somebody was talking earlier, before we started, about killing Claudius, and we kill the hell out of Claudius. That comes from my thing that the moment has to be satisfying and I was annoying in the room about it. We all come to it with our own idea of the way it has to be. But the cool thing about this process was that there were so many moments of "no it doesn't have to be like that, it can actually be something else." And because of that, because of that loosening of the preconceived notions, I think it made for a better story, I think for a better play, too. [Laughter]

Audience member: That's a good point, I actually wanted to ask about that. This production apparently changes some things—some big things but also some small things, like Claudius's death. But also, both of Hamlet's soliloquies. There are other actors in that theatrical space. Ophelia's there for the first one; Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are there for the second one. And then having Claudius assault Hamlet after the mousetrap and then put his head in water. Were those inspired by other productions you've seen, or the different ways you've read the text? Because, while I have seen Ophelia on stage during the soliloquy before, none of the other ones I'd ever seen, and I thought they worked really well. I wanted to know where those moments might have come from.

Vaughn: Well, some of it was me [laughs], and a lot of others in the room being on board with it. That's the thing about these collaborations; you put stuff out there and it might not work with people or you try to make it work—try to dance around a new idea and find it together. It goes back to the people you're doing it with in the moment, that is sort of the beauty of it. I think people come back to these plays more, and more, and more, especially the Feelgoods of the world and the Branaghes. You see that they have done these plays many times and there is probably a reason for that. But as far as the sort of weird things—the Ophelia thing is weird to me because it doesn't say she exits; he says "walking here." We

even tried it a couple times with him delivering it to her, which, if you look at it on the paper it could be many things. If you look at it based on what it is, she is the character who kills herself in the play, and here he is contemplating his own killing, suicide. So, you could play that that way. That she gets that idea—somebody with a heightened sense of turmoil could perish themselves—that initially was the endpoint for that. But then, I obviously went in a different direction with how she ended up killing herself. I felt like it was important for her to overhear that, to see her lover in a state of uncertainty, which he says later in the scene "what should such fellows as I do? Crawl in between earth and heaven?" Where inherently, a guy who's literally on the precipice of not knowing anything, of just being on a tightrope, her awareness of that seemed like it would help propel her emotional vulnerability to try to help him through that. And their distance sometimes; it just doesn't seem like she's as engaged, and it seems too easy for her to give it over. That was something we talked a lot about. The other stuff was the reaction of Claudius. I feel like Claudius is someone who has a trigger and that led to idea of him really making it obvious that he did it. How good of an actor is he? Well he is the guy, as Andrew says, "'tis unmanly grief," he says to him with a very first scene. "Buck up" basically—get over it. As the guy is blatantly just an asshole. Let's face it, he covers it in the sort of social thing, which is "everybody needs to agree with me here" right? Right. And then to see the antithesis of that in the height of that moment and that that could trigger somebody to react. To be like, "I'm going to kill you for exposing what I did," accurately seems to me dramatic and interesting. The head in the water thing was just another element of him potentially doing it to somebody else, and then he has somebody else do it for him later. That was the idea of that thread.

Mattfeld: I literally wanted to talk about yesterday; look how cool is it that Claudius tries drowning Hamlet or putting Hamlet's head in the water and then Hamlet making Claudius drink the poison drink. There is just a little bit of symmetry there. But I never realized that until yesterday and that is kind of cool.

May: And the other one was the Rosencrantz. Was that how all occasions are there?

Mattfeld: Yes, that's actually my favorite soliloquy in the whole play.

May: Me, too. It's such a great idea of him actually seeing somebody taking action and prompting him on a big, global-size issue like that is just. . .

Antaramian: And knowing they are not even going to win—that they're taking action—and also acknowledging that it's a worthless piece of ground.

Vaughn: Yes, that is something. But, they are still going for it. And the idea that those two guys—it just seemed weird again that he would say "Go a little before, I'll come"—would still be trying to keep an eye on him. And then having them walk back and him say, "From this time forth, my thoughts be bloody." Because that's the first action he takes, which is to swap the letters, make sure that they get killed. He takes action at the end of that speech toward Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, and you see that later with Horatio where he's says, "They're not near my conscience." That this is somebody who is in a sense of being right after that, and it happens in that moment. So, seeing them there was, I think, kind of important.

Audience Member: It didn't ruin the scene by any means; it's just I had never seen that done actually with them still in that theatrical space. It's always been Hamlet looking out at the audience, you know, maybe making eye contact and all that.

Vaughn: Yes. I see the soliloquies like a clip in time too. I considered almost letting it go, and then I came back to it, and in that moment I was thinking, "I got to go get my groceries, my daughters are over here, I gotta go do. . ." I'm thinking about my stuff—and I do think that some of that is what Shakespeare does with these soliloquies—he stops time.

Mattfeld: That's kind of a convention you established, too, with the church scene. It's literally in the moment, because originally, we had me walking around and then you said, "Let's try it where you're just frozen in that moment," and that's just kind of what that is as well.

Vaughn: Yes, there are other people present when that thing is happening.

Audience Member: One of the things that was really interesting to me was the use of props in this production, from the guns in the beginning—I have never really thought why is Denmark in this high state of alert at the beginning of the play, you know, before

the process attacked or that sort of thing—to the book Ophelia is holding. I was especially interested in that book with the cross on the front, and then the decision to have those flowers be pages of the book and I wonder if you could maybe talk about that.

Geer: That was me and Brian jointly. We were in the mad scene and we were trying to figure out what could we use? Real flowers? Forks and knives? We can use whatever we want. But Brian felt strongly that we wanted to bring something that had significance, not something random that you don't have any association with. The only other prop that I have are letters and we can't use those, I would never destroy love letters. So, we had this book and we had a lot of thoughts about it being a Bible. Ophelia, in that scene and in multiple parts of the play, talks a lot about God. In her madness she talks multiple times about saints—all of these things that have a lot to do with faith—and what she's grappling with is the murder of her father and unjust non-burial of him. He's basically been thrown into a pit. And she is trying her best—at this time they talk a lot in the Claudius monologue, "If you can't atone for your sins before you die, you don't go to heaven,"—to give him a burial, in a sense, and a funeral. She's trying to make her own amends to her father. I have a lot to say to him, and there is just a lot going on in terms of trying to get into heaven, and it may be a fruitless attempt, but there is so much there that has to do with faith. I think, just as much as Hamlet is struggling with what he believes, so is she, and the chaos of it all. So, a Bible to me ended up feeling like I could totally be on board with that, and that it worked for my sense of what she's struggling with, what she is trying to figure out and it is destructive. But it doesn't feel—it's hard to explain—it doesn't feel like the Bible. It just feels like tools to do the things she needs to do and she's not quite in a logical state, and then they become flowers. It is a way for her to create beauty in a moment that is not beautiful, and there are a lot of those moments. I have watched people in my life experience horrible things, and immediately go "Ahh" [sigh]. And I'm sorry about it and I have literally seen people rope it back in, I've done it, and I feel like she's attempting that at multiple moments when it gets too hard and too scary. She sees what she needs to see. She gives to people what she needs to give to them. Rue and fennel, columbine, these all have meanings, and it's very direct as well.

May: I also made the connection of the props. The book. She has such a physical relationship with the book in this play. Dan gives her a book and says look natural (laughter). Then literally kicks the book out. And then there's this thing—make use of the book. Then at the very end, she's just ripping the book, and I like that. That for me, from a distance, was how everything comes together such as the wasted idea; it comes back, like everything.

Mattfeld: I also like that it has a shade of undoing the certainty of something. We start in a place of Protestant Denmark, right, and then a ghost shows up.

Geer: A Catholic ghost.

Mattfeld: A Catholic ghost shows up. So, all of a sudden, the theological structure that we all accept as truth goes, "Oh? Wait. Whoa." I always thought it was kind of a cool thing that every one of those pages is another question, poking holes in the very carefully constructed truth in which we all live

Geer: And that's the whole scene. She's poking holes. She's trying to figure it out and she is not afraid. That's part of the virtue of not being sane in regular people times. That's really the gift of it, that I can do whatever I want to figure out what I need to figure out, and no one is going to stand in my way. I have to figure this out. So, again, I can destroy. Because the questions are too huge and I need the answers.

Smith-Bernstein: I'm going to say that is one of the things that struck me, too, is that everybody felt so intentional. I've certainly seen *Hamlet* done where Hamlet and Ophelia and Gertrude seem like victims of fate. They have no control of everything. I felt like your characters were doing what they meant to do, and I think that the madness was more emotional than mental and that idea of "I'm going to make these flowers. I'm going to make this funeral happen for my dad. Nobody else is going to do it. Well, I can do it," and all these would have it and that's really interesting.

Geer: Yes, yes, yes.

Vaughn: That's exactly it. That idea about her own agency in this world. This is not an overly-religious production, although that is element of it that makes me think it might be [laughter]. I have certainly seen productions where the sort of theological element of the play is very heavy because you have a character who is going to school in Whittenburg—which is about existential

thinking—thinking outside of the Catholic-Protestant sense of being. That is something that's happening at the base level in this play, and was, in England at this time, obviously. So the very idea that Shakespeare's players had to get approval for certain things, what was right and wrong, was the sort of thread of what was happening. I think it's really interesting that this one character in the play, everybody is trying to put into a box—her brother, her father—all saying "you need to act this way, act this way. Read on this book. Subscribe to this, don't sleep with Hamlet, deny his letters, you've been too froward with him." All these things and in the midst of that whole journey are people kind of going there is nothing either good or bad that thinking makes it so. As Hamlet says, "there is no right or wrong, there just is." And that is another layer in the play about sinning, and people feeling like they can't have agency based on some bigger picture. Hamlet even has the literally "to be or not to be," which is, I don't know what my after life will look like, because I've seen my father basically walking in purgatory. Walking into the depths of Hell, potentially. A state of unknowing.

Then there's Ophelia, to whom everybody is saying, "Be pious. Be chaste. Be pure. Don't sleep with anybody. Have this Christian life thing. Live in this type of thing." It was really interesting for me to say, "No, I'm not going to have that. This is all false. This is a false reality of who we are. My thing is my thing, you're thing is your thing." That sort of global thing on top of the religious element in the play I think is actually really, really vital. I do think it's something that Hamlet discovers through the course of the play and almost becomes a kind of Buddhist way of thinking, which is living in the moment, and it just is and it is. We don't know what the afterlife will be. We don't know any of that stuff. So, somebody saying to somebody "you have to be like this to get here," seemed to me hypocritical in this world where a woman is trying to find agency, and is obviously deeply in love with this guy. And what she says, the flowers, the meaning behind all those flowers, is specific. One of them is rue. Rue was an herb that caused abortions at the time. Shakespeare's audience probably would have known that. This is a person who she says, "When you went into my bed, you promised me to wed all this stuff I came I dub the chamber door, that in the maid and out the maid never departed more."

They have slept together. That is my thinking. They have gone farther than they probably should have in the social construct of this world. Which propels her to such a level of guilt that people are saying, "you can't be this." So, in that mask, I felt like there was another layer of her own reality, which is exposing her own truth in this thing. The heiress—I knew I wanted to bring the heiress back because it's this a blood stain thing, which is a representation of Polonius. And then in rehearsal, Emma even taking that and collecting it, and all of a sudden to have this childlike image there with "Yes, keep it! Keep it!" Because it's another layer of what potentially might have happened in their own relationship, their own love affair. We don't know what that was. But I think those herbs are specific of what Shakespeare is saying. Why would he have said rue if it wasn't about that at that time? And it's also this idea of purging the truth, that idea of cleansing of one's soul, all that is a religious metaphor in the play. So, to be honest, the idea that she's ripping a Bible is sacrilegious. At first, I just didn't know, but then I decided to do it, because [laughter] that's what she's doing. She's exposing the truth of the people who are living and lying, who are being hypocritical. And in the midst of that is death and carnage and pain and destruction. And all these things, because of him.

Geer: And no wonder Brian, correct me…

Vaughn: How does that make you feel?

Geer: . . .that's precisely what I'm doing.

Vaughn: So, the meaning—it's kind one of those little happy accidents in some ways—just opens up a whole layer. We talked about bones. We talked about what the flowers are, and I knew I didn't want to be literal because it just seemed that this is not a literal production in that sense. There's subtext underneath what's happening. That's also kind of the Chekhovian name of the play, which is basically what the father of Chekhov is. And Shakespeare is, as Andrew says, acting on the line. Living in the moment. But, there's multiple residence in a lot of the things that he says, and so I think you can act on many layers.

Audience Member: I was really intrigued by the way you described Gertrude's account of Ophelia's death and the possibility that Gertrude might be making this story up. It's not really what happened; it is Gertrude's story to cope with what happened. And

I was thinking that'when she is telling the story of Demeter and is watching as Persephone is singing and gathering flowers and gets snatched away by the god of death, maybe this gives her some agency. Maybe Gertrude is having some hope from it. She can change that story. She can turn it around. She can be like Demeter, the avenging mother who rescues the daughter back from the jaws of death. So one time not to tell about women's vulnerability, but now all that put women down is this, you go to Job and he says, "Sorry, I can't do anything about that," but Demeter can't stop spring from happening. She's not going to stop it until she gets that daughter back. Maybe it what looks like Ophelia's most vulnerable moment, there's some hope that women are going to take power into their hands and change that story around. I've always puzzled about "why doesn't she do anything." But maybe it is that she wasn't there; she's making up a story about what if I was there; maybe she's making up a story about "you know what, I can turn things around."

Antaramian: Beautiful thought—analogy. I think that's very valid and the beautiful thing is that you can take away what you want of me as the actress playing it. I don't agree with Brian in that I didn't think this was a confusing speech when I came to it. Now in this production, with what we want to do with it, it poses challenges. To me it is exactly what you say, except that you have a more interesting take on it. [laughter] But no, it's beautiful. It is her state of mind. She comes and she says, "One wolf follows another," and "they were on each other's heels, they're just going so fast." [laughter]

Mattfeld: This is why they work. [laughter]

Antaramian: Yes, and this is what comes of that. She says, "Your sister's drowned." He doesn't say how; he says where, "Oh where?" We have now made it where I have not noticed that Claudius is in the room, and then I notice before I say, "There is a willow aslant a brook." Claudius is there and he is still fearful of what he can do to Hamlet, even though he has been sent to England; there is still fear, and I think that is important. That's the reason why no one is completely doing too many things, because he still is a very powerful and fearful figure. So, I feel like the speech cannot be a lie. He doesn't work as an actor going into it; first of all, because then there's no place in the script where he says

she was lying. I think Shakespeare says what he says and "if it is a lie, it is found out." So I feel like she did see this, whether it was in her mind, she saw most of it. She was going to the willow tree. And the tree and then the stream, and it was all these things. That's the state of her mind when she came to the point that Claudius killed her, or in the original, she was just doing these things and she drowned and I (Gertrude) didn't do anything. I didn't do anything is because I couldn't do anything. In my mental state, I could only watch. And in some ways, that is the most beautiful death she could have had—that she was enveloped like a beautiful mermaid—there was nothing I could do anyway. I literally was frozen. So that—in her guilt of "I didn't do anything," whether she was murdered or drowned—she still didn't do anything. I think that it speaks to her state of mind, "I don't have agency. I can pretend that I can try to get agency, but I don't." And the women in this world can fight for it, but they are both pawns. They're both used by the men to get where they need to.

Vaughn: It's interesting, too, idea in this play of the other theme, which the player king literally shows where he says "did nothing." In their vengeance, in their actions, they did nothing, that they caused in a state of unknown. So, the idea that she doesn't do anything, you can definitely see that she herself is polarized and in inaction basically.

Antaramian: Exactly.

Vaughn: Like her son. And anybody who is debating right and wrong, what to do.

May: One reaction to this play about this particular moment that I find absolutely fascinating, having talked to a lot of people who have asked me, "Why did Gertrude kill Ophelia?"

Mattfeld: I asked you the other day!

May: Wow! I guess I want to flip the mirror around and say "how did you see that?" [laughter]

Audience Member: The main reason that that is what I came to was after Hamlet and Gertrude have their chat, and Hamlet tells Gertrude to not spend time with Claudius, and at the end of every scene, there is a moment where Claudius would beckon Gertrude to come, and she would pause, and then she would come. I can see the struggle of Gertrude being torn in between, and so it wasn't so much that I thought it was Gertrude who had the agency to

decide "I'm going to kill Ophelia," but more so I didn't see a clear moment where Claudius ordered it, and so what we saw was that Gertrude was the accomplice and it was her dirty work to get the guards to go do it; that's why she's watching.

May: This is my failure.

Vaughn: No, no it's not; it's mine. [laughing] It's mine because there is a moment where he looks to the guards and he gives them a look. But. . . it's across the stage in the wake of Laertes, who is also down. She is just left. It's easy to miss his look to those guys. I saw this as I watched the play and I go, "Ok, Brian, if you ever come back to this. . ." [laughter] It's a moment where he whispers in the guy's ear. It's a literal thing and then they go out. But there is a look that happens between the guards. They watch her go, they look to Andrew, and Andrew gives a head nod, and then they go after her.

Mattfeld: I'm just not sure why suddenly the two guys who have been following orders from Claudius the entire time, who have been doing everything Claudius says, and getting nods, all of a sudden go, "Now let's do Gertrude's work. That's the thing I don't get. Like the pattern.

Vaughn: It is not a literal time and space thing. Although some people think it is a literal time and space thing. Because she's in the room and then she comes in and...

Antaramian: Well we are doing it as she witnesses it, and it is still the same thing—there's inaction. Whether it's a murder or whether she actually drowned—whatever interpretation the play production does—she still is in inaction. And it's interesting what each of you took away from it, which is all valid, of course. After her scene with her son, he says, "Ok, you can't tell them I'm pretending to be mad, right?" And she follows and says, "Oh my God, he's crazy, he's mad." And he says, "Come on, let's go." It would be reckless for her, because she still has to help Hamlet with all things he wants to do. She still has to follow the king's direction. Again, she doesn't have that much agency as a woman in this court, even if she is a queen. It's just a gradual, "I'm not, okay, I'm going to." She has a lot of "I shall obey you" in the first act. She never says that again. And she never does that again. She begrudgingly holds her place to make sure that Hamlet does all the things he needs to do with that. Those are the nuances that either show up or they don't. But that's what we're trying to do.

Audience Member: I think a wonderful thing about the situation is, like you said earlier, how many questions it brings up. Throughout this whole play, at no point did I feel like anyone was very passive—all of the characters. It's a very common critique of Hamlet. He decides that he wants to kill his uncle, and then he never does it until act five. But in this play the questions all led to tension, all led to action.

Antaramian: And, I'm so sorry to interrupt you, but I wanted to go back to the beautiful imagery that you had in that speech. I think that when Gertrude is, maybe backing on what you're saying, there's so many different intentions and things you can take away from it, no matter what, it is not passive. I think that there's some value; that's a beautiful thing in Gertrude: "I don't have agency. I don't have ability for action, and I can imagine," but this is the rescuing of the woman. The beautiful imagery you had, maybe that is what she was thinking. Because maybe she's going through a version of her own madness, except that she's not going to that extreme—that she's starting to unravel herself in terms of reality.

Vaughn: I have something that's interesting—the idea of painting a picture more idyllic than what the reality may have been. I think this is another kind of theme in the play. I think about that with the ghost all the time, "How good a king was King Hamlet, really?" Nobody else talks about him. Everybody else acts like it's a pretty good kingdom right now with Claudius leading the pack. Everybody seems pretty happy. She seems happy. Everybody in the court—he won the public opinion. It's a pretty good state of affairs. And it does make me think "What was King Hamlet really like? What's the reality of what that is?" And, again, that goes back to another theme of the play; What is truth, and what is fiction? Why are people playing a role to be something that they're not? It's interesting and it very well could be that this is an idyllic, beautiful sort of thing. But when you think about drowning, it's often violent…painful…when people are drowning. So, what the reality of that is, is up to those that view it at the moment. That's how I feel many times, and Jackie is so beautiful in this, and in helping go on board with all of my [laughs] ideas on the play and executing them was such panache and grace. But I understand the other side of it for sure, you know, with her just describing what that event is. That's how I have been in it every

time I have been it. To me it just seemed interesting because I've read a lot of scholarship on it where it's questionable. It's one of those things and it has always been this little thing in the back of my head, which is why didn't you do anything. And maybe that's what that theme is, because, like Hamlet, she was in inaction, lost and in inaction. But she paints it in a way that it is a beautiful thing, which means, it seems to me, that it is for Laertes's benefit in taking a beautiful memory of his sister with him, when ultimately it may have been very painful and very tragic. So, we're kind of playing the duplicity of that.

Audience Member: So just on the topic of the drowning, I've never seen a drowning on stage before. Just really quickly could you maybe pull the curtain back a little bit and go into the fight chore . . . and how it was safe, and also praiseworthy.

Geer: Yes. We worked it out so there are very specific things that you're doing. And I'm doing all of it, so it's wonderful. Luke and Quinn, who are killing me, are barely touching me. They do a really good job of looking like they are tensing their muscles, but I'm doing everything; it's very, very safe.

Audience Member: What's in the trap?

Geer: Water.

Audience Member: Yeah cause it's so real. I'm curious about it.

Geer: I do put my head in water; I mean I put my whole face in it. It's about this much water?

Mattfeld: It is like a tub for dishes.

Geer: Yes. It's that much water. I start by putting my whole face in it. It's just a little trick. I slightly shift my face from mouth and nose in the water to mostly like eyes and forehead so that my mouth and my nose can be slightly out, and I can breathe. I start by making lots of bubbles and then slightly shift and breath for a while. I fake, I fake, I fake, and then I pull out and I cough and sputter and they plunge me back in. I've been doing this weird scream [laughs]. . . I am truly in water. It's just when I feel my breath starting to change, and I need to breathe, I just slightly turn my head, and that means I can take however long I want so….

Audience Member: You can drown as slowly as you need to! [laughter]

Geer: I do and wait for you all as long I possibly can. I can just take my time. It's really all in my control.

Mattfeld: It's the same thing with Claudius and me. Andrew barely has any pressure on me when I'm in the water, but I put my face in to here (signals with hand). The first thing I do is blow out with my mouth to make it sound like my mouth is underwater, and then as I lean forward to make it look like I'm going further in, I'm actually pulling my mouth up above the water, and breathing.

Audience Member: And that works even from the balcony angles?

Geer: Apparently. [laughter]

May: No literally, every time I do it, I'm thinking, I hope I'm not drowning you. [laughter] because it really does, from my perspective, look real.

Vaughn: It is a great scene though.

May: It's got to look good from the audience perspective.

Mattfeld: Every time I think, why didn't somebody put apples in this thing? [laughter] What is really great about it, too, is when you do that and you have all the scenery people saying don't get water on deck and don't do this and you think, "Let me drown somebody and try to keep them in this 3 by 3 box. We do have some contingency plans, too, because we have to fight on that stage after you get drowned…

Geer: With my big heavy wig. [laughter]

Mattfeld: Yes. So sometimes there is still water there and often Horatio, (Jeremy) who's the fight captain, will come up and be like, you know, unlike the readiness is all empty, and then he comes, starts wiping… (laughter) because it's a safety issue, right?

Geer: It does happen a little bit on the steps.

Vaughn: We want to think that everybody has a lot of the commentary has seen the humor in the play, which people are very surprised at and I want to circle back to that. I love it actually, because irony and ambiguity is Shakespeare's world. And so to play that irony—so much of the humor to me is just that. I also love the fact that the one character that Hamlet is taken back by in the wave of death is the king's jester, Yorick. That he sees in Yorick somebody who can speak the truth by putting on an antic disposition, this vain sense of being, and in the midst of that is this resonance of truth, and that's where the madness is in the play. Underneath all that madness is this layer of shear truth. It's the same with *King Lear*—anytime people are mad or just crazy,

everybody else has gone crazy, but underneath that is just this searing truth that pulls people back down to earth, and I love that Shakespeare's done that. I love that he actually says "here is this thing," that really embodied who Hamlet is. Of somebody looking at something, and turning it, and giving it multiple resonance, and not afraid to do it, and is also in front of him, dead. That he's contemplating this thing. It is such a rich metaphor. It is really beautifully structured and, for me, it's things like that that keep you coming back to this play; where you see a Hamlet who layers into the comic irony of the thing, and reveals this whole other thing that you sometimes haven't even thought of when watching the play. "Now get you to my lady's chamber and tell her, let her paint an inch thick to this favor she must come," and no matter how much you pretend to be something you're not, you will always end up here. It's just really profound. Turning people on a dime. Taking them off kilter. Throwing irony back in their face. "Oh, that's great. You're not truthful right now." Every person, he says, "Are you, are you honest? Your news is not true." It is just this thing which is so necessary in our world, that somebody who is going, "Nope. You're lying, and here's why. Here is what it is." And that takes great conviction. In many ways that's what I think Shakespeare is really trying to weave in himself in this play as a playwright, of theatre, as a representation of truth. And he uses that construct and the psychological thing, which is about life and death. It's just so poetically rich and profound. It is why we keep doing it and coming back to it.

Mattfeld: Madness and laughter are so cleansing. Especially in this world, that madness is clarity, its hyperclarity and the man's comic element, too. The very last thing that happens is that Hamlet dies laughing, because he says, "the rest is silence. I have been talking for three hours." [laughter] Hamlet never stops talking, and in the last moment he says, 'I'm not going to talk anymore." That's hilarious, you know what I mean. I think there's real clarity in that the thing that tyrants—that authoritarians—hate the most is to be laughed at.

Bahr: You just described the joker. [laughter]

Mattfeld: Now you're talking! I like that! Someday Michael will have to have a symposium on Batman as a successful Hamlet.

Smith-Bernstein: On that note. Thank you. [Applause]

UNDERGRADUATE PAPER

The Devil's in the Details: Reading Seyton as Satan in *Macbeth*

Mitchell Lloyd Cameron
University of Massachusetts Boston

As far as characters in *Macbeth* go, Seyton is remarkably unremarkable. Not only does he have incredibly few lines, but he can't even be called noteworthy for having the fewest, as Fleance beats Seyton's thirty-two words with an even more meager fifteen.[1] Yet unlike Fleance who is noteworthy for, at the very least, being Banquo's son, Seyton appears to be of such inconsequence that we may even question why he has a name at all. He does play a slightly more relevant role in the play than an average servant, but even the unnamed Doctor who appears in scene 5.3 with him has more to say, speaking fifty-one words in that scene, plus 226 in 5.1 earlier. And the information the Doctor gives is much more unique to his position, as he discusses in specific terms Lady Macbeth's madness, and how she may be cared for. Seyton's one purpose in the whole play seems to be to deliver to Macbeth the news of his wife's death, yet given his inconsequentiality, it almost seems it would have made more sense to give the Doctor a name and have him deliver that bombshell—cutting Seyton entirely. But that's not what Shakespeare chose to do.

Seyton is but a retainer in Macbeth's household, and nothing obvious within the circumstance of the play leads us to believe he

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is of any greater significance. So why then does such a character have a name? The answer, I posit, can be found by first examining the name itself; Seyton, true to his eponym, should be read not as just being some random servant, but rather another devilish force, like the weïrd sisters, who has in the final act come to play his part in the unraveling of Macbeth, yet whose presence can be subtly felt across the entire play. Seyton, I will show, is not just some servant named at random, but an incarnation of the Devil himself, come to pull at the last threads of Macbeth's sanity.

Even after some 400 years, very little has been written about Seyton, and what has been said mostly equates to a debate over the pronunciation of his name. While it certainly looks like it would be pronounced /setɪn/ (or /seʔɪn/) in our present-day English, it is in all probability a derivation of the Scottish name "Seton," pronounced /sitɪn/. The Seton family of Scotland, from the middle-ages through Shakespeare's time, dwelled in social proximity to the monarchy without ever being fully royal,[2] and in the 1898 edition of *Macbeth,* H. H. Furness notes that "the Setons of Touch were [. . .] armour-bearers to the kings of Scotland."[3] Regardless of this connection, however, in the Arden edition Sandra Clark and Pamela Mason's footnotes conclude that the name is likely a pun off of the devil's own moniker.[4] Regardless of the definite pronunciation of the name, the similarities it bears to the name "Satan" are enough to invite a comparison, and while an identical pronunciation would certainly help my case, I do not believe that it is necessary to demonstrate the possibility of an intentional connection between the retainer and the great fiend.

From the moment in which Seyton first appears, there is something off about him. The fact that in the final act, a moment of madness and despair, Macbeth calls out this new name which we have never heard before is, perhaps, startling. If Seyton had already been a close intimate of Macbeth's (the kind one might call for at such times) it then seems strange that he is not present in earlier scenes. It could be that Seyton is a more recent acquaintance, but, given the seemingly brief and rapid duration of the play,[5] as well as Macbeth's growing dependence on the supernatural forces to feel secure in his power, it seems unlikely that he would now be taking the time to form strong bonds with otherwise inconsequential members of his retinue.

We can, however, amend this incongruence if we marry Seyton to those supernatural concerns that pervade *Macbeth*. Perhaps Seyton is not a mere retainer, but rather another ally in Macbeth's cortege of satanic defenders. Indeed, there is in Seyton's introduction already a possible hint toward his fiendishness—albeit a light one. In 5.3, Macbeth, left alone, calls "Seyton, I am sick at heart, / When I behold–Seyton, I say–this push / Will cheer me ever, or disseat me now. / [. . .] / Seyton?" (3.19–29) Clark and Mason suggest that the fact "that Macbeth names him three times before he appears may indicate Macbeth's lack of authority and increasing isolation."[6] This interpretation sounds reasonable, but I would like to consider that the passage may not represent a loss of control over the humans who serve him, but rather an assertion of a more magical control over a demonic entity he entertains. The idea of one calling the devil's name three times to summon him certainly sounds more like a fixture of modern pop-culture than classical literature; we can establish a plausible precedent for such practice within the world of Macbeth.[7] The number three is, within the context established by the play, an exceedingly magical number, and whenever a three is presented we ought to look for some possible witchcraft.[8] Furthermore, the idea that calling the devil by name could summon him must have existed in Shakespeare's time, as the common phrase "speak of the devil, and he will appear" is attested in written use as early as 1591.[9] If we mix that magical number with this folk-belief that calling "Satan" would summon the devil, this scene, in which a man, who has already harkened the words of witches, calls "Seyton [. . .] Seyton [. . .] Seyton [. . .]" and then Seyton enters, takes on an undeniably magical tone.

Now this scene alone is not conclusive. While he may enter like a fiend, we can only call Seyton Satan if we see such comparison in what he does. But in conjunction with his other devilish aspects, and particularly his actions, we may attribute to Seyton a connection with the devil. Throughout his three-and-a-half lines, the '"retainer" Seyton's primary purpose on stage seems to be to confirm Macbeth's unfortunate suspicions. We see this briefly when he first enters and reports that the opposing army is indeed advancing in great numbers (5.3.31). While this is grim news for Macbeth, it is no shock that a retainer entering from offstage would have this information. What is shocking is the

other piece of news Seyton delivers, when he tells Macbeth, "The Queen, my lord, is dead" (5.5.16).

The lady's dying scream is heard from offstage only after Seyton has already entered, and the text gives no indication that Seyton steps off to investigate the scream. Clark and Mason note that "some editors, e.g., Muir, Booke, give Seyton an exit at 8 and a re-entry at 16, assuming that he has to go offstage to discover the significance of the woman's cry,"[10] and Furness even provides us with a brief discussion on how best to let Seyton learn of Lady Macbeth's demise.[11] What Furness's dialogue shows is that the text cannot be left alone. Seyton, if he is a normal man, cannot simply know what has happened. I would follow Clark and Mason in leaving Seyton on stage, but go further and explain his otherworldly knowledge by stating that he is indeed not of this world. Seyton is an unholy creature who sees the queen's suicide by some act of omnipotence, and tarries in telling Macbeth to toy with him.

If we read these powers into Seyton in 5.5, we may also return to 5.3, and perhaps view a similar action. While he would there have had time to learn the bad news he carries, we could just as easily imagine a similarly uncanny moment where Seyton enters after Macbeth's three-fold call and relates his message with a disposition that implies he knows without having seen aught. Macbeth certainly seems to, by this point in the play, be antic enough so as not to consider the oddities this character may exhibit. Furthermore, Macbeth and Seyton's conversation in 5.5 seems to be private, giving a possible devil ample space to act strangely and be unremarked (5.3.31).

This appearance of unworldly knowledge is suggestive, but one may still dissent from this reading, finding it strange that, unlike the witches (whose kind is generally considered lower than demons and devils in that vague, cosmic hierarchy of fiendish ones), Seyton presents himself not as a high-status master of unholy arts, but in a servile role beneath a human king. But this is another quality which could actually point toward confirmation of Seyton's satanic affilation, if we consider other sources of information on the great villain contemporaneous to *Macbeth*. In King James I's book *Daemonologie*, it is said that when the Devil forms a contract with a person, although it is mutual, in the beginning "the Deuill oblishes himselfe to them [. . .] he bindes himselfe to be subject

vnto them."[12] The degree to which King James I's treatise is reflected in the actions, appearance, and thematic use of the weïrd sisters has been well documented,[13] so it is plausible that *Daemonologie* may impact the character of Seyton and his less overt devilish qualities.

While we may not see horns growing out of Seyton's head, we do have a character whose name sounds like Satan's, who appears suddenly when called thrice, who displays otherworldly knowledge, and whose relationship with Macbeth is not unlike the relationship King James I himself described between the "Deuill" and the people he beguiles.

Of note to this interpretation is that reading Seyton as Satan does not require awareness on Macbeth's part. While there may be some fun found in viewing the tragic hero as being an evil character who has made a Faustian pact, it is equally—if not more—plausible that Macbeth is unaware of his retainer's true nature. Being a Scotsman, Macbeth would doubtless be familiar with the name "Seyton," and not likely to suspect any new acquaintance of devilry because of this name; when he does call the name three times, it does not feel deliberate on his part. Rather it seems as though during his soliloquy he happened to address his armor-bearer three times, at which point he finally arrives. Even if Seyton displays some level of omnipotence, Macbeth is in such a state that he is less likely to notice any oddities in Seyton's breadth of knowledge, and his level of distinction between the natural and supernatural may also be so eroded that he doesn't flinch at Seyton's observation. Finally, it would be strange for any king to question why his servant is serving him. One could even argue that Seyton is a fiendish character who has concealed himself in order to massage Macbeth's mind to diffidence and indifference in the waning days of his life.

But even if Seyton only directly enters Macbeth's mind at the end of his short reign, it is apparent that his position as the king's retainer was merely the culmination of a long-standing plot to corrupt Macbeth, as Satan's presence can be felt from the first act of the play. In 1.2 when the king and his retinue find the wounded Captain who speaks of Macbeth's valor, it is easy to read this as a realistic scene, wherein ordinary people are talking about ordinary things. Yet here again we may find something in *Daemonologie* to suggest a fantastical element. Speaking again of the "Deuill," King

James I says he is known "to enter in a dead bodie, and there out of to giue such answers, of the euent of battels, of matters concerning the estate of commonwelths, and such like other great questions" (King James I, 18). Considering this, it is possible that the Captain has not survived his wounds, but is rather being used as a puppet of Satan, endearing Macbeth to Duncan so as to push forward the fiend's macabre agenda. That productions and adaptations of *Macbeth,* such as Rupert Gold's 2010 film *Macbeth,* have had the weïrd sisters interact in some manner with the captain in the transition from 1.1 to 1.2 gives further credence to this theory.

Indeed, the weïrd sisters can be seen as agents of Satan throughout most of the play. While they are explicitly depicted as disciples of Hecate, there is a hint that they have been acting on another's orders when they begin their plot. In 3.5, Hecate, while chastising the witches for doing all they have yet done, says:

> And, which is worse, all you have done
> Has been but for a wayward son,
> Spiteful and wrathful, who, as others do,
> Loves for his own ends, not for you.[14]

Clark and Mason note that the phrase "wayward son" does not really appear to be referencing Macbeth, but they offer no definitive person who could be here implicated.[15] Consider, then, that Satan might be the "wayward son" Hecate refers to here. The character of the fallen angel is certainly more "wayward" than Macbeth, and this may explain what the weïrd sisters have been up to all this time, as 3.5 certainly suggests that they have not been acting on Hecate's orders. They used the dead Captain and delivered their prophecy by order through the powers of Satan, and now Hecate comes to scold their impertinence.

While there is too much ambiguity in the plot surrounding *Macbeth* to say definitively what the purpose of Seyton's role is, it is worth considering that Satan was behind it all: that for some foul purpose he sought to use Macbeth to sow discord within the royal family of Scotland, that he used the weïrd sisters at first, and that Seyton was merely his last trick as he sowed discord throughout the political state of Scotland.

Even if Macbeth remains unaware of this, it may become obvious to some by the end of the play. In the final confrontation between Macbeth and Macduff, the latter shatters the king's

prophesied immortality, exclaiming: "Despair thy charm, / And let the *angel* whom thou still has served / Tell thee, Macduff was from his mother's womb untimely ripped."[16] Clark and Mason seem to be at a loss for what to do with the word "angel," saying it refers plainly to an "evil spirit."[17] While the OED lists no definition of the word "angel" so broad to encompass all evil spirits, there is one definition, used as early as 950 and still present today, by which "angel" can refer to "one of the fallen or rebellious spirits, said to have been formerly angels of God."[18] While one ought often to be careful of making definitive statements when analyzing literature as obtuse as Shakespeare, I am comfortable stating that, assuming Macduff is using the word according to one of the definitions recorded in the OED, it must be in this sense, referring to the "fallen or rebellious" angel Macbeth "has served." And if everything I have put forth regarding Satan is accepted, it is clear just which fallen angel Macduff refers to here.

With Macbeth thoroughly tied to the characters of hell, we are given two options for what to do with Macduff. He could be an ordinary man who demonstrates that anyone is capable of rebuking the "Deuill," or we could see him as one who has been affected by the forces of heaven. I am more inclined to follow the latter statement, as it is difficult not to see in Macduff—the man who kills Satan's instrument and the ally of the witches—some hint of King James I, who, judging by the introduction to *Daemonologie*, must have thought of himself as one whose purpose it was to expunge the land of "these detestable slaues of the Deuill, the Witches or enchaunters."[19]

Finally, this interpretation may also make the play easier to interpret. Millicent Bell says of *Macbeth,* "the play is taught in schools as a moral tragedy illustrating the evil consequences of ambition, but Macbeth is not ambitious in the ordinary sense. [. . .] his supposed ambition is an emotion peculiarly unexpressed."[20] But seen as a theological torment of Macbeth and as Macduff's holy battle against him, we may remap the morality of *Macbeth* from the human to the cosmic. *Macbeth* is not the story of how one man can become corrupted by ambition, but rather of how Satan can corrupt any one man. This tells the same story that King James I's text perversely delights in: that there are creatures out there, hiding in the woods, who can turn even a valiant hero like

Macbeth into a parricidal, regicidal lunatic. It warns us not what to fear *within* ourselves, but rather what to fear *without*. It says, "be careful," because Satan could be right in front of you, and it will still take you 400 years to see him.

Notes

1. This paper uses the third series Arden edition. Other editions may vary slightly in line/word counts.
2. *Encyclopedia Britannica* (New York: Encyclopædia Britannica Company, 1911), "Seton."
3. H. Furness, *A New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare* (London: J. M. Dent & Co.), 5.3.30n.
4. Sandra Clark and Pamela Mason, eds., *Macbeth*, (London: The Arden Shakespeare, 2018), 5.3.19n.
5. For an exhaustive exploration of time in *Macbeth*, see Clark and Mason's section on it in their introduction to the Arden edition (62–82). The chronology of the play is intensely obtuse and no all-pleasing calendar can be drawn; nevertheless, most tend to agree that the play must take place over a relatively short period of time, so given that the only time Macbeth could have had to befriend Seyton is during his break from the stage between 4.1 and 5.3, most sensible chronological accounts do not leave Macbeth much time to become so close to a new character.
6. Clark and Mason, 5.3.19n.
7. Consider, for example, the film Beatle Juice in which the titular ghost is summoned when he name is thrice spoken.
8. Clark and Mason, 1.1.01n.
9. *OED Online,* "devil, n.," accessed March 16, 2020. https://www-oed-com.cscc.ohionet.org/view/Entry/51468?rskey=jlgzma&result=1&isAdvanced=false.
10. Clark and Mason, 5.5.8–16n.
11. H. Furness, *A New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare* (J. M. Dent & Co.), 5.5.8n.
12. King James I, *Daemonologie* (Project Gutenberg), 17.
13. See Daniel Albright, "The Witches and the Witch: Verdi's Macbeth," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 17.3 (2005): 225–252, Jane H. Jack, "*MacBeth,* King James, and the Bible," *ELH* 22.3 (1955): 173–193, and Joanna Levin, "Lady MacBeth and the Daemonologie of Hysteria," *ELH* 69.1 (2002): 21–55 for examples.
14. Shakespeare, 3.5.10–3; emphasis added.
15. Clark and Mason, 3.5.11n.
16. Shakespeare, 5.8.13–6; emphasis added.
17. Clark and Mason, 5.8.14n
18. OED, "angel."
19. King James I, *Daemonologie,* 1.
20. Millicent Bell. "Macbeth and Dismemberment," *Raritan* 25.3 (2006): 14.