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AGING QUEENS IN/AND SHAKESPEARE'S DRAMA

by

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Introduction

She was not old, nor young, nor at the years
Which certain people call a *certain* age
Which yet the most uncertain age appears.
Lord Byron (1817)

Just how old, exactly, is "a woman of a certain age"? As William Safire observed in a recent *New York Times Magazine* essay, "a certain age" seems to have racheted upward lately.[1] But until lately, the phrase was used to denote women caught up in what has been described as "mid-life"--with mid-life spanning roughly ages thirty-five to fifty-four. More specifically, the phrase, when coined and popularized in early nineteenth-century France and England, described women in their late thirties or early forties. But here the similarity between French and English usage ends. In England the phrase was used to denote the fortyish spinster, while in France, the phrase designated women of about the same age reputedly adept at initiating young men into sexual activity. Interesting to me is that in both cases "women of a certain age" are defined as much by their sexual activity and/or appetite--or the assumed absence of either or both--as by their chronological age.

I recognize that since the coinage of this phrase post-dates the early modern by at least two centuries, it is unlikely that those living in Renaissance England referred to women of *any* age as being of "a certain age." Yet the phrase is apt to my purpose of initiating an investigation into the circumstances of mid-life Englishwomen as exemplified in Shakespeare's drama. The female characters of Shakespeare who underpin my study

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[1] William Safire, *On Language*, "That Certain Age," The New York Times Magazine, July 2, 1995.

interest me precisely because their chronological age has often guaranteed them a virtual invisibility as mature women. The consequent critical myopia, if not total blindness, results in studies reducing these women to stereotypes: the "termagant," the "lusty widow," the tongue-wagging "old crone," all, with varying degrees of difficulty, sufficiently "contained" by patriarchy. Moreover, sexual activity and/or appetite--or the absence thereof--also often plays a crucial interpretive role in readings of these dramatic women. And a side, though not unrelated issue, is that the androgynous qualities of women of that notably uncertain certain age may well have been enacted on the Renaissance stage by men of an equally uncertain-certain age--a possibility I contend has yet to be explored as fully as it should be.

Few, if any, studies of Shakespeare's mature women *qua* mature women exist. The closest critical study to my own is probably Theodora Jankowski's Women and Power in the Early Modern Drama (1992), which includes chapters on Cleopatra and Margaret of Anjou. Jankowski's text, however, confines itself to a single, albeit important, concern: the dialectical relationship between femaleness/femininity and power in early modern culture and society. Her agenda also differs from my own in that the female characters under her scrutiny range across the life cycle and across the authorship of the corpus of Renaissance drama. My most serious reservation about Jankowski's book, though, is that she relies exclusively on literary sources; there is little, if anything, new in the way of historical contextualization.

Of greater use to me, although very different in critical modality, is Janet Adelman's critique of Shakespeare's Suffocating Mothers. Adelman manages her fusion of

the psychoanalytic with the historicist adroitly, but her critical emphasis nevertheless remains primarily psychoanalytic. I myself have some fundamental reservations regarding the psychoanalytic framework on which Adelman builds her arguments. Even though Adelman promises to trace the consequences of the reappearance of the maternal body after Hamlet, for example, "both for the construction of male identity and for the representation of women" (36), I would argue that her stress is more on the construction of male identity than on the representation of women. From Hamlet on, Adelman insists, "all sexual relationships will be tinged by the threat of the mother, all masculine identity problematically formed in relationship to her" (35).

Hence, Adelman posits male identity as figured through representations of one psychoanalytic construct of "woman"--the suffocating mother--rather than "women."[2] Even feminist scholars often confuse the plurals in just this way: the unitary construction of a psychoanalytic category of "woman" is an impossibility. What we are trying to sort out, rather, is a multiplicity of psychoanalytic constructs of "woman"--the idealized madonna; the "fallen" woman in need of male rescue; the suffocating womb; the Circe

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[2] Which is probably why Gertrude, for instance, remains "opaque" for Adelman, "more a screen for Hamlet's fantasies about her than a fully developed character in her own right" (34), or why, again, Adelman argues that "[d]espite Shakespeare's astonishing moments of sympathetic engagement with his female characters, his ability to see the world from their point of view, his women tend to be like Gertrude, more significant as screens for male fantasy than as independent characters making their own claim to dramatic reality" (36). Though I agree in principle with both of Adelman's assertions, especially in their point that women written by men are often "screens" for male fantasies, I think it important to add that one of the aims of feminist criticism is to read resistingly, i.e., from a woman's point of view. Even when the (male) hegemony of the psychoanalytic establishment theoretically imposes the "screen" mentality, I would argue that it remains possible to look behind the screen and formulate a "psychology" for female characters by virtue of close attention to their speech and actions.

figure; the medusa, to name only several--superimposed on material women situated in various historical, political, socio-economic circumstances. (To be fair, I must add that I believe it within the bounds of good reason to argue additionally that the unitary construction of "male identity" is equally impossible. Again, what gender theorists lately have been trying to establish is that a multiplicity of constructs of "the male" have been superimposed on material men in various historical, etc. circumstances.) But I should add here that I also think Adelman right to assume that the construction of so-called male identity/ies is/are predicated upon these representations of "woman" just so long as we are willing to allow as well that the construction of so-called female identity/ies is/are likewise dependent upon representations of "the male." Further complicating Adelman's conclusions, the Freudian/Lacanian formulation of "masculine identity" she depends upon, so tediously and speciously shaped in relation to the mother, A) automatically assumes the position of the male and B) axiomatically requires a (questionable) heterosexual imperative.

Catherine Belsey's innovative work, The Subject of Tragedy, is also generically related to my study, focusing as it does on the history of the construction of both male and female identity and subjectivity. Of special use to me is Belsey's contention that any notion of "subjectivity" undergoes three rapid-fire epistemological shifts during the early modern period. I hope to correlate Belsey's insightful thesis regarding these shifts to my own theory regarding the early modern perception of the crossdressed figure on the early and

early modern English stage.[3] Furthermore, my research indicates that representations of the "masculine" and the "feminine" on the stage aided and abetted self-conscious "play" with these same ontological categories off-stage, which in turn has a bearing on my readings of Shakespeare's mature female characters.

My agenda then is typically new historicist: I plan to historicize these representations by blending (play) text and (socio-cultural) context. I will do so by recognizing that the construction of an "identity" for any group during any historical moment is freighted with sex/gender, socio-political, legal, economic and cultural ramifications. Moreover, as Raymond Williams has taught us, it is worth bearing in mind that the ideology of these systemic apparatuses, however dominant, seldom operates as a discrete totality, impervious to the articulations of emergent and residual discourses.[4] It is my contention, rather, that the typical new historicist synchronic blend of text and context must also recognize that the discourses appropriated by these various "subject positions" (hardly univocal in themselves) enjoy a dialogic relationship with one another as they circulate and negotiate diachronically. What I am trying to resist, in other words, is what Hayden White calls the "reorientation" of new historicist theory propounded by Louis

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[3] Belsey traces the "conjunction" if not "collision" on the Renaissance stage of what she calls the "emblematic mode" of medieval theatrical practice with an "emergent illusionism" on the purpose-built stage, which in turn gets further disrupted by the advent of perspective in the Stuart masque. As she notes, "the effect was a form of drama capable at any moment of disrupting the unity of the spectator" (26). I agree and suggest further that the same disruptive dynamic operates with regard to the medieval and Renaissance sex/gender system exemplified by changes in how crossdressed males played female roles on the English stages of the periods.

[4] See Williams's chapter, "Dominant, Residual and Emergent," in Marxism and Literature.

Montrose as part of his setting forth of the new historicist program: "It is now the 'synchronic' rather than 'diachronic' aspects of the relationship between literature and the 'cultural system' that became the preferred locus of New Historicist attention" (293).

I am not sure that new historicism need concern itself with preferential treatment for either the synchronic or diachronic relationship between literature and the cultural system. To privilege either the synchronic or the diachronic relationship at the expense of the other serves only to reinstantiate, if not reify, a binary opposition largely fictional. Rather, to borrow Stephen Greenblatt's often reiterated terminology, I would suggest that the best analyses are those which recognize that synchronic and diachronic aspects "circulate" around and "negotiate" with one another in a remarkably fluid and dialectical fashion. Though the "version of history that you will get" by employing "Geertzian cultural anthropology, Foucaudian discourse theory, Derridean or de Manian deconstruction, Sausurrian semiotics, Lacanian psychoanalytical theory, or Jacobsonian poetics" may each look noticeably dissimilar, as White insists:

> [It] will be a "historical" history nonetheless if it takes as its object of study any aspect of "the past," distinguishes between that object and its various contexts, periodizes the processes of change governing the relationship between them, posits specific causal forces as governing these processes, and represents the part of history thus marked out for study as a complex structure of relationships at once integrated at any given moment and developing and changing across any sequence of such moments. (295)

Thus, there is plenty of room for reciprocity: literary texts can be a function or articulation

of context; context can serve as a function or articulation of literary texts.[5] Moreover, there is little to justify the privileging of what White calls the "paradigmatic" at the expense of the "syntagmatic" (299), since conventionally "'diachronic' [a.k.a. 'syntagmatic'] is taken to be synonymous with a specifically 'historical,' and 'synchronic' [a.k.a. 'paradigmatic'] with a generally 'ahistorical' treatment of phenomena" (300).

And yet, Montrose's line of thought drawing White's fire has long been transparent to new historicist theory. For so long, "hard" historians insisted on prioritizing the diachronic, or syntactic, aspects of history, often to the point of completely excluding or eliding history's synchronic, or paradigmatic, aspects. Montrose, in turn, seeks a radicalized re-formation of the historic via the deconstruction of the binary diachronic/synchronic, reversing as he does their order of priority with regard to their relationship to the concept of "history." Unfortunately, as is the case so often with deconstructive attempts that go awry, Montrose succeeds mainly in re-prioritizing--reconstructing out of the rubble of his deconstruction a new structural conceit, synchronic/diachronic. But his strategy does demonstrate yet again a basic tenet of deconstructive theory: with proper attention to and interrogation of the intersections of power and language, the "weak" term of the binary can be made "strong."

The "weak" in this case, the formerly disadvantaged--perhaps "conceptually challenged" might be most correct--offspring of "history" are those gems of synchronicity with which new historicists remain so enamored and with which so many "hard" historians find so much to quibble: "the episodic, anecdotal, contingent, exotic, abjected, or simply

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[5]White 298. White credits Elizabeth Fox-Genovese with this reciprocal formulation.

uncanny aspects of the historical record" (301). More important, as White goes on to note, "[t]hese aspects of history can be deemed 'poetic'...in that they appear to escape, transcend, contravene, undermine, or contest the rules, laws and principles of social organization, structure of political superordination and cultural codes predominating" (301). His categorizing of these synchronic aspects of history in these terms precisely articulates their value to the new historicist critic intent on moving towards an expression of a "poetics of culture" by way of those aspects of history which "appear" to escape the containment of former diachronic renditions of "history." Still, attention to the synchronic aspects of history informing us about moments of escape, transcendence, contravention, subversion and/or contestation, need not, indeed should not, lead us to ignore diachronic historical narrative. Rather, in light of what the historicist exposes, the re-vision of the diachronic becomes even more imperative.

Which is why, I suspect, it may be useful for new historicist critics to pay closer attention to the syntactical transitions in the grammar of "history." Additionally, as Michel Foucault's genealogies have shown, it is likely that "then" more closely resembles "now" than has been assumed previously, especially when the institutional discourses imposed in the intervening centuries are deprived of their power of articulation, or when they at least are recognized as contingent. Foucault himself neatly encapsulates the correlative nature of "history" as I refer to it here:

> Genealogy does not resemble the evolution of a species and does not map the destiny of a people. On the contrary, to follow the complex course of descent is to maintain events in their proper dispersion; it is to identify the accidents, the minute

> deviations--or conversely, the complete reversals--the errors, the false appraisals, and the faulty calculations that give birth to those things that continue to exist and have value for us; it is to discover that truth or being does not lie at the root of what we know and what we are, but the exteriority of accidents. ("Nietzsche" 81)

Moreover, I believe it especially important for feminist scholars particularly to devote attention to what I will call "microcosmic diachronicity" in conjunction with larger macrocosmic considerations, precisely because women's lives are often characterized by disruptions--the "exterior accidents" Foucault writes of--in legal status brought about by perfectly "routine" life-cycle events.

Recent studies by social historians[6] concentrating on the common and canon law records of the thirteenth through fifteenth century, for example, point out the ephemeral stati[7] of individual women as they progress through life-cycle positions in a quite possibly brief time span. As individual women experience various "points" on the life-cycle time line, their roles and places *vis-a-vis* the socio-legal-economic apparatus in general and men in particular may well be appreciably different from those which immediately precede or

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[6]For one such study see Joel Rosenthal's essay in Wife and Widow in Medieval England, Sue Sheridan Walker, ed.

[7]I use "stati" deliberately in the plural, borrowing and slightly amending and even further expanding Joan Kelly's usage: "I use 'status' here and throughout in an expanded sense, to refer to women's *place and power*--that is, the roles and positions women hold in society by comparison with those of men" (2 emphasis added). My argument, based on the more recent scholarship of Rosenthal and others, is that neither a woman's *place* nor a woman's *power* remain static in the course of her life span.

follow.[8] Thus, a daughter's status is unlike a wife's, which in turn bears no resemblance to a widow's, which, in yet another turn, can be changed yet again by remarriage.[9] Such fluidity makes "closed" readings difficult, if not impossible, but I would argue, like Biddy Martin, that "we must question the extent to which our projects and meanings subsume difference and possibility under the conceptual and strategic grasp of a unitary identity of woman," since such subsumption serves chiefly to "naturaliz[e] the construct of woman once again" (15). And one important difference often subsumed, even in feminist studies, is the age of the female under scrutiny. As the above turns in the female life-cycle suggest, age as well as marital status make getting a grip on any "unitary identity of woman" problematic, to say the least.

Any study wishing to multiply and/or refine the construction of "woman" must confront the general notion of history itself, a battle which even feminist critics, as we have seen, have had a difficult time fighting. Indeed, the agenda of patriarchal discourse over the centuries has been intent on "naturalizing the construct of woman"--perhaps to make her more "manageable." As Adelman, in particular, has demonstrated, the

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[8]In addition to Rosenthal, Frances E. Dolan has recently broadened our understanding of the remarkably different receptions accorded by both men and society at large to the *femme sole* vs. the *femme covert*. The *femme sole*, or single woman, does retain some status as a legal entity, while the *femme covert*, or married woman, legally "covered" by her spouse, does not. Accordingly, Margaret of Anjou in Shakespeare's first tetralogy provides a rare example of a literary Renaissance woman who moves through an almost complete life-cycle--from late adolescence to old age--and in the process, perhaps even more importantly metamorphoses from *femme sole* to *femme covert* and back again to *femme sole*. It is my contention that her age and legal status, as well as her Frenchified foreignness, had a bearing on how she was received by her Renaissance audience.

[9]I am referring here mainly to legal status, but changes in economic status are likely along the way as well, with ramifications all their own.

"suffocating mother" is a psychoanalytic construct fraught with a hegemonic impulse difficult for even feminist scholars to contend with. Therefore, feminist critics who label themselves new historicist must confront (in addition to the specific dispute regarding the privileging of the synchronic or diachronic addressed above) the history of history as yet another obstacle. As Joan Kelly reminds us, if we come to history assuming that women's situations are a social matter, history will not confirm our assumption (2). Kelly goes on:

> Throughout historical time, women have largely been excluded from making war, wealth, laws, governments, art and science. Men, functioning as historians, considered exactly those activities as constitutive of civilization: hence, diplomatic history, economic history, constitutional history, and political and cultural history. Women figured chiefly as exceptions, those who were said to be as ruthless as, or wrote like, or had the brains of men. In redressing this neglect, women's history is not enough. This is not to be a history of exceptional women although they too need to be restored to their rightful places. (2)

To a degree, my study would seem aimed at restoring exceptional women to their rightful places, since it concerns itself exclusively with those exceptions Kelly writes of--fictional queens; two, Cleopatra and Elizabeth I, even have a basis in historical "reality." Nevertheless, I would argue against filing my text under "compensatory history," since it would be impossible to gauge how these mid-life female theatrical representations were received by a Renaissance audience without a more complete contextualization with the lives of more typical mid-life early modern Englishwomen, a contextualization beyond the scope of this study.

Despite the public dimension of each of the characters I analyze, it is important to consider an imagined private dimension and to understand that this imagined aspect likely had a bearing on how women in the audience related to these stage women. Hermione, Paulina and Gertrude are all queens with husbands and children; Cleopatra has a lover as well as a kingdom. As scholars of later periods have posited, the collapse of the ideological division between "public" and "private" has been one of the fundamental tenets and central insights underpinning feminist theory. We now know that, especially for women, the public and private intersect in a very political way. In keeping with this realization, feminist scholars turned to "domestic ideology" and watched the ways in which this formerly undervalued genre of women's history interwove with more paternalistic, if not patriarchal, sources of political ideology. Scholars of later periods found domestic ideology an especially useful genre for elucidating what "was an essentially female tradition and was developed in manuals by women for other women" (Newton 161). Unfortunately, this assertion does not obtain for the early modern period. Though domestic ideology abounds in the forms of pamphlets and conduct manuals, the vast majority of these appear to have been written by men, mainly, but not exclusively, Puritan divines.[10] One has only to recall Juan Luis Vives' early and influential work,

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[10]See, for example, the anonymous "A Homily of the State of Matrimony," in The Second Tome of Homilies (London 1623); The Law's Resolution of Women's Rights, or The Law's Provision for Women (London 1632), by a compiler known only as T.E. and presumed to be male; John Dod and Robert Cleaver, A Godly Form of Household Government: For the Ordering of Private Families According to the Direction of God's Word (London 1621); William Whately, A Bride-Bush, or Directions for Married Persons (London 1623); and William Gouge, Of Domestical Duties: Eight Treatises (London 1634).

Instruction of a Christian Woman (translated in 1529 and reprinted eight more times in England by 1592) and Castiglione's Book of the Courtier (1528; translated into English in 1561) and the proliferation of Protestant imitations they spawned to grasp the centrality of male authorship at the heart of the formulation of rules for early modern female deportment. What scholars of later periods have turned to as an invaluable and indispensable source of historical information, by women, for women, is largely an absence for scholars of my own period.

But the fact that so many *men* felt compelled to write conduct manuals for women in the hundred years from 1550-1650 substantiates Joan Kelly's thesis that women did not have much of a Renaissance.[11] The same fact also gives the lie to any assertion that patriarchy smoothly and seamlessly consolidated its hold over women. The constant reprinting of Vives' text, along with the spate of like-minded texts Instruction of a Christian Woman inspired, itself attests to some subversion; without a need for reinforcement of the patriarchal agenda there would have been no need to reprint. More to the point, the manuals themselves often describe in most vivid terms the subversive behaviors women engage in, before, of course, excoriating them for these very same behaviors. The appearance of the manly woman of Hic Mulier provides one notable example of my point; early seventeenth-century treatises on face painting enumerated by

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[11] In addition to Kelly's important essay, Ellen Spring's "Law and the Theory of the Affective Family" attests to the fact that inheritance laws in England strengthened patriarchy's hold over English women until "strict settlement," developed about 1650 and operative throughout the eighteenth century, signaled a "telling shift from patriarchy to affective individualism" (2). Under strict settlement, portions for younger sons, wives and daughters rose considerably.

Frances Dolan supply others.[12] That many women actually engaged in practices and/or behaviors that threatened male hegemony is attested to by the number, variety and contents of male-authored pamphlets forbidding those same practices and behaviors. That many women, for whatever reason, probably refused to participate in any overtly subversive behavior is equally likely. No matter. Most important to a culture determined to get its women under male control was the *potential* of all women--no matter how apparently complacent, no matter how outwardly cooperative or uncooperative with the patriarchal regime--to subvert male authority and dominance. In fact, I would argue, the women who actualized the potential for subversion, whether through behaviors or appearance, or both, posed less of a threat than those who did not--than those, in other words, who represented *pure potential*. Women who flaunted their "disobedience" caused concern, but they were visible.[13] They are the female exceptions noted in historical accounts who share a tendency to first become prototypes, only then to devolve quickly

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[12] For several examples of these pamphlets in reaction to what Frances E. Dolan calls the "face painting debate" see the bibliography of her fine essay, "Taking the Pencil out of God's Hand"; for yet more examples see Annette Drew-Bear's Face Painting in Early Modern England and Shirley Nelson Garner's "'Let Her Paint an Inch Thick': Painted Ladies in Renaissance Drama and Society."

[13] The conduct manuals mentioned above were augmented by what feminist historians and literary critics of the period have designated the *querelle des femmes*. The first half of Half Humankind (Henderson and McManus) outlines this debate; the second half provides excerpts of ten attacks and defenses of women. Critical material pertaining to the debate is abundant. See, for example, Suzanne Hull's Chaste, Silent and Obedient: English Books for Women, 1475-1640; Kelly's essay, "Early Feminist Theory and the *Querelle des Femmes*," in Women, History and Theory; Linda Woodbridge, "The Jacobean Controversy to 1620," Chapter Four of her Women and the English Renaissance; Betty Travitsky, "The Lady Doth Protest: Protest in the Popular Writers of Renaissance Englishwomen"; and Elaine V. Beilen, Redeeming Eve: Women Writers of the English Renaissance.

into stereotypes. But stereotypes have an important function in a culture. They represent socio-cultural examples--women who dress like men (the manly woman), who talk too much (the scold), who don't stay home (the gadflies), who are sexually unfaithful (the cuckold-makers) or rapacious (the devouring woman)--demonstrating the "need" for patriarchy to perpetuate itself. Yet even more dangerous to patriarchy, I suspect, were those women who seemed cooperative. No matter how well-suited their appearance and behavior to patriarchal prerogative, their latent potential for subversion was never far removed from the male imagination. Leontes' "irrational" accusations against "spotless" Hermione provide a case in point. That so much time, attention and ink were devoted during this period to the proscription of certain female behaviors and the prescription of still others, signals not patriarchy's strength, but its weakness. In other words, methinks the gentlemen doth protest too much.

My thesis, then, is as follows: I am most concerned with the linkage between age and the power of the imagination described above. I want to explore the ways in which different types of women--all of "a certain age"--were imagined by a dramatist of the period as having the potential--at least--of subverting patriarchy, remembering that each of these characters was conditioned as well by her point in the life cycle, her marital status and her social class. That Shakespeare's literary women who present patriarchy with its most serious challenges are all in mid-life is no accident. The young "virgins," of The Merchant of Venice, As You Like It, All's Well That Ends Well, and Much Ado About Nothing, for example, whether sexually active or not, appear easily "containable" through

marriage or a highly aestheticized death.[14] The physical deformities of the aging process becoming manifest, older female characters such as Margaret in Richard III accommodate highly stylized demonization.[15] Mid-life female characters, by contrast, represent a unique threat to patriarchy. Not old, not young, the age of these characters of a *certain* age often appears disquietingly vague--they are at that age, to return to Byron, "[w]hich yet the most uncertain age appears." If married, they are young and attractive enough to be sexually unfaithful to their husbands, a male fear attested to by the countless cuckold "jokes" throughout Shakespeare's drama. Yet they are old enough to have gained experience in life and a thoroughgoing knowledge of their spouses' strengths, weaknesses. habits, quirks. If unmarried, an anomalous situation exemplified by Cleopatra but less likely for "real life" women after the dissolution of the convents considerably narrowed single women's' options in early modern England, they remained *femme sole*, yet to be deprived of legal entitlement by marriage. Significantly, as Ian Maclean has shown, the Ages of the early modern Woman were largely tied to marriage:

> The question of age and sex is of great interest. In the *Lawes resolutions of*

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[14] Janet Adelman says that the virgins who enter into sexuality--Desdemona, Cressida, Imogen--are "whored," i.e., contained, and I agree. But not all young women who become sexually active during the course of a play text are contained by whoring and/or death. Kate, for example, is "tamed" through a complex process of behavior modification, Helena by marriage to Bertram. Other virgins who do not enter into sexuality--Hero, Rosalind, Portia, Hermia--are assumed to be contained by marriage, even if there are indications that in the course of time they have the potential to subvert their containment.

[15] Two notable examples which spring immediately to mind are Spenser's Fidessa/Duessa and Dekker, Ford, and Rawley, The Witch of Edmonton.

women's rights (pp.7-8) there are said to be six ages between seven and twenty-one years at which different legal entitlement may be enjoyed. More generally, all law recognizes *puer (puella), virgo viripotens, marita, mater, gravida, lactans, vidua* as states in the life of a woman which require special legal dispensation in law. These states are made up of the marriage paradigm (maiden/ wife/ widow) and the physiological paradigm (*virgo/mulier/mater*, etc.) which may not be those of the greatest anthropological or demographical interest, but underlie the close bonds which link law to the disciplines of ethics and medicine. (77)

The potential of the mid-life women I treat to circumvent the patriarchal regime is, in every case I would say, actualized, if only temporarily. Temporality aside, my contention is that even momentary disruptions of a presumed hegemonic system represent what new historicists have come to call "leaks" in the containment paradigm. My objective is not to demonstrate "thoroughgoing feminism" on the part of William Shakespeare or, even less, on the part of his dramatic characters. Rather, what I am trying to uncover is the power residing in these ephemeral, ambiguous, and often very subtle *potential* resistances to patriarchy and the threat these imaginings present to what was ostensibly the complete control of women by men. The fact that these forms of resistance can and/or need to be imagined in the first place shows just how tenuous the hold of early modern patriarchy could be on the male (let alone female) imagination. To my mind, the need to envision forms of resistance, only to conjure up ways to squelch, dampen, or repress those same unsettling representations of resistance illustrates forcefully the precariousness of constructed patriarchy.

My take on these imaginings is further divided into first, what I will call the "literal"; second, the "figural"; and third, the ways in which the literal and figural have the potential to be conjoined. I intend to read the "literal" in terms of the representation of women who have a basis in real-life situation--stage characters, in other words, who have the potential to be actualized in the culture. "Figural" women, on the other hand, are those who operate mainly on the symbolic order of a culture. Some figural women have no basis in existence; the Whore of Babylon is one such example. Others become or remain figurally important after passing through a material existence; Cleopatra and Elizabeth I are two prime examples. Although figural women of this second type often, but not always, loom large in historiography, I would argue that they represent an even more severe threat to patriarchy in their imagined, reincarnated forms--which is why they require periodic revisonistic reinvigoration. Re-actualized in an often unflattering light, these incarnations often serve as exemplars justifying the need of patriarchy to perpetuate itself.[16] And yet, the figural specter, by definition, can never be (re)embodied. Though the figure on stage gives the illusion of reembodiment, there remains a dissonance between the reembodiment on stage and the literal body itself, quite dead. Nevertheless, patriarchal discourse requires that the potential for actualization be reified in order to rationalize patriarchal control. That the most unsettling of all to the patriarchal imagination is the

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[16] Mary Hamer notes numerous incarnations of Cleopatra appeared at the time of the women's suffrage movement. Her thesis--that "the widespread renewal of interest in Cleopatra is part of an attempt to come to terms with the changing political status" of women between the wars--demonstrates the longevity of the use of Cleopatra's image to substantiate patriarchal claims. Significantly, Hamer finds these images of Cleopatra amalgamated with another threatening figural woman--the medusa (Hamer 104-6).

conjunction of the literal and the figural is therefore not surprising. Here the literal is made figural, only to be re-literalized (by the superimposition of the figural onto the resurrected and revised enacted "literalization"), and in the process, patriarchy's worst fears materialize.

Accordingly, my first chapter traces the ways in which "the female"--doubly ironic in that she was assumed to be an essence available for consolidation, and in that she was of necessity "figural" in the sense that she lacked a biologically female corporeality--was superimposed over the literal male body of the crossdressed actor on the medieval and early modern stages. Whether "presented," displayed on the stage with a minimum of accouterments, as she was for the most part on the medieval stage, or "personated," dressed and made-up to look like a "real woman,"as I argue she was on the Renaissance stage, the older women is figured on stage by a body sexed literally male. When presented, I contend, the biblical mature woman materializes via an intersubjective bridge built by identification *with* the concept presented rather than *of* the character, no matter what the biological sex of the spectator. When personated, by contrast, identification *of* the mature female becomes paramount. No matter the modality of representation, however, I argue that the end result of crossdressed playing is much the same: the distinctions, even anatomical, between male and female, between masculine and feminine, are undermined. Eventually, whether personated or presented, what is underscored by crossdressed female representations is the unreality of the representation. Crossdressed playing encourages the kind of "play" which results in another (albeit temporary) subversion of categories patriarchy requires to sustain itself.

Most scholarship on this subject mainly concerns itself with the younger women in Shakespeare's plays, particularly Rosalind in As You Like It and Viola in Twelfth Night. But I have long had difficulty envisioning crossdressed boy actors playing "serious," if not tragic, mature female roles on the early and early modern English stages. Hence, my approach here is twofold: I first outline the several modalities of crossdressed convention which I contend were operative from the moment of inception of the crossdressed theatrical figure in England and, second, explore the ways in which the convention was/is a site of sex/gender system confrontation and subversion. Of necessity, not all crossdressed female representations are played the same way, and it is far from certain that all were of necessity played exclusively by "boys." The tradition of older men playing mature females--both serious and comic--dates from the earliest examples of crossdressed theater, and probably continued as an unremarkable extension of an earlier practice, albeit with slight renovation, on the purpose-built stage.

My second chapter on Shakespeare's The Winter's Tale will focus on the ways what I will call here "literal" women of a certain age--the early modern equivalent of the housewife, my most obvious object of identification for everyday women--married and bearing children, might be imagined as capable of finding routes of empowerment.[17] Through the matrifocality of and solidarity during the "rites" of childbirth, I argue, these

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[17] Despite the fact that these women, now referred to as "literal," are in some sense no more than figural representations of the female played by men, a point detailed in my first chapter, the women in this and the following chapters--whether literal or figural--will be read as though they are indeed women. In all cases, issues of performativity need to and should be addressed as well; unfortunately, it is beyond the purview of this dissertation to do so.

women exercised their "rights" as wives and mothers, and enjoyed an at least momentary lapse in a patriarchal continuum. Even though Hermione is a queen, she has an ample basis in the experience of early and early modern pre- and post-natal rites and rights which happen to transcend class barriers.

Turning to a more typical concern of women's history, reproduction, justifies a more literal emphasis than this play is accustomed to receiving. Clearly, the maternal enjoys to this day certain "rights" which could be said to center around what could be called maternal "rites." Although these rites/rights have evolved, they remain in place nevertheless. It is my contention that the outrage engendered by Leontes' violation of what Hermione and others in the play call the "rites" of the maternal, which are the source of most of women's "rights" in the period, is what prompts the matrifocal unit at the center of the play to coalesce. The workings of this matrifocal core demonstrates how the "rites" of childbirth award "rights" to women which men of the period violate only to their peril.

Organized around a female figurehead, mid-wife and healer, Paulina, and the protection of the maligned Hermione and her new-born daughter, Perdita, this matrifocal core includes by play's end, in one way or another, all but Leontes and Autolycus. In my view, at variance with other critics who read the romances as a consolidation of patriarchy "pure and simple,"[18] The Winter's Tale is arguably Shakespeare's most "feminist" play. The female mid-wife was still the primary care giver for pregnant women of the period, although the presence of the nascent male medical establishment which Foucault follows in

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[18] See, for instance, Marilyn Williamson.

The Birth of the Clinic was beginning to force its way--to the detriment of many pre- and post-natal women for a number of years to follow--into women's health care as well as men's. Royals, it seems, were the first to avail themselves of the services of male physicians for their pregnant consorts; members of the aristocracy soon began to follow suit. Contrary to the fashion of the early seventeenth century then, Hermione delivers her second child attended by a group of women, headed by a mid-wife--a situation perhaps atavistic for someone of her moment and class, but customary in large measure for earlier aristocratic women and contemporary women less noble. Due especially to the extraordinary circumstances surrounding Perdita's birth (specifically, Hermione's disfavor and imprisonment), the men and women who participate in saving both Hermione and her new daughter from Leontes' wrath represent an usually sharp example of how far those willing to protect both the rights and rites of the maternal will go in order to circumvent patriarchal imperative to the contrary.

My third chapter will revisit and revise earlier readings of a crucial figurative woman: the Oedipal mother in Shakespeare's Hamlet, particularly with regard to the ways in which these interpretations impinge upon historically informed readings of Gertrude. Gertrude has long been a problematic character for Shakespeare critics. Is she a "muddled cipher" as Janet Adelman reads her, or is she "pithy of speech" as Carolyn Heilbrun asserts? The disagreement is founded in what I would call the confusion of the "real life" or literal mother, with the more figurative symbolic mother, both of whom are present in Shakespeare's rendition of Gertrude. My reading of Gertrude, therefore, suggests that she represents in this play a version of what John Brenkman characterizes as the bifurcated

Oedipal mother--"real life" and "symbolic."[19] Since most of my attention in my second chapter is devoted to "real life" or "literal" motherhood, the bulk of this chapter will concentrate on Hamlet's "symbolic" mother. Once again, the linkage of age and the patriarchal imaginings of females becomes crucial. As an older woman who perhaps is free to take a lover while her husband is still alive, and/or to choose a second husband once her first is dead, she represents particular problems for patriarchy in both her literal and figurative forms. Moreover, Hamlet's age has long been a bone of contention for those commenting on psychoanalytic readings of this play. If Hamlet, as the grave digger recounts, is thirty, then Gertrude should be at least forty-five. But critics complain that he acts so much younger, and arguments that he *must* be younger hinge on readings claiming that he is embroiled in a late-adolescent Oedipal conflict which is "universal" and age specific. In fact, according to Brenkman, it is entirely possible that Hamlet is thirty, his mother is at least in her mid-forties, and Oedipal conflict is underway.

Borrowing from Brenkman, I argue that the Oedipus complex is figured retrogressively, rather than progressively. Brenkman suggests that rather than "progressing" to this particular point in their development, males in fact "retrogressively" put the pieces together and finally imagine their mothers as sexual beings only when they are confronted with the demands of initiation into patriarchal culture: choice of career, marrying, starting a family. Here is the exact juncture at which Hamlet finds himself upon return to Denmark from Wittenburg. But his mother's choice to remain sexually active disrupts, if not derails, Hamlet's initiation into patriarchal male adulthood. Gertrude's

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[19] Brenkman 10-11.

continued sexual activity collapses Hamlet's ability to distinguish between "good" and "bad" women. So how is a young prince to find a "good" woman with whom he can procreate to perpetuate the patriarchal continuum? No matter what his age, Hamlet's circumstances, read through Brenkman's theory, present no bar to a psychoanalytic reading of Oedipal crisis and Gertrude's approximate age of forty-five places her within that "certain age" patriarchy imagines most dangerous.

Under these circumstances, my idea is that Hamlet's symbolic mother undergoes yet another bifurcation--the archetypal madonna/whore split. Although many scholars before me have noted the many biblical allusions in the play--the Garden of Eden, Cain and Abel, the Virgin birth, Moses in Exodus, and the betrayal of Christ--to my knowledge only Patricia Parker has noticed the connections between the play and the apocalyptic Whore of Babylon. My reading of Gertrude as "symbolic" mother, therefore, is contingent upon a fuller understanding of the play's relationship to the anxiety generated by religious reformation not yet wholly consolidated in the period, and specifically over the wholesale destruction of religious symbols in which the culture had invested heavily,[20] especially those of the Virgin Mary. With the Virgin effaced, imaginings of the Whore proliferated, especially since early Protestants figured her to represent the Catholic Church.[21] I suspect

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[20] For what I believe to be the most balanced perspective of the psychic uncertainty prevailing in late sixteenth-century England due to the teeter-tottering between Catholicism and Protestantism, see Eamon Duffy, The Stripping of the Altars:Traditional Religion in England c.1400-c.1580. One can barely imagine the psychic duress of a cultural unconscious subjected to a wholesale erasure of valued, and in some cases, revered, symbols.

[21] It is worth noting that two other Whore of Babylon plays, Thomas Dekker's The Whore of Babylon (1607) and Barnaby Barnes' The Devil's Charter (1607) follow closely

that this momentary preoccupation with the Whore of Babylon and the notion of apocalypse has much to do with *fin de siecle* anxiety over a religious reformation never as complete or effective as has been assumed formerly. Since Brenkman contends--and I agree--that crises in religious belief are often figured in the individual and the culture at large through the symbolic mother,[22] my primary focus here will be on Gertrude's symbolic connection with the Whore of Babylon. Using Brenkman's theory, Hamlet's Oedipal conflict becomes the lens through which larger cultural conflict regarding patriarchal institutions can be read. Again, this time a figurative representation of a transgressive mature woman (Hamlet's representation of his symbolic mother) points to disruptions within the patriarchy. The consequent anxiety is refracted on to the figure of Gertrude, an aging queen written when the aged Elizabeth I was nearing the end of her childless reign, and a successor--Catholic or Protestant?--had yet to be named.

It seems that Shakespeare also had Elizabeth in mind when, three years after her death, he wrote one of his most memorable aging queens--Cleopatra. An incongruous blend of what Steven Mullaney has labeled "mourning and misogyny" is the result.[23] My

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on the heels of Hamlet.

[22] Brenkman shows that religious ambivalence played an important role in the dissolutions of the Oedipal conflicts of Freud himself and one of his most famous patients, the Rat Man. In both cases, the clash was between Judaism and some form of Christianity (see Brenkman's chapter, "Family Histories" [129-147]). Furthermore, Brenkman's chapter "Mother/Whore" (162-188) traces a genealogy of mother/whore back to the middle ages' version: saint/witch. By Brenkman's lights, the mother/whore dyad has both a *social genesis* and a *symbolic genealogy* in need of historicization (172).

[23] Although Mullaney makes a case for "proleptic" mourning evinced by Shakespeare's Hamlet, I think his reading is better served by an argument for "metaleptic" mourning--and its connections to rule by an aging female and misogyny--as represented in Antony and

argument here is that representations shadowed by Elizabeth, for obvious reasons, had to wait until after her demise. It is well known that Elizabeth and her courtiers communicated with one another through the stage; theatrical commentary on court politics, however, remained necessarily oblique during the Queen's lifetime, and even after her death representation remained circumspect.[24] Nevertheless, I contend that the later queens in Shakespeare's plays, and possibly Margaret of Anjou in the earlier plays, demonstrate the propensity of contemporary theater to posit Elizabeth as avatar while simultaneously and covertly representing many as an avatar of Elizabeth. As Louis Montrose has discerned, "[a]s the Virgin Queen--and, by the 1590's as an old, single woman--Elizabeth was, uniquely, a ruler whose political power, personal mythology, and physical condition bore a disquieting resemblance to those associated with Amazons, witches, and other unruly women" (167).

All of which probably has a bearing on why, even after her death, Elizabeth, like Cleopatra, remained "alive" figurally. Returning to the theoretical underpinning of my first chapter, these two women represent other, additional sites where the figurative and the literal meet, blend, collide, collapse--the most dangerous conjunction patriarchy can imagine. As others before me have noticed, it appears that Shakespeare's image of

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Cleopatra.

[24] For a particularly acute example of the politics of theatricality and the theatricality of politics, see Susan Frye's Elizabeth I: The Competition for Representation. Frye's second chapter pays special attention to court theatricals as a mode of communication between Elizabeth and her courtiers during the Kenilworth entertainments of 1575. Also germane, which many in addition to Frye have noticed, is the staging of Richard II on the eve of the Essex Rebellion, the import of which was not lost on Elizabeth, as her famous comment, "I am Richard, know ye not that?" attests.

Cleopatra--the re-literalization of a figurative interpretation of a long-dead historical queen--gets superimposed over the figural representation of a recently-dead historical queen. Elizabeth still could not be imagined dramatically as Elizabeth. She had to be imagined as someone else, both enough "like" to be recognizable and enough "not-like" to dramatically displace. Hence, the sense that this play is a telescoped, allegorical representation of the end of Elizabeth's reign.

Hermione and Gertrude, whether read literally or figuratively, fit into the early modern female life-cycle paradigm; they are wives and mothers. Their transgressive possibility, while destabilizing the patriarchy, can never be fully realized. My chapter on Antony and Cleopatra is about a most dangerous woman of a certain age, in yet another sense: the "anomalous" woman--unmarried, potentially sexually active, empowered. Imagining her is very difficult, hence the need for a literal example to be made figural; in other words, the example must be deliteralized into the more malleable figural or symbolic.

Neither Elizabeth I nor Shakespeare's Cleopatra marries and has children. They must die to be contained, but they keep getting resurrected. Thus, unlike Hermione and Gertrude, Elizabeth's and Cleopatra's transgressive destabilization of patriarchy is longer-lived and less amenable to patriarchal intervention. (Even historicized, psychoanalytic constructs of "woman" have been generated over time by men. However unruly the symbolic Oedipal mother, as Brenkman makes clear, she historically has been figured through the institutions of patriarchy, by men, for other men. In this respect Brenkman's

reading of the "suffocating mother" is more feminist than Adelman's.[25]) They both, however, remain susceptible to patriarchal re-invention.

Read as a political allegory of the final years of Elizabeth I's reign, the play juxtaposes the republicanism of Shakespeare's Roman plays with English politics after the accession of James I in 1603. Despite the advent of a long-awaited male monarch, it seems that the transition from Tudor female to Stuart male was one of diminishing returns in terms of popular satisfaction. The aloof imperiousness of James I contrasted sharply (and unfavorably) with the impression of warmth and accessibility so well cultivated by Elizabeth I. I suspect that as a result of the comparison which forced a contrast, the early Stuart subject was experiencing what we now call nostalgia: an excessively sentimental yearning for a theatricalized Golden World long since transmuted into Iron. The final years of Elizabeth's reign were, after all, fraught with conflict: the elaborate courtly ritual which had worked so well in keeping her first generation of courtiers at bay became a caricature of itself once Essex and his recalcitrant younger cohorts stepped in as replacements for Leicester and Burghley. But no matter how the English court and subjects might have longed for the idealized years of Elizabethan glory, their yearning for this imagined lost arcadia had to be tempered with the realization that Queen Elizabeth's childlessness had set the stage for King James's accession. That Elizabeth I actually had died--and died childless--must have come as something of a "surprise" to many of her subjects, since as

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[25] In Brenkman's words, "[t]he symbolic mother, far from being the male's most primal or natural or originating relationship, is a *symbolic* construct. It is produced from the masculine discourse on love, including stereotypes of the female object, and from the son's troubled identifications with the father" (85).

Louis Montrose details, she had used the "marriage paradigm" for aging early modern women with extreme finesse:

> At the beginning of her reign, Elizabeth formulated the strategy by which she turned the political liability of her gender to advantage for the next half-century....She appropriated not only the suppressed cult of the Blessed Virgin but also the Tudor conception of the Ages of Woman. Thus, the Queen's self-mastery and mastery of others was enhanced by an elaboration of her maidenhood into a cult of eroticized virginity...; the displacement of her wifely duties from a household to a nation; and the sublimation of her temporal and ecclesiastical authority into a maturing maternity. By fashioning herself into a singular combination of maiden, matron and mother, the Queen transformed the normative life-cycle of an Elizabethan woman into what was at once a social paradox and a quasi-religious mystery. (Purpose 52)

Rhetoric aside, the Queen died, childless. And despite all the imagery of fecund, spontaneous generation along the banks of the Nile, the relationship of Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra--like those of Elizabeth I with her courtiers and suitors along the banks of the Thames--is remarkably sterile.[26] I suspect that the succession anxiety prompted by Elizabeth's lack of bodily issue interleaves in this play with popular dissatisfaction with the Roman republicanism promulgated by her indirect descendant and

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[26] Unlike their dramatic counterparts, Antony and Cleopatra did indeed have children together. I am grateful to Richard McCoy for pointing out to me the contradiction between the fecund imagery of the play and the fictional sterility of Antony and Cleopatra, and the interrelation of their barrenness with that of Elizabeth I.

successor, James I. Further, it is my argument that the cultural turmoil instigated by the transition between the reigns of Elizabeth I and James I permeates Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra, and accounts for the "varying perspectives" which make the play so inimical to critical closure.

The queens in these chapters, despite all being of a certain age, represent symbolic and material realizations of a notable cross-cultural flux, now designated "the early modern period." Shifts in the instantiation of sex/gender categories; in the epistemology of the "real" during a period of intensified theatricalization, both on and off the nascent purpose-built stage; in the roles of male and female in family and public life; and in a political order slouching toward nation-state and colonialist expansion are all evident, I suggest, in the changing stage practice and the late fifteenth- early sixteenth-century plays of Shakespeare. But as Louis Montrose reminds us: "In the heat of our current critical debates about the politics of Elizabethan theater, we should not, however, forget that, for its Elizabethan producers and consumers, this drama-in-performance was a cultural practice and a collective process that went beyond an explicitly and narrowly political function" (40). Though some of my essays obviously call for a renewed political emphasis--the chapter on Antony and Cleopatra, for example--most others will argue that "an explicitly and narrowly political" reading of the cultural practice and collective process that was Elizabethan drama may actually serve as a detrimental delimitation. Despite the fact that early feminists declared the personal to be political, I hope to demonstrate that the early and ongoing recalcitrant "play" in response to rigidly prescribed sex/gender identification, preference, and categories as well as the continuing struggle of women for

their reproductive rights and the enduring contention over such psychoanalytic constructs as "woman" and "male identity" more accurately may be read as part of a dialectical process transcending the purely political. By turning our attention to discretely localized women of a certain age and time, my hope is that this dissertation will help to formulate a feminist genealogy.

Such a genealogy would seek to isolate and acknowledge moments of "radical alterity"--subversion--without privileging these moments as "dominant" feminist ideology--a feminist version of "containment." It likewise also would recognize that speaking from a Foucaudian position of "internal exclusion"--containment by patriarchy--does not automatically reinscribe that containment, but instead allows the reconstruction of historical and literary women in all their situational diversity.

Chapter One

London Is Burning: Cross Dressing the Mature on the Shakespearean Stage

As Robert L.A. Clark and Claire M. Sponsler have recently pointed out, theatrical crossdressing has of late attracted much critical attention, particularly from those interested in the theater of the English Renaissance (Clark and Sponsler 1).[27] But as Clark and Sponsler also note, illuminating though this body of work may be, it has virtually ignored the legacy of the crossdressed figure inherited from the Renaissance stage's immediate precursor, the medieval drama. And yet, if only for a moment, medieval cycle drama and the newly built theaters of "purpose" on the outskirts of London coexisted peacefully.[28] Moreover, many influences of and borrowings from medieval drama remain apparent in the corpora of Shakespeare and his contemporary playwrights, long after the demise of the mystery cycles.[29]

While Sponsler and Clark acknowledge that Renaissance scholars have not been averse to "reading forward" from Renaissance drama to current manifestations of crossdressing, they suspect that the reluctance to look backward has been based primarily

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[27] From an as yet unpublished manuscript, entitled, "Queer Play: The Cultural Work of Crossdressing in Medieval Drama."

[28] It is well known that medieval cycle drama was performed in Coventry, at least, until 1579 (Laroque 56-7). According to Andrew Gurr, the first purpose-built amphitheater, the Red Lion, was erected in White Chapel, a suburb of London, in 1567 (13).

[29] Francois Laroque and C.L. Barber have both done an admirable job of relating the many connections between medieval drama, especially, but not exclusively, "folk" drama, and the Shakespearean stage.

on two factors: the "disrepute into which any discourse smacking of the search for origins has fallen," and perhaps more importantly, the perception that the "Middle Ages are usually seen as being characterized by a monolithic patriarchal regime to which modern constructions of sexuality and otherness are not held to apply" (1). No matter how plentiful the reasons for this elision, the result is an underemphasis on the relationship between crossdressed medieval and Renaissance playing. It is one of my arguments that theorizing the crossdressed figure on the early modern stage requires careful scrutiny of traditions both pre- and post-dating those of the Renaissance; though looking forward to recent film examples of crossdressed playing such as "Paris is Burning," "Priscilla, Queen of the Desert," and "The Birdcage," as well as the recent all-male production of As You Like It staged by the Cheek by Jowl Theater Co. may well, I believe, enhance our understanding of early modern practice, a glance at what was typical immediately before may be equally enlightening. I want to emphasize here too a point I will be returning to later: under discussion--medieval, early modern, postmodern--are a number of **traditions**, not a totalizing tradition. I would like to argue that various modalities of crossdressed playing have long manifested themselves, in any number of venues, each with their own unique, though sometimes imbricated, implications for the study of the constructions of gender, sometimes race, and often class.[30]

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[30] The invocation of the usual triad--gender, race, and class--is not, as some might object, inappropriate to an investigation of crossdressed playing in the Middle Ages. As Clark and Sponsler argue, and they are joined by a chorus of medievalists in all fields, the "supposed massive deployment of a stable two-gender system [during the Middle Ages] is surely something of a modern fiction," since the "gendering of subjects in the Middle Ages was surely a process as complex as scholars argue it became in the early modern period." As well, according to Clark and Sponsler, "racial and class categories were less fixed and

One of Clark's and Sponsler's main points is that "[m]edievalists, too, have unwittingly collaborated" in the critical oversight relegating "the complexity of theatrical crossdressing as a cultural practice in medieval Europe" to the margins of interpretation, precisely because the practice can be "bracketed as standard and, therefore, unproblematic" (1). I share their assumption, as well as that of those other implicated medievalists and early modern scholars, that crossdressed playing during the European Middle Ages was "standard"--and I will elaborate later on the bases for those assumptions; I share also their concern that "standard" be read as "unproblematic." Here too lies the crux of the matter regarding early modern scholarship pertaining to crossdressing on the Renaissance stage. Though most critics assume crossdressing on the Renaissance stage was "standard" practice--again, it should be noted, a standard practice inherited from earlier, longstanding dramatic traditions--some, in an effort to historicize accurately, insist that early modern theatrical crossdressing is no more than a "convention" of the period and, therefore, unproblematic.[31] Other historicist critics grapple with the problematics of

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determinate in the Middle Ages than is often thought to be the case" (1).

[31]Steven Greenblatt is one who argues that the all-male acting troupe is no more than a natural by-product of a culture whose conception of gender was "teleologically male," though he sites in theatrical crossdressing potential for both subversion (and inevitably, containment) of the early modern gender system. It should be noted though that his reading owes much to Thomas Laqueur's Making Sex: The Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud, which argues for a one sex system (teleologically male). As feminist and Queer Theorists such as Gayle Rubin and Valerie Traub have lately begun to sort out, the system of *sexual* differentiation is not necessarily one and the same as the system of *gender* differentiation. Greenblatt's reading conflates the two in ways that are both misleading and unsettling. By contrast, Kathleen Mc Cluskie, though sharing some similarities in argumentation with Greenblatt and others, resists the collapse of early modern life and theater and sees crossdressed playing as no more than a theatrical convention of the period.

the unproblematic by emphasizing resultant social disruptions in what they figure as an inchoate sex/gender system undergoing major renovations even as it is constructed.[32] These critics, arguing mainly in terms of the homoerotic charge of theatricalized crossdressing--itself, in their views, a subversive and destabilizing influence on efforts to consolidate a waxing "compulsory heterosexuality"[33]--and/or attempts to consolidate, through a (predominately male) homosocial/sexual system of emulation and desire, male patriarchal authority while the other half of humankind staged their own subversive responses,[34] often bypass the important implications of conventionality. That is to say, the use of a *convention* as a site for social contestation is of course, in and of itself,

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[32]Both Laura Levine and Stephen Orgel argue that protestations against crossdressed actors arise out of the fear that the actors involved (boys) have no "essential" being and will become "effeminized" by the practice of crossdressed playing, while Phyllis Rackin, in a reading more resistant to closure than most, contends that theatrical crossdressing opens the possibility of enacting a gender plurality and fluidity historically specific to the moment.

[33]Orgel takes his and Levine's argument another step by suggesting that crossdressed players on the Renaissance stage might well become the objects of male desire, thereby disrupting newly-mandated "compulsory heterosexuality"; Lisa Jardine combines elements of Greenblatt's essay with aspects of Orgel's in that she envisions the theater as designed primarily for the gratification of men (teleologically male), and further, that that gratification takes the form of the arousal of (male) homoerotic passion. Again, I would sound a cautionary note derived from the work of Valerie Traub: arousal hardly qualifies as gratification; moreover, arousal need not result in any gratification; and finally, neither arousal nor gratification of homoerotic desire need be assumed subversive in either the late sixteenth or twentieth centuries.

[34] Jean E. Howard recognizes that stage crossdressing and the violation of sumptuary laws by women on the streets of London during the period are indeed related. She sees both as sites of social contestation, and I agree, especially with her attention to the implications of both regarding issues of class differentiation. I will have more to say later about what Howard's essay does not emphasize: the dress code "violations" of men of the period, their relation to male stage crossdressing, and the ramifications this interrelation has for issues of social class connected with crossdressed theater.

remarkable, since conventions in cultures enjoy a degree of invisibility due to their ubiquitousness and assumed normativity. The site--not the *stage*, in my immediate sense. but the *conventionality*--of medieval and early modern social contest, therefore, is not self-reflexively subversive. Moreover, the widespread presence and acceptance of crossdressed playing as a conventional source of popular entertainment in early and early modern cultures indicates an at least tacit approval and appreciation of the convention.

But even longstanding societal conventions change--sometimes through efforts one could label subversive, sometimes based on need, sometimes due to "progress," sometimes thanks to experimentation or play with prevailing form and/or content. Often, conventional permutations mirror and/or respond to epistemological shifts. Most often, a bit of all of the above is responsible for cultural alteration, resulting eventually in transmutation. No matter; when societal conventions undergo change, for whatever reason, people notice. Then they often get upset.

I suspect that one important change in theatrical crossdressing as we move from the "public" theater of medieval England to the "privatized" stage of the English Renaissance was the transition from the medieval convention of male actors of all ages playing female roles to a newfound emphasis on the Renaissance convention of the "boy actor."[35] Consequently, the bulk of early modern historicist studies on the subject focuses on the "boy actors" of Shakespearean comedies or the female pages and other young

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[35]Francois Laroque catalogues instances of older men playing females, particularly in the festive dramatic tradition of medieval and early modern England. Examples include the Queen of May/Queen of Winter (86); a man crossdressed as an old woman for the Plough Monday festivities (94); and, of course, the ever-present crossdressed festival fixture, Maid Marian (130).

female roles found in non-Shakespearean drama.[36] In a departure from the "received knowledge" of that scholarship, I would like to argue that the transition from the more pluralistic medieval uses of crossdressed playing to the more limited manifestations of the same noticed by early modern scholars was neither permanent nor unilateral. First, of course, there is nothing new about "boy actors" playing female roles on the English stage. They are a fixture of the medieval school, cycle and folk drama, and continued to be a convention of the early modern stage. It was important stylistic re-visions of the convention, I would argue, which incited the maelstrom of antitheatrical polemic, drawn upon by recent historicist critics to assist the theorization of early modern social flux and change. Second, though I agree that the new rendition of the "boy actor" enjoyed pride of place early in Shakespeare's corpus as well as in the early history of purpose-built theater--mainly, though not exclusively, due to stylistic innovations in performance and genre shift in the drama, I believe the more subsidiary older female characters--often, but not always, *esto perpetua*, the drag queens--continued to be played by older men, albeit with little change in the already commonplace sub-genre, and hence, received little notice, even from the most exercised Puritan divine. And finally, I suspect that the preponderance of mature female characters in Shakespeare's later plays suggests that "boy actors" took time to

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[36]The title of Michael Shapiro's recent book, Gender in Play on the Shakespearean Stage: Boy Heroines and Female Pages, is exemplary. Rackin and Howard, like Shapiro, emphasize, but do not limit themselves to plays from Shakespeare's corpus. And yet all concentrate on the younger heroines, presumably played by "boy actors."

grow into these more demanding dramatic roles, literally, as well as figuratively.[37]

I have so far refrained for the most part from using terminology I would now like to clarify. I have not, for instance, interchangeably referred to crossdressed theater as "transvestite theater," or "drag theater" simply because the three are not synonymous. Theatrical crossdressing typically employs a variety of sub-genres; though these sub-genres sometimes overlap to an extent, and though productions may freely mix sub-genres, sorting out the various "kinds" is especially useful when attempting to calculate audience response; when endeavoring to trace the flux of gender, race and class dynamics; and when trying to examine and/or explain the exigencies of production and the stylistics of performativity. My purpose in cataloguing these terms is to look both ways since I agree with the implicit, if not explicit, transhistoricity of recent scholarship on the current wave of "revivification" and "popularization" of crossdressed theater. That is to say, analyses of crossdressed playing need not assume the form of a unidirectional Hegelian time line, tracing the "progress" of this particular theatrical modality. Rather, it may be more useful to consider this longstanding tradition in terms of contributions made to the form, of resurgences of popularity often at times of cultural contestation, of "technological" changes not available or not feasible at other historical moments. My methodology argues from a Foucauldian stance of genealogy, rather than "history." Therefore, it seems sensible to suggest that the current distinctions in the terminology

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[37]Gerald Pinciss's remark that "boy" actors of the period probably needed time to develop their acting skills before being equipped to deal with the more demanding mature female roles of the later tragedies prompted me to remember that they were growing physically as well as emotionally.

describing crossdressing have real value for those interested in interpolating similar categories and their often very specific uses as well as their artfully calibrated theatrical goals, already noticeable, in medieval and Renaissance dramas.

To clarify:[38]

> **Transvestite**: The person who "finds relief and personal satisfaction" in crossdressing, hoping to be received and treated as a member of the sex represented should be received and treated. Transvestites often have no wish to alter surgically their own sex, and are often heterosexual. It was not until 1910 that Havelock Ellis made the first proper distinction between homosexuality and transvestism.
>
> **Transsexual**: A person who believes he or she has been born into the wrong sex and seeks sexual reassignment through surgical operation. Note: Baker believes neither of these first two terms has any real significance in a theatrical context, but I would argue otherwise: Although we have no way of knowing if those who crossdressed to play female roles on the early and early modern English stage derived "relief and personal satisfaction" from doing so, I believe it safe to assume that they wished to be received as a

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[38]"Categories" and their paraphrased definitions here are courtesy of Roger Baker's Drag: A History of Female Impersonation in the Performing Arts (16-18). It should be noted though that these categories can overlap considerably and are sometimes defined more loosely than in Baker's formulation. Nevertheless, the primary locus of misunderstanding seems to be that most critics play fast and loose with terminology, referring to a transvestite, say, as a drag queen. Even Baker admits to guilt in this blurring of boundaries due to imprecision. I would add too that theorists are still trying to arrive at some consensus regarding definitions for various sub-genres of crossdressing, and some contention over names, if not name-calling, is still to be expected.

member of the sex represented. Moreover, as Roland Barthes's S/Z demonstrates, transsexuals were an integral element of later stage venues, though their "sexual reassignment through surgical operation" was often involuntary.[39]

Male Actress: Performers who attempt "real disguise, who project authentic female characters rather than male-designed fantasy types" (17). Traditionally useful in the analysis of Elizabethan/Jacobean theater and Asian theater, but I would include medieval theater too.

Female Impersonator: Often used as an umbrella category to subsume all men who entertain by dressing as a woman. But the "illusions" of Jim Bailey's Judy Garland, Charles Pierce's Bette Davis, and Danny La Rue's Mae West narrow the category to something less all-encompassing. Female impersonators, in the strictest sense, aim to represent a particular woman

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[39]Though it is beyond the purview of my current study, recent scholarship has indicated that transsexuals, as at least a category of representation, do exist in Renaissance England. Faulted by some for using a French example in his essay, "Fiction and Friction," Stephen Greenblatt cites a phenomenon of "transsexuality" localized in England as well. Strenuous exercise or even a vigorous sneeze was argued to cause "inverted" female genitalia to "drop" into more perfect male form in at least twenty-four English examples I located in a Folger manuscript by Nathaniel Wanley. After the "sex change" all but one of the instances I found grew beards and fathered children. In the one case where the face remains smooth, the subject goes on to serve heroically in the military and father children. Examples more consistent with twentieth-century models of what constitutes transsexuality are provided by Dympna Callaghan's recent essay, "The Castrator's Song: Female Impersonation on the Early Modern Stage." According to Callaghan, barber surgeons, rather than physicians, performed this procedure in early modern England as a treatment for syphilis. As Callaghan notes, the operation involved surgical removal of the penis, rather than the testicles, which follows more closely with Freud's representation of castration than it does with the practice of testicular removal for the purpose of retaining pre-pubertal "female" characteristics for whatever purpose.

known to the audience.

Drag: Here is another portmanteau word, historically defined as "women's clothing worn by men" (17). But Bruce Roger's The Queen's Vernacular offers more than twenty usages for the term in gayspeak (some peculiar to the United States), and not all of these usages refer to clothing (17).

Drag Queen: Often used to describe full-time drag artists, but particularly contentious, since its use often seems to be drawing some conclusions about the sexuality of the performer. Especially sensitive artists reject the term in reference to their own work since they associate drag queens with the tacky or downmarket. Recall Nathan Lane's indignant response to the Robin Williams's suggestion that he impersonate his son's mother for the senator and his wife in "The Birdcage": "What do you think I am, some cheap drag queen?" I would add too that age, as well as a lack of performative finesse, often, but not always, has a bearing on being labeled a "drag queen" and that men, portraying older women, in a less than convincing manner, are particularly susceptible to the less complimentary connotations of this term. Often parodic and self-mocking, drag queens' performances have little to do with real women.

I take the time to catalogue these terms and their theatrical usages, where applicable, because I wish to argue further that most academic criticism heretofore tends (I suspect) to choose inadvertently one of these categories as the basis for an argument about all medieval or Renaissance theatrical crossdressing. It seems to me that the sub-

genre most often isolated for critical scrutiny to date by scholars of Renaissance and Jacobean drama is the male actress, largely, but not exclusively, played in the drama of these periods by "boy actors." Interest in the male actress has predominated, I suspect, due mainly to the propensity of the male actress/boy actor to cross-crossdress, thereby playing an often substantial portion of the role in male attire. Obvious examples of the above include two critical favorites, Rosalind of As You Like It and Viola of Twelfth Night. Though I would share in many of the conclusions these critics draw for the *specific sub-genre* they have isolated (deliberately or otherwise) for the purpose of argumentation, I believe assumptions and conclusions about early and early modern theatrical crossdressing would be less totalizing if understood from the standpoint of mixed sub-genres--often present *in the same play*. Although some Tudor/Stuart plays cast female parts almost exclusively in terms of male actresses/boy actors, others have a more diversified range of crossdressing sub-genres. Antony and Cleopatra deserves to be reexamined in this light, for example, as well as Measure for Measure.

I will attempt a fuller elaboration of this argument later in my essay, but first I would like to return for the moment to the medieval theater for a closer look at the provenance of the two most enduring crossdressing sub-genres of the period, both of which figure most prominently in the English dramatic tradition for some time to come: the male actress and the drag queen.

I

As aforementioned, the playing of female roles by crossdressed males was, by the time of the Renaissance, a long-standing convention of English theatrical practice. Female roles in the medieval drama, both serious and comic, so far as scholars have been able to ascertain, were almost exclusively played by men.[40] Recent experimental productions of two sharply different scenes--the Chester Visitation, centering on the "serious" female roles of Elizabeth and Mary, and the first fight episode from the Towneley Noah, a scene with an especially comic and combative Mrs. Noah--staged at Salford in 1983, attempted to recreate authentic medieval theatrical practice. But the purpose of the Salford experiment was not only to replicate authentic theatricality; the re-production was also motivated by the desire to explore the sex/gender implications of crossdressing, as gauged by audience response. Accordingly, directors Peter Norton and Meg Twycross staged each scene twice: once with adult males playing female roles and once with females playing female roles.[41] Actors and audience members alike were then asked to record and

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[40]The medieval morality play Wisdom provides one notable exception of female stage roles, calling as it does for three female dancers, "disguised" (crossdressed) as gallants. As Meg Twycross points out, the likelihood that these dancers would have been played by boys or men, crossdressed as females crossdressed as men, stretches credulity, not to mention the costume budget. One can, I suppose, envision boys or men in dresses, over which the garb of a gallant is worn, but considering the sex/gender instability of Mind, Will and Understanding in the play, and noting also that the dancers who accompany each in their "fallen" state mirror changes in sex/gender subject position after the "fall," in all likelihood these dancers, who accompany Will/Lust/Lechery, were in fact females crossdressed as gallants. Interestingly, these six female gallants are called upon to dance with three "matrons," likely played by three crossdressed men.

[41]For a more complete rehearsal of these stagings and the reactions of those involved (actor and audience), see Peter Happe et. al., "Thoughts on 'Transvestism' by Divers Hands," passim.

later comment on their reactions to individual characters, the interaction of the characters on stage, the dramatic modalities employed, and the productions as a whole.

Audience members commented that the highly stylized "presentation" of the serious women tended to erase the sex of the actor playing the role, while the hyperbolic parody of the two Mrs Noahs (one a very large male, the other a petite female) instead seemed to exaggerate the recognition of sexual difference. But whether the production attempted to (or succeeded in) exaggerating or erasing sexual markers appears to be of little consequence, since in all cases the stylization of performance, whether comic or pious, subverted any attempt to reflect mimetically beings constructed sexually "male" or "female." "Sexual realism" does not seem to have been the telos of medieval stage practice since the female characters played by men in these dramas were recognizable biblical or allegorical figures, whether sacred or secular, and, as such, "suspension of disbelief"--at least in terms of sex/gender differentiation--on the part of the medieval audience was not the theatrical crucible it was later to become.

Interestingly, what both spectators and audience noticed about these productions was how thorough an "alienation effect" was achieved, particularly in the case of the "serious" women. The gap opened by the lack of sexual identification of the actor and/with the character conversely helped both performer and audience to bridge intersubjectively that same gap between them and identify with the concept being presented rather than with the character's embodiment.

Reconstructing male-to-female crossdressing practice on the medieval stage is, however, further complicated by the inappropriate application of twentieth-century

linguistic and maturation models. Twycross and Norton used male actors in their twenties for their experiment; by today's standards there can be no doubt that these actors are post-pubescent males, i.e. "men." Most scholarship on Renaissance crossdressing and a good part of medievalists' study of the same topic, however, assumes that male actors who played women in both venues were pre-pubescent "boys." Why didn't Twycross and Norton confine themselves to "authentic" boy actors for their experiment? Most likely their unorthodox approach was dictated by recent medieval theater scholarship interrogating the categories "boy" and "man" in the period and complicating any easy assumptions about who played the woman's part in early English drama. Studies of the boy choirs of the period, for example, indicate that it was not at all unusual to find an eighteen to twenty year-old still singing treble.[42] It would seem, then, that the assumption that pre-pubertal boy actors must necessarily follow current patterns of maturation, reaching puberty, on average, at no more than thirteen or fourteen years of age, is misleading.[43] Rather, the boy actors on the medieval stage and early modern folk-stage, when chosen for vocal characteristics, probably ranged in age from a very young six to a relatively aged twenty-one, since within the framework of the musical establishment of the time the word "boy" denoted only a treble singer whose voice remained unbroken.

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[42]Rastall 28. Rastall cites as the sources for his conclusions: S.F. Daw, "'Age of Boys: Puberty in Leipzig, 1727-49, as Indicated by Voice Breaking in J.S. Bach's Choir Members," Human Biology 42 (1970), 87-9, and David Wulstan, "Vocal Colour In English Sixteenth-Century Polyphony," Journal of the Plainsong and Medieval Music Society 2 (1979), 19-60.

[43]According to Richard Rastall, research indicates that the average age for male puberty in the period was probably 17-18, with some males remaining treble until their early twenties.

Within the guilds,[44] however, where the classifications "boy" and "man" were social and professional, the range for each could vary, and the category "man" could share considerable overlap with the "boy" singer. Information culled from both REED and demographic records suggests that the use of the words "boy" and "man" to connote pre-pubertal and post-pubertal males respectively is anachronistic as well as inaccurate (Rastall 35). Thus, when an entry into the Coventry REED account records a payment of 12d to a Maistress Gymesby for the loan of her gear in 1488, or when, in 1489, the records call for the disbursement of 2d for the hiring of Procula's gown and, in the next entry, "Reynold's man" Thomas is mentioned as having been paid wages for playing Pilot's wife, we must be wary of drawing conclusions (Happe et.al. 125). For it seems that "Reynold's man"--a journeyman smith--could likely have ranged in age from seventeen to twenty-four, and therefore have been either pre- or post-pubertal at the time of his performance (Rastall 36).

That post-pubertal males played female roles in both "comic" and "pious" dramatic modes in the latter half of the fifteenth and virtually throughout the sixteenth century--in folk drama, at least-is now largely uncontested by historians and critics. As well, an enduring tradition of carnival crossdressing of mature men has been thoroughly documented by Francois Laroque, among others. Additionally, REED records indicate

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[44]Guild records, like choir records, are an important source of information concerning the early drama since the guilds financed the medieval mystery cycles, and their members provided much of the local talent needed to put on a particular guild's play. The choir records are useful not only because they tell us much about male maturation patterns, but also because choirs provided "boy actors" for the medieval and early modern stage. The guild records to which I am most indebted are edited by Lawrence Clopper, Records of Early English Drama: Chester, Toronto: Toronto UP, 1979.

that guild members who are thought to have played female roles in the mystery cycles and who can be traced through demographic records were probably eight, twenty-three and thirty-eight when they were paid for performing (Happe et.al. 126).

That both men and boys played female roles in medieval drama is not at all surprising, since liturgical drama, the forerunner of the medieval mystery cycles staged by the trade guilds, originated literally at the church door. Since medieval women then played no active part in church services and offices, the acting in these early church dramas also was likely performed exclusively by men, the occasional choir boy recruited to assist the clerks by playing female roles as required. As Roger Baker goes on to detail, "[w]hen the plays were divorced from the church, their religious content plus the influence of the church on the life of the people ensured that the all-male rules [still] applied" (26).

Age considerations aside for the moment, the dramatic experiments of Twycross and Norton seem predicated on the assumption that the staging of Mary and Elizabeth requires a different theatrical modality from the staging of Mrs. Noah. I agree; in my formulation, the "serious" women re-staged by Norton and Twycross, Elizabeth and Mary, are two of the earliest representations of what is now categorized as the "male actress," while most Mrs. Noahs, on the other hand, are arguably some of the best examples of what was to evolve into the "drag queen."

Certainly, Norton's dramatic instincts when casting and costuming his male Mrs. Noah and choosing his cycle are apropos to my hypothesis. He chose a particularly large

man.[45] and he costumed him in a dusky pink dress, pinafore and a mob cap, completely concealing the hair (Twycross 142). The waist was unemphasized and padding in the "appropriate" areas was lacking.[46] According to Twycross who, alone among critics discussing crossdressed playing in the early theater, seems to recognize that female figures represented on stage by crossdressed men do so in a range of stylized modalities, "men playing women...fall into two categories: the pantomime dame and the drag queen" (139). Her own theatrical experiment belies her assertion, of course, since the two categories here singled out apply mainly, if not exclusively, to comedy and as we have already noted, her experiment included a scene showcasing "serious" crossdressed roles as well--male actresses. But Twycross did not choose to have her "serious" women played by boys, indicating that she recognized, at least implicitly, that the category of "male actress" is not reserved for "boy" actors. It is safe to assume, then, that even in Twycross's formulation, men playing women fall into more than two categories. Twycross, however, notes her students' resistance to reading the "serious" women outside the parameters of the more comic, more parodic sub-genres of crossdressed playing, but her and Norton's directorial decisions show clearly that no effort whatsoever was made by her male actors to turn the serious women into parody, that is, into pantomime dames or drag queens. Most likely,

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[45]Norton chose a large man to play Mrs. Noah for two reasons. He wanted to gauge audience response to her physical contrast both with the relatively small man he cast as Noah in the all-male production, and with the small female he cast as Mrs. Noah in the male/female production of the scene.

[46]As Twycross avers, this is a "male" Mrs. Noah, but as she also wisely points out, "[a]n exaggeratedly busty Mrs. Noah is also a "male" version." I will return to this observation later.

the audience's predisposition for reading the "serious" as "comic" was due mainly to familiarity and comfort with the more comic modes of present-day crossdressed playing rather than with any inherent insufficiency equating crossdressed playing with the comic. Nevertheless, Twycross correctly asserts that both the pantomime dame and drag queen are "traditional theatrical, and before that, folk figures," and that there are "good reasons for their existence" (135), before going on to argue that "Mrs. Noah is a classic Dame, and the York Percula, Pilate's Wife, has distinct traces of the drag queen" (135). While I again agree with Twycross in essence, I suspect that she has at once created and blurred boundaries between these two categories which may or may not exist.

A closer inspection of the Mrs. Noahs of the Noah plays of the N-Town, York, Chester and Towneley cycles can serve as cases in point. As critics before me, including Twycross, have remarked, though each of these four pageants share typological similarities, each also has its own distinguishing characteristics. The N-Town play, for example, in keeping with what Martin Stevens has named the "typological transfer" of the cycle as a whole,[47] has a uniquely quiescent and relatively quiet (she speaks only twenty-two lines) Mrs. Noah, and she was probably played with the dignity appropriate to a prefiguration of Mary by a male actress. As Richard Rastall has suggested, though, it need not be assumed that the male actress playing this Mrs. Noah--or for that matter, Elizabeth in the Visitation, be pre-pubescent, since the deeper voice and coarser skin texture of an older male need not be considered out of place (or for that matter, comic) in a woman old

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[47]See Martin Stevens's chapter on the N-Town cycle in his Four Middle English Mystery Cycles.

enough to have three grown sons, as does Mrs. Noah (41).

In the York play we find a more combative Mrs. Noah, although it should be noted that her "clout" (line 120) to her husband is not returned and could justifiably be interpreted as symbolic of the reluctance of all worldly sinners to enter the Ark of the Covenant, a figuration of Christ's Church. Still, the York Mrs. Noah lends herself to a slightly more broadly comic portrayal: from the outset, she argues with her son about joining the family; she then tries to organize a trip to town in lieu of boarding the ark; she insists that she cannot entertain the notion of a voyage without first collecting her cooking utensils and her gossips; and she skeptically responds--with the aforementioned clout--to Noah's ark as alibi for staying out nights. Certainly most of the above could be explained away by reading this Mrs. Noah as what Melvin Storm, in his essay, "Uxor and Allison: Noah's Wife in the Flood Plays and Chaucer's Wife of Bath," calls a "highly popular exemplar of medieval comic shrewishness" (304), and ascribing her temperament to the playwright's desire to exploit an already established "antifeminist satirical tradition" (305).

A similar argument might be made about the Uxor Noah of the Chester cycle, whose attachment to her friends manifests itself even more dramatically. The reluctance of the York Mrs. Noah to board the ark becomes adamant refusal in the Chester cycle. After much dispute with her husband and sons, she is at last physically dragged into the ark by her beleaguered family. In the interim, her "good Gossips" join her in a comic drinking interlude, complete, in some manuscripts, with a drinking song. And here too, Noah's wife deals him an unanswered blow when she finally does come aboard.

Perhaps the ultimate of the above type is found in the Towneley play. Uxor Noah's

marriage here bears a strong resemblance to some of the Wife of Bath's less successful unions. While he complains that his wife is "full tetchy" and "[s]oon wroth," she protests both her oppression by work and his lethargic depression. When Noah finally does come home, he derisively calls his wife "ramshit," and her response, as though conditioned to that sort of address as a prelude to something more pugilistic, is to answer: "As I thrive, if thou smite, I shall pay back with skill." He does; she does. Despite Uxor Noah's attempts to "keep charity" by then turning her attention to her weaving, the first fight scene is soon followed by the second, which begins with her husband beating her with a staff. This fight ends with her "groan[ing]" and him "lying under," credibly read as a comic, and quite literal, rendition of the unruly "woman on top"--ably described by Natalie Zemon Davis[48]--so prevalent in the satirical medieval debate about women. Of course, it is not out of bounds to suggest that medieval men and women could read this Noah's wife as a didactic specimen of the overworked, underappreciated, emotionally and physically abused woman recognizable in the homes of neighbors and friends (if not their own). But if we read the York, Chester and Towneley Uxor Noahs as forerunners of the modern-day drag queen, the plot thickens considerably.

When Norton and Twycross staged their experimental productions of the first fight scene from the Towneley Noah, they chose for their male Mrs. Noah the crossdressed modality of what Twycross was later to call the "pantomime dame." As Richard Rastall has cautioned, however, the pantomime dame is a localized comic crossdressed tradition,

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[48]See Davis's chapter "Women on Top," in Society and Culture in Early Modern France.

specific to late nineteenth and early twentieth-century British music halls. What Twycross and Norton noticed, I think, is that Uxor Noah, particularly in the Towneley cycle, and especially when counterpoised with her docile daughters-in-law in the York, Chester and Towneley cycles (who were likely played in the mode of the male actress), bears a genealogical relation to the pantomime dame and the latter day drag queen.

If the impresarios of York, Chester, and especially Towneley chose, on occasion, to stage Noah's wife as Norton and Twycross were later to imagine her--that is, as a not terribly skillful representation of an older woman by a man, padded or not (a drag queen), then we must also consider how she parodies the sexual categories of male/female through oversignification. In this context it is worthwhile to consider the extracorporeal element inhering in the crossdressed figure. Consider the formulation of Jean Baudrillard: "To dissimulate it to pretend not to have what one has. To simulate is to feign to have what one doesn't have. One implies a presence, the other an absence" (3). The drag queen manages to dissimulate (she pretends not to have what she has, the phallus), and simulate (she feigns the feminine, if not the female, even if only by donning a dress over pants). She is, therefore, both presence and absence simultaneously. She is, therefore, the site of a dual body which refuses to signify as either/or in an orderly bi-polar fashion. As such, she oversignifies, she parodies. Consequently, we should bear in mind Baudrillard's further caution: "this parody of femininity is not quite as acerbic as one might think, since it is the parody of femininity as *men imagine* and stage it, as well as fantasize it" (14). In a femininity exaggerated, parodied, rests the claim that in this society femininity is nothing more than the signs with which men rig it up. What then of masculinity? Both concealing

and revealing, both presence and absence, both male and female, both masculine and feminine, both dissimulation and simulation, the drag queen demonstrates the ways in which representations both male and female embody the potential to cancel themselves out. In the Baudrillardian formulation: a profound reality is reflected, only to then mask and denature that profound reality, which in turn marks the absence of any profound reality at all, leaving, finally, no relation to reality whatsoever. And, I think, the "profound reality" which disintegrates in the case of the drag queen is the materiality of the body as it correlates with gender signification and performativity. In the words of Judith Butler:

> The body is not a self-identical or merely factic materiality; it is a materiality that bears meaning, if nothing else, and the matter of this bearing is fundamentally dramatic. By dramatic I mean only that the body is not merely matter but a continual and incessant *materializing* of possibilities. (272)

The body of the stage drag queen denies its "factic materiality" even as it confirms it, and the meaning it bears slip-slides as its materiality dissolves. Of course, the matter of this unbearable lightness of being is wholly dramatic, and dramatic in Butler's sense as well as my own. The dramatic body of the theatrical drag queen serves to enact repeatedly an oxymoronic evanescent materialization of sex and gender. In her dramatization, sex/gender categories emerge in a momentary materialization--stage representation--evoking recognition of the "realness" of materiality, only to dissipate once the "unrealness" of the too-padded or unpadded breasts consequently reveals itself. As such, the representation denies itself; its incessant "materialization of possibilities" foregrounds its

inability to materialize in any form for once and for all. Oversignification, even, perhaps especially when parodic, works to undo the possibility of signification.

In the case of the male actress I suspect that the dynamic of oversignification works the same, only differently. Again, what is at issue is "realness," and I believe the Renaissance stage can serve as a site of local knowledge encapsulating a wider epistemological and ontological shift in the definition of the "real." A most specific site of the shift I postulate is in the boy actor, or male actress, especially when that site (again, in my sense, the convention) begins to cite itself, as does Rosalind in the epilogue of As You Like It. I will turn now to a read

ing of the shifting dynamic of the "real" as it forms and re-forms itself on the Renaissance stage and the streets of London.

II

Several important stylistic and cultural changes accompanied the "theater" in its transition from the open-air performances of medieval England to the purpose-built stage of the Renaissance. The first and most obvious difference between the medieval and Renaissance stage is the venue itself: "theater" became enclosed. Outdoor festive and ritual drama and the early "stages," improvised at inns and other suitable edifices offering open-air courtyards, were replaced by purpose-built theaters on the outskirts of London.[49] True, natural light remained the primary source of illumination, since these amphitheaters

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[49]For a more full recounting of the transitional spaces that served as theaters prior to the construction of the first privately owned, purpose-built theaters, see Gurr.

lacked a roof and held performances in the afternoons. Nevertheless, the full-force of open-air daylight was dimmed somewhat in the new venue. Second, with the professionalism of stage practice also came more elaborate and richer costuming.[50] Third, the stylistics of performance appear to be undergoing a paradigm shift. Finally, and perhaps most important, the use of cosmetics came into vogue at the end of Elizabeth's reign and stayed so throughout James's.

Women's use of cosmetics at the end of the sixteenth century has been documented as widespread.[51] Common to the Elizabethan woman's toilet were thick mercury or lead based make-up, over which were painted red cheeks and lips and dark eyebrows; kohl-tinted eyelids; an exposed and plastered bosom; a pinched waist, enhanced hips; bleached teeth and huge hair that was either dyed or bleached or a wig or, on occasion, cut very

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[50]See Montrose, who claims that "the dramatic companies lavished money on costumes" in The Purpose of Playing, 37; and MacIntyre who states that Elizabethan theater companies greatly expanded the breadth and depth of their costume holdings beginning in the 1590's, and who lists the myriad ways by which these companies managed to enlarge their wardrobes: by purchase for general use or for a particular play; through bequests sold to acting companies by noblemen's servants forbidden by sumptuary laws to wear their legacy; from clothing brokers or "fripperers" who regularly sold to theater companies; by acquiring items pawned (generally for large sums of money, indicating finery of some value) and not reclaimed; through the work of tailors employed by the companies specifically to design and create theatrical garments.

[51]For recent accounts, see both Frances E. Dolan's "Taking the Pencil Out of God's Hand: Art, Nature and the Face-Painting Debate in Early Modern England," and Shirley Nelson Garner, "Let Her Paint an Inch Thick: Painted Ladies in Renaissance Drama and Society." For accounts contemporary with Shakespeare's theater, see Thomas Tuke, A Treatise Against Painting and Tincturing of Men and Women (London, 1616) and Hugh Platt, Delightes for Ladies, to Adorn Their Persons, Tables, Closets, and Distillatories: With Beauties, Banquets, Perfumes and Waters (London 1608).

short.[52] It was a look that Puritan divines accepted as an invitation to rail against the "unnaturalness" of women in general, and the painted women in particular, calling then "harlots," "courtesans," and "filthy strumpets." Indeed, as Frances E. Dolan has written, "by insisting on the authority to re-create themselves, women became morally and socially unknowable and unlocatable" (231).

As critics such as Stephen Greenblatt and Richard McCoy have observed, men were busy fashioning themselves equally unknowable and unlocatable, principally via courtly love lyrics and other rhetorical flourishes.[53] But these critics' insistence on a refashioning of the Elizabethan male through the *cosmesis of poesis* alone elides an important point; for men as well as women engaged in face painting. Such men, like those who wore women's clothes, Castiglione sniffs, "seeme to have a desire to appear to be...women" (39). As a number of early modern polemical texts would have it, they succeeded. Hic Mulier and Vir Haec, published within a week of one another in 1620, describe mannish women and womanly men clad in nearly identical clothing and wearing make-up:

> Hic Mulier: Nay the very Art of Painting, which to the last Age shall ever be held in detestation, they have so cunningly stolen and hidden among their husbands' hoards of treasure that the decayed stock of Prostitution, having little other revenues, are hourly bringing their action of Detinue against them.

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[52]See Williams, *passim*.

[53]See Stephen Greenblatt, Renaissance Self-Fashioning and Richard C. McCoy Rebellion in Arcadia.

> Vir Haec: Why do you rob us of our Ruffs, of our Busks, and French bodies, nay, of our Masks, Hoods, Shadows and Shapinas? Not so much as the very Art of Painting, but you have so greedily engrossed it that were it not for that little fantastical sharp-pointed dagger that hangs at your chins, and the cross-hilt which guards your upper lips, hardly would there be any difference between the fair Mistress and the foolish Servant.[54]

Additionally, cosmetic treatises, both pro and con, published in the seventeenth century often, but not always, include men as well as women in their titles, providing important evidence with respect to intended audience. Thomas Tuke's A Treatise Against Painting and Tincturing of Men and Women is one such pamphlet published in London in 1616, John Wecker's Cosmeticks: or The Beautifying Part of Physick. By Which All Deformities of Nature in Men and Women Are Corrected, Age Renewed, Youth Prolonged, and the Least Impediment, from a Hair to a Tooth, Fairly Amended is another. Even though Tuke's pamphlet is a polemic against the use of cosmetics and Wecker's pamphlet is a self-help manual for those interested in cosmetically augmented beautification, the titles alone of both demonstrate that men as well as women were utilizing cosmetics in much the same way for physical enhancement. Little wonder then, that sex/gender difference was undermined, if not at times eradicated, by the semblance of sameness provided by a painted face and inter-gender clothing.

And so, Joseph Hall, in his Righteous Mammon of 1634, wonders what an

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[54]Both in Half Humankind: Contexts and Texts of the Controversy about Women in England, 1540-1640, pp. 273 and 286, respectively.

Elizabethan progenitor, recently returned to earth, would think were he to walk behind one of his present-day descendants: "What doe you thinke he would thinke it were?" (Williams 178). Hall, typically, goes on to fulminate about only female self-fashioning, but as I think I have shown, his question might be literally apropos as well, since he is unable to inscribe sexual "difference"--male or female--on the neutered (note the pronoun "it") "being" in question.

In their work on crossdressing, Jean Howard and others have taken pains to correlate the similarities between the polemics attacking infractions in the sumptuary laws and the use of cosmetics with those attacking theatricality. The usual trajectory of such arguments is actually the reverse of what the argument at first appears to convey. While Howard first traces the polemical tracts against women violating sumptuary laws, followed by a similar rehearsal of antitheatrical tracts railing against boy actors, her argument eventually circles back on itself and can be reformulated as follows: the "covert shape-shifting of [male] actors" (43) was adopted and adapted by women on the streets of London, resulting in contemporary polemicists' fulminations about the "fundamental duplicity of women" (37). Now as Howard points out, both the writers of misogynistic sumptuary tracts and the antitheatricalists can be understood to express anxiety over "an ever-present challenge to the essentialized categories of male and female" (94) and the disruption of the "supposed 'reality' of...social station" (96). Though I agree that concern over the destabilization of physical, perhaps even metaphysical, and social categories barely formulated is an important aspect of the two controversies, such a configuration nonetheless has its problems. First, there was little "covert" about the shape-shifting of

male actors on the Renaissance stage. On the contrary, the reshaping of male actors into females on the English stage was blatantly overt; everyone in the audience knew that the females were being played by males, just as they always had been. Second, the use of the word "fundamental" implies an essentialist predisposition of women to duplicity, or shape-shifting. Now, polemicists in the debate about women may have shared the belief that women enjoyed a natural, essential predisposition for mercurial "shape" shifting at will, but such an assumption belies the implied corollary that women learned to shape-shift by watching male actors on the Elizabethan stage. And what of the men wearing cosmetics on the streets of London? Did they also learn a thing or two from watching male actors? Or were they trying to imitate that inimitable--and fundamental--ability of women to change shape at will?

As Howard is quick to point out, "the ideological import of crossdressing was mediated by all the conventions of dramatic narrative and dramatic production. It cannot simply be conflated with crossdressing on the London streets or with instances of crossdressing in disciplining rituals such as charivari and skimmington" (94). Though I agree with Howard's supposition that theatrical crossdressing and street transvestism are often erroneously conflated, I am less sure that I agree with her rather totalizing and perhaps too narrowly political suggestion that the "ideological import of crossdressing was mediated by all the conventions of dramatic narrative and dramatic production." Yes, the "theatricality" of transvestism, as elaborated earlier in my list of sub-genres of crossdressing, is hard to ignore, but it is not necessarily mediated by or through an ideological import inhering in more formal dramatic conventions and dramatic productions

per se. There has always been, and perhaps always will be, an element of Bakhtinian "carnival" to street transvestism exclusive of the conventions of dramatic production. Unlike the site-ation of subversion within a convention as elaborated above, street transvestism celebrates the lack of any conventional paradigm for the sub-genre. Though it may be relatively safe to argue that dressing as a member of the opposite sex, with the intention of being received and treated as a member of that sex should be received and treated is, in and of itself, unconventional (that is, the violation of a convention), it is equally and perhaps more importantly true that the practice of street transvestism lacks any generic paradigm to which its practitioners must or should adhere. Some male transvestites described in Renaissance accounts, for instance, retain their beards and mustaches, while others either don't have an abundance of noticeable facial hair, or if they do, remove it.

What I am driving at here is that Howard (and she is hardly alone) bases her arguments on what is likely a specious dichotomy. She concentrates almost exclusively on females who crossdress in the streets (virtually ignoring the males) and counterpoises those women opposite boy actors crossdressed as women on the early modern stage. The women are responsible in the main for aristocratic anxiety over distinctions of class being violated by members of the protobourgousie, the boys take most of the blame for unease over sex/gender fluidity undermining efforts at sex/gender system consolidation. In actuality, both are employing sub-genres of crossdressing--the men and women recorded as crossdressed on the streets of London appear to be transvestites; the boy actors at the Globe I read, for the most part, as male actresses--for purposes that are hardly locatable or

discrete.

It makes more sense to suggest a circularity of influence, rather than trying to prove that one sub-genre was the progenitor, the other the legatee. By the first decade of the seventeenth century, cosmetics were becoming commonplace across gender and "class" boundaries. As Frances E. Dolan has noticed, "[s]ince these recipes appear in works directed at housewives, face painting was apparently not only an aristocratic or courtly practice but also a 'domesticated' one. Consulting popular volumes that intermix recipes for cosmetics with those for delicacies and medicines, frugal women could make their own toiletries [and those of their husbands?] rather than purchase costly imports" (234).

Cosmetics and violation of class and gender codes regarding appropriate dress, then, make possible the "fundamental shape-shifting" of early moderns--both male and female, both on- and off-stage. Add to this combination an "emergent" mode of stylistic characterization, and you have a formula for psychic discomfort.

As discussed earlier, the sub-genres predominating in medieval crossdressed theater--the male actress and the drag queen--were male "presentations"; whether over or underemphasizing their artificiality the medieval actor did not attempt to delimit the "real" of the female or the feminine. But, as Andrew Gurr has noticed, in the purpose-built theater, the stylistics of presentation take a dramatic turn:

> In the sixteenth century the term "acting" was originally used to describe the action of the orator, his art of gesture. What the common stages offered was "playing"...What the players were presenting on stage by the beginning of the

> [seventeenth] century was distinctive enough to require a whole new term to describe it. This term, the noun "personation," is suggestive of a relatively new art of individual characterization....The first use of the term "personation" is recorded...in 1599-1600.... (Shakespearean Stage 99-100)

Gurr's observation is used in most instances by critics hoping to connect the change in the acting style of, say, Burbage or Alleyn when playing the great male roles (often kings) with the newly-foregrounded political valences of early modern theater. And yet, a significant parallelism with regard to the playing and reception of female roles on the same stage is often ignored or elided. The shift to "personation," the new emphasis on costuming appropriate to the character being played, and the introduction of cosmetics into the culture, all change dramatically the way female characters were played by the actors and received by the audience in Renaissance theaters. Additionally, the female roles being played were no longer recognizable Biblical figures or morality play personifications. As if all of that weren't enough, the professional drama of the Elizabethan commercial theaters marked what Louis Montrose has called "a decisive shift in the coordination of playing dimensions: a reorientation of the dramaturgical axis from the vertical plane, which related earthly events to a divinely ordained master narrative, to the horizontal plane, upon which social characters interact within a social space" (93).

Here then are many necessary ingredients for an epistemological shift as well as an ontological shift regarding the "real." Elizabethan theater, I would argue, prompted the members of its social body to ask with regard to that body, both personal and political, What is "real"? And furthermore, What is the nature of "the real"? Or perhaps more

importantly, *Is* there any "nature" to "the real"? The confluence of theatrical innovations seems indicative of shifting perception. According to Raymond Williams: "formal innovation is a true and integral element of changes themselves: an articulation, by technical discovery, of changes in consciousness which are themselves forms of consciousness of change" (Culture 142).

Here then, is what Catherine Belsey characterizes as the conjunction, if not collision, of the residual emblematic mode of medieval presentation with the emergent illusionism of early modern theater. It is likely that the Elizabethan theatergoer was conscious of changes in a longstanding theatrical convention while simultaneously undergoing changes in consciousness since the residual emblematic mode of presentation--the drag queen--was likely juxtaposed with the emergent illusionism of the newly transformed male actress on the purpose-built stage. Male actresses, cosmeticized and dressed to the nines, now personating, rather than presenting, both young and old female parts likely coexisted on stage with more parodic drag queens, who were largely still comic presentations.[55] Think, for example of Isabella, in Measure for Measure,

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[55]I thank Clifford Davidson for reminding me that the transition from presentation to personation is not gender specific but in fact is more closely allied with genre. Burbage and Alleyn, as mentioned earlier, likely switched from presentation to personation when playing at least royal roles, but actors playing the male "rude mechanicals" in A Midsummer Night's Dream are probably personating a presentation during their rehearsal and performance of *Pyramus and Thisby*, and once again, when the personation slips into presentation, the result is burlesque. What Bottom and his compatriots are designed to burlesque, according to Davidson is "the older dramatic styles...with their tendency toward bombastic language and clumsy use of mythological subjects" (88) and to conflate this burlesque with one aimed at the amateur guildsmen who performed the cycle dramas into the 1580's. Though I think Davidson overstates the case for the conflation of personation with comedy, once again, in his formulation, the combination of comedy with a portrayal of characters who are not young (even though the characters they are

counterpoised with Mistress Overdone, or the wives of Mortimer and Percy adjacent to Mistress Quickly in I Henry IV. Yet another subgenre of crossdressed playing is arguably found in Shakespeare's Cleopatra, who likely represents an early example of the female impersonator, in that an iconographic model preceded the stage representation. A similar argument could be drawn for Margaret of Anjou, a former queen of England of whom iconographic representations were available to the Elizabethan actor hoping to draw comparisons between the iconography and his representation.

It seems to me too to be entirely plausible that older male actors--whether just barely pre-pubescent (as is Flute in the above-cited example from MND) or post-pubescent may have played older female roles, both comic and serious. Evidence about the Cambridge plays, for instance, suggests that "boys" who had transitioned from female to male roles at times returned to a female role. In one case an actor who had already been with the Cambridge company for more than sixteen years returned to a female role after years of performing only males. In the years 1613-1618 George Drywood alternated male and female roles; Cambridge records indicate that he was twenty-one years old in 1613. Steven Pears, too, returned to playing a female role when he was twenty years old. In all of the Cambridge examples cited above, when male actors returned to playing female roles after a period of playing men, the woman they played, as can be gleaned from cast lists, was well advanced into maturity.[56] I note also that Mr. Anthony Turner is listed in the

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presenting are young) and are of a lower "class" have a bearing on the modality of playing.

[56]I wish to thank Alan Nelson for helping me to obtain this as yet unpublished information regarding the Cambridge drama.

Dramatis Personae of the Fair Maid of the West (Part I) as playing "A Kitchen Maid"--an arguably older female character with a distinctly comic dimension--and in the Dramatis Personae of the same play (Part II) as playing Bashaw Alcade; both plays were performed in 1630.[57] Relevant as well is the case of Nathan Field who, at the age of thirteen, caught the eye of Ben Jonson who then mentored Field both as actor and playwright. Field seems to have played female roles well into his twenties, when he is described as having (as my footnoted example of transsexuality cited above), "a peculiarly smooth and feminine look. with no whiskers," and when he is known to have begun fathering his five children.[58] Additionally, the cast list of Sir John van Olden Barnavelt (1619) "clearly states that Nicholas Tooley, for a time perhaps with the Admiral's Men, but after 1605 with the King's, at the age of 44 (hardly a boy) played the role of Barnavelt's wife" (Forse 90).

I do not wish to suggest that all post-pubescent males playing mature females on the Elizabethan and Jacobean stage did so in the comic modality of the drag queen. On the contrary, as I think I have demonstrated, female characters of all ages appear to have been played in a variety of crossdressed subgenres and a plurality of subgenres often are found in the same play. What I would like to suggest is that this variety of subgenres is no accident. It seems to me that arguments such as Jean Howard's, calling as it does our

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[57]As has been noticed by some, including myself, T.J. King says categorically that "boy actors with these companies do not play adult male roles, nor do adult actors play female roles" (6) but his dogmatism is undercut by his inclusion of the young Dick Jubie playing both a woman and a man in Alcazar. It is relevant also that the Nurse and Mercutio in Romeo and Juliet are played by the company's *principal* comedians. It probably took some time to be designated a company's principal comedian.

[58]Baker 43-4.

attention to the violation of class as well as gender markers perpetrated by those crossdressing both on and off the London stage, while acute, still misses an important point with regard to the connections between notions of early modern social "class" and crossdressing, particularly on stage. According to Andrew Gurr:

> [T]he two decades from 1599-1619 saw major changes in playgoing....In essence the standard assumption is that once the boy companies reopened at Paul's and the Blackfriars after 1599 some version of what Harbage called rival traditions developed--rival repertoires, distinct preferences for types of play and types of staging, and audiences from different sections of society. (Playgoing 72)

The "rival traditions" Gurr describes are in some sense informed by differences in taste attributable to various "sections of society"--what we would call social class. As Gurr goes on to detail, "[t]he boy companies drew their support from courtiers, gallants and law students" while "[t]he amphitheater companies drew their support chiefly from citizens....The courtiers were served one kind of play; the citizens another" (72). It seems logical to argue that, on the one hand, the more aristocratic audience--comfortable in the homosocial environments of the Inns of Court, Cambridge and Oxford where young male student drama was the norm--evinced a predilection for boy actors played mainly in the modality of the male actress. Citizens, on the other hand, newcomers to the city, preferred that familiar figure from more rural "folk" entertainments, the drag queen. Along these lines, Roger Baker contends that the divergent lifestyles of these two theatergoing groups resulted in different dramatic interests: "One may wonder if a search for 'spiritual purity which transcends sensuality in the search for poetic sexuality' meant much to the

groundlings who packed the playhouses. Did they, too, [like the more aristocratic audience] long for a paradise where there was no division between the sexes? It seems unlikely--power struggles, battles and murder were more to the public's taste" (63). In other words, the groundlings were more attuned to plays grappling with issues of social class, while the more aristocratic members of the audience were more engaged by plays interrogating the abstractions of sex and gender. Certainly, there must have been members of both groups who transgressed any hard and fast boundary we might try to draw in this dichotomization correlating taste and social class, and certainly the boy male actresses of the city-based theaters were also well-known for their ribald satire, nevertheless, as a general rule, I think Baker's thesis deserves careful consideration.[59] He provides at least a broad outline within which it is possible to sketch the genealogical patterns of audience response to crossdressed theater, patterns that to an extent remain valid to this day. At the turn of the twentieth century, pantomime dames--a sub-generic off-shoot of the drag queen--were "becoming a regular fixture at various seaside towns which were now reaching their peak of popularity as resorts for [working-class] family holidays" (187). All-

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[59]Of course, as Andrew Gurr so carefully details, there was at least some audience overlap between the private and public theaters. Citizens attended performances at Paul's and Blackfriars, just as nobles attended plays at the Globe. What Gurr does support is the argument that the audience at the private, intra-city theaters was predominantly aristocratic, while the audience Bankside was largely citizen. Gurr cites as evidence of this division the price of admission. A single penny was enough to secure standing admission to the Curtain in 1613; there was no standing room in the indoor playhouses and all the seats cost considerably more than a penny, placing the indoor theaters economically out of reach for many. Additionally, Gurr notes that "poets writing for the boy companies, especially the boys at Blackfriars, went to great lengths to emphasize what a different clientele they enjoyed compared with the crowds at Shoreditch or Bankside playhouses" (73).

male revues sprang up again in post World War II England. "the initial promotions suggest[ing] that the performers were ex-servicemen recreating for the civilian public the shows they had concocted to amuse themselves while serving," and the houses were once again packed (195). The British tradition endures: in 1966, Mick Jagger, whose Rolling Stones hailed from definitively working class roots, borrowed from working class musical predecessors and catered to a youthful working class audience declared, "The English don't need much convincing to dress up as a woman"[60] Roger Baker's statement that "[u]nlike in Britain, drag has never been part of mainstream American culture" seems credible. and explains in large part why American critics have lacked the British insight (of say. Twycross and Richard Rastall) with regard to the nuances and complexities of the practice.

When staging their experiments at Salford, Meg Twycross and Peter Norton noticed that Mrs. Noah needed to be staged in a very different modality from that of Mary and Elizabeth. Yet, both women were, in the final analysis, "presented" rather than "personated." What distinguished the holdover drag queen from the new manifestations of the male actress on the early modern English stage (other than the stylistic shift to "personation," which they both shared) was, I suspect, a newfound emphasis on "realness," particularly in the modality of the male actress. With the advent of cosmetics and more "realistic" costuming, the "boys" could be made to look like girls. But what so aroused the ire of the anti-theatrical polemicists was that the boys, especially, looked "too

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[60]Quoted in Christopher Sandford, Mick Jagger: Primitive Cool (London: Victor Gollancz, 1994), 71.

real"--thereby disrupting a nascent sex/gender system predicated on sexual difference as a justification for gender difference as a justification for a patriarchal division of labor. What had before been routinely accepted as "real" on the medieval stage slipped into what Umberto Eco has called the "hyperreal" on the Renaissance stage. The hyperreal, as demonstrated by the crossdressed balls in the recent film "Paris Is Burning," paradoxically highlights the artificiality of the representation. It seems to me that the young participants in this film most closely approximate what the Renaissance boy actor might have been. Many are in their late teens through perhaps thirty, and with the help of hormone therapy on the way to a hoped-for sex change, they remain smooth-faced and relatively high-voiced. Their aim is to compete in the "personation" of females in different walks of life. Though the actors-actresses-commentators in "Paris Is Burning" all repeat the mantra that it is "realness" that takes the prize home from the balls, their hyper real representations of "policewoman," say, or "nurse"--every hair in place, every nail perfectly manicured, every detail of the immaculate costume exactly as it "should" be--soon become very "unreal." As Umberto Eco has put it: "To speak of things one wants to connote as real, these things must seem real. The 'completely real' becomes identified with the 'completely fake.' Absolute unreality is offered as real presence" (7). And the absolute unreality that is offered, Eco claims, is "a reality so real it proclaims its artificiality from the rooftops" (7).

I would argue that the "complete realness" consequently sought by the Elizabethan acting companies, particularly for the younger men playing women followed just this trajectory: from the real, to the hyper real, to the unreal. In essence, the practice of crossdressing boys in this way posed just the sort of metaphysical questions about the

meaning and nature of sex and gender categories that courtiers and law students alike loved to grapple with and speculate about in their poetry. Rather than satirizing women, even when most comic, if not vitriolic, the crossdressed personator actually criticizes, if only tacitly, the very social structures responsible for supporting the sex/gender system replete with inequalities. Far be it from me to underestimate the negative effects of a patriarchal system on women, yet the inescapable truth that early modern poets experimenting with a more gender fluid self-fashioning through the *cosmesis* of *poesis*--if not actual cosmetics--recognized is that ambient patriarchy is a horribly closed and extremely inhibiting system for both sexes. The crossdressed player, therefore, as Roger Baker has discerned, "is not deriding the ordinary lives of real women, or individual women as such, but society in general" (107).

Not surprisingly, the epistemological and ontological crisis precipitated by the new rendition of crossdressed boys on the Renaissance stage and evidenced in the hail of antitheatrical polemic abated not when the theaters closed in 1642, but when the boy companies "faded from the scene" (Gurr Playgoing 75). Such an abatement would lend credence to the arguments of those critics who insist that the erotic charge inhering in crossdressed playing is almost exclusively homoerotically male. Nevertheless, Lisa Jardine, for one, although concentrating on the homoerotic appeal of the Elizabethan boy actor, acknowledges that the young "beardless" boys who played women "creat[ed] a sensuality which is independent of the sex of the desired figure" (24) and Phyllis Rackin, in her groundbreaking essay, "Androgyny, Mimesis and the Marriage of the Boy Heroine on the English Renaissance Stage" concludes that a "fluidity" of desire is most likely aroused in

the spectator.

It was Valerie Traub who took Rackin's hypothesis one step further in her landmark essay, "Desire and the Difference it Makes." Taking critics to task for foregrounding the male homoerotics of the early modern stage while either poking fun at or completely ignoring female homoerotic moments, Traub also noticed that many of the essays arguing for a principally male homoerotic charge are in fact configuring a *heterosexual* pairing based as they are on the necessity of a male in the audience relating to the "ability of the boy actor to mimic the attractions of 'femininity'" (83). Moreover, Traub saw that the critical concentration on the boy actor/male actress subgenre of crossdressed playing is remarkably limited:

> To take pederasty and 'effeminacy' as the primary models of homoerotic desire, to posit all homoerotic desire as organized around poles of activity and passivity, and then to conflate male-male interactions with male-female encounters reduces the complexity of homoerotic identifications, styles and roles--in Shakespeare's time and our own. (83)

I feel compelled to add that the formulation Traub so astutely criticizes is vastly reductive in terms of the complexity of heterosexual identifications, styles and roles too. I believe I have demonstrated that the "androgyny" of the crossdressed player--whether personated or presented--disassembles sex gender categories by his/her presence alone; further, this breakdown of categories is matched by what Sigmund Freud has characterized as the inherent bisexuality of the spectator: "observation shows that in human beings pure masculinity or femininity is not to be found either in a psychological or biological sense.

Every individual on the contrary displays a mixture of the character-traits belonging to his own and to the opposite sex; and he shows a combination of activity and passivity whether or not these last character-traits tally with his biological ones" (Three Essays 86n). All of which makes it extremely difficult to characterize desire in a single individual from moment to moment, let alone draw a schematic of desire for an entire audience for several decades.

Unfortunately, Traub's insights too are wholly concentrated on theorizing "boy actors," even though she is intent upon clearing a space for the possibility of a lesbian desire previously ignored. While I applaud her impulse, I wish she had taken into account that the schema of sexual desire is only one of many variables attendant to crossdressed playing.

It was Phyllis Rackin who first acknowledged the "changing conception of theatrical mimesis" as operative in crossdressed representations on the Elizabethan stage (30). Speaking about what she characterizes as the "artificial spectacle" (36) of the "transvestite comedies" she goes on:

> [T]he relation between sex and gender and the relation between play world and audience world, like the relation between adult actors and their heterogeneous audience, remain dialectical, with neither reality obliterating the other. (37)

As I believe I have shown, inclusion of subgenres beyond the boy heroine further substantiates as well as complicates Rackin's thesis. When two "realities" collide, one inside and one outside of the theater, even when, perhaps especially when neither reality obliterates the other, the very notion of mimesis is severely challenged and as a

consequence of this challenge requires re-vision. Representations which momentarily cancel themselves only to briefly reinstantiate another soon-to-shift reality sorely tax epistemological foundations on which rest assurance of "the real." What Rackin calls the "necessary ambivalence" evoked by this process, this dialectical "mediation between opposites," then, is not merely connected with the hypothesization of sex/gender "reality," but rather circulates and negotiates through a complex maze of interrelated social, political, sex/gender, epistemological and aesthetic considerations. Certainly, early and early modern crossdressed theater give us a "glimpse of a liminal moment when gender definitions were open to play" (38). But perhaps just as importantly, medieval and early modern theater allow us a window of opportunity through which to envision the dialectical process in which art and illusion mediate a more diversified sense of "reality."

Chapter Two

"Good Time Encounter Her!": The Childbearing Years in The Winter's Tale

Much critical attention, feminist and otherwise, has been paid to Shakespeare's treatment of the "special nature" of women, but few plays invite analysis based on a matrifocal core. The Winter's Tale has such a core, as the gestation and birth of Hermione's child, and Paulina's pivotal role in the events surrounding the birth and its aftermath, propel the play to its regenerative, redemptive, miraculous conclusion. The birth of Perdita, and Hermione's subsequent "death" and "rebirth" are often viewed by critics as a metaphor for the larger "issue" of Leontes' resurrection as a restored, regenerated man, made whole by his "forgiveness." But to reverse the perspective, to consider instead that Leontes' restoration and rebirth might possibly serve as a metaphor for the miraculous renewal of life through the birth process, a process entirely dependent upon women in early modern England, and not very well understood by men, whether husband or physician, is to alter radically the patriarchal assumptions about the play and the critical dialogue surrounding it. I believe such a reading is made possible by giving special attention to two separate but related issues. First, the functioning of the matrifocal society at the play's center--Hermione, Mamillius, Camillo, Antigonus, Paulina (and her three daughters), Perdita, the Old Shepherd, Florizel, the Clown, and even the Gaoler--and through that core's function the (temporary, but I would add with lasting effects) control of the patriarchal (fathers/sons) by the matriarchal (mothers/daughters). Second, the displacement of traditionally male/masculine (patriarchal/patristic) imperatives by the core

group's work within the play text to preserve, protect and perpetuate values often gendered (sometimes pejoratively) "feminine": life, nature, art, fidelity, and love. Their efforts, whether singular or intentionally or inadvertently combined, subvert, if not invert, the patriarchal structures inherent in early modern aristocratic life and the hegemonic preoccupation with legitimate (male) descendants exemplified in the play. I recognize that it has been argued by most that the play's subversion/inversion of male power is only ephemeral and is eventually superseded (contained) by the reinstatement of Leontes' patriarchal authority in the final moments of the play. In contrast with this prevailing view of the play, I would like to pose an alternative reading which I hope will demonstrate that the patriarchy/matriarchy dichotomy even I myself posit here is not so clear cut as it would seem; rather, I suspect that these two opposed terms are often part of an ongoing dialectic, particularly in times of social flux, and are therefore subject to redefinition, re-evaluation, and reintegration in a changed (however slightly) configuration. For instance, the "feminine" values I have enumerated above are not the sole province of women in the play--as my list of the implicated above attests--and, I would argue, the contestation regarding the definitions of these values and their relative worth is, as a benefit of this sex/gender mix, more fluid and less amenable to closure than has been supposed previously. If this play demonstrates anything about early modern family life, it is the longevity of "family values" as a site of social struggle, and the impossibility, then as now, of activating and solidifying opposing camps each neatly comprised only of members of a single biological sex. On the contrary: prompted by Leontes' unwarranted jealousy and cruel treatment of Hermione, and the subsequent banishment of the infant Perdita, the

heterogenous members of the matrifocal core at the heart of A Winter's Tale coalesce into what would seem to be an unwitting and unlikely conspiracy--one which transgresses apparent early modern sex, gender and class barriers. And yet, by play's end, only Polixenes and Autolycus remain untouched by the persuasive influence of what I will for the moment call the "feminine" in this play. My omission of Leontes may seem curious at this point, but I will return to him and his place in my schema later in my essay. First, I would like to concentrate on the roles of Hermione and Paulina, and to a lesser extent on the parts played by Antigonus, Camillo, Mamillius and the three absent daughters, in undermining patriarchal structures in The Winter's Tale.

My reading of the play will concentrate on historicizing the "rights/rites" of maternity and the power of the maternal as ably demonstrated by Hermione and Paulina (whose "art" stands in sharp contrast to that of Polixenes'). Central to this reading will be the cultural contextualization of Hermione's enumeration of her "rights" as early modern wife and mother in her own defense at her trial (3.2.94-106). From the standpoint of Hermione, we can see that the "rights" claimed by Leontes which inhere in the patriarchal structure of early modern family life are valid only if a corresponding respect is accorded to the reciprocal "rites" due the maternal order. In this long speech, Hermione, in an effective reversal, places Leontes on trial for his failure to repay what is owed her as loyal wife and mother. As I hope my essay will demonstrate, the trial staged in Act III of this play in effect acquits the defendant and convicts the plaintiff.

Much of the interaction between Hermione, Polixenes and Leontes in the early scenes of this play indicates that Hermione's female "rights" are at first grounded in the

"rites" of the courtly love tradition. But this tradition is already highly contradictory in its medieval English manifestations and becomes yet more so in its early modern versions. As Joan Kelly has demonstrated, the formulaic notion of courtly love, especially as expounded by Baldassare Castiglione, undergoes important changes in Renaissance England, to the detriment of women. In her famous and insightful essay, "Did Women Have a Renaissance?" Kelly traces the "detachment of love from sex and the allegorization of the theme of love," as the medieval courtly tradition (often now viewed by critics as a form of sanctioned adultery thereby empowering women as well as men so far as choice in sexual relationships goes) gives way to the Renaissance prescription of Castiglione. Conversely, his neo-Platonic Book of the Courtier advocates a sharp distinction between love and sex--at least for women: "Love, Beauty, Woman, aestheticized...and given cosmic import, were in effect denatured, robbed of body, sex and passion by this elevation" (41). According to Kelly, Castiglione does, however, acknowledge the double standard, pointing out that "men make the rules permitting themselves and not women sexual freedom and that concern for legitimacy does not justify this inequality" (41). Nevertheless, as Kelly goes on to argue,

> "[H]owever they actually lived, in the new ideology a spiritualized noble love *supplemented* the experience of men while it *defined* extramarital experience for the lady. For women, chastity had become the convention of the Renaissance courts....Legitimacy is a significant factor here. Even [medieval] courtly love had paid some deference to it (and to the desire of women to avoid conception) by restraining intercourse while promoting romantic and sexual play. But now, with

> cultural and political power held almost entirely by men, the norm of female chastity came to express the concerns of Renaissance noblemen as they moved into a new situation as a hereditary, dependent class. (42)

Despite the above, Ian Maclean reads the situation for early modern women differently. In his formulation, there remains some leeway for the court, as opposed to the more common, lady: "The *taciturnitas* for which the domestic woman is praised is abandoned; her private, exclusive relationship to a dominating husband is replaced by a public, promiscuous, social role in which, by convention, she is the dominant partner" (64).[61] Hermione, in a sense, embodies these two conflicting viewpoints. Although in the first two acts of the play she seems to combine the *taciturnitas* of the domestic woman with the temporarily dominant public and social role (if not the promiscuity that her husband automatically attaches to that female courtly role) required by her royalty and her husband, by the opening of Act III, yet another Hermione emerges, one who abandons courtly rituals altogether in favor of a more egalitarian Puritan household ethos. And as we move from the Elizabethan Renaissance to the early Stuart years and into the Puritan Interregnum, yet another subtle shift occurs. The Puritan wife, matron, mother, grandmother, widow--most of the early modern Stages of Woman, all connected to

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[61] The courtly love tradition as described by Castiglione and, to name another example, Tasso, is continental in origin. If, as I suspect, this play is at least partly about the displacement of a continental European tradition by another tradition more uniquely "English" in origin, it might account in part at least for its dis-location onto continental soil. One could argue that the ideology for female conduct as prescribed by the courtly love tradition which for a time was imported by England and was still operative in early seventeenth-century Bohemia and Sicilia is replaced by play's end by a more thoroughly English export.

heterosexual marriage--are awarded a more pivotal role as a shaper of values. This increased evaluation of women's social and political contributions through family life represents an (albeit small) improvement for some women since the family is often posited by Puritan political theorists as a microcosmic exemplar of the ideal macrocosmic state.[62] Of course, to serve in this important capacity a woman need be married; and the dissolution of the convents in post-Reformation England narrowed a single woman's options to virtually none.[63] And yet, the increasing importance on the family as an autonomous unit had a significant bearing on the corresponding erosion of power formerly enjoyed by the monarchy. Here then, I suspect, is a play in which the "residual" ideology of courtly love and the "emergent" tradition of the more equal Puritan household nearly obliterate the whatever the "dominant" ideology for female conduct may have been at the time.[64] In other words, when read through this play, the dominant ideology of the moment seems to be the conflict between the opposing forces of the residual and emergent.

As such, I would argue, Hermione stands on one side of the cusp of a transition from the conventions of a Petrarchan, neo-Platonic idealized courtly Renaissance woman to the Puritan convention of woman as wife, mother, and helpmate, and Paulina stands on

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[62] See David Latt's "Praising Virtuous Ladies: The Literary Image and Historical Reality of Women in Seventeenth-Century England," and Margo Todd's, "Humanists, Puritans and the Spiritualized Household."

[63] See Fitz, passim.

[64] For a more full explanation of the theory of dominant, residual and emergent ideology, see Raymond Williams's chapter on the same in Marxism and Literature.

the other.[65] When the already conflicted Renaissance tradition of courtly love breaks down for Hermione, and she is faced with her husband's irrational jealousy, she absents herself from society, withdrawing into an all-female colony comprised of herself, Paulina and Paulina's three daughters. Though it is somewhat tangential to the main focus of my argument, I would suggest further that the structure of this play supports a "lesbian" reading, whether or not Paulina's two or three visits to Hermione's cottage result in sexual acts *per se*. When the patriarchy succeeds in killing Mamillius, Antigonus and, for all appearances Hermione and Perdita, total withdrawal from what Gayle Rubin has called the "heterosexual economy" becomes the preferred alternative for Paulina and Hermione. Their withdrawal lasts for sixteen years, during which time Paulina and Hermione are perhaps celibate, or autoerotic, or sexual partners, or some combination of the above. The women return to the male "order" only after their self-sufficiency has been well established. There is no reason to assume that their demonstrated ability to satisfy their own needs should exclude the sexual.

To return to my earlier point about whatever may have been the "dominant" ideology regarding female conduct in the early seventeenth century, and to repeat a point made earlier in my Introduction, feminist scholars of the early modern period are at a distinct disadvantage when it comes to tracing "paradigm shifts" in/for female behavior since the conduct manuals for women during this period are written almost exclusively by

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[65] For a look at the former, see Kelly; for an exposition of the latter see David Latt's "Praising Virtuous Ladies: The Literary Image and Historical Reality of Women in Seventeenth-Century England," and Margo Todd's "Humanists, Puritans and the Spiritualized Household."

men. This generalization holds true even for women experiencing life-cycle transitions from "maid" to "matron" (i.e. married woman) and even "mother." Though a fuller understanding of much of what Hermione claims lost can be documented through sources contemporary with the play, specifically the marriage and childbirth manuals which proliferated during the Reformation, it must be borne in mind that it was mainly men doing the describing, prescribing and proscribing.[66]

Not even the early seventeenth-century birthing process was exempt from this usurpation; though female midwives with little or no formal medical training in attendance at deliveries were the rule, and not the exception, male medical practitioners were beginning to exert their "authority," grounded in little or no empirical data, even in these matters.[67] "Medical science," as we know it, was in its infancy, and as Thomas Laqueur points out repeatedly in his book, Making Sex: The Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud, anatomical difference between the sexes and the process of reproduction were not fully understood by anatomists until the twentieth century. Hence, early modern midwives were forced to work in a near vacuum. The dearth of information on such matters

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[66] See for example, Harrington, In this Books are Conteyned the Commendacions of Matrymony, sig. Div.; T. Comber, The Occasional Offices...Explained (1679), pp. 506-7 and 510; The Writings of Henry Barrow (1587-90), pp. 462-3; Ecclesiastical Law (2nd ed. 1767), I. p. 290; and The Puritan Manifestoes, ed. W.H. Frere and C.E. Douglas (1907), 28-9.

[67] According to Patricia Crawford, who writes in her essay, "The construction and experience of maternity in seventeenth-century England": "Up to the mid-seventeenth century, the presence of any man at a childbirth was unusual. Women's modesty required all female attendants. More than one midwife would be summoned if the case were difficult. Male physicians would attend only in the last resort, which militated against their giving effective help" (21).

stemmed, at least in part, on a surprising and notable lack of interest on the part of early modern male medical scholars. Scant information was to be found on gynecology and obstetrics in medical texts written primarily by "obscure men." And, as Hilda Smith goes on to comment, even better known physicians "gave little, if any, interest to the study and practice of obstetrics and gynecology....Even William Harvey's *De Generatione Animalium* deals only briefly with the topic of human reproduction; the bulk of his work is devoted to reproduction in chickens and deer" (98). (I will return to Harvey's study later in my essay, since his discussion of animal reproduction, however brief, has a bearing on my argument.) Furthermore, as Smith goes on to attest, "[t]here was little original work done in gynecological research, and most of all the gynecological texts were either translations. plagiarisms of earlier works, or works whose earlier authors readily admitted their only source of authority was the ancient texts" (98). To make matters even worse for the early modern midwife, the supplantation of her domain as traditional "caretaker," not just of women's health, but of the family's and, in some instances, the entire community's health as well, was begun as early as the turn of the seventeenth century when newly-formed medical guilds moved "to exclude women from their number and from their particular practice" (98). Ignorance, bias, and the reliance on outmoded paradigms of physiology on the part of the nascent medical establishment were further complicated by the fact that "the question of what medical treatment women should receive and who should treat them was inextricably connected with the view of [their] 'special nature'" (98). I will return both to the relevancy of the birthing process and to the importance of as yet typical male, rather than female, exclusion from that process in this play later in my essay, but first I would like

to circle back to the opening of the play, since I eventually intend to connect my remarks on early modern courtly love and paradigm shifts in male prescriptions for female conduct with the birth of Perdita.

At the opening of the play, "mature dignities" and "royal necessities" seem to have little dampened Leontes' and Polixenes' love for one another. As the opening interchange between Camillo and Archidamus attests, the long-term relationship between the two Kings has remained one of cordial exchange, since despite "separation of their society, their encounters, though not personal, have been royally attorneyed with interchange of gifts, letters, loving embassies"--so much so "that they have seemed to be together, though absent, shook hands as over a vast; and embraced as it were from the ends of opposed winds" (1.1.25-31). Gifts, letters, loving embassies and embraces would seem to indicate a "love affair" of some intensity between the two men, Platonic or otherwise, and yet "mature dignities" and "royal necessities" of the masculine order do eventually intervene and overcome--at least for the next sixteen years.[68]

The gap of Polixenes' and Leontes' first long separation, closed temporarily by Polixenes' nine-month visit to Sicilia, is about to be reopened by Polixenes' return to wife

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[68] Critics have variously argued about the nature of Leontes' and Polixenes' bond, but my point is that the debate over whether the bond is physical, spiritual, or "institutionalized" and "competitive" (Erickson 153), is moot. Regardless of the nature or the reported depth of the bond, it proves insufficient: Leontes accuses Polixenes of adultery as well as Hermione, and Polixenes is forced to run for his life. If indeed their bond is one of long-term fellowship in royalty and patriarchy, and I would agree that it probably is just such a homosocial, rather than homosexual alliance, already the legitimacy and strength of such bonds are being called into question. The apparent irony in the confidence of Archidamus' response to Camillo in the above-quoted interchange buttresses my point: "I think there is not in the world malice or matter to alter it" (1.1.33-4). As we soon see there is indeed both sufficient "malice" and "matter" in this world to alter their "loves."

and son in Bohemia. Prevailed upon by her husband to persuade Polixenes to extend his visit, Hermione complies in the witty and eloquent manner expected of a royal wife. Polixenes' capitulation to the charms of Hermione, as Peter Erickson points out, is more a courtly reflex, an "unwillingness to 'offend'" (1.2.57), and less a genuine conversion by feminine charm and wit. Nevertheless, this exchange between Hermione and Polixenes is often accepted by critics as the ostensible genesis of Leontes' irrational jealousy. Howard Felperin, in Shakespearean Romance, finds the jealousy "truly represented....[f]or if Leontes' suspicions seem sudden and unaccountable, it is the nature of jealousy that it has neither rational cause nor adequate motivation, that its fantasies are created out of nothing, otherwise it is not jealousy" (214).

While Felperin may be correct within the confines of the strictest sense of meaning for the word "jealousy," I believe that Keith Thomas's "history of an idea...deeply rooted in England for centuries," which he calls the "double standard," is also operative here (195).[69] In contradistinction to what Maclean has argued, exceptional sexual license does not seem to have been granted to the early modern aristocratic woman. Rather, Thomas's theory would appear to buttress Kelly's point about constriction and restriction of female freedoms as the feudal rendition of courtly love gives way to the early modern. In other

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[69] One possible site of origin for early modern subject's understanding of the logic behind the double standard may be Tasso's Discorso della virtu feminile e donnesca (1582), in which he posits that each sex has a dominant virtue, one which both sexes need to practice, but which is more important to one sex than it is to the other. The dominant virtue for women was chastity; for men, courage. The antithesis of the dominant virtue (lack of chastity, cowardice) becomes the dominant vice for each sex, and the most excusable vice the antithesis of the dominant virtue of the other sex. Therefore, for men it is most unforgivable to be cowardly and most forgivable to be unchaste; for women it is most reprehensible to be unchaste and least abhorrent to be cowardly (Maclean 62).

words, though the *assumption* that courtly love rituals could result in extramarital sex for both men and women remains constant in the two periods, *approval* for actual consummation was now granted only to men. Tellingly, by early modern definition adultery was a crime committed only by married women; married men who engaged in sexual activity with women other than their wives were guilty of fornication, which carried a lesser penalty.[70] Even though Leontes attempts retribution against both Polixenes and Hermione, one senses that Leontes' censure of Hermione for the alleged adultery is even more visceral, primarily because she is a mature married woman in the midst of her most productive heir-bearing years.[71] Though there is some latitude tacitly granted to men in English society, who are expected and even encouraged to have multiple sexual partners before, during and after marriage, such freedom is now expressly and conversely denied to women, who are bound to confine themselves to one, and only one male sexual partner, the husband. The reason for the new imbalance in the code of conduct for the sexes,

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[70] Thomas, "The Puritans and Adultery: The Act of 1650 Reconsidered" (261).

[71] Freud, in his analysis of the Rat Man, comments on how the "predilection felt by obsessional neurotics for uncertainty and doubt leads them to turn their thoughts by preference to those subjects upon which all mankind are uncertain and upon which our knowledge and judgments must necessarily remain open to doubt. The chief subjects of this kind are paternity, length of life, life after death, and memory..." (68). In a footnote appended to the above observation, Freud continues: "As Lichtenburg says, 'An astronomer knows whether the moon is inhabited or not with about as much certainty as he knows who was his father, but not with so much certainty as he knows who was his mother.' A great advance was made in civilization when men decided to put their inferences upon a level with the testimony of their senses and to make the step from matriarchy to patriarchy" (68). Whether or not Leontes shows signs of obsessional neurosis is beside my point here; despite Freud's sanguine tone, the information necessary to complete the leap from matriarchy to patriarchy was not available until the mid-twentieth century when blood types and testing made determining paternity only slightly more certain than it ever had been.

according to Thomas:

> ...is more likely to be found in the desire of men for absolute property in women, a desire which cannot be satisfied if the man has reason to believe that the woman has been possessed by another man, no matter how momentarily and involuntarily and no matter how slight the consequences. (216)

Surely, it is possible, if not probable, that both Felperin's and Thomas's ideas play a role in Leontes' outburst. But I would suggest further that Leontes' jealousy may indeed have "adequate motivation" over and above the commodification of women explicit in Thomas's formulation of women's chastity as male chattel, beyond the dependence of both royalty and patriarchy on women to provide legitimate offspring. What I believe further complicates matters is the advanced state of Hermione's current pregnancy.

As R.V. Schnucker has noted, impending childbirth in the early modern period was "a time of fear and trembling for both husband and wife" (643). And, as Schnucker continues, their fear was well-founded, since research has shown "mortality among aristocratic women was high, with forty-five percent dying before fifty years of age and one-fourth of them from the complications of childbirth" (643). Hermione exhibits impatience possibly rooted in pre-parturitive anxiety on one occasion, when she complains of her seven year old son to her one of her ladies-in-waiting, "Take the boy to you: he so troubles me,/'Tis past enduring (2.1.1). The ambiguity of the end of this line of poetry leaves open the question of whether Hermione finds the activity of the young boy or the "goodly bulk" (20) of her advanced pregnancy "past enduring." Nevertheless, she otherwise appears to be an exemplary mother, shortly returning to the group, and

encouraging her son to "tell 's a tale" (22). The child's winter's tale is then interrupted by the entrance of Leontes and his entourage; after acknowledging that the boy does "bear some signs" of him, Leontes has the child taken from Hermione and formally and publicly accuses her of adultery: "[l]et her sport herself/With that she's big with; for 'tis Polixenes/Has made thee swell thus" (61). Hermione immediately declares her willingness to be sworn otherwise.

This scene may be Leontes' first *public* abuse of Hermione, but his earlier asides during her persuasive exchange with Polixenes immediately conjoin two pervasive early modern male courtly anxieties: female fidelity (sexual and otherwise) and the legitimacy of his son. His objection, "Too hot, too hot!" (1.2.109), as Hermione give Polixenes her hand is closely followed by a series of self-reassuring comments about his son Mamillius' physical resemblance to him: "What! hast smutch'd thy nose?/ They say it is a copy out of mine" (121); "...they say we are/Almost as like as eggs; women say so,/(That will say anything)" (130-1); "yet were it true/To say this boy were like me" (135). I would suggest therefore that yet another factor may be at work in Leontes' sustained emotional instability: his unconscious need to displace his anxiety over the impending birth of the second child. Leontes' transference of responsibility for Hermione's pregnancy to Polixenes allows him to transfer as well to Polixenes the responsibility for the risks entailed in childbirth. The displacement then also allows Leontes to rationalize his inhumane treatment of Hermione--lent added emphasis in light of her condition--since by his "rights" the child carried is not his.

Leontes' continuing irrationality over the assumed adultery of Polixenes and

Hermione and his punitive measures against both propel the matrifocal core group of the play into early action. A more full enumeration and elaboration of the "rights" of the maternal will follow, but I will say for the moment that the public denouncement of his pregnant wife and her subsequent arrest and imprisonment constitute Leontes' first violations of the "rights" of the maternal--rights which others--both male and female--in the play recognize, ascribe to and are willing to protect and perpetuate. Beyond offering love and support for the endurance of the pregnancy, moralists charged husbands with ensuring that adequate provisions were made for the birth. According to Linda A. Pollock's essay, "Embarking on a Rough Passage: The Experience of Pregnancy in Early-Modern Society," "[c]areful preparations for the woman's lying-in seem to have been the norm and those cases in which the husband was negligent in this duty aroused concern and criticism" (53). Hence, in response to Leontes' outrageous accusations and character assassinations, Camillo warns Polixenes of Leontes' intended retribution by poison, and spirits him away to safety (1.2). Antigonus and an unnamed Lord staunchly defend Hermione without regard for Leontes' wrath--indeed, Antigonus invokes the names of his three daughters, notably referred to as "co-heirs" (2.1.148), to defend Hermione's honor. Polixenes, Antigonus and the Lord all dispute Leontes' linguistic and physical abuse of Hermione, variously calling her "precious," "rare" (1.2.452); "spotless" (2.1.131); and "honourable" (2.1.161).

Unable to speak on her behalf, Hermione's "ladies" accompany her to prison, however fearfully. If it is unexceptional for an imprisoned queen to be accompanied by ladies-in-waiting, it is even more unremarkable for a pregnant queen to be so, for, as

Hermione attests, her "plight requires it" (2.1.118).[72] Custom in the early seventeenth century would dictate that "numerous" women be present in the birth room both to assist the midwife in the delivery and to serve as witnesses.[73] Despite Leontes' reference to Paulina as "midwife" (2.3.159), and Paulina's reference to herself as "physician" (2.3.54), she does not literally serve in the play as either. Allowed by the Gaoler to speak as Hermione's emissary, it is Emilia, instead, who relates the circumstances of the premature birth of Hermione's daughter. The Gaoler, too, then acquiesces to the "rights" of maternity, rather than to the "might" of royal imperative. Persuaded by Paulina's argument that the innocent child has been imprisoned only by virtue of her imprisonment within the womb, he releases the infant to Paulina's custody over the presumed objections of Leontes. The Gaoler's inability or unwillingness to refute the unassailable logic of Paulina and his acceptance of her pledge of protection from the danger of royal temper anticipate a subtle shift in leadership in the play. Nevertheless, it is important to remember that Leontes' authority is eroded only by his own apparently irrational actions; Paulina and other members of the matrifocal group step in to remedy the situation only after Leontes incapacitates himself as ruler.

Paulina's growing empowerment, and the ever-increasing number of those acting in

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[72] As did the plight of the daughter of Elizabeth Molys, whose "intollerabley badd husband" refused to make suitable provision for her delivery. Elizabeth wrote to her daughter's mother-in-law in 1590 to persuade her to pressure her son "to allowe and provyde for her that ys mete for a woman in her case, and that she may be accompaned wth suche honest matrons as maye be for her saffetie for yt is evident that he hathe no car for the preservacon of her lyffe" (quoted in Pollock 53).

[73] Schnucker 641, 643.

concert to restore Hermione's name and freedom and to protect her children appear antithetical to Leontes' patriarchal rule over court and family throughout most of the play. But the signs that patriarchy fails in this play are figurative as well as literal. Mamillius, deprived of the maternal nourishment his name suggests, and fed instead the demonstrably fickle and self-serving "affection" of his father, languishes. According to Stephen Orgel, Mamillius is at what was known as the "breeching age" in early modern culture:

> Elizabethan children of both sexes were dressed in skirts until the age of seven or so; the "breeching" of boys was the formal move out of the common gender of childhood, which was both female in appearance and largely controlled by women, and into the world of men. The event was traditionally the occasion for significant family ceremony. (10-11)

As I have previously noted, Mamillius is forcibly removed from "the common gender of childhood"--the feminine--when he is taken from his mother and ladies-in-waiting and transferred to the custody of Leontes and his Lords in the opening scene of Act II. Moreover, in Mamillius' case, the "significant family ceremony" (obviously not of the kind that Orgel has in mind) that follows his transfer from matriarchy to patriarchy is his mother's trial. Significantly, Mamillius does not survive the transition: deprived of the matrifocal, he immediately falls prey to an illness which Leontes erroneously ascribes to the young prince's conception of "the dishonour of his mother" (2.3.12); Mamillius "declin[es], droop[s]," throwing off his "spirit, his appetite, his sleep" (2.3.14-5). In short order, due to "mere conceit and fear/Of the queen's speed" (a more accurate diagnosis provided by a male servant in tune with the matrifocal aspects of the household and the

culture) it is announced that the prince has succumbed to his "illness" and "is dead" (143. 145). It is my thought that the wasting and near immediate death of the figuratively named Mamillius correlates with the literal enervation, if not demise, of the patriarchal "order" in this play.

As Mamillius fades, so does Leontes' authority. Astonished, and perhaps persuaded, by Paulina's bold presentation of the infant to Leontes, and her caustic rhetoric in defense of mother and child, the lords and servants present at their confrontation refuse to obey the King's repeated order to "Force her hence" (2.3.62), even after he several times accuses them of "treason" for their inaction in the face of royal command. Ever confident as to the efficacy of patriarchal authority--despite his evident lack of control over his subjects present--Leontes turns to the penultimate authority over Paulina, her husband, for support: "Antigonus,/I charg'd thee that she should not come about me./I knew she would....What! Canst not rule her?" (2.3..43, 47). Paulina does not wait for the voice of patriarchy to answer, she interrupts:

> From all dishonesty he can: in this--
> Unless he take the course that you have done,
> Commit me for committing honour--trust it,
> He shall not rule me. (48-49)

And Antigonus corroborates her assertion that a wife will be ruled by her husband only so long as he repays honor with honor by finally responding that "[w]hen she will take the rein I let her run;/But she'll not stumble" (51). In other words, in the more egalitarian, reciprocal ethos of the Puritan household which Paulina and Antigonus represent, the

persuasive speech of an articulate woman is made even more so by the power of her honesty and honor; Antigonus defers to his wife, confident she is within her "rights."

Antigonus, with the support of the Lords present, contradicts the King's accusations of lies and treachery, and begs for the life of the child (2.3.145-65). His reward is to be charged with the disposal of the infant in a "remote and desert place," out of Sicilia's "dominions" (2.3.175-76), and he pays for his loyalty to all concerned with his life.

The near-immediate following of the "just and open trial" (2.3.203) of Hermione promised by Leontes succeeds only in giving further evidence of the insufficiency, if not inefficacy, of Leontes' rule. Hermione eloquently defends herself against the base and baseless charges of Leontes by putting obedience to the patriarchal dictates of the courtly ritual on trial:

> For Polixenes
>
> With whom I am accused, I do confess
>
> I lov'd him as in honor he required,
>
> With such a kind of love as might become
>
> A lady like me; with a love, even such
>
> So, and no other, as **yourself commanded**:
>
> Which, not to have done, I think had been in me
>
> Both disobedience and ingratitude.
>
> (3.2.61-69 emphasis added)

I believe Hermione is here referring to a somewhat residual requirement of "honor" in interpersonal, heterosexual relationships which also had been an integral element of the

medieval courtly tradition and is so well documented by Mervyn James.[74] Although recent accounts have highlighted the aspects of medieval courtly love rituals bordering on, if not resulting in, condoned adultery, as detailed above, not all courtly interactions between men and women married to other spouses resulted in infidelity. In fact, it was a requirement of the medieval courtly ritual and remained a Renaissance courtly commonplace that a lord's wife "love" all of his closest confidants and associates with a "kind of love as might become a lady," i.e., asexual, but with a warmth matching that of her husband. As we have seen, the love between Polixenes and Leontes is ostensibly quite fervid, and Hermione does no more provide the requisite match for that intensity, as commanded by her husband. To do less would be viewed in their courtly tradition as a dishonor to her husband, evidence of her "disobedience" to his authority and her "ingratitude" for his reciprocal honoring of her and her relatives and associates.

It is just this reciprocal honor that Hermione invokes when she then further turns the tables on her husband by accusing him of violating the rights of the maternal order:

To me life can be no commodity;

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[74] Though James focuses mainly on the homosocial requirements of honor in a waning feudal system, his point that "honor" was an integral element of the ethos, undergoing change as the feudal gives way to the early modern, underscores the polymorphousness of the term during this time. In many ways, the dictates of Leontes emphasize the feudal stress on ties of kinship, blood and lineage, and the sixteenth-century view of the preservation of "honor" as an assertive, often violent competitiveness. James, however, notes a shift in emphasis at the turn of the seventeenth century. A less aggressive honor is now synthesized with humanistic wisdom and the Protestant religion. It is from this standpoint that Antigonus seems to argue. Nevertheless, after the Lincolnshire Rebellion of 1536, a heretofore unheard-of reciprocity slowly emerges: The obedience of subjects slowly becomes dependent on the monarch's refusal to disrupt local material or moral balance. The erosion of obedience to Leontes seems to me to be contingent on his disruption of the moral balance in Sicilia. See James, passim.

The crown and comfort of my life, your favour,
I do give lost, for I do feel it gone,
But knowst not how it went. My second joy,
And first fruits of my body, from his presence
I am bar'd like one infectious. My third comfort
(Starr'd most unluckily) is from my breast
The innocent milk in its most innocent mouth)
Hal'd out to murder; myself in every port
Proclaimed a strumpet, with immodest hatred
The child-bed privilege denied, which 'longs
To women of all fashions; lastly hurried
Here, to this place, in the open air before
I have got strength of limit. (3.2.94-106)

From Hermione's viewpoint, the "rights" of Leontes which inhere in the patriarchal structure of early modern family life are valid only if a corresponding respect is accorded to the reciprocal rights of the maternal order. After delineating her competent performance in carrying out the "commands" and "requirements" of the residual courtly patriarchal order, she in effect places Leontes on trial for his failure to repay what is owed her as wife and mother in early modern Reformation culture: her husband's affection and respect; her son's companionship; her daughter's nourishment; her unsullied reputation; and her recuperative period, granted to women of all classes after childbirth. Hermione is no iconoclast; she is a woman of her time in a moment of transition for women and for

patriarchy. She is willing to honor Leontes' "rights" as husband, but only so long as her "rights" as wife and mother are in turn respected by her husband. Her admirable fulfillment of marital and maternal duties serves to underscore Leontes' neglect of reciprocity.

Hermione's lengthy enumeration of her "rights" tells us much too about the "rites" of the maternal in early modern England. So far as "rights" are concerned, as I have begun to detail above, the lost "favor" owed by Leontes, which Hermione considers the "crown and comfort of my life," includes a mutuality of respect, honor and protection of her good name. As detailed above, she offers her respect and honor to Leontes in her acquiescence to his wish to have her use her considerable charm and powers of articulation to persuade Polixenes to extend his stay. In return, Leontes' public proclamation ("on every port") of her as a "strumpet," or whore, in so preemptory a fashion, and so contrary to the evidence of her conduct during the at least eight year duration of their marriage previous to his accusation, violates her reciprocal right to honor.

Compounding matters, Hermione has been "bar'd like one infectious" from her "second joy,/And first fruits of [her] body." Here again, Leontes violates an important tenet of early modern maternal rights. Even though Mamillius has reached the breeching age of about seven years, the age at which boy children of the gentry were normally removed from maternal education and instead entrusted to the care of a male tutor, so long as she desires it (and not all noblewomen did so desire) she can expect continued, frequent, warm contact with her son.[75] Widows, such as Paulina after Act III, were usually appointed guardians of their children, although certain kinds of behavior could result in the

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[75] Crawford 12.

removal of the child or children from their care.[76]

We are then told that Hermione's "third comfort" (her newborn daughter) "is from her breast/The innocent milk in its most innocent mouth/Hal'd out to murder." Few noblewomen breast-fed their children; they usually employed wet nurses to feed and care for their infants.[77] We know from Leontes' earlier comment ("I am glad you did not nurse him" 2.1.56) that Hermione, consonant with custom, did not nurse her son; his name notwithstanding, Mamillius is not literally tied to his mother's breast. Her daughter, however, is a different case, and here again is a difference marking the transition in the mores of family life during the period. The Puritan family ethic now makes it more incumbent upon and acceptable for women of all classes to nurse their own children, especially since abuses in the wet-nurse "industry" were rampant.[78] True, Hermione is imprisoned when her daughter is born, but one suspects that if a wet-nurse had been called for, the Gaoler would have felt compelled to comply, especially in light of Paulina's argument that the infant is in prison only by an accident of timing, not by virtue of any crime to be punished with starvation.

Even so, recent scholarship on the subject has shown that any generalizations about early modern wet-nursing and breastfeeding are inappropriate without consideration

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[76] Charles I took from his widow's care the children of his friend the Duke of Buckingham when, after his death, she reverted to Roman Catholicism (Crawford 12).

[77] Schnucker, 644-50.

[78] See Adelman, Suffocating Mothers: "Wet-nursing itself was sometimes tantamount to murder: even aside from the "killing nurses" who allegedly attended to the very poor, children put out to nurse were twice as likely to die as those nursed by their mothers through the effects of disease or neglect, or sometimes deliberate malice" (4).

of issues of social class. In the more rural agrarian outposts of London, for example, the child routinely sent out for nursing came from a poorer family, one that could not spare the labor of the mother in the fields while nursing her child. Consequently, the women doing the nursing were often in more comfortable financial circumstances than the mothers of the children they nursed; their families could afford their absence in the fields. Complicating matters even further, extended wet-nursing was often used by early modern women as a means of birth control. Consequently, the women wealthy enough to wet nurse enjoyed fewer pregnancies and lower birth rates than their less well-off neighbors: there is some irony in the fact that the women from families least able to cope with the financial burden of additional children were most likely to bear those children since they could not afford the prolonged period of infertility enjoyed by nursing women.[79]

The outlook for very poor children was more dismal. Bastards, orphans and pauper children--not to mention those infants abandoned by frightened single mothers--were often farmed out as a form of early modern "work-fare" to women collecting poor relief. Since poor nutrition and disease walked hand-in-hand among the early modern poor, infants nursed in these circumstances were less likely to survive.[80] Interestingly, in addition to the infants of the relatively poor and very poor, babies at the other end of the economic spectrum were also sent out to nurses--as Mamillius' experience demonstrates--but for very different reasons. Coitus, it seems, was thought unhealthy for both nursing mother and child. Although writers of domestic manuals such as Gouge urged husbands to

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[79] Newall, passim.

[80] Newall 134.

do what that could to contain themselves, it was often the husbands who insisted that breastfeeding be discontinued so that sexual relations could be resumed.[81] Once aristocratic women began to understand the benefits of breastfeeding--postponement of the resumption of regular coitus and ancillary reduction of pregnancies and childbirths--they too, as Hermione shows, began to argue for their "right" to breastfeed their newborns.

Hermione's parenthetical assessment of her infant daughter as one "starr'd most unluckily" turns us from the "rights" to the "rites" of the maternal. A medieval childbirth woodcut by Jost Amman shows what appears to be an aristocratic bedchamber (large, well-appointed room complete with ornate bed furnishings and an elaborately corniced window) in which a woman, with the support of three other women, gives birth. Seated in the foreground in a semi-reclining position on what was known as a "birthing stool," the laboring mother is flanked on either side by a woman leaning toward her solicitously while holding her hand. Seated on an even lower stool, with her back to the viewer, is the midwife, her hand reaching into the dress of the mother-to-be to retrieve the infant. In the background, in profile or with their backs to the viewer, with a table and charting instruments between them, are two astrologers gazing skyward out the magnificent arched window through which the stars are visible. The customary role of male "experts" at early modern births which Hermione reminds us of, then, is that of astrologer--not physician. Though it is unlikely that one was present at the less comfortable birth of her second child, Hermione assumes that, had this customary aristocratic rite been observed, Perdita's

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[81] Gouge, Of Domesticall Duties, 516-17.

astrological chart would have signified negatively. Probably the most important rite of the maternal in which inhered certain rights for the new mother which Hermione speaks of is her "child-bed privilege" which, she contends, "'longs to women of all fashions" or what we would call economic classes. In this phrase "child-bed privilege" resides a complex of important elements which coalesce into a social ceremony of relatively long duration.

With the onset of labor, the expectant mother would withdraw from the household into the all-female environment of a darkened bedchamber. Once all were assembled, the ceremony of childbirth would begin. What is most important here is that the expectant mother and her assistants move into a different social space, "away from the world of men (centrally, her husband) and into the world of women" (Wilson 71). In Hermione's case, this segregated social space is the gaol which, as we shall see, in many ways serves the purpose and, as I noted earlier, is honored as such by the gaoler.

Like Hermione, the mother was usually accompanied into the childbed chamber by other females and these women were often referred to as her "gossips." The word "gossip" is actually a corruption of the word "god-sib" or "god-sibling"--that is, a woman invited to witness the birth for the subsequent purpose of serving as a witness at the child's baptism.[82] The importance of these women to one another, often serving as each others' god-sibs, round-robin style, is underscored by Mrs. Noah's insistence that her "gossips" accompany her onto the ark. In The Winter's Tale, Hermione's ladies-in-waiting in effect function as her gossips; one suspects that under more usual circumstances, Paulina would have been in attendance as well. As Adrian Wilson writes:

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[82] Wilson 72.

> The social space of birth, then, was a collective female space, constituted on the one hand by the presence of gossips and midwife, and on the other hand by the absence of men. It was, however, equally important to demarcate the *physical* space of the birth: to confer upon the room a different character, signifying its special function. This was achieved by physically and symbolically enclosing the chamber. Air was excluded by blocking up the keyholes; daylight was shut out by means of heavy curtains; the darkness within was illuminated by means of candles, which were therefore part of the standard requirements for delivery. Thus reconstituted, the room became a *lying-in chamber*, the physical counterpart of the female social space to which the mother now belonged. (73)

With the swaddling of the newborn in this separate social space, the birthing ceremony was complete; and yet, the ritual ceremony of early modern childbirth was only beginning. For the child-bed privilege Hermione refers to includes up to one month of isolation, rest and recuperation.[83] In the course of this period of physical healing, the mother also experienced a transition in terms of physical and social space, enjoying a gradual reintegration into the social body.

The lying-in period seems to have been comprised of three stages. First, for a period of at least three days and at most two weeks, the new mother was confined to bed in the still-darkened room. Next, the "upsitting" ceremony, after which the mother would

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[83] In some early modern localities, the child-bed privilege was gendered, allowing fourteen days for the birth of a girl and thirty for the birth of a boy, an indication of the relative value awarded daughters and sons. In other localities the period of rest and isolation allowed ranged from three weeks to a month, regardless of the sex of the child birthed.

remain in her room for anywhere from a week to ten days, though she would begin to move about the room more freely and the room would gradually be "opened" to at least light and at most the visits of a few close friends and relatives and the other members of her immediate family. Finally, the new mother would leave her room and begin to move freely around the enclosed space of her household for about a week; she would not at this stage yet venture out of doors. Though the number of days in each stage varies with local custom and the strength of the particular mothers involved, the sequencing of the stages appears, based on the fragmentary evidence available, to have been fairly constant.[84] An additional constant seems to be the absence of sexual activity during this time of relative seclusion.

Hence, Hermione's complaint that her husband has forced her into "the open air before/I have got strength of limit." Perhaps even more importantly, Hermione has not yet marked the last stage of the lying-in period, the official return to a more open physical and social space, the rite marking her reintegration into a more broadly based social community: the churching, or purification rite. Based on Jewish rituals to cleanse women after childbirth or menstruation, and mentioned in Leviticus (12: 1-8)[85] as well as Luke (2:22), to Stephen Greenblatt at least, the early modern rendition of this rite represents an attempt by the male professional elite--jurists, theologians, physicians--to "regulate the female body: to identify its periods of untouchability or pollution, to cleanse it of its stains,

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[84] Wilson 76.

[85] In Leviticus the numbers are reversed, but the prioritizing based on the sex of the baby born remains constant: a woman is unclean for seven days after the birth of a son; for fourteen days after the birth of a "maid child."

to distinguish between 'superstitious' practices and those conducive to public health" (131). Perhaps Greenblatt is partially correct about this interpretation of the ritual, especially when it is considered within the narrow framework of the secularization of Puritan England. but given a wider scope, the issue of purifying early modern women becomes much more complicated. Like Greenblatt, Keith Thomas assumes the position of Puritan divines--though he labels them extremists--when speculating about the ritual:

> Extreme Protestant reformers were later to regard [the churching of women, [or purification ritual] as one of the most obnoxious Popish survivals in the Anglican Church, but medieval churchmen had also devoted a good deal of energy to refuting such popular superstitions as the belief that it was improper for the mother to emerge from her house, or look at the sky or earth before she had been purified....The idea of Purification survived the Reformation; even at the end of the seventeenth century it was reported in Wales. (Religion 38)

Thomas goes on to suggest that the ritual was so stubbornly entrenched in the popular imagination not because women who had recently given birth were in any way "unclean" and in need of segregation and subsequent purification before being reintegrated into the social body, but as a result of the persistent patristic church orthodoxy that, in the absence of procreation, sexual abstinence was a "general condition of holiness" (38). In other words, since it was widely recognized that the new mother was not again fertile for a period of thirty days or so after giving birth, sexual relations were therefore taboo until the purification rite reestablished her as a sexual, procreative body. Unfortunately, although attempting a feminist perspective, Thomas's and Greenblatt's suggestions tend to view the

churching of women from only the male viewpoint. By way of contrast, I would suggest that part of the reason for the tenacity of the practice might be found in the reluctance of women to forego this part of the birthing ritual. After all, the notion of up to a month of post-partum seclusion, relief of household and sexual "duties," and rest may well have held some attraction for the Tudor-Stuart woman.

The male responses to the ritual--passive acceptance, quiet and not-so-quiet resentment--serve, when viewed from a female perspective, to underscore what Adrian Wilson calls the "universality and hegemony of the ritual" (83).[86] Both Arnold van Gennep's and Thomas's reading of the ritual portray women as essentially obedient to the ritual, subservient to male prerogative. In the alternative reading posed by Natalie Davis, Wilson and myself, the ritual serves important interests of women; while undergoing the ritual process men are essentially, if only temporarily, subservient to female prerogative.

Following the compelling rebuttal Hermione offers to counter Leontes' charges, the oracle returns a judgement in her favor. The death of Mamillius is announced, Hermione faints, is carried off, and is then reported dead to a belatedly chastened Leontes. By the end of Act III, Leontes finds himself in virtual isolation, with only the "boundless tongue" (2.3.91) of Paulina for company and comfort. Consonant with the Puritan family ethic, the deterioration of Leontes' macrocosmic rule at court is matched by the

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[86] Wilson neatly summarizes the three main interpretations of the early modern purification ritual: the "rite of passage" theory, including the steps articulated by anthropologist Arnold van Gennep--separation, transition, reincorporation; Keith Thomas's formulation of the theory of a dialectical relationship between popular attitudes and social customs; and the theory of Natalie Zemon Davis, closely approximating my own that the lying-in period was yet another instance of the early modern woman "on top," if only for a brief interlude (84-86).

corresponding microcosmic depletion of his family. Antigonus' unwitting prophecy that Leontes would "leave [him]self/Hardly one subject" (2.3.110) becomes a reality.

Counterpoised within the sixteen year gap which follows these events are the rustic, pastoral idealized landscape of the Old Shepherd and Perdita, and the emptied, enervated court of Leontes. But it is worth remembering that the all-female society of widowed Paulina, her three daughters and Hermione, mentioned only retrospectively, continues to thrive; it is this world, posed mainly as an absence, which to some extent bridges the other two. It is Perdita, however, who later draws the three together.

Peter Erickson believes the "female figure" in The Winter's Tale to be a composite of Hermione, Paulina and Perdita. Erickson's thesis provides a potent example of how three very disparate women, each in a different stage of the life-cycle--maid, matron, widow--are fused into "woman." At least Erickson allows that the "splitting" of his monad into a triad "allows Shakespeare to present complex dimensions of female values" (152). Perdita, in Erickson's view, is associated with nature, with a fertility that repeats her mother's of the opening acts, and with a "youthful sexuality that is still respectful of social forms" (152). Perhaps, but I would suggest that while Perdita's exchange with Polixenes at the sheep shearing considerably complicates matters, the points she scores in the debate reinforce those of other key members of the play's matrifocal core.

The "flowers" that Perdita hands to Polixenes and Camillo are, in fact, herbs. Polixenes comments that Perdita has appropriately given them flowers to "fit our ages," "flowers of winter" (4.4.78). Perdita's rejoinder is that she has in her "rustic garden" only those plants growing naturally in season; no "carnations and streak'd gillyvors"--hybrid

flowers--for her, which, she coyly adds, "some call nature's bastards" (82-3). Apparently and ironically, Perdita agrees with "some" as to the "illegitimacy" of hybrid flowers since she concludes, "I care not to get slips of them" (84). Questioned by Polixenes as to her "neglect" of them, Perdita replies that she objects to the "art" in them, an art shared with "great creating nature" (86-7). Polixenes' rebuttal is that the "art which Perdita objects to as "added" to nature is, in fact, created by nature. Well and good, but the example Polixenes gives to compound the point is telling:

> You see, sweet maid, we marry
> A gentle scion to the wildest stock,
> And make conceive a bark of baser kind
> By bud of nobler race. (92-4)

Of course Polixenes, contrary to his own argument, has no intention of hybridizing his noble blood by allowing his "gentle scion" to marry someone from Perdita's "wilder stock," even if, according to his theory, such a union between the gentle (noble, male art) elevates the wilder (common, female nature). More more telling is Polixenes' momentary equivocation that such art "does mend nature--change it rather" (96). He is not quite sure whether hybridizing art improves the baser stock--mending it--or pollutes the nobler race--changing it. It is this uncertainty which causes Polixenes' contradiction of his own theory, and prevents him from applying his thesis for the "natural" world to human and courtly inheritance. Perdita likewise equivocates. Faced with Polixenes' "masculine" assumption that "[t]he art itself is nature" (96), she replies, "So it is" (97). But Perdita catches Polixenes' contradiction of his own argument. When Polixenes posits art as something

created by nature, Perdita agrees with him; when he equivocates by suggesting that art is a man-made addition to nature, she disagrees with him. For her, it is either/or, not both. She therefore interprets Polixenes' remark, "[t]he art itself is nature" *literally*, meaning that the only art, the "art" itself, is nature; hence the capitulation "So it is." But when Polixenes then conflates her agreement to his first premise with assumed agreement to his second, by ordering Perdita to "make your garden rich in gillyvors,/And do not call them bastards" (99), Perdita refuses:

> I'll not
> The dibble in the earth to set one slip of them;
> No more than, were I painted, I would wish
> This youth to say 'twere well, and only therefore
> Desire to breed by me. (100-3)

Beating Polixenes at his own game, Perdita too now turns the argument to human "breeding," her intent all along, I would argue, since her pastoral experience levels the conflict she senses in Polixenes' reluctance to apply his theory of plant hybridization to human reproduction. She equates Polixenes' courtly "art" for her garden with artifice, anathema to her in a world where human and animal breeding is part of, rather than distinct from, "great creating nature."

There are, however, more than issues of social "class" which account for the inability of Polixenes and Perdita to reconcile their opinions on the matter of the differences and relationship between art and nature. As Frances E. Dolan as recently so clearly and cogently sorted out, "art" and "nature" in early modern culture are multivalent

terms, carrying some very specific sex/gender implications.

In Dolan's formulation "the gender and the value variously assigned" to art and nature are complexly, and dialectically related. Like Polixenes, Sir Philip Sidney, in his Apology for Poetry (1581) seems to argue that art is a masculine prerogative which transcends nature, changes it and mends it, and the constraints of nature to be transcended mended and changed are sexed female and gendered feminine. While, as Dolan points out, Sidney allowed that most arts are "compassed within" nature, he then adds that the poet "goeth hand in hand with nature, not enclosed within the narrow warrant of her gifts, but freely ranging only within the zodiac of his own wit" (14). As Dolan surmises from the above, "[l]iberated from nature's narrow warrant, the poet creates a world that surpasses nature and bypasses nature's role in reproduction" (225). The crux of the misunderstanding between Polixenes and Perdita lies in a similar vein. Perdita will not grant the masculinist assumptions of Polixenes' contention that man's art, as exemplified by the hybridized carnations and gillyvors, bypasses and/or transcends the female reproductive role in great creating nature. As Perdita understands it, masculine "art" is hardly capable of *augmenting* female "nature"--let alone transcending or bypassing her powers. Polixenes, on the other hand, seems less certain. When it comes to carnations, he appears to side with Sidney who, "reveres art as unconstrained and powerful, as simultaneously allied with the masculine and the divine" (225). When it comes to putting his theory into practice, in the form of his son's human reproduction with the Shepherd's daughter, he seems decidedly less sanguine.

Unlike Sidney, other Renaissance literary theorists impose much more severe

limitations on art, and accept a concept of art delimited by the power of nature. In this rendition, the boundaries between art and nature are blurred; nevertheless, in this case both are sexed female and gendered feminine. George Puttenham, for instance, in The Arte of English Poesie (1585), posits nature as female and/or feminine, but unlike Sidney, he uses the metaphor of female clothing to describe the art of the poet when dressing nature. For Puttenham, art is artful only when it matches nature; when the artist tries to supercede nature, disaster results:

> [If] the...colours in our art of Poesie...be not well tempered, or not well layd, or be used in excesse, or never so litle disordered or misplaced, they not onely give it no matter of grace at all, but rather do disfigure the stuffe and spill the whole workmanship taking away all bewtie and good liking of it....(138).

Perdita's formulation of the relationship between and relative value of art and nature would appear to more closely approximate that of Puttenham than that of Sidney. Perhaps even more important, Puttenham, sounding a note similar to Perdita, equates overreaching art with (mainly female) face painting. Her "No more than, were I painted, I would wish/This youth to say 'twere well," to refute Polixenes' call for masculine art's enhancement of her garden, sounds a note quite similar to Puttenham, who likens poetry abundant in the kind of art which lacks respect for the circumscription of nature to "a crimson tainte, which should be laid upon a Ladies lips, or right in the center of her cheekes...forehead or chinne, ...a very ridiculous bewtie" (138).

It seems, then, that when male Renaissance theorists equate art with the male/masculine, it is "art" and highly valued; when equated with the female/feminine, art

often devolves into artifice, usually but not always carrying mainly negative connotations. There can be no excess of "masculine" art; it is the excessive art associated with the feminine and often correlated with unnatural painted women and bad poetry which is to be avoided at all costs. Only when art and nature are both sexed/gendered female/feminine, and only when they enjoy a symbiotic relationship will Perdita--and as I will later show, Paulina--allow for the power of art as contained within the schema of the "natural." Like Puttenham, those associated with the matrifocal values of this play, whether male or female, would seem to support the view that art is to be praised "only insofar as it corresponds to nature" (Dolan 225). Once again, reciprocity and equality are paramount.

Polixenes' reluctance to convert horticultural theory into human practice is further informed by common Renaissance misconceptions about human generation. Largely dependent on the outmoded models of Aristotle and Galen, it was thought that women provided the "material," or nature, to the human generative process, and men provided the "idea" or art.[87] Thus, when Perdita's and Polixenes' discussion turns from an innocuous repartee instigated by his seemingly apolitical question, "How does your garden grow?" into a gendered dialectic regarding the sexual politics inherent in early modern reproductive theory, Perdita hedges. Perdita does indeed represent Hermione's fertility. She seems to wish to deny man's hybridizing art in the reproductive process when she submits that it would not be well for Florizel to "breed" with her should she be "painted"--false, artificial, unfaithful--but her implicit recognition that she does indeed require Florizel

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[87] Laqueur, passim. His discussion of Harvey's reformulation of the ancients' ideas about conception is found on p. 144-8.

to "breed" shows at least tacit acknowldgement of some male contribution to human reproduction. To Perdita's mind, man's artistic contribution to generation is confined to "feminine" art as detailed above. She is unwilling to accept Polixenes' brand of "masculine" art credited with bypassing, transcending or augmenting female/feminine nature, but she does not repudiate art completely in favor of an idealized nature. Rather, Perdita recognizes only an art derived from, balanced with and subservient to the natural. Misconceptions regarding the mechanics of human generation accompanying early modern reliance on the ancients, and miscommmunication based on ambiguous sexed/gendered definitions of art and nature are both responsible for any implicit contradictions in Perdita's and Polixenes' arguments.

I linger over Perdita's debate with Polixenes because I suspect it belies, at least from my perspective, a prescient skepticism concerning the male contribution to the generative process that was soon to be articulated in William Harvey's Disputation Touching the Generation of Animals (1651). In it, Harvey strives to contain and explain the "mystery of epigenesis, of making a complex organism from unformed matter which somehow assumes the shape and characteristics of the creature it came from" (qtd. in Laqueur 146). His explanation is "contained within the "one-sex-model," again promulgated by the ancients, which explains female anatomy as nothing more than the inverse of the more perfect human form. Harvey's need to re-explain the generative process stems from his inability, upon autopsy, to find any evidence of "male seed" in the wombs of pregnant deer, but rather only embryos and "menstrual matter" (145). In Harvey's re-vision, the invisible sperm are said to act "Prometheus-like" to "ignite" the

matter (146). It seems to me that Harvey, frustrated by his lack of empirical evidence to explain the god-like male contribution to reproduction, Platonizes, or idealizes invisible "male seed" which in turn enhances its value beyond that of the base "menstrual matter" (and embryo) visible to his naked eye. "Or," as Thomas Laqueur writes, "in a metaphor even more evocative of the Word, of the Logos 'informing' the world, it is like the formation of a conception in the brain" (147).[88] As Laqueur goes on to explain, Harvey's imagery becomes increasingly "complex," since in the absence of "ocular proof," he is forced to back away from the Aristotelian primacy of the sperm and instead move toward a reimagining of the female, rather than the male, brain as the artistic "instrument of conception" (147). Perdita, no doubt, would have approved of Harvey's more symbiotic melding of art and matter within the female/feminine.

Paulina, too, welds art and nature in the female/feminine sense when she concretizes Perdita's at times metaphysical argument into the monumentalized Hermione in the final act of the play. As I mentioned earlier, even Leontes appears to have come under the sway of matriarch Paulina in the intervening sixteen years. Her authority can be at least partly attributed to her advanced age. As Patricia Crawford writes: "Indeed, it was in old age, especially as grandmothers, that wealthier women enjoyed most social respect" (26).

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[88] G. Wilson Knight relies on the same metaphor when he writes of "art" in the Shakespearean Romance as "an extroverted expression of the creative imagination, which, when introverted, becomes a religion" (22-3). Extrapolating from this metaphor, Knight revisions "the poetic Logos as animated thought--the Word made Flesh" (79). Based on the above, Harvey's struggle to concretize the invisible (and therefore spiritual) male contribution to the generative process, and Knight's suggestion that it is the introversion of the extroverted phallic Word that spiritualizes poetry both ironize the long-held belief that poetic incarnation, was mainly, if not exclusive male/masculine.

It would not be a stretch to assume that one, at least, of Paulina's three daughters, now aged approximately 27, 25 and 21 have made her a grandmother. And since, as Crawford has documented, "at the upper levels of society, girls married at around 20 in the late sixteenth century," we can surmise that Hermione was likely at least 27 when she "died". Paulina considerably older.[89] Also, it would seem that Paulina and Hermione both have moved beyond the years of fertility, since early modern women entered menopause by approximately age 40.[90] I would suggest that a good part of Paulina's authority rests in her stage of the female life-cycle: widowed grandmother. According to Crawford maternal authority could and often would "be used beyond the household to justify intervention in the wider world" (29). Paulina's interventionist authority obviously extends beyond her immediate household.

Overriding the objections of his Lords, Dion and Cleomenes, Paulina extracts a promise from the repentant Leontes not to remarry without her permission. He then further succumbs to her rule when he agrees to let Paulina choose his new queen, even though Paulina promises that "she will not be as young/As was your former" (5.1.79). Indeed, the "new" queen, whom Paulina unveils for Leontes at her home is not so young as his "old." Like Cleopatra, she is "wrinkled deep in time." Says Leontes:

> Chide me, dear stone, that I may say indeed
> Thou art Hermione; or rather, thou art she
> In thy not chiding: for she was as tender

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[89] Poorer women married later, at approximately 25 (Maclaren 65).

[90] Maclaren 65.

As infancy and grace. But yet, Paulina,

Hermione was not so much wrinkled, nothing

So aged as this seems. (5.3.24-29)

Paulina carefully orchestrates Hermione's slow regeneration until, as she steps down from her pedestal, "dear Life"--nature--fuses with and animates Paulina's art, thereby "redeem[ing]" Leontes (104); like Perdita's garden, Leontes' and Hermione's restoration and rebirth serve as a metaphor for the literal regenerative power of female/feminine art and nature. Stunned by this miraculous turn of events, Leontes hesitates. Happy though he is to have her back, he is less than delighted with Hermione's unexpectedly aged appearance and for both reasons requires Paulina's prodding. The process of wooing, wedding and power often reverses itself in age: "When she was young you woo'd her," Paulina chides, "now, in age,/Is she become the suitor?" (108-9). Well beyond their childbearing years, Hermione and Paulina are now less "suitable" to male desire. And yet, as may be more typical, neither becomes the suitor as the play draws to a close. Hermione has just been wooed anew, listening as a silent statue to Leontes' lamentations and expressions of love, and she embraces him in turn. Paulina is provided by Leontes with a new husband, Camillo, who, like her first husband Antigonus, has acted in concert with the martrifocal to circumvent patriarchal temper. Patriarchy is restored, perhaps, but only in a very limited fashion. Florizel, Leontes' successor, is a son-in-law, not a son, and one who has demonstrated that he, too, is willing to forgo the exigencies of patriarchal succession if they require him to relinquish Perdita. And it is Paulina to whom Leontes turns in the final line of the play, asking her to "Lead us hence" (152). Paulina's

leadership has proven much more effective than that of patriarchy.

Central to this more equal balance of power is Hermione's total, and Paulina's virtual absence from patriarchal culture for approximately sixteen years. It is my argument that this long withdrawal is a retributive substitution for the shorter retreat mandated by the rites/rights of the maternal. As Adrian Wilson has noted, "[t]he effect of the lying-in month was to withdraw from the husband two of the customary fruits of marriage: his wife's physical labour and her sexual services" (87). Wilson continues:

> Thus, the ceremony of childbirth inverted the normal pattern of conjugal relations: the wife's bodily energies and sexualities, now, for the space of "the month," belonged to her; what marriage had taken away from her, the ceremony of childbirth temporarily restored. This makes intelligible the fact that the ceremony was a collective female event. The presence of other women may have served to police the lying-in--to ensure that the husband respected the norms. More generally, the immersion of the mother in female collectivity elegantly inverted the central feature in patriarchy, namely its basis in individual male property. (87)

Paulina's and Hermione's sixteen-year extension of Hermione's "lying-in" may well be a response to Leontes' refusal to respect the norms of the rites/rights of this ceremony. Moreover, their prolongation of the temporary inversion of power inherent in this collective female event is so well sustained and so well succeeds in altering conjugal relations that the restoration of the patriarchy of Act I is no longer a possibility.

Much critical controversy surrounds the issue of the growing or waning empowerment of women in the early modern period. What has been written can, in the

main, be divided into two camps: on the one hand, we find those who find an increasing empowerment of women which can be correlated with and is reflected in Shakespeare's plays.[91] Others in this camp locate women's waxing empowerment in their active involvement in any number of inchoate religious sects.[92] On the other hand we find those who feel that any notion of the Renaissance as a "paradise for women" is a misnomer.[93] The reason for the inconsistency may lie in the contradictions exposed by social historians examining diachronically a number of women's lives.

Because for every small, however ambivalent gain for early modern women, there seems to be a corresponding loss. Once such crucial loss was the diminution of female control over the birthing process, as midwives and female collectivity in darkened lying-in chambers were increasingly displaced by the emergent male medical establishment. The midwife's place of primacy and power, based solely on tradition, was eroded by the "increasing scientific sophistication of trained physicians," whose ranks excluded women from training and practice (Smith 109). As the "professionalization" of medicine progressed in the seventeenth century, physicians and surgeons "attemp[ed] to squash competition from women by applying monopolistic privileges granted by charter while they yet lacked the professional skills to justify exclusive privileges" (109). Before too

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[91] See Dusinberre for what Linda Fitz calls a treatment of Shakespeare's "thoroughgoing feminism" (1).

[92] See Keith Thomas's essay, "Women and the Civil War Sects."

[93] See, for instance, Joan Kelly's Women, History and Theory, Linda Fitz's, "'What Says the Married Woman?' Marriage Theory and Feminism in the English Renaissance," and Lisa Jardine's Still Harping on Daughters.

long, matrifocal cadres like the one protecting Hermione and her infant in The Winter's Tale would be dispersed.

In addition, the "semi-divine" meaning attached to romantic love in the Renaissance becomes complicated in the early seventeenth century by a further development: "the romantic idea descends from fancy to actuality; it becomes practical, and therefore moral, in the ethic of marriage" (Knight 79). I am not altogether sure "descends" is the proper word; nevertheless, The Winter's Tale does indeed entail such a move to practicality. As Patricia Gourley writes, "femaleness is a theme of major importance in the play" (375). Yes, but. More than the spiritualization, deification and/or monumentalization of women--all of which, each in their own ways best serve the interests of patriarchy, not women--is at work here. It is just those "practical" aspects behind the seventeenth century understanding of conception and childbirth at the heart of The Winter's Tale which are, in large part, responsible for what makes events in the play seem so "miraculous." Though the literal birth of Hermione's daughter is usually read as peripheral to the central metaphor of Leontes' rebirth, reading the metaphorical reinvigoration as peripheral to the central literalism of birth does much to close the gap of silence in the play.

Chapter Three

Wormwood: Psychic Anxiety and the Difference It Makes for Readings of Hamlet

Since Freud and Ernest Jones, at least, psychoanalytic readings of Hamlet have proliferated at what some critics would call an alarming pace. Most of these "Freudian" readings focus on the centrality of the so-called Oedipal triangle in the play. But *which* Oedipal triangle? Hamlet, his father and Gertrude? Hamlet, Claudius and Gertrude? The very nature--if not de-naturalization--of the triangle often becomes the bone of contention. Configured, only to be deconfigured and eventually reconfigured, the Oedipal triangle in this play appears to be as protean as the camel-weasel-whale-shaped cloud pointed out to Polonius by Hamlet (3.2.383-88). And yet, as I intend to demonstrate in this chapter, the Oedipal "triangle" is in fact rather polymorphously perverse, capable of shape-shifting which exceeds and often redraws the boundaries of its linear limits.

A full rehearsal of the wealth of Oedipal readings of this play, combined with comments on their intertextuality and a complete discussion of their many moments of convergence and divergence, is, however, beyond the scope of this essay. Rhetorically, the task represents a strategic nightmare of sorts, so vast is the body of this scholarship, so diverse in form and psychoanalytic provenance--Freudian, post-Freudian; Kleinian, post-Kleinian; Lacanian, post-Lacanian (just to name six major schools of thought in dialogue with one another). My issues with and answers to many, if not most, will, I trust, become apparent as my argument proceeds. For now, I need to turn to another methodological issue in need of address.

Namely, what possible interest could the psychoanalytic controversy surrounding Hamlet hold for a critic interested in situating literary texts in their (mediated) historical context? For historicist critics long have had their special problems with any psychoanalytic approach to this play, including Janet Adelman's ground breaking blend of the psychoanalytic and the historical, Suffocating Mothers. They argue, often persuasively, and contra Sophocles, that a personality theory emanating from late nineteenth-century Vienna has no business being superimposed on an early modern play text. Stephen Greenblatt, for one, expresses his reservations about the combination most emphatically:

> An experience recurs in the study of Renaissance literature and culture: an image or text seems to invite, even to demand, a psychoanalytic approach and yet turns out to baffle or elude that approach....[T]he mingled invitation and denial has a more historical dimension; the bafflement of psychoanalytic interpretation by Renaissance culture is evident as early as Freud's own suggestive but deeply inadequate attempts to explicate the art of Leonardo, Michelangelo, and Shakespeare. The problem, I suggest, is that psychoanalysis is at once the fulfillment and effacement of specifically Renaissance insights: psychoanalysis is, in more than one sense, the end of the Renaissance." (Learning to Curse 131)

I differ from Greenblatt on two scores. First, I believe the inadequacy of Freud's interpretation of Shakespeare lies in his methodology rather than his theory *per se*. Second, since the psychoanalytic is so deeply dependent upon the symbolic, I believe that historicizing "specifically Renaissance insights" in a psychoanalytic framework

demonstrates that psychoanalysis does not signal the end of the Renaissance.[94] Over and above failing to adhere to Frederic Jameson's dictum to always historicize, the psychoanalytic approach, Greenblatt and others contend, suffers from the weakness (a weakness acknowledged even by critics of the psychoanalytic community) of ascribing, to borrow Avi Erlich's terminology, "secrets of the unconscious" to a fictional literary character. Erlich circumvents this difficulty by insisting that "all fantasies of the play, Hamlet's as well as other characters', [are] generated from a single nexus of conflict that we can identify more or less as Shakespeare's" (13). I agree with this contention-- if only in light of the qualification "more or less"--with reservations. If I sometimes, like Erlich, refer to "something suspect like 'Hamlet's unconscious fantasies'" I hope my reader too will "recognize this as...shorthand for 'the unconscious fantasies with which Shakespeare has endowed Hamlet'" (14). But my agreement with Erlich's second statement is limited, in the first place, by the recognition that identifying a "single nexus of conflict" which can be identified "more or less as Shakespeare's" is something very different from locating conflict in unconscious fantasies *with which Shakespeare has endowed Hamlet*. Second, the "single nexus of conflict" Erlich speaks of--Shakespeare--is actually composed of a complex of conflict largely derived from the culture.

Unconscious fantasies may or may not cause conflict in an individual. More

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[94]This latter concern of Greenblatt's combines a curiously (for a new historicist) Hegelian reluctance to apply a late nineteenth-century Viennese theory to an early modern text and/or context with an, again, curious assertion that "specifically Renaissance insights" extend to and end with the advent of psychoanalysis in the late nineteenth century. Both insights display a tendency towards periodization, even if somewhat unorthodox, which I find specious.

important, perhaps, unconscious fantasies and the conflict that may or may not arise as a result of their latent or manifest presence, as John Brenkman has shown, are cultural constructs in need of historicization. Unconscious fantasies are likely the products of a specific socio-cultural environment, mediated, that is, by and through historical locality.[95] Unconscious fantasies, and/or the conflicts that may or may not arise from these fantasies, therefore, have both a *social genesis* and a *symbolic genealogy* in need of historicization (Brenkman 172).

What Greenblatt calls the "bafflement of psychoanalytic interpretation by Renaissance culture," then, is not so much a by-product of cultural difference, or the replacement of specifically Renaissance insights with specifically Victorian insights, as it is a failure of methodology. Adequate historicization of the social genesis and the symbolic genealogy of these constructs has been hampered by what I referred to above as "Freud's methodology"--though as Erlich's statements prove, Freud is far from alone in employing

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[95] Lear's statement that he is suffering from "the mother" and its relationship toAdelman's thesis regarding "suffocating mothers" in Shakespeare's drama are related and are informed by a specific historical context. Gynecological tracts, linked historically to Albertus Magnus' late thirteenth or early fourteenth-century *De secretis mulierum*, describe a female "hysteria" caused by the womb's migration from its proper place to the throat, resulting in suffocation. This "disease" was most commonly suffered by young, menstruating women not yet sexually active, and the recommended cure was (hetero)sexual activity, masturbation, or (fe)manual manipulation of the vulva by a midwife and the application of heat. Note that the malady becomes what I have labeled a psychoanalytic construct in that the "pathology"--historically shown to be specious--suffered by empty-wombed women is then turned into a "type" of woman, and not a young, childless woman, but a *mother* who suffocates, rather than one suffocated. Notice also that once the construct is in place it then becomes transferable as well to a man, and an old man at that, but only by virtue of his "feminization" and "infantilization" brought about by his loss of power. Thus, Lear's illness itself is a cultural construct, and his suffering with it historically situated in a very specific locale. For more on *De secretis mulierum*, see Karma Lochrie, "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" (141-7).

it. In fact, most psychoanalytic interpretation of aesthetic texts, whether literary or other forms of art, depend upon what is known as a "pathographic" approach. The pathographic approach, "Freudian" as defined by Ellen Handler Spitz, is one that "takes as its interpretive context the work of art plus whatever can be known about the artist's life and larger oeuvre. Emphasis is placed on conflict and repetition, the analysis of drives and drive derivatives, reconstruction, and the oedipal constellation.This model is equipped to address such issues as artistic creativity, the precise relations between an artist's life and work, and artistic intention and expression" (x).

But Freud's own application of his approach to Hamlet is remarkably limited: a footnote in Interpretation of Dreams; two paragraphs in Dostoevsky and Parricide; scattered references elsewhere.[96] Ernest Jones's expansion of Freud's footnote on Hamlet, Hamlet and Oedipus, however, falls mainly under the pathographic heading of Freud. In his study, Jones insists that "the appreciation of a work and an understanding of its intention are only heightened when it is related to some knowledge of its author's characteristics and to stages in his artistic development" (14). But in addition to taking

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[96] Freud's first mention of the Oedipus complex and its relationship to Hamlet occurs in a footnote in The Interpretation of Dreams (1900), which was not elevated into text until the 1934 edition of the same. Further (brief) discussions occur in "Psychopathic Characters on the Stage" (1905-6), and in a letter to Wilhelm Fleiss dated October 15, 1897. Many critics, Harold Bloom among them, take a pathographic approach to the timing of Freud's interest in and preoccupation with Hamlet's Oedipal difficulties noting that Hamlet was written by Shakespeare shortly after the death of his father, and following upon the death of his similarly named son, Hamnet; likewise, Freud's revisions to his theories predicated upon Oedipal conflict are inscribed shortly after the death of his own father. For more on the nature of these imbrications, see Harold Bloom, "Freud: A Shakespearean Reading," in The Western Canon: The Books and School of Ages (371-94).

into account that "[a]n artist has an unconscious mind as well as a conscious one" (a point I earlier was making in reverse in response to Erlich), Jones also notices that the drama differs from other artistic modalities, such as sculpture and painting, in that *dramatic characters* form a large portion of the work of art. And "we are asked to believe that [these dramatic characters] are living persons; indeed, the dramatist's success is largely measured by this criterion, one in which Shakespeare was superbly pre-eminent" (19). Hence, Jones, in his pathographic analysis of Hamlet, "pretends that Hamlet was a living person" while "far from forgetting that he was a figment of Shakespeare's mind" and thus, "go[es] on to consider the relation of this particular imaginative creation to the personality of Shakespeare himself" (22).

The pathographic methodology espoused by Jones and Freud is remarkably different from the mode employed by Meredith Skura. Skura's theoretical base expands and contracts the method used by pathographers. Her theory expands pathography to include ego psychology, "which analyzes the relatively autonomous functions of the ego, with its organized and stable patterns of defense and adaptation" (Spitz xi). But it contracts pathography by refusing to take into account biographical material pertaining to the artist. In the so-called psychoanalysis of the autonomous text, which correlates with and was influenced by New Criticism, "one is not permitted to analyze invented characters as if they possessed minds of their own and life histories extending beyond what is given in the text" (102). Instead, one looks for a proliferation of fantasy within the text, and a simultaneous abundance of interpretive possibilities, for example:

Is Hamlet taking Hamlet senior's place and repeating Claudius' crime, or is he

> punishing Claudius and undoing Claudius' crime? Is brother (Claudius) pouring poison into his brother's (the older Hamlet's) ear, as in the play-within-a-play? Or is nephew (Hamlet) pouring poison into his uncle's (Claudius') ear as in the dumb show? Or is the son pouring poison in his father's ear, if we short-circuit the two accounts? (97)

But Skura doesn't speak of the *process* by which these fantasies are formed, and since it is beyond the purview of her theory, she does not look for cultural cues informing the "fantasies" within the bounds of the text. Her point, nevertheless, is one I will return to at the end of this essay: proliferation of meaning does make critical closure, if not textual closure virtually impossible.

A third method employed in the psychoanalytic reading of texts includes the work as well as its audience. This method relies on object relations theory, "with its emphasis on self and other, themes of fusion and separation, loss and reparation," as a theoretical base (Spitz xi). Lacan, and those following him, have interpreted the play from a strict object relations standpoint, in other words, confining the analysis of object relations scrutinized to those among the characters within the play text, especially that of Hamlet with his mother. But this method should expand to include the experience and the response of the audience; it shares some similarities with reader response criticism. It is a method particularly useful to critics of drama interested in situating the drama within a cultural context shared to some extent by audience members at a particular historical moment.

There is no reason why each of these methods need remain discrete. When aspects of each are combined, each can be used as a methodology supplementary to the others.

Though a pathographic approach is implicit in my analysis of Hamlet, since I believe Shakespeare's conscious and unconscious fantasies shape and inform his play text, my approach mainly will combine aspects of the autonomous text method with an expansion outward into the culture. Taking the lead of John Brenkman, I want to situate historically Oedipal configurations operative at the moment when William Shakespeare wrote his play. That is to say, the representations governing and informing Oedipal conflict are inconstant. They defy generic classification. Viewed diachronically, instead, representational matter (in this case, *mater*, in particular) resonates with associations historically specific. My intention, then, is to localize Hamlet's civilization and its discontents as figured through his mother, Gertrude.

The tripartite structure of the Oedipal triangle dictates the involvement of three players: a mother, a father and a son.[97] That the relationship need not be that of a

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[97] A review of Freud's entire corpus reveals misgivings about the application of his Oedipal theory of development to female children almost from the outset of the articulation of his theory. At first Freud confined the expression of his reservations to a sentence, or at most a couple of paragraphs--a point to which he would return later, though he never did. This pivotal point turned on Freud's acceptance, and later rejection of his "seduction theory." Though most of Freud's early patients were female (c.f. Studies in Hysteria [1895]), and though most complained of being sexually abused by close male relatives, at about the same time Freud's attention turned to the neuroses of men (c.f. the Rat Man [1910]), Freud decided that the women he had analyzed had less than reliable memories. He instead theorized that the female analysands had fantasies of sexual relationships with their fathers, rather than the experience of real abuse. This "wish fulfillment" version of events in the childhoods of women enabled Freud to "universalize" his theory to apply to men as well as women. In other words, both male and female children fantasize about having sex with their parent of the opposite sex, though few ever get to consummate the relationship. This reformulation, of course, begs the question of the feasibility of potential child/parent sexual relations, i.e. the mechanics of a mother sexually "forcing herself" upon a young son. Perhaps recognizing the above flaw, at about the same

biological father and son has been documented by critics convincingly positing Claudius as the "father" figure in Hamlet's Oedipal conflict. Freud and Jones, in fact, were the first to do so.[98] Other critics quickly followed suit. James Clark Maloney and Lawrence Rockelein, for instance, enumerate Hamlet's many reasons for identity/rivalry with and resentment for his stepfather Claudius, and find much in the way of psychological motivation and justification for Hamlet's revenge on his corrupt father-figure.[99] Though it took a while, critics did eventually shift their attention from the Claudius/Hamlet dyad to that of Hamlet and his father. K.R. Eissler, in 1971, called attention to Hamlet's father figures in general, and to Hamlet's biological father in particular.[100] Avi Erlich, in turn, argues convincingly for an Oedipal emphasis on Hamlet Sr.[101] Finally, a few critics noticed

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time as the death of his father, Freud, in a letter to Fleiss, "abandoned" his seduction theory. He held off publicly doing so, though, for some time after, realizing that the abandonment of the theory poked holes in the universalizing of the Oedipal experience for children of both sexes. His later essays on women try (unsuccessfully so far as most feminists are concerned) to resolve his irresolution regarding Oedipal conflict as experienced by female children. For an all too brief, but very clear synopsis of these developments, see Brenkman (8).

[98] See Freud, Interpretation of Dreams (SE IV 264-66) and Jones Hamlet and Oedipus (99-100).

[99] Maloney and Rockelein, "A New Interpretation of Hamlet."

[100] Eissler according to Erlich: "The Ghost, we learn, was an absolute ideal; Polonius is a dotard; Fortinbras was killed in a duel; Fortinbras' brother is sick and bedridden; Claudius is a criminal. The five men of the older generation thus represent various kinds of fathers that sons may have: ideal, senile, dead, sick and criminal" (Erlich 25).

[101] I applaud Erlich's turn in the critical history of this play but I take exception to his thesis that Hamlet Sr.'s importance as the Oedipal father resides in his absentness, and as a corollary to that absentness, his weakness. Based on the play text, it is difficult to theorize Hamlet Sr. as overly absent or weak. There may be strong psychoanalytical basis for this argument in Hamlet's behavior, but the play text does not adequately support such

the importance of the maternal representation in the play, as figured through Gertrude and. at times. Ophelia.[102] So far, though, the configuration of the Oedipal event remained limited to. or delimited by, three-term triangulation.

Post-Lacanian events took yet another turn. Lacan--for reasons still largely beyond me--became, in the early 1980's, the "darling" of feminist critics and theorists. Encouraged by his turn to and new emphasis on "the feminine," and his formulation of a "feminine sexuality," distinct from, and contrary to Freud's limited and largely unsuccessful theorizing of the same, French and American feminists alike jumped on his bandwagon.[103] Never mind that Lacan's most important signifier is the "phallus"--distinct from, but nevertheless inextricably linked to, the penis--resonating with symbolic authority as "begetter, name-giver and law-giver," to name just a few phallic powers. Never mind too that Lacan's theorizing is concerned mainly with the male maturation process. Fortunately, beyond substantiating Lacan's androcentrism, neither of my reservations regarding Lacan's development theory have much of a bearing on my argument here. More important, for my purposes, is that Lacan's reconfiguration of familial structure did

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suppositions regarding Hamlet Sr.

[102] These interpretations include Frederick Wertham's stress on matricidal impulses in the play (1941); and Norman Holland's reading of the same (1966). Both conclude that Hamlet's matricidal inclinations have a bearing on his repudiation of Ophelia, a point I will return to.

[103] Lacan's most cited work in this regard are his lectures Feminine Sexuality edited by Jacqueline Rose and Juliet Mitchell. In my view, Lacan's breakthroughs are limited, if not sorely taxed by his essentialism, by his tendency to universalize family experience in terms of the bourgeois nuclear family, and by his tendency to over evaluate, to the point of pathology, the role of the mother. In Lacanian terms, the father's familial role is primarily symbolic.

contain an important development for psychoanalytic readings of Hamlet. The usual triadic Oedipal formation acquires what John Brenkman calls a "fourth term":

> The Oedipal triangle I--mother--father is transformed into a five-term structure....[T]he consequences of Lacan's notion [is] that the father appears twice in the individual myth, as the symbolic father invested with authority and as the real-life father with whom the son identifies. The real-life father is, in Lacan's phrase, the 4th term whose presence complicates the Oedipal triangle because of its discord with the symbolic father, the traditional 3rd term. (10)

Lacan's reading of Hamlet is based primarily on Freud's metapsychological essay, "Mourning and Melancholia" (1917). During seven lectures on "Desire and Its Interpretation" between March 4 and April 29, 1959, Lacan argued that Hamlet's unsuccessful resolution of his Oedipal conflict resulted in a regression to an early narcissistic state, and an inability to turn his desire for an object from his mother to others. Lacan's is a classical object relations approach, though it ignores the aesthetic ramifications of his theory, namely, the relationship and response of audience to play. Moreover, as Jonathan Scott Lee stresses in his acute reading of Lacan's very difficult and often prolix lectures, "the desire revealed here 'is far from being [Hamlet's] own. It is not his desire for his mother; it is the desire of his mother.'" (qtd . Lee 113). In order to account for Gertrude's desire Hamlet must split his "father" in two: Claudius as "real-life" father and Hamlet Sr. as an idealized symbolic father. He begins to construct the contrast between his symbolic father and his real-life father early in the play:

> So excellent a king, that was to this

Hyperion to a satyr, so loving to my mother

That he might not beteem the winds of heaven

Visit her face too roughly. (1.2.139-42)

As Marjorie Garber has noticed, the symbolic father constructed by Hamlet takes on all the attributes enumerated by Lacan: law-giver, begetter, name-giver.[104] But as Janet Adelman has argued, Hamlet's distinction between his two father figures is ambiguous, at best. Required in youth to form his own identity by identifying with a "true" father figure, rather than a "false" one, Hamlet needs to differentiate not only his father from Claudius, but also his mother's desire for his father from his mother's desire for his brother. Hamlet's fathers threaten to "collapse" into one another as a consequence of Gertrude's desire. She refuses to reflect Hamlet's image of his ideal father by inadequately mourning his death. Thus Hamlet's idealized father borders on effacement, and Hamlet teeter-totters under the psychic load of differentiating between his fathers through memory--"Remember me." Hamlet's struggle, in Adelman's Lacanian formulation of his Oedipal conflict resides in his attempt to free his masculine identity from its origins in his mother's (sexually) contaminated body. What contaminates Gertrude's maternal body, in this case, are her sexual relations with Claudius, her desire for Claudius. As Adelman puts it:

> [Gertrude's] failure of memory--registered in her undiscriminating sexuality--in effect defines Hamlet's task in relation to his father as a task of memory: as she forgets, he inherits the burden of differentiating, of idealizing, and making static the past; hence the ghost's insistence on remembering (1.5.33, 91), and the degree

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[104] Garber, Shakespeare's Ghost Writers (131).

to which Hamlet registers his failure to avenge his father as a failure of memory (4.4.40). (13)

Again, Hamlet's desire for Gertrude is less a problem than is her desire of Claudius. And, by extension, how perfect an idealized father can Hamlet Sr. be if Gertrude felt the same sexual desire for him as she does for Claudius? Notice of Lacan's 4th term leaves Hamlet with what Adelman calls "a triangulated choice between two fathers" (12). Here is an especially acute example of what Brenkman posits as the discord between the real-life father and the symbolic father.

Brenkman then advances the argument one giant-step further:

> I argue that the mother, too, is a bifurcated figure. The mother as Oedipal theory always represents her--revered, tabooed, degraded--is in fact a symbolic figure fabricated in the discourse of male fantasy and patriarchal culture. She is the second term of the I--mother--father triangle. Hidden behind this cultural representation is the real-life mother, the 5th term, a theoretical blank space in Freud and Lacan, the woman who actually raises the child. (11)

My last chapter was devoted to filling in the theoretical blank space, the cultural (mis)representation of a real-life mother--Hermione. In my adaptation of Brenkman's adaptation of Freud and Lacan, Hermione, as "real life mother" embodies one "literal" representation of a mid-life woman. To put it slightly differently, I take Hermione literally--at her word as articulated in speech regarding Leontes' violation of her maternal rites/rights. For the most part here, I mean to turn my attention to a figurative representation of a historically located mid-life woman. To clarify: I want to express, as

fully as possible. an early modern discourse of male fantasy and patriarchal culture in order to unravel Gertrude's fabrication as an early seventeenth-century symbolic figure--revered. tabooed, and degraded by her son. In what manner or manners, and by whom is the symbolic mother figured at this point in Renaissance culture? In what ways do these figurations inform Hamlet's Oedipal anxieties? Even more important, perhaps, how do Hamlet's Oedipal anxieties inform early modern symbolic figurations of women and what do these anxieties reveal about the mature female's figurative capability to inform disruptions in the patriarchal continuum? The bulk of this chapter is dedicated to formulating speculative "answers" to these questions, but first some small attention to Hamlet's "real-life" mother.

For there is a "real-life" mother in Hamlet--Gertrude. She doesn't say much, and she performs only one action of consequence outside the frame of the play: she marries her husband's brother soon after his death. Part of the trouble with readings of Gertrude is that the "real-life" mother here--Brenkman's 5th Term-- has been conflated with the second term in the I--mother--father triad--the symbolic mother. That the real-life mother in this play has been habitually ignored, dismissed, a theoretical blank space for so many for so long underscores how completely potent figurations of women can overshadow, if not eclipse, the "real" woman.

In 1990, Carolyn Heilbrun complained that

> The character of Hamlet's mother has not received the specific critical attention it deserves....Indeed, Freud and Jones see her, the object of Hamlet's Oedipus complex, as central to the motivation of the play. But the critics, with no exception

> that I have been able to find, have accepted Hamlet's word "frailty" as applying to her whole personality, and have seen in her not one weakness, or passion in the Elizabethan sense, but a character of which weakness and lack of depth and vigorous intelligence are the entire explanation. (9-10)

Heilbrun goes on to enumerate more than a few examples of critics who read Gertrude as "shallow and feminine in the pejorative sense of the word: incapable of any sustained rational process, superficial and flighty" (11).[105] Adelman likewise reads Gertrude as "muddled, fallible, fully human," unable to speak clearly, relatively "closed" to the audience (16). But by paying close attention to the few words Gertrude does actually speak in the play (rather than those addressed to or spoken about her), Heilbrun arrives at the contrary conclusion that Shakespeare's Gertrude is "pithy of speech," and "if not profound...never silly" with a "talent for getting to the essence" of things rather quickly. Of course she is right. Heilbrun was the first to notice that there is a "real-life" mother in Gertrude distinct and very different from Freud's and Jones's symbolic object of Hamlet's Oedipus complex so "central to the motivation of the play."

With the exception of the famous closet scene, which I will treat in more depth later in this essay, Hamlet's real-life mother is far from muddled; in fact, as Heilbrun has noticed, she speaks rather clearly. And if her clear speech is "unheard," misprized or twisted by her preoccupied, and relatively "closed," son, that situation need not mandate her closure to the audience as well. She first speaks in 1.2, a concerned mother asking her

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[105] Heilbrun numbers among such critics A.C. Bradley, Harley Granville-Baker, Dover Wilson and Lily B. Campbell (10-12)

son to stop mourning his "noble" father, since it is "common" that "all lives must die,/Passing through nature to eternity"--a fairly intelligent and balanced view of life and death, unless one resents her refusal to fixate on death to the exclusion of life (71-2). Hamlet responds by playing on her use of the word "common" to mean "ignoble," rather than Gertrude's intended "shared by all," but he does so in a way indicating simple *agreement* with her statement ("Ay, madam, it is common" [74]), and Gertrude, unaware of the unexpected irony in Hamlet's apparently unexceptional response, yet confounded by his contrarily exceptional behavior and appearance, probes further: "If it be,/Why seems so particular with thee?" (75). Does Gertrude's failure to read Hamlet's misprision indicate a lack of intelligence and/or a lack of understanding of her son? Far from it. This first exchange between Hamlet and his mother shows, rather, that Gertrude is not accustomed to having her words twisted by her son; that she does not expect, and therefore does not read, any disrespectful intent in his speech; that she observes carefully and notes the dissonance between Hamlet's apparently innocuous response and his appearance and behavior as cause for concern.

What else can we glean about Hamlet's "real life" mother from her own speech in the play? She prays, and the intention of her prayers is that her son remain with her in Denmark (1.2.118-9). Her son talks to her about his friends, and she asks those friends to spend some time with him in Denmark in the hope that the visit will improve her son's spirits (2.2. 19-26, 35). While everyone else hypothesizes about and plans ways to "sift" the essence of Hamlet's "distemper," Gertrude understands perfectly her son's distress: "I doubt it is no other but the main,/His father's death and our o'er hasty marriage" (2.2.56).

When Polonius informs Gertrude about Hamlet's intensifying "madness," his mother requests directness in the form of "[m]ore matter with less art" (95); when Polonius' theory finally is expounded, she intelligently admits its plausibility, but remains unconvinced. She knows her son's habits; for example, he walks for hours at a time "in the lobby" (161). Unable to get a straight answer from her son, she asks his friends how Hamlet is responding to them and what they have been doing to relieve his difficulty (3.1). She hopes, against her better judgment, that Hamlet is indeed lovesick over Ophelia (3.1.38-41). She thinks the Player Queen overdoes her declaration never to remarry if widowed (of course, the Player Queen's husband is still very much alive) (3.2.225). She expresses surprise when her son speaks to her rudely and demands an account ("Have you forgot me?" [3.4.14]). She reports the murder of Polonius to her husband and says Hamlet repents it (4.1.27). After first refusing to see Ophelia, she treats her with compassion and regret over her condition (4.5.27). She regretfully but articulately and at times poetically informs Laertes that his sister Ophelia has drowned (4.7.165-81). She mourns Ophelia, saying that she hoped Ophelia would be her son's wife, and she tries to prevent Hamlet from disrupting Ophelia's already maimed burial rites and Laertes from harming Hamlet (5.1). She cheers and ministers to her son at the duel, and tries to protect her son against the poison cup (5.2).

Concerned, helpful, knowledgeable about her son's friends and habits and love for Ophelia, secure (until the closet scene) in her son's esteem, practical, protective, forgiving and aware that her own actions have the potential for disrupting her son's emotional equilibrium (a sign of their "real-life" attachment as well as an indication of the strength

of Hamlet's Oedipal fantasies which Gertrude seems not to have considered), there is nothing amiss in Gertrude's parenting of her son, beyond her underestimation of her son's Oedipal attachment to her. In light of Gertrude's quasi-hopeful acceptance of Polonius' theory that his daughter is the root cause of Hamlet's distemper, and considering her comment that she hoped Hamlet would marry Ophelia, there is reason to conjecture that "real-life" Gertrude had every reason to believe, first, that she had been replaced as her son's object by Ophelia and, second, that she accepts and approves of that "healthy" replacement. Take the Ghost out of the equation, and Hamlet's reaction to his mother's remarriage does appear to be lacking in an objective correlative. Undo Gertrude's one action performed outside the frame of the play (her abrupt remarriage to her former husband's brother) and her relationship to her son likely would have continued as the above signs in the play indicate: mutually respectful, supportive, protective, communicative.

But that one action obliterates Hamlet's vision of his "real-life" mother, and substitutes instead a symbolic mother fraught with Oedipal fantasies bound to the culture at large in England at this particular moment in time. That Hamlet should have such a violent reaction to his mother's remarriage surprises critics who insist that Hamlet is far too old to revisit Oedipal conflict--a point of view Gertrude seems to share as well. Crucially, one of the more important innovations in John Brenkman's re-vision of the Oedipal event is his realization that the Oedipal conflict is chronologically a top-down, rather than bottom-up, experience for men. In other words, one of Brenkman's most important insights is that the knowledge needed to experience Oedipal conflict cannot

possibly be acquired by male children as early as many theorists, including Freud himself, supposed. The infantile Oedipal experience, in fact, mirrors one that Freud posits for adult males for whom Oedipal conflict is never resolved. In "A Special Kind of Object Choice Made by Men," Freud enumerates several conditions for a type of neurosis common in adult men, the first of which is always present: a) that there be an injured third party; b) that the woman in question be in some sort of state of bad repute; c) that she be held in high esteem and d) that she be in need of rescue. Needless to say, Hamlet's relationship with Gertrude meets all of these conditions. Oddly, Freud insists that in the infantile manifestation of the Oedipus complex all of these factors are present as well. For, in Freud's formulation, the infant sees his father as a rival, while at the same time acknowledging that his father is "an inseparable part of his mother's essence" (Brenkman 169)--thus the injured third party, the infant himself. Moreover, it goes without saying that the infant holds his mother in the highest esteem. Thus, the male infant is, according to Freud, like Hamlet in that he sees his mother as a sexual being (of bad repute), engaged in a relationship which injures himself (the third party), and from which she is in need of rescue, since she was held in such high esteem prior to her "fall."

But, as Brenkman notices, understanding of the criteria bad repute and woman in need of rescue is hard to attribute to a pre-adolescent boy. These two criteria are dependent on knowledge acquired as the male adolescent advances into socialized, heterosexual adulthood. Brenkman remains cautious about assigning these realizations to any particular moment in the male maturation process, in other words, to a specific age. Rather, he suggests that the above knowing of the mother as a woman of bad repute (i.e.

sexually active, desiring) and in need of rescue (from sexual contamination), often occurs at some imprecise moment in male development when the male is "socialized into masculinity and heterosexuality," "through the process of recognizing himself in the father" (57), that is, when the male is socialized into the symbolic order of patriarchy.

Hamlet's age has long been one of the major cruces of this play. His tenure as a student, his affiance to Ophelia, his "immature" behavior (feigning madness) lead some to argue that he is in the throes of late-adolescent angst. And yet, the grave digger's remark that he has been sexton "thirty years" (5.1.164), and that the date of his acquisition of this office coincides with the very day that Hamlet Sr. "overcame Fortinbras" (146) and "young Hamlet was born" (150) seems to indicate that Hamlet is now thirty. Oedipal arguments about Hamlet's distress have long been undermined by the assumption that the conflict is finally resolved no later than late adolescence. But Brenkman's idea turns Hamlet's dilemma to a new light once again.

For certainly, no matter what his age, Hamlet represents a male undergoing his orientation into the adult world of masculinized heterosexuality. His return from Wittenburg for his father's funeral and, incidently, his mother's wedding signals an important transition in his perception of his identity and his place within the patriarchal world--heir apparent to the Danish crown, husband to Ophelia, father of future heirs to the Danish crown. Mamillius, ripped from his mother's arms and forced into the literal space of patriarchy within the court, languishes and dies. Hamlet, confronted with socialization and penetration into the figurative space of patriarchal order--Father, law-giver, begetter, name-giver--fares no better. And in both cases, the failure of male integration into the

patriarchal order hinges on violence done to women. What would seem advantageous to patriarchal consolidation--the solidification of homosocial bonds through the perpetration of violence against women--in fact signals a failure of patriarchy in both instances. The literal. domestic violence done Hermione, namely her imprisonment and trial, attenuates Leontes' patriarchal hold over his kingdom and results in a putative transfer of power to Paulina, the head of the matrifocal core which becomes paramount in the play. The violence done to Gertrude, as both literal and symbolic mother has, as we shall see, by play's end, much the same effect. In order to better understand Hamlet's violent figuration of his symbolic mother, and the group, as well as individual, psychology of an early modern audience and playwright underpinning this figuration, it is necessary first to turn to the cultural milieu from which this play emanates.

In customary Freudian readings of Oedipal conflict, the mother, after the male child's realization of the four criteria listed above, splits into two figures: the care giver of the child and the mate of the father.[106] Freudian theory pays most close attention to the

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[106] The argument that the mother is symbolically split into both madonna and whore figures is central to Freud's argument in "A Special Kind of Object Choice Made By Men." The failure to integrate the mother who is sexually active with the father and the mother who represents the madonna-like care giver in the child's imagination causes, according to Freud, a corresponding failure of integration in the male neurotic's personality. Due to the failure in imagining the mother as a loving caregiver who is sexually active, the male who is the subject of this essay (a quite common type, Freud notes) is never able to turn his attention to appropriate object choices. That is, the male of this type is never able to accept that "good" women can have sex without turning "whore." Hence, these males look for women who meet the four criteria, and enter into endless, short-lived, triangulated relationships (the third party--another man--is coincidently the "injured third party" and the one from whom the woman is in need of "rescue"--the symbolic father figure redux). (Freud passim)

mother who is the mate of the father. Object relations theorists, on the other hand, pay somewhat more attention to the mother who tends the infant. Most important, both theories split these "mothers"-- the split I refer to, of course, is the "classic" madonna/whore bifurcation.[107] It is my argument that in this point in time, the symbolization of the early seventeenth-century madonna/whore split is highly inflected by the politicization of religion in the culture. Evidenced by a series of religious "reformations"; the iconography of a female monarch about to die childless, with another religious "reformation" possibly ensuing; and the interrelationship of Elizabeth I's iconography and self-presentation to her courtiers and subjects with religious iconography. the symbolic crisis peaks in anticipation of her turn-of-the-century death.

Under Catholicism, the madonna/whore split was usually symbolized by the two Marys--the Blessed Virgin and Mary Magdalene. Under Elizabethan Protestantism, as Roy Strong among others has so capably demonstrated, the Cult of the Virgin was supplanted by the Cult of the Virgin Queen; to put it another way, in the symbolic register of the early modern imagination, the image of the Virgin Queen was superimposed over the image of the Virgin Mary. The palimpsest metaphor is apropos, since there is evidence that the image of the Virgin lingered, if only in the symbolic imagination of a culture reluctant to relinquish its attachment to this revered maternal symbolic figure. Isolated Catholic protests complained that "the Queen's birthday and Accession Day were observed with

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[107] In 2.1 of The Winter's Tale, just prior to Leontes' accusation of infidelity, the pregnant Hermione with her son in her lap represents a Pieta of sorts, especially since she is soon to sacrifice her son to Leontes' "redemption." Leontes' language when he confronts her simultaneously posits her just as vividly as "whore."

more solemnity than the great festivals of the Church. In particular, the fervent devotion to the English Virgin and contempt for the Virgin Mary" shocked (126). But for the most part, the image of the Virgin Queen eventually overshadowed the image of the Holy Virgin. Strong's study, however, centers its attention on tracing the trajectory of the ascendancy of the Cult of Elizabeth; it does little in the way of following the parallel decline of the Virgin Mary.[108]

Keith Thomas says that for even radical Protestants, well into the seventeenth century, "[v]irginity, or at least abstinence from sexual intercourse, was still a generally accepted condition of holiness" (Religion 38). The roots of this belief, as Eamon Duffy explains, go deep: "Virginity as a symbol of sacred power, a concrete realization within this world of divine spirit, has a very ancient pedigree within Christianity....What it gave to the ordinary Christian man and woman was not so much a model to imitate, something most of them never dreamt of doing, but rather a source of power to be tapped" (175).

Consequently, in late medieval England, the cult of Mary "came second only to Christ himself and towered above all the other saints" (256). Iconographic representations depicting Mary's sublime and unique power as a symbol of purity, tenderness, and protection proliferated in England, so much so that the "Joys of Mary, most commonly

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[108] Strong's powerful thesis relies mainly on close reading of Elizabethan iconography and accounts of the Queen's representation at/by ritual events such as the Accession day Tilts. The tilts were held on what had formerly been the catholic feast of St. Hugh. As Strong recounts: "Accession Day represented a development of the medieval tradition of combining a feast day of the Church with secular rejoicing. The Reformation had swept away many important Catholic feast days, above all Corpus Christi, which had been the occasion for spectacular processions and pageants organized and staged by civic and guild authorities. The rise of the Queen's Day festivities enabled these energies to be concentrated into a stream designated to glorify the monarchy and its policies" (119).

counted in England as five--Annunciation, Nativity, the Resurrection, Ascension, and her Coronation in Heaven--were familiar to every man, woman and child from their endless reproduction in carving, painting and glass" (257).[109]

When the altars were stripped in England, much of this iconography was seriously damaged or destroyed. The Injunctions of 1547 formed the basis of a "royal visitation" designed to "police" compliance to sweeping and drastic religious change. Eamon Duffy recounts one instance of enforcement in the heart of London:

> The visitation of St. Paul's commenced in the first week of September, and all the images except the Rood, Mary and John were removed. The policy was extended to St. Brides, Fleet Street and to other City churches a few days later. By mid-September the wave of image-and-window-breaking had got out of hand and the council tried to call a halt to it.... (453)

Of course, much of this imagery was "restored" during Mary's reign, only to be destroyed (or in many cases, hidden) once again after Elizabeth's accession. Even during the Marian interlude, however, the restoration of the Virgin's image to the symbolic order was accomplished on a much more limited scale. The only image now gracing many churches in Marian England was a rood, sometimes, as Duffy qualifies, "a matter of simple

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[109] Pamela Sheingorn catalogues many important iconographic representations of Mary paired with her mother Anne, as well as a number of others portraying Anne, Mary and the infant Jesus. Though never as popular as Mary herself, the cult of Saint Anne also flourished in medieval England, and like her daughter's, Anne's cult "functioned symbolically for a wide range of social groups in their cultural practices" (76). To name a few, Anne symbolically represented "the cult of family to gentry and aristocracy....a sympathetic intercessor in childbearing....and an appropriate patron to a number of crafts" (76).

economics" after destruction (563). Duffy continues, "whatever the reason, the fact was that the only representation of the Virgin in most churches now would be the weeping figure standing under the Rood, where once there might have been multiple images of Mary--the Pieta, the Mother of Mercy, Our Lady in childbed, the Madonna and Child" (563). Significant, also, is the disappearance, under Protestantism, of formerly formulaic invocations to Mary in last wills.[110] Noteworthy, too, is that the ten Articles of 1536 accept that "it is meet that [images of Christ and Our Lady] should stand" and "be esteemed" (Cressy 21); the Thirty-Nine Articles of 1563, on the other hand, make no mention of the Virgin whatsoever.

That the Christian culture in England had at one time invested heavily in Marian images and devotion is now a readily accepted truism. Less interpreted and interrogated, though, have been the ramifications of her effacement from the collective cultural psyche. Did the Virgin Queen provide an adequate substitute for the Virgin Spouse and/or Mother in early modern England? In iconographic representations, the Virgin Mary, like the Virgin Queen, is endurably ageless. In the absence of a corporeal, "literal" substitute for beatific iconographic representation of the Virgin Mary, her "eternity" was all that could register symbolically, despite the attempt at cultural effacement through substitution of images of the Virgin Queen. Elizabeth I was less blessed. So long as she was young (and virginal) the substitution seemed to work. But as she aged, despite attempts to deflect attention

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[110] Ralph Houlbrooke mentions this important detail without dating the transition any more precisely than "Protestantism brought many changes...." (30). As Duffy and Christopher Haigh make abundantly clear in their studies of the Protestant reformations, precise dating of the advent of a unified Protestant ethos is difficult, if not impossible; nevertheless, an approximation, perhaps by a decade, might have been useful here.

from her years and remain "ageless," the strategy proved less than successful. The rank-and-file Elizabethan subject had only to count on his or her fingers to number the years of Elizabeth's reign and approximate her age. Hopelessly mortal, this virgin could not possibly endure in all eternity. The time would come when a successor would rule. Without the reinstitution of the Virgin Mary or the institution of yet another Virgin Queen, the culture would be left "virgin-less."

Stephen Mullaney attests that the cultural awareness of and anxiety about Elizabeth's impending death were so heightened at the turn of the century that a variety of mourning--"proleptic mourning"--took hold in the culture as Elizabeth approached the apparent final years of her reign. Viewed from another standpoint, one perhaps even more apocalyptic for cultural signification and symbolization, the death of this mortal virgin of necessity signified the death of what was left of the Virgin cult in Tudor/Stuart culture at large. Our experience shows us that the displacement of cultural symbols is hardly noticeable, let alone terrifying, so long as an acceptable replacement intervenes, whether by design or accident. In fact, moments of psychic distress brought about by the loss of an important cultural symbol are often soothed by collective mourning and consequent monumentalization. Memorialized through monument, the culture is usually able to pass through mourning the symbol without experiencing mourning's more pathological manifestation, melancholia. The culture, pleased with itself for abiding by the unspoken injunction--Remember me--soon finds replacement symbols into which it can invest the

collective capital of symbolic efficacy.[111]

In the case of early modern England, acceptable substitute symbols for the Virgin took some time to emerge. In the interim, only the whore half of the madonna/whore dyad remained fully operative.[112] Here, too, symbolization of the "whore" in the culture had much to do with the politicization of religion. At about the same time that the Virgin Mary faded into the Virgin Queen, the apocalyptic Whore of Babylon rose to new prominence.

In an especially insightful essay, "A Whore at First Blush Seemeth Only a Woman," Claire McEachern sorts out the crisis of signification exemplified by and in the Book of Revelation, and the exegetical conundrum that crisis presented to commentators on the text.[113] Additionally, McEachern notices the semiological impact on and

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[111] For an intriguing discussion of the ways in which crowds and symbols interact with one another, and an informative and insightful linking of national identities with particular symbols, see Elias Canetti, Crowds and Power.

[112] In a reading sharing some similarities with my own, William Kerrigan states that "the virgin/whore is especially primative and vehement in English Renaissance males" and then accrues the emphasis on the whore to the spread of prostitution throughout the city of London. But he notices also that "Catholicism is denounced in the vocabulary of prostitution for its whorish devotion to religious images" (82, 83).

[113] According to Josephine Waters Bennett, Wycliff was the first to identify the Pope with the Antichrist of the Revelation, and the Whore with the Roman church. Still, early Protestants remained wary of the book, since Catholic theologians "used it to support their doctrines of purgatory and the Mass (110). Nevertheless, there followed, in the 1570's, a spate of publications supporting Bale's Image of Both Churches (1540-8), including, but not limited to: Henry Bullinger's In Apocalypsim conciones centum (translated by George Gyffard, who in 1596 wrote a volume of sermons which he dedicated to the Earl of Essex, exhorting him to "join the army on white horses which fights against the Antichrist," a reference to Revelation); a second English edition of Bullinger's Sermons upon the Apocalips (1573); and Arthur Golding's translation of Marlorate's Catholic Exposition upon the Revelation of Sainct John (1574). All references in Bennett (111). The one Roman appropriation of the Whore of Babylon I have been able to locate is Anthony Copley's A Fig for Fortune (1596). In it, the Whore of Babylon atypically represents the

relationship to representations of early modern women. Focusing on one particular exegete's commentary, John Bale's The Image of Both Churches, McEachern traces the collapse of several important binaries pertaining to and contained within the text:the literal versus the figural interpretation of the text, historical versus symbolic readings, the Whore versus the Bride of Christ, the true versus the false Church, the whore versus the woman. As McEachern's acute reading demonstrates, each binary relates to and impinges upon the others in myriad and unexpected ways.

In order to attempt a reading of the image of both churches in Revelation, Bale is forced to distinguish between ways of reading the Book, namely, literal and figural. His commentary points to a longstanding disagreement among scholars preceding and following Bale resulting in what McEachern calls "the divided tradition of Revelation exegesis itself" (252). Katharine Firth differentiates between the literal, or historical tradition of reading Revelation, with its medieval proponents, one in which "the obscure prophecies of the Book of Revelation [are viewed] as a hidden history unfolding its pattern in world events" (6), and the other, figurative tradition, exemplified by Wycliffe, in which the text is considered "an allegory acted out on an eternal plane illustrating a completed and changeless revelation of truth" (6). Among the features of the first method, according to McEachern, "is the tempting potential identification of the exegete's own moment in the narrative" which must of necessity be coupled with the difficulty of "the potential nonliterality of certain numbers as well as the inevitable opaqueness of the future itself" (252). The second, or allegorical method, by contrast, "is attractive for its

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Protestant church.

responsiveness to the intractability of the many characters to a literal apprehension, and also to the inevitably deferred structure of closure that the text insists upon" (252-3).[114]

The division between these two interpretive strategies, as McEachern states, is "inevitably schematic" and "hardly absolute." Indeed, Bale himself "has been styled an exponent of both methods" (253). Hence, Firth too finds Bale "in a compromise position in which the Apocalypse might be interpreted as a revelation of the past but when it clearly referred to the future it remained a mystery incapable of certain interpretation" (43). The indeterminacy indicates the specific historical moment, according to McEachern:

> ...[T]he literal method, in its desire for confirmatory proof or evidence through the coincidence of word and "exterior" world, will be problematic--even presumptuous--for a radically inward faith. The straddling of the threshold of the present, with one foot in the figurative and another in literal history, bespeaks a comfort denied to a reformer as sensitive as Bale to the wedge driven between the two readings by the moment of the Reformation itself. (254)

Bale's "straddling"--between England and the Continent, between true and false faith--was

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[114] Literal/historical vs. figurative/allegorical readings of Revelation are discussed in three useful essays in The Apocalypse in English Renaissance Thought and Literature, eds. C.A. Patrides and Joseph Wittreich. These three essays form the book's second unit, "The Apocalypse in Renaissance England and Europe" (74-147). Though the writers of these essays differ as to whether there is a historical progression from literal/historical to figurative/allegorical (or vice versa), as well as to the characterization of particular texts as either one or the other, or a combination of both (Book One of Spenser's Faerie Queene provides an important example), their disagreement is instructive. The impossibility of pure adherence to either "camp" in the interpretive binary opposition underscores McEachern's point that these are binaries that collapse into one another. Interesting, too, is the textual and interpretive information provided in the essays contained in the first unit of this text, "The Background" (2-73).

literal as well as figural. As was his text, Bale was only an "intermittent presence" in England. "unwelcome under Henry VIII, but with full acceptance under his son Edward, and Somerset's pro-Protestant protectorship; presumably like its author and fellow reformers, The Image once again became unwelcome under Mary" (264). Moreover, "Bale, like many other nascent reformers, was not born into the true church" (265). A former Carmelite friar, the "shared iconicity" of the "true" and "false" churches presented Bale not so much with the problem of distinguishing one church from the other, but rather with a way of moving freely between them.

That the radical indeterminacy, and resulting anxiety, of Bale as an individual and as an ideological reformer of a signal patriarchal institution should be refracted onto women is not at all surprising. His Image of Both Churches figures women and whores, the Woman Clothed in Light and the Whore of Babylon, the true believer (as a species of woman) and the false idolator (again, as a species of woman) in unorthodox and often very confusing ways. Consequently, the boundaries between each remain extremely unstable.

Central to Bale's imaging of both churches is what McEachern calls a "typology of female identity" (245). In Bale's typology, it becomes virtually impossible to distinguish between a woman and a whore, since the whore "at first blush seemeth only a woman." The whore, like the Whore, possesses a physical and visual appeal over which "every fleshly man is inordinately wanton, fierce and greedy" (Bale 260). Ornate, painted, gaudy, whores, like the Roman church, " beareth out this malignant muster in...a wanton...vain-glorious pomp" (494-6). "Gorgeously apparaled...flourishingly decked with gold, precious

stones, and pearls," "so blinded are they with her fopperies and tangled with her toys, that they judge all that she doth holy, religious and perfect" (497-8). Remarkable is that her fopperies and toys do not advertise the whore's carnality, but rather her holy, religious perfection. Thus, in Bale's gloss,

> "[I]f a whore is something that can "seem" a woman, then a woman is something that can be impersonated, or falsely represented. More pressing, then, than the question When is a woman a whore becomes When is a woman not a whore, or, in Bale's terms, When is a woman *only* a woman? At its furthest extreme, such a logic points to the question whether a pure, or authentic, non-impersonated woman even exists. (McEachern 249)

Typically, sexual promiscuity, or a lack of chastity, would distinguish the whore from a woman who is "only" a woman. But Bale confuses the usual categories by insisting on chastity's negative connotations, particularly with reference to priestly chastity: "they have set up an ydoll among themselves, calling it holy viginitie and the vowed chastity of priests" (Bale 453). Again, what Bale challenges here is not so much the representation itself but what McEachern calls "the *authenticity* of representation" (my italics 256). Looking "holy, religious and perfect" (paradoxically like the glittering whore), seeming virtuous, celibate clerics "leaving the naturall use of woman, have burnt in their own lust one to other that man with man, that is to say, monke with monke, nonne with nonne, fryre with fryre and priest wth priest" (Bale *The Actes* A7v-A8r). In Bale's formulation, there is no such thing as virginity, since it inevitably leads into clandestine carnality, one much more unseemly that that of "normative" heterosexual unions with women who are

"only" women--if in fact such a woman can be found. Indeed, the difficulty of discerning true from false--woman and/as church--is underscored by Bale's insistence that many might mistake the Bride of Christ, since "every man shall not see...her apparel, for it will be rather a raiment of the heart rather than of the outward body" (Bale *The Image* 583).

As McEachern reports, Bale's confusion of women is modeled on a confusion of and within men: "for Bale misogyny does indeed propel the conflation of all women with sexual commerce, yet the figure of the fallen woman simultaneously models his own position as spiritually lapsed and potentially redeemed"--if only he can learn to read his own confused signs "correctly" (267). Similarly, in another "revelatory" text, the position of Hamlet as a participant in a world spiritually lapsed, yet potentially redeemed, is contingent upon the redemption of his spiritually lapsed mother. The "real-life" mother, the one who is "only" a woman in Bale's radically indeterminate formula, has been supplanted by the W/whore. In the space formerly occupied by the Virgin only a blank emptiness remained. The Whore--in particular the Whore of Babylon brought to the fore by Bale and his Reformation-minded legatees--was momentarily all that remained in the symbolic imagination.

Indeed, beginning with their earliest exchange, Hamlet seems to "have forgotten" his "real-life" mother. All that remains is his figuration of his mother as a desirable and desiring woman: a whore. Awareness of his mother's sexual activity with his father, arguably, was dampened, if not successfully repressed, in the absence of any further pregnancies after Hamlet's birth. Far from being repressed, Hamlet's imagination is all too capable of vividly envisioning Gertrude's sexual activity with Claudius:

Let the bloat King tempt you again to bed,

Pinch wanton on your cheek, call you his mouse,

And let him, for a pair of reechy kisses,

Or paddling in your neck with his damned fingers,

Make you ravel all this matter out. (3.4.184-87)

I say "sexual activity" here with an ear, again, attuned to the doubleness of Hamlet's words. As Sigmund Freud has pointed out in a brief, but acute, essay, "A Mythological Parallel to Visual Obsession," individuals obsessing over a dilemma often confuse or replace the face as a synecdochal representation of a person with the genital area. Given the possible shift in body zone, the "wanton cheeks" being pinched need not indicate those on Gertrude' face; the "reechy [filthy] kisses" Hamlet speaks of could just as well be planted on a different second set of lips; the "neck" Claudius paddles his fingers "*in*"--a curious preposition in context to begin with--could just as well be what was thought of as the "neck" of the uterus--the vagina--as the neck on which Gertrude's head stands. The frenzy of erotic ecstasy Hamlet imagines could well make Gertrude "ravel all this matter out": both the matter of his "madness" and the matter contained in her matrix.

Clearly, events have placed Gertrude, in Hamlet's mind at least, as a woman of ill-repute. And not just any woman of ill-repute, but one in need of rescue, since she has married, and is engaged in sexual activity with, the murderer of his idealized, symbolic father--news which the symbolic father passes along to his son:

Sleeping within my orchard,

My custom always of the afternoon,

Upon my secure hour they uncle stole

With juice of cursed hebona in a vile,

And in the porches of my ear did pour

The leperous distillment....(1.5.59-64)

Furthermore, Gertrude's age seems to confound Hamlet's ability to distinguish between Gertrude's capacities to love and desire: "You cannot call it love, for at your age/The heyday of the blood is tame, it's humble,/And waits upon the judgement" (3.4.69-71). Apparently not. Hamlet's "real-life," mature mother and the young, sexual being he assumes she once was but had imagined vanished, collapse into one another, and all that remains is the lust of the whore. Despite her age, despite Hamlet's wish, Gertrude's blood has apparently failed to tame; conceivably, her relationship to Claudius could be one of reasoned, platonic, idealized, asexual, companionate love (perhaps like that of her relationship to her first husband, or, more precisely, Hamlet's imaginary vision of that relationship).[115] But in this marriage, and more specifically, *at this age*, Hamlet is unwilling to countenance his mother loving another even without sex, or more dangerously (and more likely), engaging in sexual activity without love. Since age is no help in differentiating between whores and women, trying to keep the woman who is "only a woman" distinct from the glittering whore becomes impossible for Hamlet. And he, like

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[115]Gertrude's age, hinging as it does on Hamlet's, is yet another crux of this play. If Hamlet is indeed caught up in a late adolescent Oedipal conflict, Gertrude may well be pre-menopausal, and unlike Hermione at her return to Leones, still in possession of what Hamlet perceives as a "dangerous" fertility. The "matter" she ravels out then, could be female the seed required to conceive another child--with Claudius. On the other hand, if Hamlet is indeed thirty--and that is what the information in the play tells us--Gertrude is then likely well passed menopause, and therefore, infertile.

Bale, looks for the "blush" to assist distinguishing between them:

> O shame, where is thy blush?
>
> Rebellious hell,
>
> If thou canst mutine in a matron's bones,
>
> To flaming youth let virtue be as wax
>
> And melt her in her own fire; proclaim no shame
>
> When the compulsive ardour gives the charge,
>
> Since frost itself as actively doth burn
>
> And reason panders will. (82-89)

According to Hamlet, it should be "no shame" for Ophelia's youthful lust to burn her in her "own fire," but once the "frost" of his mother's years proves inadequate protection against the "rebellious hell" of lust, the similarity of the two women--ostensible virgin and whore--like the similarity of his two "fathers" makes them indistinguishable from one another. More important, in terms of Bale, at least, is that "the blush" fails Hamlet too as a reliable semiotic aid in discerning the whore. In Hamlet's experience, the "flame" and "fire" of youthful lust which appears to be a blush, leaves no shame; while the assumed shame of Gertrude's frosty desire which should have left its telltale sign leaves him screaming, O shame, where is thy blush? In Bale's, as well as Hamlet's vocabulary, the sign fails to indicate the expected signified. Hamlet's inability to keep the whore separate from the woman mirrors Bale's inability to figure the two churches in terms of women and whores who can be sorted out in terms of difference.

But instances of residual Catholicism complicate any notion that the mention of

Wittenburg, and that city's connections with Lutheranism, demonstrate that Hamlet is Shakespeare's most profoundly Protestant play--that we need look no further than Bale, Luther, Calvin and Hooker to explicate its theology.[116] I have argued above that the Whore of Babylon began to figure prominently in the symbolic imagination only with the rise of Protestantism, peaking when the Virgin substitute for Marian piety aged and approached death--and possible symbolic effacement.[117] The Protestant imagination was then left with only one of two components in the madonna/whore split. The Roman church, by contrast, held on to both, emphasizing the Virgin, surely, but allowing symbolic space for a whore who repents and is forgiven: Mary Magdalene.[118] The fact that the Whore began to occupy so much symbolic space at the time that the influence of the Virgin was waning does not, however, suggest that one church seamlessly and effortlessly gave way to another in the hearts and minds of the English populace. On the contrary, had

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[116] The most vexing for critics eager to read Hamlet as Shakespeare's "Protestant" play is the Ghost's reference to his consignment to purgatory, since he died unshriven. Purgatory was one of the first Catholic doctrines to be dispensed with by Protestantism.

[117] Says C.L. Barber: "I can imagine no way to prove it, but it seems to me that the very central and problematical role of women in Shakespeare--and in Elizabethan drama generally--reflects the fact that Protestantism did away with the cult of the Virgin Mary. It meant a loss of ritual resource for dealing with the internal residues in all of us of the once all-powerful and all-inclusive mother" (196). Barber believes the "terrible mother" survived in the form of the witch; I think the psychological route to the witch is very complicated indeed.

[118] There is no biblical evidence that Mary Magdalene was ever posited as a prostitute. That this legend originated and thrived despite the textual limitations of her story is indicative of the power of the madonna/whore split to symbolize. If the Virgin need always be balanced by the whore in order to facilitate efficacious integration of the symbolic woman in the male imagination, the psychic disequilibrium caused by the death of the Virgin in late Renaissance England is likely one of the root causes of Hamlet's distress.

Protestantism been able to replace the symbolic order of Catholicism quickly, there would have been no reason for the constant resurgence and revision of the Roman Whore--and little in the way of theological dissonance reflected in much the same way in Hamlet.

Many critics associate Hamlet with Genesis. To my knowledge, only Patricia Parker gives a partial reading of the play through the Book of Revelation.[119] It is my contention that this play, in figuring Gertrude (and Ophelia) as the apocalyptic Whore, assumes a circular structure reminiscent of the alpha and the omega. As Parker points out,

> "[a] structure of deferral inhabits even the Bible's own end or last word, the Book of the Apocalypse, or Revelation. There, ending is linked to the stripping, or overcoming of a female figure, the Whore of Babylon, by now the at last returned Master, Christ. But the final lines end in the still-deferred and still-anticipatory mode of an apostrophe, invocation or vocative, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Revelation 22), a retreat from a vision of Ending into the ambiguous space before that ending. (12)

Or, as the case of Hamlet suggests, perhaps back to the beginning--infinite deferral through the compulsion to repeat. The rest, after all, is not silence. Hamlet's story is yet to be monumentalized through the memory of Horatio's speech: "Let me speak to th' yet unknowing world/How these things came about" (5.2.380). Answers Fortinbras: "Let us haste to hear it" (388).

How will Horatio begin his story of "carnal, bloody and unnatural acts"? (382). With the alpha? The King, "sleeping within his orchard" murdered by his brother (1.5.59,

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[119] See the second chapter of Literary Fat Ladies.

GEN 2:15, 4:8). Or with the omega? The King, returned from the "sulf'rous and tormenting flames" of purgatory to tell his story (1.5.3, REV 14:10).

Either way, central to the story will be the King's "most seeming virtuous queen" (1.5.46), now won to the "shameful lust" of "that incestuous, that adulterate beast," Claudius:

> So lust, though to a radiant angel linked,
>
> Will sate itself in a celestial bed
>
> And prey on garbage. (1.5.35-7)

"You cannot call it love...at your age, Hamlet tells his mother. The Ghost tells Hamlet that the "wicked wit and gifts" of his brother had "the power to seduce" his wife (1.5.43, 45). It would appear, then, that in the Ghost's rendition of events, lust is linked to his "radiant angel" of a wife only through Claudius' contamination. But the linkage comes undone in what follows. If Claudius is metonymic with lust, his union with "radiant angel" Gertrude causes her devolution into "garbage"; if lust is a metonymy for Gertrude, she is "preying on garbage." The instability of sign to referent in this passage underscores once again that in the figuration of sexually active women, even radiant angels are susceptible to collapse into garbage.

The instability in the figuration of women prompted by the linguistic indeterminacy in reference to women extends and attaches itself to Ophelia as well. Immediately following his conversation with the Ghost, Hamlet runs to Ophelia:

> He took me by the wrist and held me hard;
>
> Then goes he to the length of all his arm,

And with his other hand thus o'er his brow

He falls to such a perusal of my face

As 'a would draw it. Long stayed he so. (2.1.87-90)

In the next scene in which Hamlet appears, he has made his decision--Ophelia is assumed whore: "For if the sun breed maggots in a dead dog, being a good kissing carrion--Have you a daughter? Let her not walk I' th' sun. Conception is a blessing, but as your daughter may conceive, friend, look to 't (2.2.181-2, 185-6).

Hamlet's conflated perception of these two women persists along these lines at the performance of The Mousetrap. Lying "between maid's legs" Hamlet continues to taunt both Ophelia and his mother with sexual innuendo (3.2.121). Moreover, to the Player Queen's assertion, "In second husband let me be accurst!/None wed the second but who killed the first," Hamlet responds, "That's wormwood" (3.2.185-7). In the Book of Revelation, personified Wormwood amplifies Gertrude's story: "[A]nd there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon a third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters;/and the name of the star was called Wormwood; and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter" (8:10-11). A star fallen from heaven, a "radiant angel" killing men with poison--regardless of the Ghost's reticence, the Biblical allusion here certainly implicates Gertrude in her husband's death. The allusion, of course, is Hamlet's.

But Babylon falls. Again, Hamlet seems to glean his inspiration from the prophetic voice of Revelation before he visits his mother in her closet:

For her sins have reached into heaven, and God

hath remembered her iniquities.

Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double
unto her double according to her works; in the cup
which she hath filled, fill her double.

How much she glorified herself, and lived
deliciously, so much sorrow and torment give her: for
she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow,
and shall see no sorrow. (18-5-7)

In the closet scene, Hamlet literally doubles his mother's works, forcing her to confront his two pictures of her husbands: one with a "combination of form...where every god did seem to set his seal"; the other "a mildewed ear" (3.4.61-2, 65). The comparison, combined with Hamlet's foul language regarding her "lust," soon has Gertrude agreeing with Hamlet's judgment. No longer does she say in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow; when he leaves her heart cleft in twain.

The cup Gertrude metaphorically has filled by marrying her husband's brother is a poison cup, one that is filled double for her in the final scene. She drinks from the cup intended for her son and falls one last time: "The drink, the drink! I am poisoned" (5.2.311). The drink, like the water Wormwood contaminates in Babylon, doubles back to kill the whore.

Doubling back is a common trope in Hamlet. The King doubles back to Elsinore to double back to his life's story at its interruption; the image of Claudius doubles back to the King, haunting Gertrude and her son; Hamlet doubles back to Denmark a changed man

after narrowly escaping his step-father's murderous plot; the plots of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern double back upon themselves; Hamlet's vision of Ophelia doubles back to Gertrude, and vice-versa; Claudius' plots eventually double back to him and all he holds dear; Fortinbras doubles back through Denmark after his campaign in Poland, just in time to double back to the point before his father lost to Hamlet's father; Horatio will double back to the beginning in retelling Hamlet's tragedy to young Fortinbras.

The constant doubling back of the omega to the alpha is similar to, but not exactly the same as, Patricia Parker's notion of textual "deferral" or "dilation." And dilation, or opening, is precisely what is needed to "ravel this matter out." In Parker's formulation, "[t]he New Testament, like the Old, is filled with warnings that this deferral of ending must not lull its hearers into the assumption that the promised end will never come" (12). I am less sure. The circularity of plot threads returning to their origins in Hamlet and in the Bible suggests that closure may be endlessly deferred. In the words of Joseph Wittreich, Hamlet, like other texts of John Milton's, reads the Apocalypse as a book requiring "human engagement," one that locates the drama of existence "in the human psyche and that allows not for immediate transcendence but for betterment through a long process of spiritual evolution" (200). The apocalyptic ending of Hamlet necessitates a trip back to its edenic beginning.

Infinite deferral is often associated with desire. What Hamlet mourns in this play is not so much the death of his father as the desire of his mother. His affective conflict resembles the "uncertain economy" of "mourning and misogyny" calculated by Steven Mullaney. It seems likely that Hamlet's processing of his Oedipal conflict is characterized

by what Mullaney calls "mourning under the sign of patriarchy," especially since Hamlet's lost object or ideal is a symbolic woman (140). Gertrude's desire for Claudius trips Hamlet's mourning for the lost symbolic madonna. His consequent inability to integrate the bipartite structure reduced to only one term--the whore--leaves him only one alternative: misogyny. Only after Ophelia is safely dead can Hamlet acknowledge that he loved her.

In addition, as Mullaney puts it: "Successful mourning requires a resolution of the contradiction between what is still vital in the memory and what is dead" (155). Lacking any conscious perception of what, exactly, is at or near death, and perhaps lacking, too, the awareness that the death of his mother's maternal, madonna-like aura is linked not only to her apparent sexual activity but also to the near-death of the Virgin in the larger culture, Hamlet is forced to confront an irresolvable psychic dilemma: with only one term left, synthesis is impossible. All that remains vital in Hamlet's memory is the reformation emphasis on the Whore.

Chapter Four

"A Mangled Shadow": Elizabeth I, Political Allegory and Antony and Cleopatra

The critical ground surrounding Antony and Cleopatra has long been unstable. The uncertainty and indeterminacy in the play, highlighted best, perhaps, by Janet Adelman's study, The Common Liar, translates into critical uncertainty about the play. Variously categorized by critics as a "Roman" play, a tragedy, and a "problem" play, Antony and Cleopatra seems to defy even generic classification.[120] Despite what to my mind are many comic moments in the play, and the acute observations along those lines of a few critics, Adelman, Ania Loomba and Jonathan Dollimore[121] to name three, no one has dared declare the play an out-and-out comedy--tragedy manque, on occasion, but not comedy. It is not my purpose in this essay to prove conclusively that Antony and Cleopatra is Shakespeare's premiere comedy, far from it, but I do think it is worth lingering for a moment on the play's more comic aspects and the difficulties they present to any attempt at univocal interpretation.

Janet Adelman ascribes some of the uncertainty in the play to the "varying perspectives" of the main characters we are given by the minor characters. Seldom, in

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[120] In the words of Ania Loomba, "[t]hree centuries of critical opinion, from Samuel Johnson onwards, has been preoccupied with 'overcoming' the heterogeneous nature of both the form and the content of Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra: the focus has variously been on its disjointed structure, mingling of tragic and comic, flux in character; its divisions between private and public, male and female, high and low life..." (124).

[121] In an otherwise serious reading Dollimore eventually re-visions Shakespeare's play as academic farce. The original acuity of Dollimore's perception lies in his ability to see the more "camp" aspects in what otherwise has been read as a transcendent love story.

Antony and Cleopatra, do the "protagonists confide in the audience" (50). In fact, "we see more often through the eyes of commentators than through the eyes of the protagonists" (50). And to make matters even more confusing, "the commentators seldom take the protagonists as seriously as they would wish" (50). As Adelman again and again illustrates, the constant intervention of the minor characters between the protagonists and the audience is more indicative of a comic dramatic structure than a tragic one. Adelman also wisely issues a caveat against either dismissing the comic resonances of the play as but "surface excrescences" or "overemphasizing" them (51). She instead argues that the blending of the comic and the tragic, even when the comic does not appear to serve the interests of the tragic, is the play's "peculiar triumph" (52). Unable to "maintain the certain attitudes of comedy or tragedy very long," the audience finds itself on unstable terrain: "We think we know where we stand; and then we find the ground shifting under our feet" (52).

The tremors are far from confined to the locations in the play where comedy and tragedy converge; choose any site where polarities collide in Antony and Cleopatra and expect to find the critical terrain equally unstable. Another example: critics often focus on the erotic love story as paramount in the play, and utilize its more erotic aspects in the service of explicating the "Rome vs. Egypt" dichotomy, or, more specifically, in the case of feminist critics, celebrating the "feminization" of Antony as he abandons the ostensible "masculine" values for the so-called "feminine" values of Egypt. With the liberal use of Occam's razor, however, one could reduce the number of critical receptions with regard to the love story of Antony and Cleopatra to two. As both Lucy Hughes-Hallet and

Dollimore point out, the conclusions both audience and critics over the centuries have arrived at can be limited to the "moralist" position (passionate love as destructive) or the "post-Romantic" position (passionate love as redemptive). I would contend that the blending of these two critical perspectives (as antipodal as comedy and tragedy), even when the "moralist" position does not seem to serve the interests of the "post-Romantic" position, is also the play's peculiar triumph. Antony and Cleopatra oscillate between pathos and bathos; they are destroyed in the end only to achieve transcendence as "a pair so famous" (5.2.358). The boundary between the redemptive and destructive aspects of romantic love is continually transgressed in this play just as the boundary between comedy and tragedy is often blurred. Antony and Cleopatra is a play rife with structural polarities, largely familiar. Rome/Egypt, masculine/feminine, land/water, sensuality/reason--an exhaustive list would require pages to rehearse fully. To list them is besides my main point, in any event. To the contrary, the figurative spaces I find most absorbing in this play are the ones located in the yawning gap between polarities. Instead of closely examining the contents of that space, most readers have attempted rather to cram a Hegelian synthesis of oppositions into the void. Ergo, the structural gaps in the play have been filled with interpretive conclusions ranging from comedy to tragedy, from love as redemptive to love as destructive, and so on. But we should remember that structural dualisms have a way of collapsing into one another, and what causes their breakdown is the wealth of significant possibility, not amenable to synthesis, intervening between dualistic extremes. In other words, the contents of the gap between extremes of signification often results in new possibilities for signification and hence, interpretation. Not a synthesis, but a fusion of

two terms into a third, perhaps a fourth, a fifth--the interpretative possibilities also begin to radiate outward.[122]

I would argue that another important fusion of polarities, offering what some critics have called a "third term," operates in Antony and Cleopatra: the melding of the Virgin Queen, Elizabeth I and the Egyptian "whore," Cleopatra. Associations between the two monarchs were so strong in early modern England that Fulke Greville destroyed the manuscript of a play about Antony and Cleopatra fearing the "childish wantonness" in it would inevitably be identified with a monarch "forsaking empire to follow sensuality" as many feared Elizabeth--were she ever to fall passionately in love--would (Hughes-Hallet 139).[123]

But was Cleopatra a "whore" or a female monarch unafraid of overriding traditional western gender limitations thanks to the fluidity of Egyptian society? Likewise, was Elizabeth I the "Virgin" Queen or the paradigmatic Renaissance woman--"light of credit, lusty of stomach, impatient, full of words, apt to lie, flatter and weep"? (Smith 58). I pose these questions only rhetorically, and have deliberately chosen to base them on

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[122] Susan Frye points out that allegory is usually located in the "gap" between signifier and signified; by contrast, I want to argue that allegory is what fills the gap between structural polarities in this play. Quite possibly, linguistic gaps of many varieties are filled with some permutation of the "allegorical," strictly or loosely defined. Therefore, Frye and I ultimately agree that a "gap" is "a linguistic phenomenon with profound social consequences because the resulting instability means that no meaning is ever completely fixed or natural, however it may appear" (18).

[123] Hughes-Hallet says that Greville's play was written during the time of Essex's disgrace. Because of her tumultuous relationship with Essex, the Queen, Greville judged, would be in no mood to publish his play about another Queen sacrificing empire for passionate love. Hughes-Hallet cites Geoffrey Bullough (216) as her source.

stereotypes of the two women which are likely baseless.[124] Both women were consummate politicians, but it must be borne in mind that both were women first and consummate politicians second so far as their respective interpretive communities were concerned.

Obviously, the constituents and opposition of both Elizabeth and Cleopatra can be differentiated in terms of geography, historical moment, political milieu, and cultural "norms"--just as the queens themselves could be. In many senses, it would seem that two more widely opposed binaries would be difficult to locate. And yet, Elizabeth and Cleopatra, Rome, Egypt and England, 30 BC and 1607 AD do seem to be what Roy Strong has termed "telescoped" in this play.[125]

Though the telescopic imagery may be unique to the Renaissance, the conjuring of Cleopatra's image for purposes usually largely political, as Mary Hamer has shown, is not.

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[124] Stereotypes cannot and should not be easily dismissed. As Catherine Belsey suggests, "stereotypes define what the social body endorses and what it wants to exclude" (165); moreover, "the construction of stereotypes cannot ensure permanent stability...insofar as the stereotypes themselves are inevitably subject to internal contradictions and so are perpetually precarious" (165). Part of my argument is that Antony and Cleopatra is balanced precariously on the "stereotypical" reception, rife with internal contradiction, of two important queens.

[125] In The Cult of Elizabeth, Strong argues that "telescoping" of events, places and people was a common form of representation prior to the advent, in the early seventeenth century, of artistic perspective fanning outward from a focal point. Strong uses portraits of Elizabeth I and Sir Henry Upton to illustrate telescoping but his methodology applies equally well to the drama prior to the perspectival sets of Inigo Jones. It is my argument that Antony and Cleopatra is an especially acute example of a *way of seeing* that was soon to be replaced by a changed and new perspective and that interpretive difficulties with the play have been exacerbated by our loss of telescopic vision. Again, Belsey's arguments regarding the emblematic theatrical mode of medieval theater being replaced by what she calls the emergent illusionism of Renaissance theater, which she contends was further disrupted by perspectival imagery, serve as a corollary to Strong's thesis about artistic representations undergoing similar shifts in the period.

Again and again, up to and including the twentieth century, the "authority implicit in the name of Cleopatra is elegantly compromised and reformulated" into what Hamer calls "another commodity, valued at market price, which drops with the passage of time, even for Elizabeth Taylor" (xix). According to Hamer, and I concur, we need to consider "what interests were served, at discrete historical moments, by summoning up the image of a dead Egyptian queen in periods and cultures to which the living woman never had access?" (xxi).

Stanley Cavell believes it "not controversial" to include this play among Shakespeare's histories, and "since it is a Roman play, to sense in it a freedom of speculation not quite available in the English histories, where a particular care is required in the handling of historical events" (20). Cavell, too, admits the difficulty of classifying this play, and one of his many suggestions regarding Antony and Cleopatra is that, considering its handy historical displacement, it maybe read as a "parable" for local contemporary events. Another suggestion is that it would be equally uncontroversial to find in the play "a setting for world catastrophe" (20).

My thesis mirrors Cavell's to the degree that I, too, want to argue that the play is a curious melding a global and local politics. While Cavell, after signalling the ideological potential in the play, concentrates on foregrounding what he calls "the advent of skepticism" against a backdrop, among other things, political, I would like to foreground the political against a backdrop, among other things, skeptical. I agree with Cavell's contention that this play presents a world "undergoing, not to say experiencing, catastrophe" (20). Cavell goes on, "What could this be? Something about the succession

or passing of Elizabeth, or about her predecessors or successor?" (20). Borrowing a metaphor from Macbeth, Cavell then backs away from this idea, since those events seem to him "the wrong size," i.e., borrowed robes in this case too small, too "poor a size" to contain the magnitude, the indelible greatness--one might be tempted to say, quite deliberately, the fulsomeness--of Shakespeare's Antony, Caesar and Cleopatra (20). Here I disagree. I think Shakespeare's local political setting, pretty well summed up by Cavell's question above, combined with proto-modern awareness of global politics brought about by England's fledgling imperialist/colonialist enterprise, might fit perfectly with readings centering on the "catastrophic" ambience of the play.

To gain access to the local, it is worth reiterating that the play correlates Elizabeth I and Cleopatra on several levels. Shakespeare's two additions to Plutarch's "historical" account mirror, to an extent, episodes chronicled during Elizabeth's reign. Cleopatra's interrogation of the messenger regarding Octavia in III.iii, for instance, "Is she as tall as me?" "Is she shrill tongu'd or low?" "What majesty in her gait?" "Bear'st thou her face in mind? is't long or round?" "Her hair what color?" (11, 13, 17, 29, 32) is strikingly similar to Elizabeth's grilling of ambassador James Melville regarding the appearance of one whom many consider Elizabeth's archrival, Mary Queen of Scots.[126] Another historical

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[126]Recorded in Neale (130-1): "She wanted to know what coloroured hair was best, and how hers compared to Mary's. Then followed a whole series of comparisons. Who, she asked, was the fairer, Mary or she?....Next she wanted to know who was higher. Mary was, answered Melville. Then she is over-high, retorted Elizabeth; she herself being neither over-high nor over-low." Notice that Shakespeare's Cleopatra has the same knack for transposing her rival's assets into liabilities: when the messenger reports that Octavia is not as tall as Cleopatra and "low-voic'd," for example, Egypt's Queen exults, "Dull of tongue and dwarfish!" (3.3.16).

parallel is provided by Shakespeare's second addition to his source in II.v--Cleopatra's striking of the messenger. As Ridley reports in his Introduction to the Arden edition of the play, there is no historical foundation for or counterpart to Shakespeare's scene. Elizabeth I, though, was known to strike her recalcitrant courtier Essex on one occasion, and her ladies-in-waiting on more than a few.[4]

The linguistic correlations between the two queens are numerous and persuasive. Francis Bacon marvels at "[Elizabeth's] wonderful art in keeping servants in satisfaction yet in appetite"[5] and Enobarbus observes much the same about Cleopatra: "[O]ther women cloy/the appetites they feed, but she makes hungry/Where she most satisfies" (2.3.235-7). The language Cleopatra uses during her fishing expedition with Charmian in Act II, scene v closely resembles what Sir Christopher Hatton had to say about Elizabeth as angler: "The queen did fish for men's souls, and had so sweet a bait that no one could escape her network....She caught many a poor fish, who little knew what was laid for them" (Neale 215). Moreover, the language used by herself or others to describe Cleopatra resonates with images Elizabeth used to fashion herself. Elizabeth had portraits of herself painted designed to show how she "outranks Venus, Juno and Athena" just as Cleopatra is said to "O'er pictur[e] that Venus" in her barge[6]. In a different vein altogether, Cleopatra's comparison of herself with "the maid who milks" echoes Elizabeth's consistent

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[4] Anabel Patterson 82 and Neale 346.

[5] McCoy 61.

[6] For the first, see King 44; for the second see Antony and Cleopatra II.ii.200.

use of the same metaphor when representing herself to her subjects.[7] Finally, Antony's reference to Cleopatra as "this great fairy" seems to parallel Elizabethan connections to Gloriana, the Faerie Queen.[8]

The correlation of this play to Spenser's political allegory tends to buttress my own argument for allegory, or at least, borrowing from Cavell, parable, especially when one acknowledges the intersection of issues of race and gender as yet another link between the two Queens. According to David Norbrook, "Spenser's treatment of the virgin-queen figure is not uniformly reverent....After all, before he gave her a courtly apotheosis, the Fairy Queen of folklore was not a dignified and transcendent figure, but a mischievous black-faced trickster" (115).[9] There had been other efforts prior to the composition of Spenser's poem to incorporate the fairy queen image into royal pageantry, but it was not until the Woodstock entertainments of 1575--still fifteen years before the publication of Books I-III of Spenser's epic poem, and twenty-one years before Books IV-VI--that she made what is believed to be her debut at such an event. Elizabeth's magic is said to have turned that Fairy Queen's black face white.[10] It has been conjectured, incorrectly as it turns out, that Cleopatra, like the folkloric Fairy Queen, was black.

Mary Hamer, for one, notes that when, in September 1991, the American weekly

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[7] Antony and Cleopatra IV.xv.74. For numerous examples of Elizabeth's use of the trope, see Louis Adrian Montrose, "'Eliza Queene of Shepheardes' and the Pastoral of Power."

[8] Adelman 65.

[9] See also Keith Thomas, Religion and the Decline of Magic (732).

[10] Norbrook 115; see also Yates 94-98.

Newsweek wanted to "air some issues associated with Afrocentrism" they covered the issue with a profile of a head of an Egyptian queen from a temple relief. adding a brightly colored earring in the shape of the African continent striped in the red, black and green of the recent black nationalist movement in the United States. The by-line underneath the image read "Was Cleopatra Black?" (xviii). Actually, Cleopatra was Macedonian. rather than African, but nevertheless was likely darker-skinned than the extreme "whiteness" so prized by the culture of Renaissance England. Elizabethans, therefore, probably would refer to Cleopatra as "sunburnt" rather than "blackamoor."[11] Despite my disagreement with Hamer and others over Cleopatra's exact ethnic origin, I agree with her contention that "[t]he dynamic of ethnicity as it interacts with gender in the representation of Cleopatra and its work in maintaining Eurocentrism deserves a book of its own" (xix). Judging from the accounts of the ethnicity of early renditions of the Fairy Queen, the new imperialism of the later years of Elizabeth's reign, and the difficulties imposed by her biological sex when ruling, the ethnicity/gender dynamic may well be worth exploration with regard to Elizabeth, too.

While I do not want to argue that Antony and Cleopatra is a simple *roman a clef*, I

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[11] In the Appendix C of The Common Liar, Janet Adelman reaches conclusions very similar to my own regarding Cleopatra's skin color. Noting (as Kim Hall was to later trace in much greater detail) the connections between Renaissance representations of dark-skinned people and the "bestial and lecherous" (187), Adelman nevertheless concludes--and I concur--that in this case a) the association of Egypt with Africa should not be "overemphasized" and b) Shakespeare likely followed precedent when associating "dark sensuality" with "arcane and ancient knowledge" and finally c) the above two associations with Cleopatra probably do in some way and to some extent "reinforce one another" (188). Notwithstanding, insofar as literal skin color is concerned, about all we can conclude is that, "to Shakespeare's audience, what probably mattered is that she was darker than they were" (188).

do believe that the play is in some sense a kaleidoscopic political allegory.[12] My intent in this chapter is to further expand the connections between Elizabeth and Cleopatra, before reconnecting the two to both the locally and globally political. For all the imagery of fecund, spontaneous generation along the banks of the Nile, the relationship of Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra remains, like those of Elizabeth with her courtiers and suitors, remarkably sterile.[13] That "sterility," in general as well as particular, conjoined with pervasive nostalgia (and likely Cartesian skepticism, though it is not my intent to rehearse Cavell's astute argument here) is likely responsible for the play's "catastrophic" overtones. In addition, the break-down of aged Elizabeth's elaborate courtly regime with her second-generation courtiers in the waning years of her reign probably has a bearing on the more comic, and localized, aspects of the play. There are good reasons for Shakespeare's summons of the image of a dead Egyptian queen in the first decade of seventeenth-century England. As Mary Hamer has shown, the connotations calling her to

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[12] I am relying, in a slightly modified version, on Susan Frye's interpretation of allegory as "the most obvious form of representation whose images embody the ideology of their sponsor" (24). What complicates my re-vision of Frye is that she posits playwrights (plural) as representing various political perspectives (again plural) while I want to imagine a playwright (singular) capable of representing various political perspectives (plural) telescoped onto a single dramatic canvas in a characteristically Elizabethan fashion. Like Frye, I too prefer Louis Althusser's definition of ideology as "the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence," but I would insist that this play represents a confluence of imaginary *relationships* bumping up against "real conditions of existence" which had changed significantly over the course of the previous three decades of the playwright's life.

[13] Unlike their dramatic counterparts, the historical Antony and Cleopatra did indeed have children together. I am grateful to Richard McCoy for pointing out to me the contradiction between the fecund imagery of the play and the sterility of Antony and Cleopatra, and the interrelation of their barrenness with that of Elizabeth.

Shakespeare's mind are not much different from those beckoning other eighteenth-. nineteenth-and twentieth-century writers and dramatists. An "anomalous" woman, Cleopatra fits nowhere--and everywhere. As has become typical, she embodies in this play text and historical context a matrix of sex, age, gender, spectacle, international imperialism and/or colonialism and local politics which coalesces in surprising and myriad ways. I would like to address each of these issues separately at some length, before contextualizing them in terms of the political allegory I see being played out on the Jacobean stage three or four years after Elizabeth's death.

Sex

Obviously, both queens are biologically female. But the astute use of androgynous representation by both makes even sexual classification problematic. It is widely recognized that Elizabeth spent most of her reign adroitly avoiding associations limited to the female sex by shrewdly making use of her two bodies: the body politic of a (male) Prince, and the (female) body physical of a chaste Queen in search of an appropriate suitor ready to reproduce heirs. In keeping with what was literally apparent, Elizabeth seems to have posed an external/internal binary when referring to her own biological sex. Her famous comment to her troops at Tilbury illustrates my point; the "weak and feeble" outer female shell is complimented, if not countermanded by the internal "heart and stomach of a King." Since there was little to be gained by denying the obvious, Elizabeth shrewdly acquiescing to the accepted limitations of the literal female body; hers was weak and feeble just as all early modern female bodies necessarily must be. But she counterpoised

the literal with an internalized metaphorical male body comprised of an especially strong heart and stomach, both indicative of courage and fortitude, particularly necessary in the face of a possible military confrontation and both useful to a monarch with expansionist ambitions.

In an eminently readable essay, Clare Kinney suggests that "the queen's two bodies" metaphor applies at least as well, if not better, to Cleopatra. The problem with her argument, however, originates in her use of Shakespeare's playtext as a historical document apropos to the analysis of ancient Egyptian political representations. True, in Shakespeare's play, "inasmuch as [Cleopatra's] identity can be fixed, it is located in the repeated metonymical epithet, Egypt" (177); in other words, the physical body of the queen often *is* the body of Egypt: sensual, inviting, mysterious, open, feminine--a very different body politic from the one possessed by Elizabeth I--but one imposed on Cleopatra from without, not "self-fashioned" as in the case of England's Queen. Then, of course, there is the physical, biologically determined body of Cleopatra: the sexual one, the reproductive one. This body too is unambiguously female in both cases. On the other hand, we have in Shakespeare's play a Cleopatra who exchanges her "tires and mantles" for Antony's "sword Philippan"--an active androgyny characterized by her momentary acquisition of what Judith Butler has called the "detachable phallus." The split, though, proves more Elizabethan than ancient Egyptian.

The historical Cleopatra apparently also represented herself as an androgynous being, but by means of fusion rather than dichotomy. In iconographic representations, Cleopatra "is inscribed in the terms used to define a powerful female ruler from the

Pharaonic past. Hatshepsut" (Hamer 14). Rather than split her body into a body physical and a body politic. Cleopatra used her physical connection to and biological continuity with pharaonic lineage, including a female forebear, Hatshepsut--who was known to assume "the full regalia of power, even to the ceremonial beard" for state functions--to unify her physicality with other physical male and female bodies of power in Egypt (Hamer 14). Cleopatra also used iconographic representation to connect herself with important goddesses who could provide precedents for her rule. She was especially fond of representing herself as a human Isis/Hathor, a goddess who lived with her son while separated from his father, Horus, just as Cleopatra lived with her son, Caesarion, while separated from his putative father, Caesar. As Mary Hamer observes, "Queen and goddess alike ruled without benefit of a consort's presence: the need for the validation of a male co-regent is confronted and set aside by appeal to divine precedent; the absence of Caesarion's father is transformed into a positive asset, since it confirms the parallel between the divine pair and the royal one" (16). Cleopatra, unlike Elizabeth, could represent herself as "the queen himself" (the oxymoronic female Pharoh) based on divine and human precedents still very much present and living in the culture.

As the above historicization makes clear, I disagree with the basic premise of Kinney's essay regarding the genesis of Cleopatra's "two bodies." Nevertheless, I do find her implicit recognition that Shakespeare's sexual, textual Cleopatra well serves as a palimpsest over which the textual, sexual Elizabeth can be inscribed most interesting and astute.

Age

Once again for Elizabeth, the literal and figural are at odds. As Susan Frye has pointed out in her groundbreaking study, Elizabeth I and the Politics of Representation. Elizabeth astutely made use of the established and accepted early modern female life-cycle paradigm, but only metaphorically at times, and only to a point. Early in her reign, as a newly-crowned twenty-five year-old monarch being introduced to her subjects, Elizabeth used a trope that was literally appropriate as well--that of the modest, chaste, maid. So far as everyone knew at that point in time, Elizabeth really was a virtuous, marriageable maid who was also figuratively courting and being courted by her subjects hoping for a happy, productive, long-term metaphorical union of crown and people. Later in her reign, when it became apparent that the Queen was not to marry, she appropriated the trope of matron, married to her people and empire. But in keeping with her refusal to age beyond the childbearing years, Elizabeth oscillated between "maid" and "wife," and moved no further along the female life-cycle timeline. It was perhaps most unfortunate that since she never married, and since her kingdom was still very much alive, she was unable ever to position herself at the most powerful and respected life-cycle moment an early modern female could hope to enjoy: widow.

Since Egyptian culture had a strong tradition of matrilinearity, female gods, and female Pharoahs, it is unlikely that the life-cycle paradigm for ancient Egyptian women mirrored that of early modern Englishwomen. In fact, there is some disparity between Egyptian and English legal entitlements for adult females. According to Hamer, "[e]ven though the rights of women under the law had been eroded under the Greek

administration, in Egypt there was less discrimination between the rights of male and female than was known elsewhere in the ancient world, with regard, in particular, to marriage legislation and inheritance of property" (19). Admittedly, the legal rights accorded females in ancient Egypt pertained mainly to older women, but there is some evidence that legal entitlements of even widows continued to erode throughout the sixteenth as well as seventeenth century in England.[14]

The most important dissimilarity critics notice when comparing Elizabeth and Cleopatra is the age discrepancy. Keith Reinhart warns that "it would have been impolitic of Shakespeare to have made Cleopatra resemble Elizabeth too closely, nor would the aged queen have provided an entirely satisfactory source for the thirty-year old Cleopatra" (81). Nearly a decade older than thirty at the time of her death, Reinhart's point regarding Cleopatra's age is nevertheless well taken. Cleopatra's age is difficult to determine in Antony and Cleopatra. "Age cannot wither her" (2.3.235) yet she is "wrinkled deep in time" (1.5.29). Elizabeth did her level best to remain equally "ageless." In artistic representations, at least, she refused to let age wither her. Carefully orchestrating and supervising her portraiture, she became virtually "ageless" after her death, when, by her design, only forever youthful portraiture remained.

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[14] R. Valerie Lucas, in her essay, "Puritan Preaching and the Politics of the Family," reiterates Lawrence Stone's point that the Protestant Reformation promoted the analogy of state to family, thereby solidifying and intensifying patriarchal authority. Even in the more progressive civil war sects that Keith Thomas cites in his essay, "Women and the Civil War Sects," as sites of female empowerment through preaching, the situation for women is better only by degrees in comparison to more standard Puritanisms. Not even the Quakers, who were probably the most liberal in their treatment of female members, accorded women wholly equal status with men up to and including the beginning decades of the eighteenth century.

Shakespeare's ambiguous treatment of Cleopatra's age may be more than a link to Elizabeth I. His Cleopatra, the Cleopatra under consideration here, is a Renaissance adaptation, staged and received by an early modern English acting company and audience. As such, the thirty-eight year old queen on stage at the Globe presents special problems. Neither maid, nor wife, nor widow, she simply does not fit into the early modern English female life-cycle paradigm. An unruly, unmarried, sexually active mature female--who also happens to be a queen--forces all the repressed fear stored in the collective unconscious regarding Elizabeth I to come knocking on consciousness's door. It was a door that Elizabeth, at least, realized could not be opened while she ruled.

Gender

When necessary, both Elizabeth and Cleopatra had little difficulty invoking "the feminine." Both I think intuitively realized that "the feminine" was largely a construct of "the masculine," and neither had any difficulty turning each of these constructs to her own light. In other words, at issue here is a deliberate appropriation of "the masculine" and "the feminine" for political purposes. Not surprisingly, when summing up a similar argument regarding Indira Ghandhi and Margaret Thatcher, Ania Loomba turns to Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra. All of these female rulers, argues Loomba, "repeatedly attempted to appropriate a masculine identity in order to consolidate authority" (110). Their appropriations included the claim by each that they possessed "masculine" qualities (in the case of Elizabeth, intestinal fortitude; in the case of Ghandhi, the ability to make decisions), but as Loomba realizes, "such assertions are strategic" (110). The same Queen

who, when addressing her troops at Tilbury, emphasized an internalized male body possessing masculine organs, spoke the following words to her Parliament pressuring her to marry:

> The weight and greatness of this matter might cawse in me being a woman wantinge both witt and memory some feare to speake, and bashfulness besides, a thing appropriat to my sex.... (Heisch 34)

Here Elizabeth invokes sex *in the service of* gender. Her female-sexed body, she claims, comes complete with feminine want of wit and memory, anxiety concerning speech, and reticence. Rather than disavow her outward female body, Elizabeth chose instead to use that body, and the feminine qualities men associated with it--in other words, to appropriate the appropriate--to advantage when necessary. Elizabeth's gendered "feare to speake" allows her to strategically remain silent on the matter of marriage. While possibly indicating "at one level the internalization of female inferiority," at another it was, according to Loomba, "a brilliant strategy both to appropriate the public spaces denied to women and repudiate the 'private' realm allocated to them" (110). In view of what I see in Elizabeth's representation of her "internalized" body, the strategic seems to outmaneuver incorporation; contra Loomba, the body that Elizabeth incorporates, or internalizes, seems to be masculine, rather than feminine. Moreover, her appropriation of public space not customarily denied to a sovereign in this instance allows her to finesse, rather than repudiate, the private realm men sought to make public issue.

Similarly, Shakespeare has his Cleopatra represent herself in a way more characteristic of Elizabeth than Egypt's queen: "A charge we bear i'th' war,/And, as

president of my kingdom, will/Appear there for a man" (3.7.16) alternates with, "No more but e'en a woman, and commanded/By such poor passion as the maid that milks/And does the meanest chares" (4.15.78-9). Shakespeare's Cleopatra, restricted as she is to Renaissance England, fails to recognize that associations with female bodies, both divine and mortal, and the corresponding evocation of the feminine need not carry negative connotations in ancient Egypt; indeed, as I have shown earlier, the historical Cleopatra adroitly annexed female precursors to consolidate, substantiate and augment her authority. No such powerful, positive, female representations, however, were available to Elizabeth. She could derive no legitimacy for the English crown by connecting herself with "foreign" queens; she could not displace the Cult of the Virgin and replace it with the cult of the Virgin Queen without de-catholicizing femininity, thereby losing much in the way of symbolic resonance; she could not even adopt the image of the faerie queen from English folklore without serious adaptation, turning her from black to white. The best Elizabeth could do was appropriate mythological female figures loaded with negative, as well as positive connotations for femininity.

Spectacle

Cleopatra's use of spectacle, as in the case of Elizabeth, combined the religious and political. In addition, like Elizabeth, Cleopatra's "power" as a ruler was tied up with the "conduct of war and the pursuit of conquest," both "spectacular" in their own way. (Hamer 13). Unfortunately for Cleopatra, "European understanding of the use she made of these forms has been shaped by the perspective of Roman writers hostile to her political

ends" (Hamer 13). To begin with, Roman colonizers found suspect and were hostile to the indigenous Egyptian practice of animal worship which Greek Cleopatra took pains to uphold. Roman redactions of Cleopatra's very public deference to this custom are decidedly unflattering, calling the practice "debased" (Hamer 13). As outlined above, Cleopatra's deployment of spectacular associations with the goddesses Isis and Hathor remain literally carved in stone or impressed into metal; these, fortunately, were impervious to Roman reinterpretation. But despite the tangible remnants recalling Cleopatra's able use of spectacle (wall reliefs and coins, mainly), discussions of her public uses of spectacle during her reign are all filtered through a Roman lens. As Mary Hamer has summarized:

> It is only through reports written after her death by authors who did not share her culture that we know anything about the public events she stage-managed: the dressing as Isis, which Plutarch asserts took place on many occasions; or presenting herself in splendor--'The barge she sat in, like a burnished throne, Burned on the water'--to Mark Antony at Tarsus; even the tableau she is said to have created out of her own death. (17)

The cultural difference most important to bear in mind is that display was not only licensed by, but also an essential part of, Egyptian culture--though not Roman.[15] Communal religious festivals not unlike medieval English Corpus Christi celebrations were an integral element of Egyptian culture, and the assumption is that Cleopatra participated. Roman disapproval of the ethos in general probably was transformed into more particular

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[15] Hamer 18.

disapproval of Cleopatra's participation in and exploitation of the culture's appreciation for the spectacular. Nevertheless, Cleopatra's adept incorporation of the religious and the spectacular served political ends very much like those of Elizabeth I in early modern England. The difference is that Elizabeth used the spectacular to solidify further the union of crown and creed, whereas Cleopatra used the (appropriated) faith to cement the connection between the crown and the spectacular. Regardless of which means served what ends, the important point is that with respect to spectacle in general, Egyptian ritual culture more closely resembled the Elizabethan, rather than Roman, sense and appreciation of what constituted the spectacular. More specifically, it seems that Cleopatra, as well as Elizabeth, understood that the spectacular could be deployed in ways designed to accentuate and consolidate political power. Both understood spectacle's theatrical potential; more important, perhaps, both signalled in their spectacular stagings their understanding of the multiplicity of possibility inherent in a highly malleable dramatic form.

Technically a foreigner, Cleopatra reinforced her "divine right" to the Egyptian throne by publicly paying her divine (female) Egyptian predecessors tribute, in longstanding high Egyptian style. By contrast, Elizabeth, a native, used the spectacle of her coronation progress to distance herself from the person and religious ritual of a female predecessor, Mary Tudor, and to reestablish ties with the person and religion of a male forebear, Henry VIII. Unfortunately, the Church of England's rites were still, at the time of Elizabeth's accession, under construction. Due to the religious tumult and ferment of the two decades and more preceding her reign, an enduring tradition of Protestant ritual

observance was largely unavailable to Elizabeth in mid-sixteenth century England. She therefore could not count on ancient religious rite to substantiate her divine right; she had to find another way. As Richard C. McCoy has ably demonstrated, the route Elizabeth took has left scholars following in her trail ever since. The early Elizabethan years were apparently a time of reinvention of the spectacular, particularly with regard to religious. While Cleopatra combined the spectacle of what could be called a "civic progress" with her canny, and very political, observance of her adopted Egyptian religious custom, Elizabeth, following on the heels of her half-sister Mary's controversial Catholic reign, had to be more careful. A return to her father's Protestant melding of church and state had to be handled delicately. Accordingly, Elizabeth deemphasized the "ritual" aspects of her coronation, awarding pride of place to the "civic."[16] Nevertheless, as head of both the Church of England as well as the state, Queen Elizabeth welded a triad of religion, state and spectacle not unlike the one fashioned by Cleopatra. Though their configurations of

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[16] McCoy's differentiation between the "ritual" and the "civic" is useful here. Elizabeth's coronation, a "ritual," was "sacred and hierarchical, and its procedures were fixed and mystical," moreover, these rites "directly invoked God's authority." The "civic" progress preceding the coronation was, by contrast, "a ceremony, secular and popular...freshly improvised and performed." McCoy's well-documented argument that Queen Elizabeth foregrounded the civic at the expense of the ritual during her coronation ceremonies requires me to expand earlier statements pertaining to Elizabeth's use of spectacle to solidify connections between crown and creed. In brief, Elizabeth wanted to remain, in keeping with the policy of her father, head of both church and (Protestant) state. Following on the heels of her sister Mary's Catholic reign, however, Elizabeth found it necessary, at least temporarily, to de-emphasize, in order to de-Catholicize and re-Protestantize, ritual. To help achieve this end, she saw to it that her civic progress was publicized in an unprecedented way, while her coronation ritual remained (and, according to McCoy yet remains) shrouded in ambiguities, which McCoy's essays help to clarify. For a more thorough treatment of the issues, see McCoy "Thou Idol Ceremony" and "The Wonderfull Spectacle."

the three components may have been at some variance with one another, both have in common the use of faith and spectacle to demonstrate and substantiate their acquisition and intended retention of political power.

Imperialism and Colonialism

The interstices of gender and imperialism/colonialism have been revealed by several post-colonial critics before me. As Edward Said sums it up, from the Renaissance forward, visions of the Oriental Other: "[K]eep intact the separateness of the Orient, its eccentricity, its backwardness, its silent indifference, it feminine penetribility, its supine malleability" (206). In short, the Orient has been "Othered" and the Other is routinely gendered feminine.

Renaissance colonialist discourse confirms Said's hypothesis. Colonized territory, in Africa and elsewhere, as Stephen Greenblatt notes, was "taken possession of"[17] by male explorers. One cannot help but noting the similarity in phraseology to that used by men to designate the act of sexually "possessing" or "taking possession of" women. In addition, the description of New World lands often furthers the connections between those lands and the effeminized female body:

> [The other islands] already seen are very beautiful and green and fertile, this one is much more so and with very large and green groves of trees. Here there are some big lakes and around them the groves are marvelous....And the singing of the small birds [is so marvelous] that it seems that a man would never want to leave this place. (Quoted in Greenblatt MP 78)

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[17] Marvelous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World 56.

Beautiful, young, lush, fertile, inviting, green[18]--above all, open to male penetration--the new lands encountered so seduce the men taking possession of them that they never want to leave the warmth of their embrace.

African colonizers found something more akin to Said's occidental approach to the oriental: more strange, anomalous, unstable and disordered, the darker color of the land's inhabitants and their "unruly" natures seemed to the colonizers to go part and parcel with the "foreignness" of the landscape. Also, as Kim Hall has noticed, black skin color "conjoins erotic nature with darkness"; indeed, it seems as though British colonizers suspected that the sensuality of these indigenous people is what turned their skin color black (97).

Both Elizabeth I and Cleopatra were female sovereigns deeply impressed by the impact of imperialism/colonialism. On a literal level, Elizabeth served as the monarch in whose name colonized territories were possessed. Her paradoxical position as female imperialist/colonizer is highlighted in Walter Ralegh's rhetoric designed to persuade the Queen to extend her colonial endeavors to Guiana:

> Her majesty shall confirme and strengthen the opinions of all nations, as touching her great and princely actions. And where the south border of Guiana reacheth to the Dominion and the Empire of the Amazones, those women shall hereby heare the name of a virgin, which is not onely able to defend her own territories and her neighbors, but also to invade and conquer so great Empyres and so far removed.

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[18] The "green sickness" in early modern England manifested itself as green skin tone among young menstruating women not yet sexually active. The recommended cure for "green sickness," in other words, was (hetero)sexual activity.

(Quoted in Montrose SE 120)

As Louis Montrose rightly has noticed, Ralegh's rhetorical strategy is not unlike Elizabeth's; he insinuates that she is both like and unlike an Amazon, possessing characteristics gendered both masculine and feminine. More dubiously, Montrose infers from the above that Elizabeth "can definitely cleanse herself from contamination by the Amazons if she sanctions their subjugation" (120). But Montrose's reading of Ralegh is predicated on the assumption that Elizabeth serves as no more than a metaphorical Amazonian female figurehead for males interested in colonizing other unruly females, the "literal" Amazons. Quite the contrary, as her iconography proves, Elizabeth was quite literally an enthusiastic imperialist colonizer of much more than unruly females.[19] Montrose's confusion might originate in inaccurately applied models of sexual difference--perhaps distorted by the lens of the twentieth century--that do not necessarily inhere in Ralegh's words. Carefully examined, one finds the pronoun "her" followed closely by the adjective "princely"--a rhetorical strategy mirroring Elizabeth's own--but what follows further serves to mystify sex and gender: he invokes the virgin body to describe one fully capable of "defending her own territories" (the impenetrable hymen of the anomalous female colonizer?) yet also physically equipped to accomplish phallic (penile) invasion and conquest. If there is anything the early modern androgyny of these queens makes clear, it is that the language of sexual difference, particularly in concert with colonialist discourse, does not always speak from a biologically determined body.

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[19] For more on the imperialist overtones found in Elizabeth's portraiture, see Constance Jordon's useful, "Representing Political Androgyny: More on the Siena Portrait of Elizabeth I."

Whether literal or figural, though, what I have concentrated on thus far is Elizabeth I as colonizer. If she was colonized, it was only figuratively in the minds of her courtiers and subjects, a point I will return at the end of this essay. Cleopatra, on the other hand, was literally both colonizer and colonized. As a Macedonian, she was part of a Greek colonizing presence in Egypt. As an Egyptian Queen she was colonized by the invading Romans. Mary Hamer neatly summarizes the Greek colonization of Egypt:

> In Egypt, where Cleopatra was born into the reigning house, there were two principal ethnic groups and cultures reflecting the history of its conquest by Alexander in 332 BC. The ruler, the court, and the administration were Greek. The mass of the population were farmers, holding land from the king. These peasants were Egyptian, as were the priests who maintained the ancient religion and with it the very focus of Egyptian civilization. But the two groups were not as clearly divided as this definition might suggest. Scholars continue to argue over the precise relation between the cultures in practice but in one area it is clear how the ruling Greeks had adapted to local conditions. The Ptolemies had been careful from early in their rule to avoid challenging the native religion: they adapted its forms and took part in its ceremonies to support their own tenure on the throne. (6)

Unlike the later colonization of the Greek rulers of Egypt by the Romans, the imperialist Greeks left major portions of Egyptian culture intact, especially, but not exclusively, religious observation and ceremony. By contrast, the Romans, when colonizing Egypt, sought to completely displace both Greek and Egyptian with Roman. Increasingly,

Augustus replaced the female/feminine images in religion and politics with male/masculine ones. Though he was careful to offer sacrifice to Cleopatra's goddess Hathor, he had himself represented artistically, at least, as presenting her with the sun, a symbol for male dominance.[20] Even more importantly perhaps, "[t]he female ruler, offering cult to the female goddess, a tradition extending back well before the time of Cleopatra, is displaced" (23). In addition, Augustus took pains to represent himself more customarily as making offering to the Buchis bull.[21] Even the image of Cleopatra on coins was "Romanized": a new coin first appearing in 37 BC replaces her graceful Alexandrian profile with what Mary Hamer calls "an unflattering waist-deep portrait of an older woman wearing a big necklace. The nose is big; the jaw sticks out. The image appeals not to past images of Hellenistic queens but to the Roman present: Cleopatra looks like Mark Antony in a wig" (9).

Noting the "crude colonization" of Greek/Egyptian culture by the Romans, Hamer notes too that though the replacement of the female in Egyptian culture by phallic male imagery has often elicited comment, few have widened that interpretation to include the male/female relation to the masculine/feminine. When what Hamer calls the "representational space" of gender "allocated to royal women in Egyptian culture was absorbed into male territory, the possibility of showing women as powerful in their own

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[20] See Freud's analysis of Dr. Schreber, "Psychoanalytic Notes upon an Autobiographical Account of a Case of Paranoia," where he states: "The sun is nothing more but another sublimated symbol for the father....the other parent is represented in this picture by the complementary conception which is found everywhere, 'Mother Earth'" (130). Note again the colonialists positing of the terrestrial as female.

[21] Hamer 23.

right, and in co-regency with men, was discarded" (23). Here is the unstable ground inherited by Elizabeth in England more than fifteen hundred years later. The already complicated nexus of sex, gender, race and imperialism was to grow even more confused in early modern culture.

Local Politics

First, I would like to attend to the politics of theater and the theater of politics. When Elizabeth died in 1603, Shakespeare was more free to analyze her reign in retrospect. I say *more* free because his artistic license was relative. James I was, after all, Elizabeth's nephew of sorts, and as Annabel Patterson points out, artistic freedom in the theaters was even more curtailed in the early Jacobean years.[22] In fact, James, chagrined by the number of plays satirizing court life and its attendant system of patronage, saw to it that a law passed against satire in the final years of Elizabeth's reign (1601) was more strictly enforced. But as Richard McCoy observes, Shakespeare was adept at "displacement":

> Shakespeare's stage...sustains a kind of Utopian displacement, its distance from the pressures of immediate controversy allowing a more detached perspective of the social situation. (Rites 6)

In this case, Shakespeare could distance himself from the pressures of immediate controversy, as well as perhaps gain a more detached perspective of the social situation in

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[22] Patterson reports than a "pattern of official surveillance" began in mid-sixteenth century England continued in James's reign (78).

early Jacobean England, by couching his observations about Elizabeth in terms of Cleopatra. As most of the above categories amply demonstrate, the similarities between the two queens were plentiful enough to ensure association; the differences were adequate to prevent a one-to-one correspondence. As Theordora A. Jankowski asserts: "By displacing the situation of Antony and Cleopatra to Egypt, Shakespeare was able to explore those questions of the nature of female rule free from court censure" (96). What Jankowski ignores, and what I will later address, is the importance of Antony and Cleopatra as a vehicle for Shakespeare's reflexive review of Elizabeth's reign--his ambivalence regarding her past rule, and, more importantly, his frustration with the fickle aggrandizement of her tenure by his contemporaries.[23] I suspect too that the play is in part an admonishment to the young courtiers who surrounded, flattered and abused the aged Elizabeth as they scrambled for position during the last years of her reign, only to bow to expediency and James I upon her death.

Jankowski has plenty of company in equating Elizabeth and Cleopatra. Both Helen Morris, in her critical essay, "Queen Elizabeth I 'Shadowed' by Cleopatra" and Keith Reinhart, in an essay entitled, "Shakespeare's Cleopatra and England's Elizabeth," enumerate the comparison in some detail. As the above reiteration of the many points of intersection shows, Shakespeare was probably aware of, and even exploited, the

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[23] In his essay "Mourning and Misogyny," Steven Mullaney argues that "proleptic" mourning of Elizabeth's death and misogynistic prejudice against aging women in general and England's aging Queen in particular are subtexts undergirding Shakespeare's Hamlet. While I agree with Mullaney in principle, I believe his theories carry more force when applied to a "metaleptic" text, Antony and Cleopatra, published three or four years after Elizabeth's death.

"collective response" of his Renaissance audience with regard to the two female monarchs under discussion. As Gary Taylor reports, the official censor often demanded changes "not because he expected each individual to interpret the text differently, but because he feared that three thousand spectators would respond collectively to Shakespeare's dangerous irreverence" (325). While the above makes evident that I agree with both Morris and Reinhart when they hasten to add that many dissimilarities between the two monarchs are also apparent, I would argue that a "collective response" to the composite Elizabeth/Cleopatra shades the present critical apparatus of the play much as it probably colored audience response in 1607.

Ania Loomba, for one, notices that the opposition of Caesar and Cleopatra in the play "can be seen as partially deriving from the contrasting styles of James and Elizabeth" (133). She reads the theatrical arch framing the Jacobean stage as "an emblem of state power" (132). Designed by Inigo Jones, the framing arch sought "to exalt the power of the state as much as the public theater was seen to threaten it," and was used "repeatedly in colonial architecture as emblematic of colonial might" (133). Loomba's conclusion, then, that "no spatial structure is free of social implications" seems in this case to be especially acute and germane (132). Antony and Cleopatra was literally framed on the Jacobean stage by an arch designed to temporally as well as spatially distance events on the stage, reaffirm state power, and reassert colonial dominance. Bordered as such, the play would provide another exalted example of the "materialism and mechanism (and republicanism) of Occidental culture" determined to eradicate the ethereal flux of non-republican Orientalism (Said 115). In terms of gender, Loomba claims that "James' anti-woman bias

was also picked up by the new architecture and theater. Inigo Jones conceived of his own architecture and theater design as 'solid, proportional, *masculine* and unaffected' (Thorne 57 emphasis added). If masculinity connotes order and power, then the variety and disorder of the popular theater is connected yet again to the disturbance offered by unruly femininity" (133). In short, the Jacobean stage was designed to announce its imperial distance from Elizabeth I, the spectator/subject, the colonized Other, and the "unruly femininity" potentially present in one and all.

But Elizabeth was one of those absences destined to become only more present with the passage of time. In fact, I would argue, in the early Jacobean years, she became ever more "wrinkled deep in time." The nostalgia for Elizabeth's reign was heightened by the much more autocratic rule of James I, the reduced circumstances of the early years of his reign, and the increasing empowerment of conservative Protestants. In her absence, Elizabeth became an even greater favorite of her people, resulting in near-canonization.

Shakespeare may well have shared these sentiments, but the elevation of the bygone Elizabethan reign to the status of a lost arcadia must have had its problems for one sharing close ties with the inner circle surrounding the Queen in the final years of her reign. Few associated with the crown and its entourage could have failed to notice that Elizabeth's magic nearly evaporated in the generational turn-over of the 1590's. With second-generation courtiers brazenly jockeying to fill positions left open by the deaths of more subtle, more patient, and more experienced first-generation retainers, the impression of unshakable loyalty and unquestioned deference so well cultivated by Elizabeth,

Burghley and Leicester was shattered. Here again, Shakespeare likely displaces his concerns. Rather than point the finger directly at his noble associates and sponsors. he instead substitutes Roman aristocracy for English. The shifting loyalties of Caesar, Lepidus, Pompey and Antony make them perfect foils for Shakespeare's English contemporaries. Antony and Cleopatra likely collapses a growing sense of restiveness shared by playwright and audience during the early Stewart reign into an ever-increasing disillusionment with court circles originating in events more than a decade earlier.

Most critics align republican Rome with Elizabethan England via a proleptic (perhaps even prophetic) reading of Shakespeare's Julius Caesar (1599), advanced to allegorize the upcoming Essex Rebellion (1601). In addition, critics Rebhorn, Dollimore and Jonathan Goldberg all specify Essex as the Elizabethan courtier most evocative of republican Rome. But it pays to remain mindful of Rebhorn's careful assertion that "Julius Caesar is...no Tragedie of Essex" (106). His observation is equally apropos to Antony and Cleopatra. And yet, the repeated reworking of the Roman model indicates that Shakespeare continued to re-turn republican Rome to the light of its analogous relationships with his contemporary society.[24] If Shakespeare could not help noticing parallels between Elizabeth and Cleopatra worth exploiting, he could no more miss the comparison of the Roman triumvirate with Elizabeth's Privy Council. The social and

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[24] Shakespeare was not the only one to draw the analogy: Bacon's 1597 essay, "Of Faction," is careful never to name Elizabeth and her later court as its inspiration, but instead refers to factionalism as a dangerous phenomenon pertinent to the ruin of ancient Rome. Likewise, Sir William Cornwallis's "Of Friendship and Factions" takes the Roman "Triumviri" as its model. Rebhorn believes that Cornwallis and Bacon "thus reveal a normal tendency in their day to see Elizabethan politics through the lens of Rome" (99).

political climate of late Tudor and early Stuart England made the return to Rome an especially appropriate subterfuge.

Elizabeth never shared Coriolanus' aversion to working a crowd. She used her progresses as opportunities to mix with her subjects, displaying a great deal of warmth and affection for her subjects, which was eagerly reciprocated. But her relationships with her courtiers during her last years were another matter, as they became increasingly fraught with controversy and conflict. It was during these years that Elizabeth was obliged to "train" the new courtiers breaking in as members of the "old camp"--Burghley, Walsingham and Randolph, for instance--died.[25] "In a sense," recounts biographer John Neale, "Elizabeth's supreme task, which had been accomplished painfully but successfully in the early decades of her reign--the eradication of sex prejudice in statesmen and courtiers--was beginning over again with the new generation" (342). This time, a sublime political tactic turned ridiculous; Elizabeth was simply too aged to continue to use the same elaborate courtship ritual to advantage:

> [T]he tragedy was that the artifice by means of which she had met the disability of her sex, even turning it to account, no longer retained its charm. The love-tricks, the idyll of the Fairy Queen, went on: at what point were they to be stopped?....[T]hey were at best tawdry, at worst mockery, to the young bloods of Essex's generation. (342)

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[25] According to Frye, Leicester died in 1588, Walsingham in 1590, and Burghley in 1598. Female intimates of the privy chamber such as Mistress Mary Ratcliffe also died, leaving Elizabeth "depressed" (99), and with an inevitably heightened awareness of the vulnerability of her own aging body.

"Sex prejudice" with the added wrinkle of age prejudice became too much for Elizabeth to successfully counter. The bosom exposed to connote virginity, the effusive love letters exchanged between Elizabeth and her courtiers, the dangled marriage possibilities all now looked sadly comic. Surely, there was absolutely no chance that Elizabeth might actually marry one of them, conceive a son, and die conveniently in childbirth, leaving Ralegh say. or Essex, for all intents and purposes, King. Yet the game persisted, her courtiers continuing to flatter her as a means to advancement and the extremely remunerative favors she was able to dispense to favorites. It was false to the core, as all parties involved, and strategically placed onlookers, were likely aware.

The resulting isolation in the later years of her reign was therefore both literal and figural. As Susan Frye recounts, Elizabeth's "aging body re-excited and re-shaped anxieties about the succession" (107). To counter these anxieties provoked by her literal appearance, Elizabeth became ever more physically withdrawn. She then augmented her physical distance by rhetorically positioning herself as "powerful because she was remote, self-sufficient and desirable--'chaste' according to her own definition of the word" (107). This time the evocation of "chastity" to elicit automatic semantic associations with its corollary, youth, was a strategy of only limited efficacy.

Without what Frye calls the "mediation of figurative language" conflict seemed inevitable, and inevitably, conflict arose. As Louis A. Montrose recounts, Elizabeth's "open display of intimacy with Ralegh during the Christmas festivities of 1584" signalled to many the displacement if not replacement of her older, and earlier, suitor Leicester by a member of the younger group of courtiers just starting to make its mark ("Work" 184). By

the late 1580's Ralegh in turn was displaced in the Queen's affections by the even younger Essex. Both men eventually made a mockery of their "courtship" of Elizabeth by secretly marrying other, younger women, and both men were soundly remonstrated for their lack of constancy by the Queen.[26]

Sentiments Richard C. McCoy characterizes as "estrangement" and "unruly discontent" fanned outward from Essex as "focal point." ("A Dangerous Image" 328). According to McCoy, a letter written in 1602 to Robert Cecil by Sir John Popham bemoans Popham's inability to recruit participants for a royal entertainment within the Middle Temple, even though funds for the event were not a problem: "[I]f the *young* gentlemen will be drawn in to perform what is of their part, I hope it will be effected. Some of the *young* gentlemen have their humours, but I hope that will be overruled" (Qtd. McCoy 328 my emphasis). McCoy holds court factions and aspiration at least partly responsible for the rifts between the courtiers themselves and their Queen; Wayne Rebhorn adds emulation, a form of competition as well as imitation, to McCoy's recipe for

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[26] Raleigh secretly married Elizabeth Throgmorton, and Elizabeth learned of the clandestine union and the birth of their first child in 1592. Both were imprisoned in the Tower for their transgression, and Raleigh continued in disgrace for some time after he and his wife regained their freedom. Essex's suit for Elizabeth's pardon of his marriage to Frances Walsingham, Sir Philip Sidney's widow, at the Accession Day Tilt of 1590 is legendary. It should be noted, however, that Roy Strong's reading of as Essex black-clad penitent has been complicated by Richard C. McCoy's counterintuitive suggestion that Essex's performance belies a "flagrant assertion of his loyalty to Sidney's memory and his widow" and seems "more defiant than contrite" ("Essex and Elizabethan Chivalry 319). McCoy's reading accords with my own suspicions regarding the patent and rather blatant hypocrisy of Elizabeth's "loving" younger courtiers.

conflict: Anthony Esler astutely throws generational conflict into the above mix.[27] As events such as Essex's failed rebellion of 1601 have shown, it was a volatile blend.

The dead and dying first-generation members of Elizabeth's inner circle undoubtedly suffered their fair share of intrigue, competition for favor, and ambition. After all, there existed the possibility, however slim, that Elizabeth might actually marry one of them and produce an heir, disrupting, if not destroying, a most tenuously balanced distribution of power. And yet, I suspect, the dangling of the nuptial carrot combined with the force of the princely stick (only available so long as Elizabeth remained unmarried and thus free of husbandly "rule") helped to keep rivalous skirmishing discreetly out of the public eye. Coupled with the complaisant air of smooth courtly deference to the Queen, a keen awareness of and appreciation for the necessity of "image building" pervaded Elizabeth's early court, ruling out overt public displays of dissention. Courtiers instead used courtly entertainments (such as those staged at Kenilworth in 1575) to covertly package their quarrels between themselves and with their Queen.

But as the work of McCoy, Rebhorn and Esler makes abundantly clear, the aspiring minds of the younger generation presented a new challenge to Elizabeth, just as her aging body forced a redefinition of the chivalric code which for so long had enabled her to contain dissention so capably. Complicating matters even further, the factions of the younger generation--the Ralegh faction, the Essex faction--contended not just with each other for prestige and position, but with the members of the elder generation of courtiers

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[27] McCoy, "'A Dangerous Image': The Earl of Essex and Elizabethan Chivalry"; Rebhorn, "The Crisis of the Aristocracy in *Julius Caesar*"; Esler, The Aspiring Mind of the Elizabethan Younger Generation.

still active at court. As Anthony Esler has described the year of 1588, for example, the court was led by a fifty-five year-old queen, flanked by her favorite, Essex, who was twenty-one; the Cecils, old Lord Burghley his son's senior by more than forty years; the Earl of Leicester and Sir Francis Drake, both of the aging Queen's generation; and the up-and-comers such as Sir Francis Vere and Charles Blount, the future Lord Mountjoy (xii-iii).

Though Esler takes pains to enumerate several generations active in the last two decades of Elizabeth's reign, the generational conflict he situates in those decades largely was waged between what he calls the "generation of the 1520's" and the "generation of the 1560's" (xiv). The generation of 1520 was shaped by the "revolutionary decades of the later Henry VIII, Edward VI and Mary; they therefore tended to think and act alike" (xiv). Moreover, as Esler points out, a "conservative drag" becomes more pronounced as people from all generations throughout history age (xi). The cautious men of 1520 surrounding Elizabeth in her youth likely became even more reserved as they and their Queen aged.

The aspiring younger generation, however, felt no such compunction. In contrast to their elders, they had been born for the most part after Elizabeth's accession, and had enjoyed the stability of her reign for twenty, and then thirty years. The tumult and turmoil of the reigns of Elizabeth's three predecessors pre-dated their lived experience; it was at best part of their received knowledge of "history," at worst, folklore. In addition, "the much admired Christian humanist education...failed with the generation of 1560" (56). In the opinion of Esler, "this failure of the educational process contributed largely to the deeper spiritual alienation of the younger generation from the ideals of their elders" (56).

Compounding matters even further, the younger generation enjoyed fewer family ties, often growing up in what Esler calls "broken homes," usually due to the premature death of a parent. Schools succeeded no better in fostering a sense of community. Harsh rigidity and strict discipline was the order of the day, and the curriculum was deemed "antiquated"--unable to keep pace with and remote from "the affairs of...a world in which the realms of politics, science, commerce, and industry were seeing tremendous changes of which the traditional university studies failed to take cognizance" (59).

Esler probably overstates his case a bit, pitting the "natural, passionate idealism" of the generation of 1560 against the "cautious negativism and apparent hypocrisy of [the] spiritually burned-out older generation" of 1520 (60). Nevertheless, he does posit something akin to Cavell's philosophical skepticism as belonging to this new generation; he calls it the absence of a "psychologically satisfying basis for a system of values" (61). In doubt as to the values maintaining the epistemological equilibrium the earlier generation seemed so intent on preserving, the generation of the 1560's, much like the generation of 1960's, exploded with what Elser calls "high aspiration." In short, Essex, much like the cheeky twenty-somethings responding to a similar cultural conflict four hundred years later, took his protest into the streets.

The youthful protest movements of the 1960's, however, often presupposed a repudiation of the economic security so prized, so often obtained at an exorbitant cost, by the preceding generation. Not so for Elizabeth's young men of 1560. That Sir Nicholas Bacon had begun life as a sheep reeve's son, that Charles Blount's father had spent most of his life accumulating wealth almost to the ruin of himself and his family, that even

Burghley was a "new man," rising through the ranks under three sovereigns, was not lost on the newcomers (Esler 62). Rather than disparage those accomplishments, the younger generation, for the most part enjoying the comfort of wealth from their earliest days, sought to outdo, to raise the acquisitiveness of the earlier generation to an even higher power. But how? More important perhaps, where? The answer for most young men was to look outward, to expand their vision of unprecedented personal wealth and power well beyond the borders of merry old England. Ralegh looked to the Americas; Essex, like Edmund Spenser, hoped to find the route to preferment via Ireland. The ambitions of the aspiring minds of the 1560's were too large to be contained within the English perimeter; colonialist expansion was required to satisfy a broadened sense of ambition.

Louis A. Montrose substantiates my point in part by recounting Ralegh's advice to the Queen:

> As is common in the promotional literature for Elizabethan colonizing ventures, Ralegh envisions exploration, trade, and settlement abroad as an escape valve for the frustrations of disaffected or marginalized groups, and as a solution for endemic socioeconomic problems at home: "Her Majestie may in this enterprize employ all those souldiers and gentlemen that are younger brethren, and all captaines and chieftaines that want employment." Thus, the potentially riotous malcontents among her majesty's masculine subjects may displace their thwarted ambitions into the conquest of virgin lands. Himself a younger brother, a soldier, and a gentleman in need of advancement, Ralegh might well be considered a special case of the general social problem that he here seeks to redress to his own

inestimable advantage. ("Work" 206)

That Rome's crude masculinist attempts to colonize the ambient femininity of Egypt in Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra has the potential to be read as a telescoped, allegorical, not-especially-complimentary vision of England's younger sons trying to "possess" new world territory should come as no surprise. Ralegh published his *Discoverie of Guiana*, quoted above, in 1596, only three years prior to the debacle of Essex's Irish campaign of 1599.

Wayne A. Rebhorn catalogues the many comparisons between Essex and Caesar in his essay, "The Crisis of the Aristocracy in *Julius Caesar*."[28] He concludes first, that like Caesar, "Essex's enemies were doubless gloating...and anticipating his fall from grace" after his failure in Ireland and that these enemies "could be imagined as conspiring to undo him--a view that Shakespeare, on the periphery of the Essex circle, could have encountered" and second, that factional struggles between the generations of 1520 and 1560 "certainly invited contemporaries to compare Caesar and Pompey and the other Romans to Essex and Cecil" (102, 103). Finally, and perhaps "most noteworthy," Rebhorn

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[28] Rebhorn suggests that Essex perceived himself as something more than the "ideal knight"; he "also viewed himself as a Roman hero" (102). Like Shakespeare's Cleopatra, Essex often used references to Roman culture to describe his circumstances, and according to Lacey Baldwin Smith, one of Essex's favorite phrases was Caesar's, "The die is cast" (L.B. Smith 221, citing Thomas Birch, Memoirs of the Reign of Queen Elizabeth from the Year 1581 til her Death [London:1754], 2:386). Essex's own associations aside, others such as Bacon, Greville and Naunton made the same connection, since the parallels between the two men are numerous: "both were self-publicizing, heroic warriors and conquerors, both successfully courted the common people and commanded powerful factions among the aristocracy, and both were seen as aspiring to Kingship" (Rebhorn 103). The small fault I find in Rebhorn's argument is that the same could be said of at least Ralegh and Antony as well. Perhaps even more so than Julius Caesar, Antony and Cleopatra is a political allegory with more than one referent for every signifier.

repeats Sir Robert Naunton's direct comparison of Essex's followers during the rebellion to Caesar's who, "like Caesar's followers would have all or none" (103). The first two of Rebhorn's references are metaleptic, though the last is proleptic; the Essex Rebellion took place in 1601. Julius Caesar is dated 1599.

Nevertheless, as Rebhorn points out, also proleptically as regards Julius Caesar, the political and socioeconomic climate in England changed considerably after the accession of James I. The more absolutist policy of James impinged upon aristocratic power formerly acquired through warfare and the residuum of feudal maintenance. General price rises and the expense of court living made it ever more incumbent upon the aristocracy to curry favor and all found themselves scrambling for the position necessary to secure financial reward at home and abroad. Rent increases designed to enable courtiers to balance their bloated budgets disenfranchised the aristocracy from the peasants on their estates. Factional strife continued unabated (Rebhorn 107). Though, as Lawrence Stone has reminded us, the aristocracy was to rebuild after the Interregnum, the last decades of the fifteenth century and the first decades of the sixteenth century likely mark a march toward the bottoming-out that Stone dates at 1640.[29]

Shakespeare's next play, Coriolanus, like Stone's analysis, emphasizes economics and social history, but Julius Caesar and Antony and Cleopatra come from a different perspective, one more epistemologically eschatological, one derived more from ethical conundrums than from the adjacent material aspects of early modern culture. Rebhorn's conclusions about Julius Caesar are equally, if not more appropriate to Antony and

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[29] See the Conclusion to Stone's The Crisis of the Aristocracy.

Cleopatra: "Shakespeare's play is analytical, revealing the self-destruction, the *suicide*, to which an entire class is being impelled by its essential values and mode of self-definition, by its emulation and factionalism" and, "[a]ristocratic emulation spells factionalism and civil strife and it leads inevitably, tragically, to the dead-end of *suicide* (my emphasis 108).

Thus the tragic. Contra most available readings of this play, I suspect that the tragic elements of Antony and Cleopatra are inscribed within the demise of an ambitious, factionalized, emulous masculinity, even if an inaccurately and exceedingly "masculinized" early modern version of the feminine dies along with it. Like Ralegh's *Discoverie*, this play "manifests a considerable strain between two Elizabethan subject positions and two different notions of the 'subject': a strain between the subject's courtship of and deference to his queen, and his contrary impulse to assert his own masculine virtue and to put his sovereign in her place as a woman" (Montrose "Work" 207).

Hence, a distinctly parodic flavor was added to Shakespeare's portrayal of Antony and Cleopatra. As the strategies that had worked so well for Elizabeth in the past descended into farce, so too, at times does this play. Once the surface of subservient deference cracked to reveal to the populace the hypocrisy just beneath, Shakespeare was free to comingle stories of transcendent love as redemptive (the early years and the years following Elizabeth's death) with one of transcendent love as destructive (the final two decades of her reign). The latter story borders on satire. And like all good satirists, Shakespeare aims for more than a single target: Rome, Egypt, Elizabethan and Jacobean England, Cleopatra, Antony, Essex, Ralegh et. al., Elizabeth. The value of the resulting indeterminacy has already been established. What Shakespeare scores is an indirect hit,

with "varying perspectives" on just who is to be praised or blamed, and for what.

Antony's Roman indictment of "[o]ur slippery people,/whose love is never link'd to the deserver/Till his deserts are past" (1.2.183-4) speaks just as eloquently to the large, mercurial retinue supported and sustained by Elizabeth. Caesar's remarks are no less acute with regard to James: "It hath been taught us from the primal state/That he which is was wish'd, until he were" (1.4.41-2). Caesar's observation is particularly poignant in light of the pronoun; even those who appreciated the stability and accomplishment of England during Elizabeth's forty-five year reign often found that it was ***he*** who was wished. And then he was.

And when he was, as Antony's accusation attests, a curious nostalgia pervaded the Jacobean psyche. Once again, the play forces us to confront the contents of a gap, since nostalgia is located within the space that differentiates present from past. Within that gap, Lowell Gallagher situates yet another rupture, one he names "the structuring wound within nostalgia: belatedness, which is figured as a mark of discrepancy that cannot be closed but can be acknowledged, coped with, even made productive" (470). Belatedly, Elizabethans encountered both the phenomenological and the psychoanalytic manifestations their nostalgic yearning for a return to Elizabeth.[30]

Phenomenologically, nostalgia requires an internalized sense of distance in space,

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[30] The term "nostalgia" actually originates in 1678. According to James Phillips, "it was coined in order to elevate to the status of a formal medical entity the pathological homesickness frequently observed at the time and over the next three hundred years nostalgia's use as a medical equivalent to pathologic homesickness slowly receded and evolved into the phenomenon we now recognize by the term" (64). I want to argue that the phenomenon we now recognize by the term is operative in early seventeenth-century England.

but more importantly, in time. In homesickness one finds that "the spatial dimension prevails over the temporal"; by contrast, "it is in the distance of nostalgia that the reverse occurs, the temporal dimension prevailing over the spatial" (65). Additionally, nostalgia requires a *memorialization* of a *time past*, no matter how proximate to the present. That the past yearned for is memorialized serves as a cue to another important aspect of nostalgia: "[The nostalgic] often appears to be yearning for something that never existed" (66), or in other cases, for something that existed in a much less idealized form.

Psychoanalytically, nostalgia is most often treated as "a fantasied response to loss through an imagined recreation of the lost object" (68). Analysts note, however, that "the nostalgic fantasy of fulfillment and the accompanying sense of satisfaction, is based on a past fulfillment which was real" (68). The lost object-as-source-of-satisfaction is predictably an internalized representation of the maternal, literally, the mother. But as D.W. Winnicott has shown, the gap between mother and child is often filled with what he described as "transitional objects" (Winnicott 229-43). Transitional objects, however specific, however literal, eventually transmute into more general symbolic solace. For, as Winnicott argues, even after relinquishing the transitional object, the subject retains in its place the "transitional realm," and this realm in turn dilates sufficiently to contain the whole of the subject's symbolic and cultural experience.

The gap between presence and absence marks the region of the transitional realm; the absence made present in the psyche evokes nostalgic desire. One could argue that the return to the mother here is figured as and associated with the more maternal representations of Elizabeth later in her reign. Furthermore, one plausibly could suggest

that nostalgic yearning for the mother, shifted within the transitional realm to longing for Elizabethan comfort, is then translated into experience through the symbolic order of language--a play text. Considering Shakespeare's effacement of the maternal in Cleopatra, however, these arguments seem too limited. The "maternal" needs to be expanded to "the feminine."

Par for the course, the feminine is figured here as Other. Incidentally, she is a unified Other, one of extreme adaptability against which the construction of masculinity, of colonization and imperialism, of homosocial emulation and aspiration, of past and present, of absence and presence, of language and symbol--to give only a partial list--becomes possible.

But what ramifications, if any, does the collapse of Cleopatra and Elizabeth I into generic female Other have for the contemporary critic? From the perspective of the feminist critic, one would have to address a certain reluctance to historicize females transferred from the historic to the literary based on accounts written by men. Because the "invented" scenes of Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra are often assumed by critics to exemplify behavior perfectly consonant with a preconceived image of Cleopatra, questions arise when those episodes become connected instead with Elizabeth I. A conclusion reached by Martha Tuck Rozett provides a potent example of my reservations:

> Antony and Cleopatra delight us with their poetry, with their unpredictable--and sometimes predictable--responses (an example of the latter is Cleopatra's treatment of the messenger who brings news of Antony's marriage to Octavia)...(164).

"Predictable response" for whom? Females? Monarchs? Female monarchs? That the distinctions collapse for us as they did for the Jacobean audience is a blessing and a curse. We notice the ways in which adjectives used to describe the two women in historical chronicles interchange, but who wrote the descriptions? Plutarch, Melville, Greville, Harrington, Hatton, Camden and Neale, to name several, all male. Serious reservations arise when male/masculine perspectives provide the only sources on which to base conclusions about people who are, after all, individuals, separated from one another in both space and time.

Conclusion

"Conclusions"--let alone the singular, "conclusion"--for one like myself so resistent to closure, are difficult, to say the least. I wish I could say that the preceeding pages "prove" something, prove *anything*, for that matter. They don't. But they do, I hope, open new possibilities for a continuing dialogue for those of us interested in gender, age, and women's studies.

What my undergraduate mentor, Robert Christopher, hailed as my "resistence to closure" has become something of a blessing and a curse. Scholarship demands a "conclusion"; we like to think we have made our cases clearly and persuasively. But my implication in the postmodern condition leaves me wary of declaring my word the last, definitive word on any matter.

So much of what I investigate is new to the scholarly arena. Feminist studies of Shakespeare's plays began only perhaps twenty-five years ago. And many of these early studies produced as a byproduct of the first wave of the feminist movement, as I mentioned in my Introduction, were more concerned with the shaping of male identity than they were with the female characters themselves. There is still an alarming propensity, even in recent work, for essays purportedly about Gertrude, say, to turn into essays about Hamlet. The same is often true for essays concerning Cleopatra.

Gender studies, as a movement apart from mainstream feminism, is still in its infancy. New essays, new books on the topic pour out in a stream difficult to keep abreast

with, and yet, keep up we must, as the startling new scholarship by Dympna Callaghan mentioned only as a footnote in this study underscores how little we know about sex and gender configurations in the early modern period. What gender theorists are discovering can not help but have an important impact on what future feminist critics have to say about women of the period.

Age studies are few and far between. So little scholarship is available on the early modern aging process, and most available studies pertain to men. For so long, the medieval and early modern "Ages of Man" have been assumed generic. In fact, the "Ages of Woman" appear to be decidedly different from those of their male counterparts. Legally and medically, most of the Ages of Woman seem to be based on the marriage paradigm, and this emphasis has so far been predicated upon the assumed lack of options for single women in the period. But the assumption that few, if any women, remained unmarried after the dissolution of the convents--that only rare exceptions such as Elizabeth I and Moll Cutpurse remained single by choice throughout their lifetimes--is one in need of further investigation before we come to any conclusions. Before we can adopt the marriage paradigm as reliable and draw any tentative outlines of the manner in which early modern women aged--and these at first crude outlines will have to take into account other issues as well, issues of social class, for example, and country life apart from urban--much work remains to be done, and the work that has been completed will likely need revision.

In addition, my differentiating between "literal" women and "figurative" women in this dissertation is, I believe, a useful reminder. As my chapter on the madonna/whore split of the early modern period demonstrates, we need to historicize firgurative representations

of women every bit as much as we need to dig up archival information about the lives of actual women in the period. Pernicious as they are, figural representations which have evolved into cliches about women should not be ignored, or shrugged off as uninteresting or unworthy of further critical attention. Certainly, most of these figural represenattions of women have been derived from the patriarchal discourse of "ideological state apparatuses": religious and educational institutions, psychoanalysis, theories of the state and of the family, the law. But that circumstance need not, indeed should not, deprive them of the opportunity to be re-figured in terms of advances made in theorization. Once these often stereotypical figures are historicized in terms of their social genesis and symbolic genealogy, as John Brenkman has termed it, their power of articulation reasonably can be emptied out. In other words, we need to know where these malignant stereotypes originated and how they have historically been put to use to justify the need for patriarchal intervention into women's lives.

The women this dissertation focuses on all disrupt, or, in the case of Gertrude, indicate disruptions in, the continuity of the patriarchal paradigm. In every case, I would say that their age is the most important factor in their ability to fragment, at least temporarily, what is thought to be a holistic regime. No longer young, not yet old, these women of a certain age have a unique ability at this particular juncture of their lives to arouse the worst fears of an early modern system determined to become monolithic. It is in figuring these fears through women that male authors give us a glimpse not of the strength of patriarchy, but of its weakness. A reading of Shakespeare's entire corpus would reveal, I think, virtually every fearful fantasy about women held in the male

imagination. Most of these fears inhere in the sexual nature of the female body: fear of sexual infidelity; fear of female speech, the open mouth an indication of the correspondingly open body; fear of childbirth and questions about legitamacy; fear of inability to read the signs that distinguish a woman who is "only a woman" from one who is a whore. That male uncertainty about so many aspects of early modern life gets read through a supposed instability in the "signs" of women testifies once again to the power of women to symbolize, and the power of literal women to disrupt symbolization once it has been "established."

My hope, as I stated in my Introduction, is to begin a feminist genealogy of women, one that resists the impulse to generalize the particular. I warned from the outset that I had no need or desire to prove that moments of subversion indicate female "domination," the "failure" of patriarchy, the lack of "containment." Likewise, I want to continue to resist the notion that speaking from the subject position of one living within a culture where patriarchal assumptions dominate indicates an automatic reinscription of patriarchal perrogative *by women*. Hermione, for example, "buys into" a residual kind of patriarchy--the courtly love paradigm--until it fails her completely. She then, with the help of Paulina, withdraws until the emergent type of patriarchy--the "reciprocity" of the affective family prescribed by Puritan divines--makes her reemergence into the "open air" again possible.

To return to the beginning of this conclusion as a way to an end, I want to once again call attention to the *plural*. As the last paragraph again shows, I want to turn the attention of feminist historicist scholars to the importance of the plural, even if that turn

complicates closure. We need to think, both synchronically and diachroncially, in terms of the plural: different brands of patriarchy shaped by residual, dominant and emergent ideology; women who are women even in the course of a single lifetime; conclusions about women and patriarchies deferring a conclusive conclusion but allowing instead the reconstuction of historical and literary women in all their situational diversity. If I have helped to makes us more attentive to difference, and the deferral difference mandates, then there is a conclusion after all.

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