2010

Your Change Is Still Behind: Futurity in Early Modern Literature

Tripthi Pillai
Loyola University Chicago

Follow this and additional works at: https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_diss

Part of the Literature in English, British Isles Commons

Recommended Citation
Pillai, Tripthi, "Your Change Is Still Behind: Futurity in Early Modern Literature" (2010). Dissertations. 175.
https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_diss/175

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses and Dissertations at Loyola eCommons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Loyola eCommons. For more information, please contact ecommons@luc.edu.

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 License.
Copyright © 2010 Tripthi Pillai
LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

‘YOUR CHANGE IS STILL BEHIND’:
FUTURITY IN EARLY MODERN LITERATURE

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

PROGRAM IN ENGLISH

BY
TRIPTHI PILLAI
CHICAGO, IL
MAY, 2010
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS viii  
ABSTRACT xi  
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION 1  
CHAPTER TWO: “THE HOUR MUST HAVE HER PORTION”: MATERIAL FUTURITY IN EARLY MODERN DRAMA 56  
CHAPTER THREE: “YOUR CHANGE IS STILL BEHIND: Appropriated Bodies and Biological Futurity in Marlowe and Middleton” 85  
CHAPTER FOUR: “IN HOPE TO ALTER KINDE”: MAPPING POLITICAL FUTURITY IN LANYER AND MORE 116  
CHAPTER FIVE: “NOW I WILL BELIEVE THAT THERE ARE UNICORNS”: DISRUPTIVE VISIONS AND POLITICAL FUTURITY IN SHAKESPEARE’S ROMANCES 137  
CHAPTER SIX: “IF WISHES WERE HORSES, BEGGARS WOULD RIDE”: DESIRE, ARTICULATION, AND MOVEMENT IN EVERYDAY PERFORMANCES OF FUTURITY 187  
BIBLIOGRAPHY 249  
VITA 264
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I could not have written this dissertation without the invaluable criticism and nourishing intellectual support of my director, Dr. Suzanne Gossett. Dr. Christopher Kendrick and Dr. Wendy Wall provided me with consistent and productive feedback, engaging my work at each point with rigorous enthusiasm. I am thankful to my committee for their brilliant insights and knowledge, their generosity, and for their tireless support of my ideas.

Various faculty members and colleagues have helped me navigate my graduate student experiences at Loyola. Their mentorship has been priceless, and I hope in future to emulate their pedagogy and model/s of companionship. Dr. David Chinitz was the Graduate Programs’ Director when I joined the English department. I want to thank him especially for standing by me through thick and thin. Without his support, none of this could have materialized. Dr. Andrew Cutrofello of the Philosophy department has helped me better understand Deleuze in the context of futurity. His enthusiasm for Shakespeare is infectious, and he has made me a better reader and appreciator of literature and theory. Dr. Jack Kerkering has advised me on matters ranging from the teaching of close reading practices to the all-important realities of the academic “job market.” I will never be able to thank him enough for his help and his ceaseless generosity toward me. Dr. Paul Jay’s support during this difficult year on the “market” has made my application process both enjoyable and successful. I want to thank him for his optimistic spirit, which combines wonderfully with his critical insight to the academic profession. As Chairs of the English
department during my graduate student years, Dean Frank Fennell and Dr. Joyce Wexler ensured that I received ample teaching experience; it is because of their help that I consistently have been able to improve myself as a teacher of literature and writing. As Graduate Programs’ Director during my dissertation writing years, Dr. Pamela Caughie did everything she possibly could to make the administrative processes smooth-sailing.

Loyola libraries have been my home away from home and have sustained me, both intellectually and economically. In particular, I want to thank Jeannette Pierce, Niamh McGuigan, and Brenda Overton of the Reference department for having made work a delight. My respect for the centrality of libraries within university culture is doubly solidified owing to the tireless efforts of the librarians and student workers at Loyola, who embrace their responsibilities with admirable dignity.

My friends have lifted me out of some of my most painful experiences of loss while at Loyola, notably the times of my divorce and the death of my father. They have also listened with patience to my ideas about futurity, and have helped me give shape to my project. My heartfelt thanks to Kanika Batra, Donovan Braud, Matthew Clarke, Roger McNamara, and Mark Owen. Natalie and Matt have been wonderful roommates; they have, moreover, been true friends. Two other friends, Karthik Krishnaswamy and Sherri Saltzman, have taught me by their examples that it is possible to be both courageous and fabulous. My thanks to them for being there for me. There is not space enough here to express my love and respect for Eric Byville; he is my best friend, and I would not have it any other way.
Finally, my humblest and greatest thanks are reserved for my family at home in Delhi—Momma, Chechi, Mohan Chetta, Proni, and Binsu. They make my happiness meaningful.
ABSTRACT

A study of Renaissance literature’s engagement with temporality, my project is a critical evaluation of the concept of early modern futurity, of which I propose three categories: “Material futurity”; “Biological futurity”; and “Political futurity.” In the moments that I identify in texts composed during the Tudor and early Stuart reigns in England, I demonstrate that the future—as an idea—structures individuals’ actions and ruptures social formations. Futurity, which I define as a play of multiple desires that exist simultaneously within our present beings, is a volatile agent of imagination in early modern literature. Futurity collides with the cultural sites of memory and pulls characters in different directions, destabilizing the organized spaces defined by their bodies, kingdoms, and locations. While the characters in these texts may return to regulated forms of thought and being, it is in their moments of flux, I argue, that they present the most complex engagement with futurity.

In _A Midsummer Night’s Dream_, for example, Helena initiates a material futurity when she chases down the scornful Demetrius in the woods outside Athens and promises him that she will write a “story” that “shall” change the future of female lovers (2.1.230). It is precisely because Helena resists material conditions—the silence and immobility imposed upon Athenian women, who “cannot” act and “fight for love as men may do”—that she strives to transform the future of female subjectivity and citizenship (2.1.241). _The Changeling_’s Beatrice-Joanna, on the other hand, appropriates a futurity that is
biological, when she plans carefully to avoid the virginity and pregnancy tests designed for her by her new husband Alsemoro. Having lost to De Flores her virginity, that “loved and loathed” passage to the site for the generation of patriarchal futures (1.1.125), Beatrice-Joanna sabotages her own marriage bed as well as others’ bodies, thereby avoiding her fundamental sexual responsibility to patriarchs—her husband and her father—of legitimate biological propagation. In my third example, Paulina in The Winter’s Tale relies on political futurity to topple Leontes’ absolutist monarchy. As she orders the king to “[c]are not for issue” but follow the example of the “Great Alexander,” who died and left his kingdom to no particular heir (5.1.46-47), Paulina instigates in Sicilia such a politics of unpredictability as will culminate in the succession of a new kind of political leadership.

Through these and other examples, I establish the various means by which characters in Renaissance literature operate within one or more categories of futurity, and I argue that the future in these works is a persistent if problematic source of inspiration and agency. Futurity, that condition of our present experience in which we want, need, wish, hope, and plan for diverse objects and states to be realized in our future, initiates in characters such as Helena, Beatrice-Joanna, and Paulina a contradictory desire that often leads to their perverting (making monstrous) the social apparatuses of their past and present. Through such manipulations, characters in early modern literature not only imagine the future as a controllable component of time, but also amend the seemingly concrete elements of temporality—their historical past and present—in order to propel change.
chapter one

introduction: temporality, deleuze, and early modern futurity

the topic of my study is renaissance futurity. an interplay of multiple desires that exist simultaneously within our present beings, futurity is a volatile agent of imagination in early modern literature. in the moments that i identify in texts composed during the tudor and early stuart reigns in england, i demonstrate that the future—as an idea—structures individuals’ actions and ruptures social formations. futurity, that condition of our present experience in which we want, need, wish, hope, and plan for diverse objects and states to be realized in our future, initiates in characters a contradictory desire that often leads to their perverting and making monstrous the social apparatuses of their past and present. simply put, futurity is an unstable condition and it disturbs the institutions within which we function as beings organized by linear temporality. our experiences of the past and present apply force to our construction of our ideas of the future; these forces pull in unpredictable ways, often in opposing directions, thereby destabilizing the basis of linear temporality and organization, of progress. futurity, moreover, collides with the cultural sites of memory and pulls characters in different directions, destabilizing the organized spaces defined by their bodies, kingdoms, and locations. while the characters in early modern texts may return to regulated forms of thought and being, it is in their moments of flux that they present the
most complex engagement with futurity. Through such engagement, these characters not only imagine the future as a controllable component of time, but also amend the seemingly concrete elements of temporality—their historical past and present—in order to propel change.

Within the early modern context, the experiences of futurity fall into one or more of three prominent categories: material futurity; biological futurity; and/or political futurity. Material futurity is informed by characters’ acute consciousness of the limitations posed on their identity by the present material conditions within which they must operate. Biological futurity, which is rampant in early modern thought, typically concerns itself with the matter of the proper and improper reproduction of bodies. Political futurity emerges from characters’ desire to dismantle political infrastructures and create atmospheres that might enable alternative forms of political organization. Most often early modern experiences of futurity are interwoven and overlapping, with the material, biological, and political investments overlapping, colliding, and/or coinciding in characters’ constructions and enabling of the future. The future that the characters envision, in other words, is a concept through which they re-imagine and reconfigure simultaneously the boundaries of institutions, such as marriage, maternity, and monarchy, within which they must operate as material, biological, and political agents.

Any critical discussion of futurity must take into account diverse theories of temporality that inform our understanding of the experience of time. Key movements in twentieth century socio-political, literary-cultural, and historical-philosophical studies have asserted the complexity of the human experience of time, noting specifically
peoples’ erratic or non-linear constructions of time. My study of early modern futurity engages with the theoretical investments of various cultural materialists, feminists, and political philosophers. Particularly relevant to my analysis are the theories of Gilles Deleuze. In works such as *The Logic of Sense, Difference and Repetition*, and *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze establishes his theories of temporality, of which I draw chiefly on “becoming” and “deterritorialization.” The concepts of becoming (which encompasses “the infinite identity of both directions or senses at the same time”) and deterritorialization (which releases “the creative potential” of a structured body or system by freeing up “the fixed relations that contain” it) may effectively be employed to understand the fluidity and multiplicity of the futures envisioned by characters in Renaissance literature. Whereas other theories of temporality are rooted in either the absolute nature of the past (Bergson’s “pure memory,” which I discuss in Chapter Five in the context of political futurity in *The Winter’s Tale* and *The Tempest*) or the terminal condition of the future (Derrida’s “gift of death,” which I address briefly in Chapter Six in the context of everyday performances of futurity in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*), Deleuze’s philosophy of time offers becoming and deterritorialization as unstable and indefinite elements that enable individuals simultaneously to participate in their past, present, and future, and thereby to intensify their experiences. His theories are immersed in collaborative analysis, and combine provocatively a vast array of aesthetic, material, philosophical, political, and psychoanalytical methods of evaluating human experience.
Using Deleuze’s theories of temporality in conjunction with established historicist methods of analysis, my project offers throughout close readings of Renaissance futurity as it is constructed within the literature of the period. This chapter presents readings of scenes from *Othello* (1602-03), *As You Like It* (1600), and *Macbeth* (1606) to exemplify the relationship between early modern representations of temporality and the socio-historical context in which the concept of the future—as materially, biologically, and politically malleable (pervertible) and narratable—is constructed in the literature. Here I also identify the processes through which Deleuzean terminology and theories (such as “becoming,” “detrimentalization,” and “lines of flight,”) may effectively be employed, in collaboration with historicist analysis, to engage Renaissance conceptions of time. I draw out specifically those moments in early modern literature that represent the temporal flux created by characters breaking away from the seemingly fixed limits of their experience. Such flux results from these characters’ Deleuzean recognitions of the interpenetration of the past, present, and future. The flux, moreover, arises when they embrace the future as being virtual and fluid, a component of time that they continually may mold or create. Through their experimentations with futurity, then, characters in early modern literature transcend the imposed limits of their identity and, by deterritorializing from their prescribed states of being, express the innovative potential of the future that they imagine and implement for themselves and others. By disrupting contemporary systems of organization, characters in Renaissance literature construct the future as a time of opportunity and change.
My discussion of futurity in three of Shakespeare’s plays opens with a seeming
digression into a reading of a poem by a Renaissance woman:

The Doubt of Future Foes

The doubt of future foes
Exiles my present joy
And wit me warns to shun such snares
As threatens mine annoy.

For falsehood now doth flow
And subjects’ faith doth ebb,
Which should not be if reason ruled
Or wisdom weaved the web.

But clouds of joys untried
Do cloak aspiring minds
Which turns to rage of late repent
By changèd course of winds.

The top of hope supposed
The root of rue shall be
And fruitless all their grafted guile,
As shortly you shall see.

Their dazzled eyes with pride,
Which great ambition blinds,
Shall be unsealed by worthy wights
Whose foresight falsehood finds.

The daughter of debate
That discord aye doth sow
Shall reap no gain where former rule
Still peace hath taught to know.

No foreign banished wight
Shall anchor in this port:
Our realm brooks no seditious sects—
Let them elsewhere resort.

My rusty sword through rest
Shall first his edge employ
To pull their tops who seek such change
Or gape for future joy.

_Vivat Regina_

Written by Queen Elizabeth in 1571, this poem is remarkable for having been included by George Puttenham in 1589 in his _Art of English Poesie_ as an exemplary “gorgious,” a style that he identifies in his work as the “last and principal figure of our poetical ornament.” The style, Puttenham explains, is notable for its “copious and pleasant amplifications and much variety of sentences all running upon one point and to one intent.” Semantically, the poem is remarkable because its “one point” or “intent,” which, as Puttenham notes, is indeed made using “copious … amplifications” and a “variety of sentences,” is the Queen’s investment in futurity. Elizabeth captures what is essential to futurity: an acute consciousness of continual if also unpredictable temporal movements that are capable of causing social and political disruptions. Falsities, the Queen notes in her poem, are flowing in her realm, just as her “subjects’ faith” in the political system is ebbing. The precise direction of the “flow” is notably left uncertain in the lines. The erratic movement of narrative (of “falsehood”) and subjectivity (“faith”) that Elizabeth wishes to regulate through her judicious exercise of “reason” remains the focus of her poetic discourse, and the corrected state of affairs is deferred to a future close at hand, one that she can already envision and that her subjects (readers) shall “shortly … see.”

The poet is quick to note that her own sense of futurity clashes with that of other, less observant political agents, who, being “dazzled” by the ambitious visions of their futures, are blind to the watchful eyes of the Queen’s “worthy” and loyal counselors, who will soon unravel or unseal the traitors’ subversive plans. Elizabeth is similarly
dismissive of the political threat posed by Mary, the “daughter of debate,” and other “foreign” figures whose agendas of usurpation, she believes, will prove “fruitless” on English soil. While for most of the poem’s duration Elizabeth refrains from direct action, trusting instead her subjects’ sense of loyalty and their sound judgment on matters of stately security, she finally articulates the physical act that she would be willing to perform in order to ensure the future joy of her people and her realm. Her “sword,” though “rusty” from scant use in the past, is fully capable of stopping short the actions of those that seek change against her royal will. Upon such a categorical announcement Elizabeth not only signs her royal name but also promises to live long into a future whose direction she has already begun to pave.

As Elizabeth makes clear in the poem that the uncertainties regarding her future (England’s future) impose upon her “present joy” or contentment, she prompts the interplay of multiple kinds of “doubt” that troubled the men and women of early modern England and Europe. Considered by many as unfit to rule owing to her dubious birth and religion, Elizabeth’s body and her politics no doubt filled her subjects with anxiety. Fully alert to the public concern, her addresses to the people of England exemplify the Queen’s willful desire to appropriate contemporary conventions of matrimony and lineage, and to develop instead an environment that she could inhabit on terms that guaranteed both her absolute power (as the sole, unjointed monarch of the State) and her subjects’ desire for a cleansed (virginal) polity. Her first speech before Parliament on February 10, 1559 makes her point clearly:
… [A]lbeit it might please almighty God to continue me still in this mind to live out of the state of marriage, yet it is not to be feared but He will so work in my heart and in your wisdoms as good provision by His help may be made in convenient time, whereby the realm shall not remain destitute of an heir that may be a fit governor, and peradventure more beneficial to the realm than such offspring as may come of me. For … yet may my issue grow out of kind and become, perhaps, ungracious. And in the end this shall be for me sufficient: that a marble stone shall declare that a queen, having reigned such a time, lived and died a virgin. (58; emphasis added)

Speaking at a time when the early modern imagination was inundated with quasi medical theories of maternal impression and scandalous stories of women’s violation of the basic patriarchal right of fathers to identify through imprinting the markings of their paternity on their offspring,¹ Elizabeth positions herself strategically as the ideal female monarch who, by remaining virginal, would never risk the future of her subjects by corrupting it through an unwise marriage that may lead to a faulty or corrupted offspring.

But she goes beyond trying merely to alleviate her people’s present concerns regarding the future of England. Elizabeth mobilizes actively through narrative an alternative vision of the state’s political future, a vision that she offers to her subjects as a picture of positive transformation and outcomes that can result from the collaboration of divine, royal, and civil desires. Fittingly, even as she nods to the frailty affiliated with her

¹ In Chapter three on biological futurity in plays by Christopher Marlowe and Thomas Middleton, I develop at length an analysis of the early modern cultural practices surrounding paternal imprinting, maternal impression, and perverse progeny.
feminine form, the Queen embraces the role of political and intellectual architect,\(^2\) as she presents her ideas to the young and old men of Cambridge University on August 7, 1564:

… Rome was not built in a day. For my age is not yet senile, nor have I reigned for such a long time; so may I, before I pay my debt to nature (if Atropos does not sever the thread of life more quickly than I hope), do some famous and noteworthy work. Nor, for as long as the impulse guides my mind, will anything deflect me from the purpose. And if it should come to pass (which clearly I do not know how soon it might) that I have to die before I am able to complete that which I promise, yet will I leave an exceptional work after my death, by which not only may my memory be renowned in the future, but others may be inspired by my example, and I may make you all more eager for your studies. (88-89)

The Queen that stands before them, Elizabeth seems to state, is neither naïve or jaded but is at a perfect age for rulership. The future therefore holds for her a promising venue—the England of her making in the time that is to come—for creativity. She makes it equally clear to her audience that she does not mean to shy away from her ideas about the future of her state, and hopes that death, which is the termination of temporal experience, will not compromise her desires. But even if death should get the better of her by rendering incomplete her vision of an altered England, she declares that she means to continue

\(^2\) Elizabeth begins her speech with the conventional apology for choosing to speak as a relatively unlearned, “barbarous,” woman before a highly learned audience. After articulating quickly and effectively her purpose in being so bold, the Queen concludes her speech with another mirthful apology. Notably, neither her opening nor concluding apologies conceal her will to construct a future for herself and for her state that is to her liking.
during her lifetime to be an exemplary figure whose “exceptional work” will convince
the likes of the Cambridge men to construct their futures based on their “studies” of her
conception of futurity. Her biology and her age, matters with which she initiates her
speech and narrative of futurity, are transformed from being the ingredients of concern
and debate into the features that necessarily equip the Queen with her abilities as both the
creator and enabler of transformation.

Increasingly unlikely to marry and bear children, then, during the time that she
composed “Doubt of Future Foes,” the thirty-eight year old Queen was a double threat to
her people: as a single woman who was not governed by a man but instead exercised
material and political power over her own and others’ beings, she posed threat to the
future of patriarchal authority; as a female who managed to avoid her reproductive
responsibilities, she jeopardized the future of the family unit, an institution that enabled
the smooth operation of monarchy. Elizabeth, in short, shook not only England’s ideas
about its own future but also disrupted fundamentally the construction of the future as an
idea. In so doing, she became one of the principal architects of early modern futurity.

That she relies on diverse narrative strategies in order to construct futurity is no
coincidence; throughout this chapter, and in my project as a whole, narration remains
crucial to characters’ development of their ideas of the future, and instrumental in their
disruption of the experience of linear temporality.
‘There Are Many Events In the Womb of Time, Which Will Be Delivered’:

Narration and Futurity in Othello

Shakespeare’s Othello offers a peculiarly rich example of the intersection of motifs that are integral to our understanding of early modern literature’s engagement with material, biological, and political futurity. The play is frequently at the center of scholarly discussions of the period’s growing investment in the constructions of identity. Histories of race, gender, and sexuality have continued to inform the practices of our critical analysis of the characters’ understanding of their selves in the context of others in Othello. More recent evaluations of the play have also studied the means by which characters use mundane objects—handkerchiefs and bed linens, for instance—to structure and manipulate their own and others’ beings. Narrative plays a crucial part in enabling these characters to present themselves as individuals crafted by experience, in a word, by time. Through language they manage to account for the past and present; but they also wield language collaboratively in order to bring about future transformations that are prompted by their articulation.

Almost everyone in Othello has a powerful story to tell. Repeatedly characters offer each other true or false tales, and their narratives prompt both judgment and action in the listeners, urging them in turn to abandon their hitherto courses to the future and adopt instead an alternative futurity that is inscribed by the storytellers’ designs. Iago’s tall tale to Othello about Desdemona’s infidelity may be the best known and most obvious example of the play’s pervasive narrative drive—indeed he is a dream-weaver and fiction-maker par excellence. But other characters are not too different than the
infamous villain. Othello is an impressive storyteller, for example. His narration not only wins him Desdemona’s “sighs” (and/or “kisses”) (1.3.160), but it also holds captive a stately Venetian audience that otherwise is in a hurry to settle the military unrest in Cyprus. Othello’s modest appraisal of his rhetorical abilities runs counter to what his “rude … speech” is in fact able to achieve; his “round unvarnished tale(s)” are more potent than magic particularly because they are not limited by the formulaic discipline of potions or charms. Instead his narratives, which, Brabantio claims have the effect of “spells” (1.3.62), connect with others through what the philosopher Gilles Deleuze would identify as the transference of the “passionate quality of … experience” (Parr 90). It is through this “State of passion,” Deleuze argues, that individuals may share experiences, thus “making (them) endurable,” and even finding through them the “lines of flight” that emerge from within the folds of experience (Negotiations 116). Experience, Deleuze further clarifies, is not limited to that which is immediately perceived or made empirically tangible. Rather, experience (and the lines of flight that result from it) becomes real owing to the passionate connections we make through it with others; it is especially real when “we don’t see it, because it’s the least perceptible of things” (Negotiations 45). This embedded or imperceptible quality of the connections, which emerge from individuals’ sharing their narratives of experience, has directly to do with

---

3 The seriousness of the Turkish threat also is a matter that is reported through narrative. Various messengers offer differing stories about the enemy’s strength; while the first Senator has “news” of “a hundred and seven galleys,” and the second Senator reports of “two hundred,” the “letters” sent to the Duke suggest there are “a hundred and forty” in the fleet. Despite the reporters’ confusion over the precise number of Turkish ships that are sailing toward Cyprus, the members of the senate all agree that the essence of the story—that the Venetians are under threat—is true and must therefore be believed “[i]n fearful sense” (1.3.1-11).
the multiplicity of events that, with the passage of time, become interwoven and even overlap.

Like Homi Bhabha’s contemplative “self” that is sensible to having “lived that moment of the scattering of the people that in other times and other places, in nations of others, becomes a moment of scattering” (139), Shakespeare’s Othello is a man altogether aware of identity as a “rhizomatics” of place, time, and exchange. What I, following Deleuze, refer to here as rhizomatics is similar to what Bhabha identifies in his work as “gatherings.” Identity, especially the identity of “exiles and émigrés and refugees,” claims Bhabha, is a fusion of gatherings: “gathering on the edge of ‘foreign’ cultures; gathering at the frontiers; gatherings in the ghettos or … city centres; gathering in the half-life, half-light of foreign tongues, or in the uncanny fluency of another’s language; gathering the signs of approval and acceptance, degrees, discourses, disciplines; gathering the memories of underdevelopment, of other worlds lived retroactively; gathering the past in a ritual of revival; gathering the present” (139).

Instead of Bhabha’s “gatherings” I appropriate Deleuze’s term “rhizome” to evaluate the multiple connections that saturate and erupt within Othello. Deleuze’s adoption of botanical language, which includes “roots,” “trees,” “rhizomes,” and “arborescence,” is particularly useful to our understanding of the multiplicity of relationships and their networks (intercrossings) that continually are forged and transformed within early modern texts. In particular, the composition and expansion of Deleuze’s theories of “rhizomes” enable us to understand the ways in which characters in Othello navigate the social complexes within or outside of which they find themselves. A
detailed analysis of “rhizomatics” will also be useful to our understanding of important related concepts—concepts such as “becoming,” “deterritorialization,” and “reterritorialization,” all of which are central to my study of early modern futurity.

Deleuze and Guattari declare that in order for us to comprehend multiplicity, we must abandon our desire for uniqueness: “subtract the unique from the multiplicity to be constituted,” they advice (A Thousand Plateaus 6). They propose the model of the “rhizome” as one that abandons uniqueness and enables a true multiplicity:

A rhizome as a subterranean stem is absolutely different from roots and radicles. Bulbs and tubers are rhizomes. … Even some animals are, in their pack form. Rats are rhizomes. Burrows are too, in all of their functions of shelter, supply, movement, evasion, and breakout. The rhizome itself assumes very diverse forms, from ramified surface extension in all directions to concretion into bulbs and tubers. When rats swarm over each other. The rhizome includes the best and the worst: potato and couchgrass, or weed. (A Thousand Plateaus 6-7)

In this characteristically lyrical if unruly passage, Deleuze and Guattari present through examples the fundamental basis on which all rhizomatic multiplicity takes place. They go on to explain the characteristics of the rhizome in a more systematic manner. As its first two features, Deleuze and Guattari list the rhizome’s “principles of connection and heterogeneity.” “Any point of a rhizome,” they state, “can be connected to anything other, and must be. This is very different from a tree or root, which plots a point, fixes an order.” In the context of human activity or interaction, “[a] rhizome ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic chains, organizations of power, and
circumstances relative to the arts, sciences, and social struggles” (*A Thousand Plateaus* 7). The philosophers use the example of language to show its rhizomatic social movement: “there is no mother tongue, only a power takeover by a dominant language within a political multiplicity” (7). Like a bulb, language too “evolves by subterranean stems and flows, along river valleys or train tracks; it spreads like a patch of oil” (7). While language may be broken down to establish its structure or roots, Deleuze and Guattari suggest that a preferable method of analysis, one that would follow peoples’ methodologies of linguistic adoption, adaption, and appropriation, will necessarily be decentered “onto other dimensions and other registers” instead of being “closed upon itself” (*A Thousand Plateaus* 8).

Another characteristic of the rhizome is its multiplicity. By multiplicity Deleuze and Guattari do not mean a subject or object’s capacity to modify and/or increase itself. Rather, multiplicity has “determinations, magnitudes, and dimensions that cannot increase in number without … changing in nature” (8). In other words, rhizomes do not multiply themselves (in short, they do not reproduce); nor do they have a structural unity. Instead their connections change them fundamentally. Thus “the laws of combination … increase in number as the multiplicity grows” (8). The next feature of the rhizome involves its rupture. As with arborescent structures (such as trees) that can be broken, split, or segmented, rhizomes too may be broken. However, the breakage does not conclude their connective capacity but enables them to find what Deleuze and Guattari call a “line of flight,” an escape from termination or permanent containment. Broken at a given point, rhizomes will grow out of other points, or even at the point from which they
were broken (though this growth or expansion will neither imitate the former
connection nor rejuvenate the old).

Related to the idea of the rupture of rhizomes are two principal Deleuzean
concepts that are crucial to my study: “deterritorialization” and “reterritorialization.”

“Deterritorialization” is the process by which a rhizome contaminates the structures that
try to define, organize, and limit its connections. By deterritorializing the rhizome finds
unlimited and disorganized ways of spreading. But the deterritorialized rhizome is always
at risk of being “reterritorialized” by another structuring body. That is, its connections
may be limited by organizations (systems) that render predictable its modes of expansion.
This, in turn, enables the organizations to contain or limit rhizomatic activity. The
example that Deleuze and Guattari use to explain the processes of deterritorialization and
reterritorialization is especially striking:

The orchid deterritorializes by forming an image, a tracing of a wasp; but the
wasp reterritorializes on that image. The wasp is nevertheless deterritorialized,
becoming a piece in the orchid’s reproductive apparatus. But it reterritorializes
the orchid by transporting its pollen. Wasp and orchid, as heterogeneous elements,
form a rhizome. It could be said that the orchid imitates the wasp, reproducing its
image in a signifying fashion (mimesis, mimicry, lure, etc.). But this is true only
on the level of the strata—a parallelism between two strata such that a plant
organization on one imitates an animal organization on the other. At the same
time, something else entirely is going on: not imitation at all but a capture of
code, … an increase in valence, a veritable becoming, a becoming-wasp of the
orchid and the becoming-orchid of the wasps. (A Thousand Plateaus 10; emphasis added)

While both the orchid and wasp reterritorialize onto the system of biological reproduction (reproducing their own kind), they also are deterritorialized at the moment that they make a cross-species connection (a connection that dismantles momentarily the distinction between “self” and “other”). Thus deterritorialization and reterritorialization are interlinked in the rupture and spreading of rhizomes.

Finally, rhizomatic activity comprises mappings. Unlike tracings, which follow linear direction and assume the existence and superiority of originals, maps are “open and connectable in all … dimensions, … detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modifications” (A Thousand Plateaus 12). Maps may be accessed or invaded from any point; they do not have prescriptive means or routes of exit; and they need not be complete in the same way as tracings must be. In short, since they are open to continual conception and transformation, movements on maps need not be limited to movements backward or forward, which are the only two possibilities of motion in tracings. Maps therefore enable the experience of space and of connectivity in ways that may be paradoxical and unsystematic.

As Othello speaks of his “most disastrous chances” and near-impossible adventures (1.3.135), then, he not only places an imaginable, mappable distance between his “travailous history” of enslavement and his present free condition of narration, he also provides Desdemona with a “line of flight” that enables her to transcend the limits of her experience of domesticity (“the house affairs” that are imposed on her by the Venetian
codes of female conduct) and passive privilege, and to connect with his experiences of self-construction (1.3.148). Put differently, the language that Othello offers to and shares with Desdemona embraces the contradictions of their respective experiences and leads them to Deleuzean “becomings.” For Deleuze states:

> It is language which fixes the limits …, but it is language as well which transcends the limits and restores them to the infinite equivalence of an unlimited becoming. Hence the reversals which constitute … adventures: the reversal of becoming larger and smaller …; the reversal of the day before and the day after …; the reversal of more and less …; the reversal of cause and effect. (Logic of Sense 2-3)

While others in Venice—notably the powerful senators, including Brabantio who, with his daughter “devour[ed] up (Othello’s) discourse” and “loved” him for it (1.3.151, 129)—also enjoy their General’s stories of violence in foreign lands, their interest is similar to that of a tracer’s curiosity, which lacks sympathy but desires non-contradictory, convenient consumption and closure. Unlike the men’s, Desdemona’s “greedy ear[s]” cause her as much trouble or “pains” upon hearing of Othello’s past as they bring her present pleasure and fill her with hopes for her future: “She wished she had not heard it, yet she wished / That heaven had made her such a man” (1.3.161-62). Also unlike the senators, who prioritize Othello’s direct actions over his narrative capabilities because they depend on his valiance and military experience for the uninterrupted propagation of their political ideology, Desdemona relies on his discourse to unfix her present state of being and bring about a radical transformation in her identity; not surprisingly, she
wishes to be united with such a man as “would woo her” in non-filiative ways by learning of Othello his “story” (1.3.165-67). In short, Desdemona deterritorializes by means of Othello’s narratives of his past, and thus experiences what Deleuze provocatively terms a “becoming.”

In *The Logic of Sense* Deleuze puts forth his theories of “becoming,” theories that are of central importance to my study. “Becoming” is paradoxical, essentially. Deleuze explains “becoming,” using the example of Alice’s movements in Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland*. The constantly transforming Alice has an unfixable identity and location because she straddles oppositions; she grows bigger and smaller, moves forward and backward: she does not stay the same. In continually transforming (experiencing “ruptures”), she escapes the fixity of the three temporal phases—the past, present, and future—but instead is always in the middle of all three. Thus Alice never is anything in the simple present or present perfect sense of being. At the same time, she is not contained by a simple past or the future perfect tense. Alice experiences her transformations in the present-continuous. Hers is not a be-ing, then, but a “becoming.”

While “[g]ood sense affirms that in all things there is a determinable sense of direction, … paradox is the affirmation of both sense or directions at the same time” (*Logic of Sense*). It is paradox, again, that defines “becoming.”

Where the passion of narrative may move characters such as Desdemona and Othello to love and pity and to experience becomings, it is Brabantio’s hope that the Venetians will recognize only the limitations of words. (Ironically, he had wished initially with his speech to sway the Senate to unleash bitter justice upon Othello and to
punish him.) But the Duke—eager to clear up the present anxiety within Brabantio’s household that is brought about by miscegenation, and to free Othello so he may perform his function of securing Venetian interests in Cyprus—advices the old senator to forget his sorrow as a thing of the past: “To mourn a mischief that is past and gone / Is the next way to draw new mischief on” (1.3.205-06). He moreover attempts a clever rhetorical ploy through which he hopes to erase the distinction, in Brabantio’s perception, between Othello’s and Desdemona’s beings: “[N]oble signor, / If virtue no delighted beauty lack / Your son-in-law is far more fair than black” (1.3.289-91). Clearly, despite their many other similarities (of race, religion, politics, and status) the Duke does not wish to share Brabantio’s language and his experience of betrayal at the hands of the other. Instead he wishes strategically to align himself with Othello, who, in Deleuzean terms, functions as a “war machine”:

There are many reasons to believe that the war machine is of a different origin, is a different assemblage, than a State apparatus. One of the fundamental problems of the State is to appropriate this war machine that is foreign to it and make it a piece of its apparatus, in the form of a stable military institution. (A Thousand Plateaus 230)

Deleuze and Guattari’s statement about the complex relationship of the State to the war machine is exemplified by the early interactions in Othello, where the statesmen, who quite clearly rely on their valiant General’s foreignness to gain control over the Turkish insurrection and to return stability to Cyprus, are at the same time anxious to tether the Moor to Venetian laws. Unlike Desdemona, they do not desire contradictory connections
of passion to form between them and Othello, but rather wish to mimic sympathy in order to make Othello their own, an outstanding citizen who would propagate their interests. Thus, even as the Duke’s “special mandate for the state affairs” bestows on Othello a near absolute authority and personal freedom to marry the fair Desdemona (1.3.73), there is a simultaneous expectation that the Moor’s future actions must necessarily solidify the state’s authority over all its subjects, including Othello himself. Being black, Othello must adopt through a bellicose display of his loyalty a Venetian identity, and thereby embrace a whitened rhetoric of pride in virtuous citizenship.

The Duke’s strategy of indoctrination is similar to what Bhabha identifies as the fundamental work of metaphors in constructing bonds and narratives of national affiliation: “The entitlement of the nation is its metaphor: Amor Patria; Fatherland; Pig Earth; Mothertongue; Matigari; Middlemarch; Midnight’s Children; One Hundred Years of Solitude; War and Peace; I Promessi Sposi; Kanthapura; Moby-Dick; The Magic Mountain; Things Fall Apart” (141). To Bhabha’s formidable list of texts, each of which articulates the narrative strategies that interlock nationhood and identity, one easily could add Othello. A play that presents each character’s engagement with belonging and unbelonging in terms of the acts or inversions of enslavement and service, obligation and loyalty, elopement and matrimony, and racial and religious affinity, Othello exemplifies Bhabha’s understanding that “the narrative and psychological force that nationness brings to bear on cultural production and political projection is the effect of the ambivalence of the ‘nation’ as a narrative strategy” (140). Moreover, “as an apparatus of symbolic power, it produces a continual slippage of categories, like sexuality, class affiliation, territorial
paranoia, or ‘cultural difference’ in the act of writing the nation” (Bhabha 140).

*Othello* is a play that reveals characters’ flows of identity through the mobility of discourse. Narration is mobile in this play precisely because in it the “temporality of representation … moves between cultural formations and social processes without a centered causal logic” (141). If anything, the Duke is keen to suggest that the Venetian culture of virtue and heroism forms or locates itself “more around temporality than about historicity” (140). Because the temporal organization of such a culture is not systematic, it is also not reproducible formulaically. Rather, it relies for its propagation on instability and unpredictability, on events (such as past acts in past wars and anticipated acts in future wars) that gain symbolic significance through the effective use of narrative, and by comprising the narratives. These narratives—of cultural production and indoctrination, among others—are marked by what Bhabha refers to as the “continual slippage of categories” (140). The Duke wields his language of benevolent unification and solidarity, then, specifically in order to undercut Brabantio’s emphasis on the impossibility of transcending difference.

Fully cognizant of the political situation embroiling Venice and Cyprus, and conscious of Othello’s utility in the context of these military affairs, Brabantio is no naive subject; nor is he easily comforted by the Duke’s seemingly kind words to him. He points to the hypocrisy of his leader’s advice, and suggests that he is wiser than to take seriously words that cannot bring about a desirable modification in his future. However, already fooled once by his child and by Othello, Brabantio plays the fool inadvertently for the second time when he calls attention to the impotency of equivocation. “[W]ords are
words” (1.3.219), he states, suggesting that language, being powerless without the conjoining force of direct experience, can neither do harm nor be the cause of relief. His claim that he “never yet did hear / That the bruised heart was pierced through the ear” is all too ironic (1.3.220); for the rest of the play unravels precisely as a series of actions committed by heartbroken characters “pierced through the ear” by others’ words.

Almost immediately after Brabantio makes his statement about the impoverishment of words, for example, Desdemona moves the Senate with her plea to escort her new husband to the potentially war-torn shores of Cyprus:

That I did love the moor to live with him
My downright violence and scorn of fortunes
May trumpet to the world. My heart’s subdued
Even to the very quality of my lord:
I saw Othello’s visage in his mind,
And to his honours and his valiant parts
Did I my soul and fortunes consecrate,
So that, dear lords, if I be left behind,
A moth of peace, and he go to war,
The rites for which I love him are bereft me,
And I a heavy interim shall support
By his dear absence. Let me go with him. (1.3.249-60)

Having given up the secured future that is afforded to Venetian women who know their proper place within society—a comfortable marriage to a man of her father’s choosing or
liking, and also an uninterrupted if transformed relationship with her father—
Desdemona craves the thing for which she has sacrificed these “fortunes.” The stories of
Othello’s past acts of heroism and suffering that drew her to him in the first place now
must be received first hand as narratives told to her in the present tense. In short, the
connection that Desdemona felt in the past with the experienced soldier Othello is made
more intense through their marriage. As a result, she does not wish to be oppressed by the
order of “peace” when her sympathy is for “war.” The “rites” or rights of which she
speaks boldly are not so much sexual as they are discursive—qualities of marital
intimacy that are unfamiliar to most Venetians, whose heteronormative relations are
limited mainly to sexual dynamics and are marked by mutual suspicion.

To gauge Venice’s cynical vision of the sexual union between men and women,
we need only consider Iago’s obsession with his marriage bed as a space abused by
Emilia, whom he suspects of having slept at the least with Othello and Cassio, in
violation of the sexual contract that informs matrimony. For her part, Emilia suggests that
sexual infidelity is not an unimaginable offense, and that the sexual monopoly that
contractually binds individuals within matrimony is tiresome to women and men alike.
Likewise, Roderigo is willing to believe that Desdemona is sexually corruptible and that,
with some effort and persistence on his part, she may cuckold Othello. Bianca fears that
Cassio is sexually deceptive and has another mistress, who offers him favors and trinkets.
Of the exhaustive list of sexually organized Venetians, perhaps the most indirect yet
telling comment on the culture of heteronormative jealousy and suspicion is made by
Brabantio, who warns Othello about his daughter’s propensity for unchastity, thus
locating Desdemona and the institution of matrimony within the damaging Venetian climate of suspicion and sexual difference.

But as Claire Colebrook argues, “sexual difference, like any other difference, is always disrupted or opened by the question of its meaning and condition” (122). In Othello this opening up comes in the shape of discursive intimacy. Desdemona’s eagerness to participate in the masculine discourse community surrounding war (and warriors) seems to be an extension of Othello’s earlier description of her greedy ears absorbing his stories of his history and subjectivity. No longer willing to be a passive recipient of retrospective narrative, she wants to accompany her husband to Cyprus and permeate the masculine space of military homosociality in order to receive first-hand (in the present tense) word of his actions. Othello too is eager to assert the non-sexual dimensions of the couple’s intimacy and proximity in Cyprus. Sex is far from the newlyweds’ minds, it would seem. Othello even admits to being too old “to comply with heat, the young affects” of sexual desire that in him are “defunct” (1.3.264-65). Instead of the “wanton dullness” that the Senators fear might result from the company of most “housewives,” he insists on the heightened cerebral and speculative qualities that his wife inspires in him (1.3.266-73). With little time to waste, the Senators give in without hesitation to Desdemona’s and Othello’s desire to be together while they are away from Venice. Notably, with even lesser time to share together before embarking on their momentous journey to Cyprus, the couple spends their final hour in Venice not in the throes of speechless (silent) love but rather in articulation—the giving and receiving of “direction” or advice (1.3.300).
To suggest that Othello’s and Desdemona’s love is not of a sexual nature may seem problematic. There is, after all, a long and complex history of critical engagement with the topic of sexuality in *Othello*, especially as it emerges within the analyses of feminist, postcolonial, and queer theorists who study the play and focus on the sexual relations of Othello, Desdemona, and Iago. Feminist interpretations often defend Desdemona’s love for Othello as a balanced combination of romance and realism that is marked by her “healthy, casual acceptance of sexuality” (Neely 74). Further articulating this trend in criticism, Emily Bartels argues that Desdemona’s “gestures of submission paradoxically enable (her) expression of desire” and empower her as one of the few female characters in early modern drama who “inhabit their subjectivities, who are able to seem as well as be and, consequently, be as well as seem” (420). Bartels points to the early scenes in the play when Othello conjures up the figure of his wife as a “vicarious adventurer” (424). Desdemona herself, she claims, performs the role of a balanced, conventional Venetian woman not unlike her mother, specifically so that she may have her way and escort her husband to Cyprus. Critics such as Karen Newman, on the other hand, point not to the balance and possible healthiness of female love and sexuality but rather to the “link between femininity and the monstrous which Othello’s and Desdemona’s union figures in the play” (137). Also focusing on the monstrous, Ania Loomba complicates the play’s engagement with sexuality by triangulating the workings of race, class, and gender within the Venetian world. She studies the couple’s relations through the “shifting positions” that Desdemona “occupies in relation to Othello, and to the contradictions that they impose upon her” (177). The shift, Loomba argues, has to do
with Desdemona’s movement away from her initial sense of power, which derives from her “confidence of both race and class,” toward her eventual recognition of “the more sobering reality of the power of the husband over the wife, a power that Othello asserts despite his blackness, or … because of it” (179-80).

Reading through a queer critical lens, Nicholas Radel also pays attention to the coincidence of gender, sexuality, and social class, and suggests that, with *Romeo and Juliet*, *Othello* too may “easily be explained by modern conceptions of sexuality” (62). He notes, however, that the play is often misread as “a love tragedy ostensibly about a heterosexual couple, and to the extent that other kinds of desire factor into the plot, they seem to constitute perverse others to normative heterosexual functioning” (62). As opposed to such interpretations, Radel’s thesis, which he pursues chiefly through his reading of Iago, is that the play “attempts to contain within discourses of sodomy the disruptions to its homosocial military bonds” (63). Through his “sodomitical perversions,” Iago manages not only to threaten “marriage and reproductive sexuality,” but he also violates social hierarchy, “particularly when he so deftly reads and then mishandles his superior, Othello” (Radel 69). The important differences in their approaches notwithstanding, most recent critics of *Othello* contend that the play focuses primarily on sexuality and sexual difference. Whereas Michael Bristol is among the few scholars who maintain that Desdemona “remains perfectly submissive to the end” and her “very self consists in not being a self, not being even a body, but a bodiless obedient silence,” for the most part Desdemona is interesting to critics as the exemplary figure of femininity and female sexuality. They suggest moreover that all the male characters in
the play construct and appropriate their masculine, sexual identity in the specific context of their perceived or desired relationships to women, notably Desdemona.

Without diminishing the importance of the issue of sexuality in the play, I want to draw attention to a peculiar quality of the intimacy between Desdemona and Othello, one that fruitfully may be discussed using Deleuze and Guattari’s theories of non-filiative connections. The philosophers suggest that “propagation by epidemic, by contagion, has nothing to do with filiation by heredity, even if the two themes intermingle and require each other. The vampire does not filiate, it infects” (*A Thousand Plateaus* 241-42). Iago recognizes Othello as a threatening figure of contagion, one who connects or bands with Desdemona through the non-filiative means of sympathy and narrative. But as he instills fear first in Roderigo and then in Brabantio, Iago uses the language of filiation—in Deleuzean terms, of “evolution” and “regression”—thus forcing the bond between Othello and Desdemona to be interpreted in terms of sexual mixing and miscegenation, problematic concepts for Venetians but at least recognizable and therefore containable (through the proper or improper use of the law and conventions).

Strangely, Desdemona’s and Othello’s affinity, which, before Iago interferes with them, is based on non-propagative terms of intimacy, shares something with the alternative model that Brabantio proclaims early in the play as the ideal for the future of patriarchy:

I had rather to *adopt* a child than get it.

Come hither, Moor:

I here do give thee that with all my heart
Which, but thou hast already, with all my heart
I would keep from thee. For your sake, jewel,
I am glad at soul I have no other child,
For thy escape would teach me tyranny
To hang clogs on them. I have done, my lord.

(1.3.192-99; emphasis added)

The horror of Desdemona’s brief but efficient appropriation of patriarchy, whereby she reminds Brabantio of the institutional necessity of the daughter “preferring” her husband in marriage “before her father” (1.3.187), spurs the Senator’s bitter speech, which functions simultaneously as his public disownment of his only offspring and his betrothal of his daughter to the man whom he would least like to see as her husband. His mind already full of images of monstrous births, it is not surprising that Brabantio talks of the avoidance of copulation and reproduction; so much so that, when he declares adoption and not biological reproduction to be the ideal medium through which a parent may propagate his patriarchal ideology (of obedience and female chastity), Brabantio inverts the trope of paternal imprinting, which within the early modern context of biological futurity, was meant to promote the secured lineage and footing of patriarchs. Since his offspring’s actions prove her to be nothing like her father, Brabantio claims that he would rather rely on a child that is not begot by him. Again defying the patriarchal conventions with which an early modern English audience must have been familiar, Brabantio expresses his gratefulness for being parent to only one child. Hitherto of loving and open nature but now betrayed by his daughter, Brabantio implicates Desdemona in the
transformation of his character and admits to feeling compelled in future to lock up all that he possesses—even imaginary children—so that he may never again experience a child’s disobedience, the kind that has led to his present condition of abandonment. The bonds of sympathy form much stronger connections than those of blood, Brabantio recognizes painfully.

In light of the seeming victory of the unconventional love between Othello and Desdemona, Roderigo promises to end his sorrows, not by changing his approach to cultural norms, but by reinforcing them. Roderigo swears that he will drown himself—thus returning the audience to the all too familiar conventions that inform the erotic dynamic between men and women in Venice. But Iago is quick to catch his foolish friend’s error: Roderigo’s disappointment in what he believes is his love for Desdemona the ancient identifies correctly as the young man’s frustration with unfulfilled “lust of the blood and … permission of the will” (1.3.335). The popular misnomer of lust as love defines erotic relations in Venice, and Iago, who is an expert in Venetian ways, promises the “snipe” Roderigo that he will transform (or, to use a Deleuzean term, “reterritorialize”) Othello’s and Desdemona’s love—a thing held together by “a frail vow”—into lust, which, unlike narratives of shared experience that with time may grow in complexity and engagement, reduces itself quickly after being “sated” into a base and changeable “error” (1.3.356; 351-52). Ironically, Iago also recognizes that in order for him to force this transformation upon Othello and Desdemona, he will have to “abuse Othello’s ear” by narrating stories not only about Cassio’s intimacy with the General’s wife (1.3.394-95), but also about the affects of Venetian citizenship.
As the action moves from Venice to Cyprus, Act two, scene one, seems at first to move us away from the labyrinthine discussions of filiative and non-filiative bonding that are held in the mainland to the anxious and hurried exchanges between soldiers and gentlemen on the stormy coast of Cyprus. But we return quickly to the conflict that is at the heart of the play. The storm, which anticipates the opening scene of Shakespeare’s late play *The Tempest*, dampens the scope of Othello’s future activity and heroism. Even before the General lands on the coast, we hear from the third gentleman that the “wars are done” for no other reason but that “[t]he desperate tempest hath so banged the Turks / That their designment halts” (2.1.20-22). The valiant Othello does not even have the chance to witness the destruction of his enemies; that fortune falls upon Cassio, who happened to be on board the “noble ship” that encountered the “grevious wrack and sufferance” of the Turkish fleet (2.1.22-23). This scene is important because it draws attention to Othello’s failure to gather the very experiences or stories that would fuel Desdemona’s love and pity for him. The pressing “cause” of war on alien soil that led the Venetians to give away one of their most prized women no longer exists and so closes off the possibility of the aging hero displaying to his wife the reasons for which she forsook her father’s affections. From here on Othello’s visions of the future are contaminated, a phenomenon best described by Jean-Paul Martinon as follows:

[F]uturity as contamination means that the unhinging of space (and) time operates only by retaining and encouraging the impurity of space(s) (and) time(s): here, there, past, present, or future. … What we are left with … is therefore not a perpetually recurring contamination …, but a ‘state’ of unrest, where one never
knows what or how things are coming or going and yet are compelled to take action. (Martinon 189)

Defeated in his bellicose enterprise at the hands of nature, Othello cannot even manage to land in Cyprus in time to welcome his bride. Instead he finds her waiting along with the “valiant Cassio” and the quick witted Iago to “meet him and receive him” (2.1.87, 179). Indeed it seems that Othello is outdone in his journey by his “fair warrior” who, as Iago recognizes astutely if corruptly, may soon starve for want of adventure. Dangerously, the stage is set wherein the experiences of the General, who admits to dormancy—having for “some nine months wasted” the skills for which he has been employed by the state (1.3.85), and who now “prattle[s] out of fashion, and … dote[s] / In (his) own comforts” (2.1.205-06)—may be reduced by Iago, but possibly even by Desdemona, into mere tales of “bragging” and “fantastical lies” (2.1.221). Moreover, with no new stories of his action to recount to his wife, Othello, the hitherto expert storyteller-actor, offers himself as the anxious audience of Iago’s dramaturgy, as an ear into which the ancient may pour poisonous “prologue[s] to the history of lust and foul thoughts” (2.1.256). This scene, then, is positioned crucially within the play to mark the transformation in various characters’ roles in the context of storytelling. Those who have been narrators move steadily from this point on to becoming recipients of narrative; the storytellers change their subjects from experiences of heroic suffering to lurid acts and dreams of sexual corruption. What remains consistent despite the other changes and inversions in narrative is the pull of the story, the drive of futurity: “[f]or every minute is expectancy/ Of more arrivance” (2.1.41-42).
‘To The Last Syllable of Recorded Time’: (S)Pacing Futurity in Macbeth

The overlapping of narratives and temporalities that is crucial to the action in

*Othello* finds a more urgent representation in *Macbeth*, a play that quintessentially is a drama of the paradoxical movement of futurity. Elizabeth Grosz suggests that most texts focusing on the movement of time adopt one of two categories for charting temporality: time in these texts is either “linear, progressive, … even, regulated, and teleological” or else it is “circular, repetitive, and thus infinite” (98). But *Macbeth*, like *Othello*, presents a challenge to this model by invoking disruptive temporalities. The play insists on the paradoxical nature of characters’ experience of time and on the flux that emerges from their chiasmic manipulations of events. The opening lines, for instance, spoken by the first witch, suggest a potential repetition of an event: “[w]hen shall we three meet again?” The second witch’s answer, however, does not engage a linear time by offering a categorical answer, such as “When Macbeth has killed Macdonwald”; nor does it accommodate a circular, repetitious time with a response, such as “When the sun sets again.” Instead the second witch’s response—“When the battle’s lost and won” (1.1.4)—mobilizes a paradoxical temporality similar to what Deleuze explains in *The Logic of Sense* is Alice’s experience in Wonderland. Having set the stage for contrariness, the witches in unison utter the notoriously paradoxical words that usher in not only the action of the play but also the future dispositions of the characters: “Fair is foul and foul is fair” (1.1.11).
The spirit of this chiasm is picked up almost immediately by King Duncan, whose exchanges with his soldiers and subjects in Act One, scene two, are steeped in paradox. Death and life collide in the “bloody man,” a captain whom Duncan accosts for the “newest state” of the battle. Upon his king’s demand to learn about the latest news from the battlefield, the Captain halts his progress toward death (or “surgeons”) and unravels with enthusiastic detail the violent means by which Macbeth and Banquo, having first defeated “the merciless Macdonwald,” are now paving the way to Scotland’s victory over Norway and the traitorous Thane of Cawdor. His anticipation of Norway’s plight at the hands of Macbeth is made certain—as a thing of the past—when Ross announces to Duncan that “[t]he victory” indeed “fell on” Scotland (1.2.59; emphasis added). Often remarked upon by scholars, the hasty pace of the events that move the action forward is unsettling specifically because of the corruption of the linear temporal flow, both in terms of action and narration.

The action of the play is also unsettling because of its complex spatiality. The physical and psychical spaces occupied by characters in Macbeth may best be understood in terms of Deleuzean “mappings” that engage the “conceptions of space and time” alongside the “exploration of corporeality” of the characters (Grosz 84). The witches’

---

4 The subject of time has been central to scholarship on Macbeth. Critics such as Tzachi Zamir and Geza Kallay draw attention to the relationship between Macbeth’s moral “hollowness,” his “vaulting ambition,” and the speed with which the play catalogs the central character’s transformative journey from hero to villain. George Williams and Douglas Burnham, among other scholars, focus on the “verbal echoing” of events, which dominates Macbeth’s experience of time. While their insights offer valuable approaches to interpreting the temporality of the play, the critics neglect to study the overlapping experiences of time, which prompt, even force, characters to live simultaneously in the future and in their past.
physical appearance, for example, intertwines problematically spatio-temporal and corporeal dimensions of experience. It is no wonder that Macbeth and Banquo are puzzled by the witches and by their own response to the appearance of the “weird sisters.” The men’s puzzlement stems directly from their inability to plot the witches on a familiar course of identity that maintains throughout the distinctions of space, time, and corporeality. Grosz explains that, typically, space-time and corporeality are evaluated separately in social settings: “[t]he two sets of interests are defined in reciprocal terms, for bodies are always understood within a spatial and temporal context, and space and time remain conceivable only insofar as corporeality provides the basis for our perception and representation of them” (84). Their encounter with the witches estranges Macbeth and Banquo from their hitherto familiar processes of comprehension. This is because Banquo’s “What are these?” is a question that neither he nor Macbeth can answer without addressing simultaneously the contrariness of the time during which they encounter the mysterious figures: the time (“day”) at which the beings meet is both “foul and fair.” In conjunction with the oppositional pulls of the time, the witches occupy contradictory bodies and spaces. They are on the earth, though they do not look earthly; they have beards, yet seem to be women; they seem alive but escape humanity; they silence themselves but are fully cognizant of the power of language. (While we know that they are capable of speech, Banquo and Macbeth are first baffled by the witches’ silence because “each at once her choppy finger laying / Upon her skinny lips” refuses to provide the men with straightforward answers to their inquiries (1.3.45-6) Their eventual speech, of course, dazzles the men—particularly Macbeth—even more than did their silence.)
When the witches break their silence and speak to the men, they remain agents of dense mystery, specifically of spatio-temporal and corporeal confusion. On a “blasted heath” that is somewhere between the gory site/s of battle and the familiar geography of Forres in Scotland, the witches “stop” Macbeth and Banquo’s systematic movement forward on the course of what seems to be smooth and linear progress, and confound the men with “prophetic greeting” and “great prediction” (1.3.55-79). Notably, at least one of their prophetic claims about Macbeth’s future is an utterance of a past event. Neither soldier is surprised by the witches’ addressing of Macbeth as Thane of Glamis because both men are assured of systematic success even before their encounter with the witches; their valiant actions in the recent wars have guaranteed them reasonable ascendancy within Duncan’s court. But it is the strategic positioning of the utterance to which I wish to draw attention. By articulating their knowledge of an event fresh in the past, the witches manage to validate their corporeality and, in so doing, induce in the men a system of faith or belief about their predictions for all time, including the future. That is, because their claim suggests that they know intricate tidbits of Macbeth’s recent past, of events that even the King needed to be educated on, the witches gain credibility as beings that comprehend both time and space, even as they position themselves as the Others of spatio-temporal existence. That their strategically confusing utterance embarks Macbeth on his momentous journey, which is navigated by his overlapping drives of material, biological, and political futurities, is a testament to the power of their narration. Remarkably, their utterance not only prompts in Macbeth the rhizomatic rupture that
leads to his “becoming-criminal,” but also enables a powerful display of his identity as a conjunctive composition of self and Other.

Like Deleuze and Bhabha, Jacques Lacan also engages theories of the Other to explain the workings of the self within spatio-temporal realms. Lacan states famously that the individual’s discovery of identity takes place when she first encounters her mirror-image. This image necessarily will:

…crystallize in the subject’s internal conflictual tension, which determines the awakening of his desire for the object of the other’s desire: here the primordial coming together (concours) is precipitated into aggressive competitiveness (concurrence), from which develops the triad of others, the ego and the object, which, spanning the space of specular communion, is inscribed there… (Lacan 19)

In other words, it is only through this initial encounter with our mirror-image that we recognize identity as a space that we occupy. Moreover, it is only after our encounter with the Other or the mirror-image that we begin to understand and strive for our own place in society. Confronted by the future of Banquo’s children, who, the witches prophesy, “shall be kings”, Macbeth immediately constructs his identity as one who desires to capture the Other’s—in this case Banquo’s—code. Thus, even when he theoretically is made aware by the witches’ prophesies of his own identity, it is only the news of Banquo’s future identity that draws from Macbeth his desire to know more about himself: “stay, you imperfect creatures, tell me more,” he orders the witches. But these are disobedient creatures, who, like the “bubbles” or like melting “breath,” defy
“corporal” dimensions. Notably, they leave Macbeth pondering—and desiring—Banquo’s future, specifically the good fortune promised to his children.

Lacan’s theories share much in common with those of Roger Caillois, whose work, as Elizabeth Grosz suggests, analyzes “the effects of the image on the subject’s acquisition of spatial comportment” (87). Caillois in fact argues that while the “anchoring of subjectivity in its body is the condition of coherent identity,” one that enables the subject to have a “perspective on the world” (28), an individual’s psychosis results from his inability to position himself in a space that he ought to occupy. This in turn leads to his failure to gain perspective. Caillois ponders the experience of psychotics at length:

To these dispossessed souls, space seems to be a devouring force. Space pursues them, encircles them, digests them in a gigantic phagocytosis. It ends by replacing them. Then the body separates itself from thought, the individual breaks the boundary of his skin and occupies the other side of his senses. He tries to look at himself from any point whatever in space. He feels himself becoming space, dark space where things cannot be put. He is similar, not similar to something, but just similar. And he invents spaces of which he is the convulsive possession. (30)

Upon hearing from the witches about his future, and having portions of their prophesies fulfilled, Macbeth experiences a categorical break from linear temporality. His “psychosis” results from his inability to situate himself spatially in the present. For him the future becomes a site of haunting and persuasion; indeed it “ends by replacing” all his other spatial and temporal experiences. His sense that “[p]resent fears / Are less than horrible imaginings” couples paradoxically with his new-found conviction that “[t]he
greatest is behind” (1.3.136-37; 115). From here on Macbeth experiences the present solely as a “step” that he “must … o’erleap” to catch up with his “deep desires” for a mysterious future time (1.4.48-51), one that Lady Macbeth recognizes can only be experienced through contradictory pulls: “To beguile the time,” her husband she states must also “[l]ook like the time” (1.5.61-62). A quick learner, Macbeth adopts his wife’s advice of deceitfulness, and dissembles through the present, seeking not only to concretize a future that he is convinced has been promised him, but also to undo the future that has been promised to others. The confusing “masterpiece” that he initiates with the murder of Duncan is only the first in a series of multiple strokes in his bloody painting of a time that is to come (2.3.62). His fear that he holds but a “barren sceptre” in his hands prompts Macbeth to wrench from Banquo his life and, with that, his potential to bear future kings that might threaten the present usurper with usurpation (3.1.63). But Macbeth’s ceaseless and “horrible imaginings” work continually within him (1.3.250), making it impossible for him to participate fully in the present “pleasure of the time” (3.4.97). These “imaginings,” moreover, dismantle his ability to function as a cohesive self, producing instead multiple ruptures in his being, which dislocate him temporally and spatially at the same time that they fill him with the desire for the state of fulfillment:

Time, thou anticipat’st my dread exploits.

The flighty purpose never is o’ertook

Unless the deed go with it. From this moment

5 Clearly, Macbeth sees in Fleance a visible threat to his own future, which makes the child’s death essential. But Banquo’s murder is even more important than that of the young lad, because he is able to father more children (the as yet invisible threats to Macbeth), having already fathered one.
The very firstlings of my heart shall be
The firstlings of my hand. And even now,
To crown my thoughts with acts, be it thought and done:

(4.1.160-65)

If, as Deleuze suggests in *Difference and Repetition*, “[w]e are contemplations, … *imaginations,*” and if “[w]e must always first contemplate something else … in order to be filled with an image of ourselves” (74-75; emphasis added), Macbeth is divided among his multiple contemplations about himself in the future. Beneath his “self which acts are little selves which contemplate, … thousands of little witnesses” that pull him at differing speeds and in different directions (75). Thus, even as he swears to be focused and determined (“This deed I’ll do before this purpose cool”), Macbeth is split among the many “sights” (or imaginings) that he no longer wishes to see (4.2.170-71). That one of the sights he cannot bear to see includes the marching woods of Birnam is all too ironic; for this forest that creeps into Macbeth’s present and dislodges him finally from his ever-racing experience of futurity is itself a product of deception. Similar to the Forest of Arden in *As You Like*, the mobile topography of Birnam Wood, then, marks the dangerous marginal space of flux, of simultaneous deterritorialization and reterritorialization. Like a “petticoat’s” fringe, the mutable forest disturbs and marks boundaries, temporalities, and identities.
Perverse Periphery: The Forest in As You Like It

Petticoats occupy a prominent place in As You Like It. Of the nine occurrences of the words in the body of Shakespeare’s drama (in the singular and plural forms combined), they appear thrice in this play alone. More peculiar still is the connection of petticoats to particular locations in As You Like It, and to the unstable conditions of characters’ beings. A closer study of the scenes that involve this trivial article of women’s underclothing reveals the play’s overarching preoccupation with the complex, interwoven network of spatial and temporal flux that informs characters’ self-constructions and their engagements with others. In this play, petticoats peep through the outer layers or covers of stabilized public identity perversely to catch on the contradictions (or complications, to use Deleuzean terminology) that emerge from characters’ encounters with each other at the edges (or fringes) of seemingly demarcated spaces of the city and forest.

Early in As You Like It, Celia responds to Rosalind’s love-kindled exclamation, “O how full of briers is this working-day world,” with the first of the three references in the play to petticoats: “If we walk not in the trodden path our petticoats will catch them.” The immediate purpose of Celia’s words is to return Rosalind to the world of reason: the “briers” of undesigned (undesignated) love that her cousin finds intolerable are simply “burs … thrown upon” her “in holiday foolery” (1.3.9-13), distractions that threaten to break up her proper being. When Rosalind claims that she cannot discard the disturbances

6 The word “petticoat” appears in seven instances in the plays: once each in The Taming of the Shrew, Henry the Sixth, Part Three, and Antony and Cleopatra; twice in Henry the Fourth, Part Two and As You Like It, respectively. The word “petticoats” appears only twice in Shakespeare’s drama: first in As You Like It and next in Othello.
of love as she could “shake … off” other thorns from her “coat,” Celia recognizes her cousin’s sudden attraction to Orlando for what it is: a deviance or “fall” from her hitherto organized identity. She points to the fruits of this encounter that await Rosalind down the road: “You will try in time, in despite of a fall” (1.3.20-21).

In the first reference to the piece of clothing, the women’s petticoats are situated on (and off) the “trodden paths” of social norms (1.3.12). Although the cousins are located within the boundaries of civil society, Rosalind’s desire for Orlando situates her on the cusp of propriety and impropriety. As a woman who must know her place as one that is determined by chastity, Rosalind traverses the imposed limits of female identity and initiates multiple “lines of flight,” means by which she might escape the permanent containment that accompanies her present material situation at court, and imagine a future condition of happiness with her as yet unborn “child’s father” (1.3.9). Not surprisingly, then, the second reference to petticoats is made by Rosalind as Ganymede, when she contemplates the complexities of playing the parts of both genders while wearing the garb of only one: “I could find it in my heart to disgrace my man’s apparel and to cry like a woman. But I must comfort the weaker vessel, as doublet and hose ought to show itself courageous to petticoat …” (2.4.3-5). Having abandoned the institutional structures of the courtly world, Rosalind must carve a future for herself in the margins of the forest, that is, in an unfamiliar structure. In the final instance, Rosalind, again as Ganymede, describes to Orlando the location of her home and hints at her tentative or unstable identity: she dwells, she tells the young man, “in the skirts of the forest, like fringe upon a petticoat” (3.2.305-06).
Indeed it is on the fringes or margins of society that characters in *As You Like It* experience the disruptions of identity. These experiences coincide with their consciousness of material abandonment, which triggers in them a nomadic movement and a fracturing or splitting of their beings: no longer are they selves that are constructed in opposition to others, but rather they are constantly in mutation, othering themselves from all predetermined structures. In *The Logic of Sense* Deleuze elaborates on the fringe or marginal identity as follows:

Filling the world with possibilities, backgrounds, *fringes*, and transitions; inscribing the possibility of a frightening world when I am not yet afraid, or, on the contrary, the possibility of a reassuring world when I am really frightened by the world; encompassing in different respects the world which presents itself before me developed otherwise; constituting inside the world so many blisters which contain so many possible worlds—this is the Other.

(310; emphasis added)

Similar to Deleuze’s theories of migrant otherhood, Bhabha’s discussion of the Other interweaves processes of the historical and material constructions of colonized and colonizing identities with philosophical inquiries regarding desire. This interweaving or “interposition,” Bhabha states in *The Location of Culture*, leads to “perversion,” which is represented in the figure of the “post-Enlightened man tethered to … his dark reflection, the shadow of colonized man, that splits his presence, distorts his outline, breaches his boundaries, … disturbs and divides the very time of his being” (43-44). This “ambivalent” connection relies on the “idea of man as his alienated image; not Self and
Other but the otherness of the Self inscribed in the perverse palimpsest of colonial
identity” (44). It is desire, Bhabha asserts, that forces the bifurcation of identity and the
multiple divisions of being.

In *As You Like It* desire is mobilized at the junctures of rivaling material
circumstances or locations. More specifically, it is initiated by the realities of banishment,
homelessness, and relocation. “Spatial mobility,” Neil Smith suggests in his work on
urban (modern) homelessness, “is a central problem for people evicted from the …
spheres of the real estate market” (87). Although the immediate context of Smith’s work
and terminology is modern America, his analysis of the relationship of socio-economic
oppression to patterns of migration is useful to our understanding of characters’
movements in *As You Like It*: away from the court and city into the Forest of Arden.
Their movement is “an appropriately extreme response to mass social eviction,” and is a
rootlessness or instability “provoked by poverty, … invasion and attack” (Smith 89).

Duke Frederick’s banishment of Rosalind in Act one, scene three is accompanied
by clear if strict temporal and spatial guidelines. The young “mistress” must leave the
court with “safest haste” and, in a matter of “ten days,” must also ensure that she places a
minimum distance of “twenty miles” between her new home and her uncle’s “public
court” (1.3.33-38). Duke Frederick’s decision stems from Rosalind’s seemingly fixed
condition of being: she is her “father’s daughter” (1.3.52), a feature of her identity that
she cannot change even with the words she uses to craft herself as a loyal and innocent
subject of the state. His daughter, on the other hand, constructs identity—her own and her
cousin’s—as malleable and open to infection. Celia, who pleads on behalf of her cousin,
insists on Rosalind’s innocence and makes a dangerous claim about the seepage or interpenetration of the two women’s identities: she declares to her father that she too may be a traitor if her cousin is one. Her brazen statement to her father is also ironic of course because, based on Duke Frederick’s line of argument, she must indeed be a traitor: she is, after all, her father’s daughter, and her father is a treacherous usurper of his brother’s land and identity. But Celia’s diagnosis of her potential condition as traitor is based on the level of intimacy that she shares with Rosalind; she reminds her father of the communal environment within which the young girls have grown up, which has led to their inseparable connection:

We still have slept together,
Rose at an instant, learned, played, eat together,
And wheresoe’er we went, like Juno’s swans
Still we went coupled and inseparable. (1.3.67-70)

Celia’s description of her companionship with Rosalind is similar to many a Shakespearean character’s recollection of friendly unions. Her words are anticipated by Helena in A Midsummer Night’s Dream, for instance, and echoed by Polixenes in The Winter’s Tale. But friendships in Shakespeare’s drama suffer terrible fortune: as with Helena and Hermia, whose friendship is tested and disrupted by patriarchy, Celia and Rosalind too experience a forced transformation in their companionship, one that is mobilized by patriarchal rivalries. (The Duke’s brief explanation to his daughter of Rosalind’s danger is marked as much by his suspicion of female friendship as it is by his concern that his niece will undo his daughter’s fortunes by usurping people’s pity from
her by performing virtue, “silence” and “patience” (1.3.71-76). His fears are rooted in his patriarchal anxiety about his daughter’s traffickability, a quality that Rosalind compromises with her very presence.) The women’s bond may also be understood in Deleuzean terms as an “unnatural nuptial.” As opposed to filiative relations that rely for propagation on reproduction and evolution, non-filiative relationships are “unnatural nuptials” that spread by means of communication and connection. They engage in a “multiplicity without the unity of an ancestor” (A Thousand Plateaus 241).

But Duke Frederick, rooted in the ideologies of filiation, focuses on heredity (ancestry) as he proclaims his banishment of Rosalind to be final and “irrevocable” (1.3.77). The force of his declaration is great enough to rekindle Rosalind’s acute consciousness of otherness, a condition of her being that she manages temporarily to simplify when she constructs herself in direct opposition to her cousin; she has “more cause” to be unhappy, she tells Celia, because it is she who has been “banished” (1.3.87-89) from the kingdom, not her cousin. In other words, she “reterritorializes” momentarily onto the structures of hierarchy and heredity. She is made to recognize, however, the more powerful connection that she has made with Celia, who is willing to rupture the codes of heredity—her statement of disownment, “Let my father seek another heir” (1.3.93), leaps to mind immediately—and embrace a nomadic future that accompanies their transformed material circumstances. With their love reinforced by collaborations and connections, then, Rosalind and Celia prepare for their departure from the court, the space of discrete identities, and for their experience of the perverse geography of the Forest of Arden.
But why is the forest a perverse space? Perversion, Deleuze states, “does not need to describe behaviors or undertake abominable accounts” (*Logic of Sense* 280). Rather perversion has to do with the paradoxical “structure”—of bodies, locations, times—of differentiation, wherein it embraces differences while “never suppressing the undifferentiated which is divided in it …” (281). The forest in *As You Like It* has a perverse structure, for here the demarcations of identity are severed or at least complicated. The forest, moreover, triggers within its dwellers a desire to manipulate the structures that regulated their previous constructions of selves. Thus the distinctions of blood, sex, rank, vocation, material possession, and liberty, which mark the composition of citizenship in the world of the court are perverted or problematized in the forest. Notably, these components are not forgotten but are deliberately disassembled and reshaped within the edges of the forest—quite simply, the forest transforms the dwellers’ selfhood.

Duke Senior’s speech to his fellow foresters, for instance, insists on the virtues of their othered position. He claims that, as outsiders to the civil society of the court, and as naturalized subjects of the Forest, he and his followers are “more free,” being now “exempt from public haunt” and culture that previously comprised their identity (2.1.4-15). At the same time, Duke Senior is only able to construct his followers’ and his own freedom in the context of the “envious court” from which they have been exiled. Without the memory of the self in history, the Duke is unable to construct his present, othered identity. Deleuze explains this complex interplay of past and present self-constructions by means of his analysis of the “Other”: 
[We] must attach a great importance to the notion of the Other as structure: not at all a particular ‘form’ inside a perceptual field (distinct from the form ‘object’ or the form ‘animal’), but rather a system which conditions the functioning of the entire perceptual field in general. We must therefore distinguish the *a priori* Other, which designates this structure, and the *concrete* Other, which designates real terms actualizing the structure in concrete fields. If the *concrete* Other is always someone—I for you and you for me—the *a priori* Other, on the other hand, is no one since structure is transcendent with respect to terms which actualize it. (Logic of Sense 318)

It is the Duke’s perception of his new citizenship—of the Forest and Nature—that enables him to embrace the paradoxical experience of his identity at the moment that he is exposed to the elements:

> Here feel we not the penalty of Adam,
> The seasons’ difference, as the icy fang
> And churlish chiding of the winter’s wind,
> Which when it bites and blows upon my body
> Even till I shrink with cold, I smile, and say
> ‘This is no flattery. These are counselors
> That feelingly persuade me what I am.’ (2.1.6-11)

Once othered by Nature and unaccustomed to the perilous “woods,” Duke Senior now carves the forest as an *a priori* Other or “structure that conditions the functioning of the entire perceptual field in general.” His process of conditioning himself employs the
familiar language of the court ("This is no flattery. These are counselors"), just as his memories of his past comforts enable him to connect with the transformation in him that is brought about by natural discomfort. A similar recognition of paradox erupts in Duke Senior’s desire to go deer hunting in the forest:

Come, shall we go and kill us venison?
And yet it irks me the poor dappled fools,
Being native burghers of this desert city,
Should in their own confines with forkèd heads
Have their round haunches gored. (2.1.21-25)

No doubt a cultural component of his past citizenship in the courtly world, hunting now is transformed in the Duke’s and his followers’ perceptions into an opportunity to connect with the "concrete Other." As fellow citizens of the forest, the men and the beast are united as others of the court. Thus, Duke Senior is “irked” by his imagining the pain of the “native burghers” of his new “city.”

Just as soon as Duke Senior articulates his concern for the potential plight of the deer that he plans to hunt, his followers describe Jaques’ encounter in the woods with a wounded stag. The juxtaposition of the two men’s articulation (mimicry) of sympathy highlights their perception of their othered condition. The Duke’s sympathy for the animal that he wishes simultaneously to kill is a product of his newly acquired identity.

---

7 Herein the Duke is not unlike Lear who, when exposed to the brutal elements of the storm, recognizes both his history of othering or alienating the poor subjects of his kingdom and his transformed condition of being, which forces his connection with Nature: enslaved now to the whims of the elements, he realizes that the “art of [his] necessities is strange” enough for him to find the raging storm to be “servile,” even pleasurable (3.2.18-69).
Unlike Jaques, who moralizes the theme of men’s invasion of natural spaces, the Duke embraces Nature’s violence as a rite of his new citizenship. Being one with Nature now, he moralizes on the theme of silliness that informs civil society. Jaques, on the other hand, is unable/unwilling to break away from his educated stance of alienation and reflect on the structural differences between the world he now inhabits and the world of the court. Instead he recognizes in the deer merely a “concrete Other,” a creature or form that is different from him. Thus he waxes lyrically, if “invectively” (2.1.58), over the pain of the wounded stag, using “a thousand similes” to compare the animal’s pain to the condition of other “worldlings” (2.1.45-48). Notably, Jaques does not include himself among those worldlings that, not knowing better, contribute to cultures of excess; nor does he liken himself to the “usurpers” and “tyrants” of the forest that destroy the others’ space (2.1.61). As he anatomizes the corruption of the “country, city, court” and all of “life” (2.1.59-60), Jaques posits an unbridgeable gap between himself and all others. At the same time, he fails to perceive the structural distinctions of identity that are brought about by the difference of location; he remains untransformed by the spaces that he inhabits and is always at home with his melancholy condition.

Unlike Jaques, who insists on (and performs) the alienation of his self from others and in the process reinforces the construction of each in the context of mutual opposition, Duke Senior is aware both of the importance of belonging and of the interpenetration of identities in the forest: having been forced out of the world of the court, he is now perfectly at home in the woods. Indeed his experience of otherness renders him perverse
because it enables in him a consciousness that Deleuze refers to as “Other-cide.” He explains Other-cide in the context of perversion:

The fundamental misrepresentation of perversion … consists in bringing perversion to bear upon certain offenses committed against Others. Everything persuades us, from the point of view of behavior, that perversion is nothing without the presence of the Other: voyeurism, exhibitionism, etc. But from the point of view of the structure, the contrary must be asserted … The world of the pervert is a world without Others … All perversion is an ‘Other-cide,’ and an ‘altrucide’ … But altrucide is not committed through perverse behavior, it is presupposed in the perverse structure.

(The Logic of Sense 320-21)

Rosalind is perhaps the play’s most perverse figure, though her experiences of perversion and Other-cide differ radically from those of her exiled father’s. Unlike Duke Senior, who makes all spaces a home, Rosalind is never at home in any location. While at court, she is conscious of her alien status, which weighs constantly on her mind. The prospect of sexual and material calamity fills her with anxiety about her future in the woods (1.3.104), just as the fear of death makes the court a categorically unwelcome space. Once in the forest, Rosalind may be less worried for her life, but she becomes doubly alien—a nomad. Remarkably, her alienation is not a performative one, at least not in the sense that Jaques’ is. If anything, Rosalind acts as though she belongs within the worlds and bodies that she inhabits, but is aware at all times of the paradox of her
untethered identity. Hers is the puzzlement of what Deleuze refers to as the “dissolved self”:

The dissolved self opens up to a series of roles, since it gives rise to an intensity which already comprehends difference in itself, the unequal in itself, and which penetrates all others, across and within multiple bodies. … That everything is so ‘complicated,’ that I may be an other, that something else thinks in us in an aggression which is the aggression of thought, in a multiplication which is the multiplication of the body, or in a violence which is the violence of language—this is a joyful message. For we are so sure of living again (without resurrection) only because so many beings and things think in us …

(Logic of Sense 298)

It is her consciousness of the multiple divisions within her being that make Rosalind an excellent actor: she is not only able to “show more mirth than” she is “mistress of” (1.2.2), or be more generous with her fortunes than she is in possession of (1.2.211-13), but as Ganymede she is also able to gauge others’ performances for what they are worth. Thus, in her first encounter with the notorious melancholic of the woods, she reveals to Jaques the simplicity of his character, which she declares is “extreme,” lacking in multiple dimensions: those individuals that occupy either extremity of mirth or melancholy, Ganymede tells Jaques, are “abominable fellows” who “betray themselves to every modern censure” (4.1.5-6). In place of Jaques’ extreme resolve of selfhood, Rosalind proposes a fringe identity, one that borders on both mirth and melancholy, and which also overlaps (finds connections) with the experiences of others. It is owing to her
“dissolving” of her self, for instance, that Rosalind is able to find in the shepherd Silvius’ expression of his love for Phoebe a testament of her own affections (2.4.39-40). At the same time, she is “wearied” by the nameless lover’s poems, whose expression she finds “tedious” even as she is filled with “wonder” about his identity (3.2.142-74).

Upon discovering that the terrible poet is none other than her love Orlando, she finds his articulation suddenly to be more powerful than Jove’s (3.2.214). Yet Rosalind speeds to catch and outmatch the young lover by educating him in the ways of love and rhetoric, when as Ganymede she discloses to him the “divers” relationships of temporality to being (3.2.281-82). Echoing her cousin’s words to her from earlier in the play, she promises also to restore the young man to stable “reason” by playing the part of Rosalind (1.3.5), the woman Orlando loves so deeply that “neither rhyme nor reason can express” his intensity (3.2.357). Not surprisingly, for Orlando to be cured of his desire, he must collaborate with the boy Ganymede on his imaginations, the successful result of which would be that Orlando will “forswear the full stream of the world … to live in a nook merely monastic” (3.2.374-75). Remarkably, Rosalind begins this process of perverse education by escorting Orlando to her “cot” in the space that she identifies with flux and subversion: the petticoat’s fringe (3.3.381).

Similar marginal and impermanent spaces creep into presence throughout the literature of the early modern period. They coincide with characters’ experiences of deterritorialization and reterritorialization, and of the simultaneous and contradictory forces of futurity that pull them in opposing directions. (Orlando’s confession to Duke Senior—as he awaits Ganymede’s magical transformation of his own and others’
futures—that he “sometimes do believe, and sometimes do not, / As those that fear
they hope, and know they fear” is a pithy example of characters’ acute consciousness of
the tentative if powerful condition of futurity). As we shall see in subsequent chapters,
these spaces are indeed the sites of futurity, where characters’ material, biological, and
political visions/plans of/for their futures rupture their functioning in their present social
confines as material, biological, and political agents.
CHAPTER TWO

“THE HOUR MUST HAVE HER PORTION”: MATERIAL FUTURITY IN EARLY MODERN DRAMA

Infringing on the system of early capitalism, working women occupied the margins of early modern societies. Their representations within the literature of the period are riddled with contradictions, and focus on the women’s strained relationship to the central organizing structures in England, both professional and cultural. Scholars have for long studied the complex structure of early modern women’s work with respect to its economic repercussions on the domestic and public spheres during the period.¹ Extending their analysis of the dynamic of women’s labor, in this chapter I will study the socio-economic and cultural framework of the marginal, non-domestic professions of the prostitutes, midwives, wise-women, and female medical practitioners of early modern England. Using the examples of female workers in the works of Lyly, Shakespeare, Heywood, Middleton, and Rowley, I will argue that the playwrights complicate their theatrical renditions of working women in order to represent the mixed appeal and value that women’s professions held in contemporary

¹ Alice Clark’s work is among the more significant early works on this period, but there were even contemporary records indicating interest in women’s economic contributions to early modern English society. For detailed analyses of working women in early modern England and Europe, see Ian Archer’s Pursuit of Stability, Amy Louise Erickson’s Women and Property in Early Modern England, and Margaret Pelling’s “Defensive Tactics: Networking by Female Medical Practitioners in Early Modern London.”
English societies. Moreover, the complications in the drama arise from the characters’ appropriation of material culture in order to construct for themselves and others a future that would empower them. Remaining on the margins or fringes of society, then, female characters in early modern drama mobilize a material futurity that weakens the hold of the center and destabilizes notions of economic progress.

As *Mother Bombie, The Wise-Woman of Hogsdon, Pericles, The Witch, A Fair Quarrel*, and *Women Beware Women* make clear through their diverse presentations of independent working women, economically viable women of the Renaissance are situated on the margins of a society that is at once dependent on and suspicious of their professional capabilities. These women are precariously located within a socially constructed spectrum of acceptable women’s work. At the least threatening or dangerous end of the spectrum are *Pericles’* prostitutes and Bawd who, despite their sexual indiscretions, work well within a patriarchally recognized, exclusive professional space. Although the overtly sexual nature of their profession exposes them to contemporary moralistic rhetoric, by no means are they an economic threat to men. Lyly’s *Mother Bombie*, Heywood’s *Wise-woman*, and Middleton and Rowley’s *Anne* move steadily toward the dangerous and subversive end of the spectrum, encroaching on the male-

---

2 While Andrew Gurr states that women were actively present in the theater audiences, he does not go into much detail regarding the professional status of these women. It would be interesting to look into the economic and professional composition of the female audience in the early modern theater, because these would most likely have affected the dynamic of the theatrical presentations of the working women.

3 In fact it is precisely because the prostitutes and the Bawd are willing to participate in the patriarchally determined cultural practice of sexual and monetary exchange that they are working within an accepted socio-economic structure of contemporary women’s work.
dominated, relatively lucrative professions of fortune-telling, quack healing, and medical apprenticeship. In short they impact the future of men’s economies by professing to manipulate (fortune-telling) and improve (healing) the future of others. But it is Middleton’s Witch and Livia who locate themselves on the most problematic end of the spectrum and actively threaten to usurp the patriarchally determined and formally structured economic territories of apothecary, medicine, and law.\(^4\)

Even as early modern authorities strictly monitored the participation and representation of women in the public space; and while Church and State collaborated actively with each other to restrict women’s attempts at socio-economic self-reliance and autonomy, contemporary drama positions working women in the conflicted maneuverings of their lived experiences.\(^5\) Consequently, even while they are ridiculed as quacks and social parasites (as in Heywood’s *Wise-Woman* and Middleton’s *Witch*), they are given a theatrical space within which they operate as sympathetic figures (as in the cases of Lyly’s *Bombie* and Middleton and Rowley’s *A Fair Quarrel*). These women invade both a narrative and performative space within which they assert, to varying

\(^4\) Starting with the reign of Henry VIII and continuing well into the rule of James I, several laws were passed restricting the practice of medicine and surgery to men alone. These laws and sanctions were specifically coded in a language that related medical women to witches. For more on this, see Margaret Pelling’s “Defensive Tactics.”

\(^5\) Various town records indicate that common people—those who were poor—frequently depended on the professional services of the early modern non-domestic workingwomen. Patients frequented women practitioners of medicine, relied on their prophetic claims, and had their children delivered in the care of (unlicensed) midwives. Consequently, even while the English authorities formally shunned these women, they played a significant—even central—part in the lives of the lower orders of society.
degrees, a material autonomy that is inextricable from their gendered social and professional identity.

---

*A History of Women’s Non-Domestic Labor Market*

The Liverpool Town Books indicate that in 1582 a woman named Alice Wynn (Welsh Alice) was expelled by the town authorities for lodging illegally with a local married woman. 6 Such expulsions of single women (and marginalized men, especially unemployed foreigners) were frequently conducted using coded laws that ensured the economic hegemony of men throughout the English towns. 7 While several menial and domestic forms of labor were accepted as women’s work, most specialized professions were cordoned off from them. 8 Additionally, even when women were allowed to fend for themselves in non-domestic spaces, they were to remain under the verifiable surveillance of male members of the community. Town authorities consistently uprooted women who

---

6 The standard policy regarding residency stipulated that a (female) newcomer be granted residential status only if she could reflect a positive contribution to the town’s economy by having someone vouch for her “good character” and, more importantly, guarantee her some work.


8 Women practiced various domestic professions as maids, seamstresses, cleaning women, cooks, yard workers, spinners, weavers, and so on. Although older women ran primary schools out of their own homes, during the sixteenth century they were prohibited from educating boys. While most of the general, non-specialty jobs and chores were open for them to occupy, women were especially prohibited from taking up specialized, high-paying positions. Professional guilds and associations actively worked to keep women out of their professional environments.
worked outside the confines of the household economy independently, or without the official support of men. By ousting out the nonconforming women on grounds of immorality, the authorities tried rigorously to enforce an urban economic infrastructure wherein women’s work, sexuality, and marital status were not only intimately related to each other, but were also restricted to the household confines. Consequently, the most common and socially acceptable forms of women’s work were not just thoroughly domestic in nature but were also grossly underpaying.

Of course restrictions and impositions of this kind may have been designed specifically so that men could hold on to the better-paid, high-status work in an increasingly difficult economy. Despite these measures, however, as the sixteenth century drew to a close, and even through the first half of the seventeenth century, there were several women who refused to enter domestic service and instead chose to roam the urban and suburban streets, seeking out work and mobility on their own terms. These women were chastised in moralistic terms for being “light,” “unchaste,” or “evil-disposed,” and the authorities tried their best to rid the towns of them and restore the economy’s precarious balance (Roberts 86). Apart from the most obvious threat that these women posed of raising levels of unemployment among the men of the towns, if they were sexually viable and of reproductive capabilities they also presented the threat of overpopulating the towns with illegitimate children.  

Roberts states that in purely economic terms, women who were illegal inmates of houses ran the risk of increasing the town’s population of illegitimate, dependent children (the implication being that as single women, they were prone to sexual encounters with male servants, other inmates, and/or employers). For greater details on the issues of
authorities and preachers actively associated prostitution and “un-chastity” with independently employed and/or unemployed single women. That women’s chastity and their domestic position in the labor market were emphasized at precisely such a time when “female economic activity of all kinds appeared to be spilling over into the streets and lanes as never before” is ironic (94). The fact remained that, despite the preachers’ and town authorities’ efforts to control the growth of population by focusing on the female body as a troubled site of re/production, productive working women were ever-growing realities during the Renaissance.10

In addition to working as skilled laborers under the formal or informal supervision of craftsmen, women also worked as midwives. But the growing sense of competitive professionalism in the fields of medicine and surgery forced quite a few of these women to work independently, even secretly, without the required licenses and authority from the


10 It must be noted here that while women were not formally or openly encouraged to enter specialized trades or guilds in England, daughters, wives, and other women in the households of craftsmen may have informally acquired the skills so as to help out with the family business. Such women would have been considered assets in the late sixteenth and seventeenth century economies (as the specialized personnel, who were mainly men, jumped from one profession to the next in order to stay afloat and remain lucratively employed, such women were often un/underpaid, yet reliable helping hands in the business). It was especially for this purpose that, as Weisner states, some “master-craftsmen went so far as to adopt a number of young women so that they could have more workers in their shops” (66; emphasis added). Understandably, as uncontracted workers/apprentices, singlewomen were more affordable as compared to their male counterparts. Consequently, they may have been popular among the craftsmen who could find ways to hire these women despite legal restrictions and offer them shelter and low wages. Under such circumstances, masters and other male members of the household may have also had sexual relations with such women workers who may have depended on their jobs for financial and legal security.
church. While *The Byrth of Mankynde* (1544) was the first English-language midwifery publication, by the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, numerous male-authored, European and Arabic midwifery texts in translation started filling the English markets. Simultaneously advocating men’s active participation in the birthing process and deriding the unscientific and dangerous practices of female midwives, these texts also discouraged the formation of women’s communities by denigrating “women’s speech” and disrupting the connection “between mother and gossips in the name of professional self-fashioning and validation” (Bicks 43). Although previously men may have regarded the female networks among mothers, midwives, and midwife-assistants with some suspicion and even fear, they now were provided with sanction in the form of educated male voices that claimed a superior knowledge of women’s bodies and that also undermined the validity, or even necessity, of the formation of women’s communities during child birth.

The increased demand for such male-authored texts suggests that literate individuals (mainly men) were anxious to probe the female body through the male interventional economy of scientific practice. With newfound access to the skills of midwifery, several male medical practitioners, who had hitherto ignored the professional

---

11 In his seminal work on the early English life-cycle, Cressy cites the example of an Elizabeth Wyatt who swore before the London Archdeaconry court in 1635 that “she hath practiced as midwife for the space of these five years and that she is not yet licensed, for she is a deputy to one Mrs. Brown with whom she conditioned to serve seven years, and at the expiration of the said years she intendeth to obtain license” (66). Wyatt’s record is significant not only because it addresses her unlicensed practice of midwifery, but also because it suggests the possibility of an active master-apprentice relationship among women workers within the field.
study of women’s anatomies, were now encouraged to present their written texts and translations as the “last word on obstetrical procedure” (44), and to dislocate the midwives from their positions of (dubious) authority. From here on, male medical practitioners cut systematically into the autonomy of midwives’ claims to obstetric expertise. As they introduced themselves into the obstetric and gynecological market, these men garnered the support of authorities to marginalize such women as may have carved out a space for themselves in the birthing market and who may also have been in control of such a space. These phenomena coincided with the increased persecution of

Cressy indicated that opposing traditions in popular literature of the time “both vilified and sentimentalized midwives, associating them in one tradition with filthiness, bawdry, and witchcraft, in another with ancient goddess wisdom and resistance to patriarchal oppression” (59).

Male physicians and surgeons garnered support not just from the state authorities but also from the Church. Religiously speaking, one of the “first named battlegrounds” regarding midwives was their baptismal power (Bicks 137). In the Catholic faith, during emergencies (for instance, the possible death of a newborn), the midwife was responsible for the spiritual salvation of the child. While many Puritans considered this practice a remnant of popish superstition, certain post-Reformation clergymen desired to retain the practice. However, by the end of the sixteenth century several tracts (Admonition to the Parliament being one such work) condemned the participation of women in such vital activities and even portrayed midwives in a witch-like manner. According to such polemicists, midwives violated God’s will not only because of their improper baptismal powers, but also because they intervened in the natural process of labor (a fitting punishment for women, owing to Eve’s act of disobedience) “by developing natural painkillers” (Ibid). Women’s involvement in the development of potions or medications (some of which have a place in modern pharmacology) was directly interpreted as an act of heresy “performed by witches against newborns and potential mothers” (Ibid). Indeed it is significant that such potion-concocting “midwife-witches” threatened male apothecaries who, in turn, may have considered these women’s activities to be an economic intrusion on their specialized field. Consequently, various acts were passed that centralized the control of medical procedures in England and prevented the medical experimentation of “common Artificers, as Smiths, Weavers and Women, (who) boldly and accustomedly take upon them great Cures, and things of great difficulty, in the which
unlicensed female medical practitioners in England during the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and with the increase in the numbers of church and state-backed witch hunts.\textsuperscript{14} Interestingly, they also coincided with the negative social and literary associations of midwives with gossiping, disruptive, and dangerous female communities.\textsuperscript{15}

Just as midwives posed a real threat to the male domination of the economy of early modern England, so too did female medical practitioners, who catered to a large they partly use Sorcery and Witchcraft” (An Act concernynge phisicyons and surgeons,” qtd. in Bicks 139).

\textsuperscript{14} In light of this, the Royal College of Surgeon’s persecution of 110 illegal, unlicensed female practitioners is highly significant to the study of women’s work within the field of midwifery and medicine. While the college did not make detailed records for most of these women (most of them are referred to by their first names alone, and the majority of them do not have an affixed marital status), they did categorize these women’s work as “empiric” and also “bold” and “insolent” (Pelling 199).

\textsuperscript{15} While the English midwife’s oath imposed on her a role of patriarchal protection, for all practical purposes, she remained a controversial subject in early modern England. Although her European predecessors and contemporaries mainly functioned in the maternal interest (they served as witnesses to “protect the mother from allegations of infanticide”), the English midwife was supposed to uphold patriarchal investments (in naming the father as rightful patriarch, or—in case of a bastard birth—by affirming the authority of the state). However, as men were physically displaced from their positions in the household (during, and even up to a month after the birth, the woman of the house entertained the midwife and her staff by exchanging stories with them), they had no real control—through observation and censorship—over the delivery and the midwives’ ceremonial functions. Consequently, the vocal nature of this strictly female community posed an obvious threat to patriarchy and its representations were often crude, implying that the language of an unsurveillanced female congregation was necessarily antipatriarchal. Midwives soon came to be associated with the stock fictional convention of gossips’ bowls that were often situated in alehouses or in birthrooms—in \textit{A Midsummer Night’s Dream}, Puck refers to himself lurking among drunken, gossiping women—and that portrayed these working women as drunken, tell-tales—in \textit{Titus Andronicus} the nurse is addressed as a “long-tongu’d babbling gossip” (IV, ii, 151)—who reveled in passing on stories of marital discord.
variety of patients. In response to women’s active participation in medical healing practices, several laws were enforced to bar women from earning their living through medicine. Physicians, surgeons and apothecaries all demanded and obtained exclusive privileges to practice their respective trades. The state supported the male specialists’ campaigns and declared in Statute Three (passed under Henry VIII to check the practices of witchcraft) that “‘none should exercise the Faculty of Physick or Surgery within the City of London or within Seven Miles of the same, unless first he were examined, approved and admitted by the Bishop of London, or the Dean of St. Paul’s, calling him or them Four Doctors of Physick, and for Surgery other expert Persons in that Faculty, upon pain of Forfeiture of Five pounds for every Month they should occupy Physick or Surgery, not thus admitted’ because ‘that common Artificers, as Smiths, Weavers, and Women, boldly and accustomably took upon them great Cures, and Things of great Difficulty, in the which they partly used Sorceries and Witchcraft, and partly applied such Medicines unto the Diseased, as were very noynous, and nothing meet therefore’” (Survey of the Cities of London and Westminster qtd. in Clark 259; emphasis added).

Similarly, in 1614 a charter was granted to the Company of Barber-Surgeons at Salisbury declaring that women could, under no circumstances, practice the specialized surgical skills:

There are divers women and others within this city, altogether unskilled in the art of chirurgery, who do oftentimes take cures on them, to the great danger of the patient, it is therefore ordered, that no such woman, or any other, shall take or meddle with any cure of chirurgery, wherefore they … shall have or take any
money, benefit or other reward for the same, upon pain that every delinquent shall for every cure to be taken in hand, or meddled with, contrary to this order, unless she or they shall be first allowed by this Company, forfeit and lose to the use of this Company the sum of ten shillings.

(S. P. D. qtd. in Clark 259-60; emphasis added).

Yet, as Clark notes, the account books kept by several boroughs and parishes indicate that women continued to practice their medical profession in the margins of urban spaces, especially catering to the poorer sections of the communities, to individuals who were themselves located on the outskirts. For instance, Mrs. Lucy Hutchinson’s maidservant “went to Colson, to have a sore eye cured by a woman of the Town” (Memoirs of Col. Hutchinson qtd. in Clark 263); and Mrs. D’ewes left her sick baby boy in the care of Mrs. Margaret Waltham, “a female practitioner” (Walter Yonge qtd. in Clark 263). Besides the obvious monetary benefit of receiving treatment at lesser costs from unlicensed (therefore relatively inexpensive) female medical practitioners, women patients sought medical advice from other women because they felt more comfortable exposing their (often vulnerable and socially questionable) conditions to members of their own sex. In his detailed examination of medical advertisements in early modern London, Kevin Siena especially considers the vulnerability of female syphilitic patients. He states that the same dynamic that caused “foul” patients to seek confidentiality also led them to “demand same-sex practitioners.” Moreover, he provides significant evidence that during the early modern period, several women “specialized in treating female
venereal patients who preferred not to confide in a male doctor” (200). With Syphilis and other venereal diseases spreading rapidly across England, women medical practitioners who were eager to tap into the “lucrative VD market” (202) advertised their skills using gendered strategies. These female specialists prioritized confidentiality to such a degree that they promised to withhold sensitive information regarding their patients’ ailments even from the sexual partners of those infected. In light of the early modern fears of slander and the importance of women’s sexual reputation, it is clear that women felt the stigma of venereal diseases even more acutely than did early modern men. Naturally, this led to the increasing numbers of women practitioners of Venereology in London. One such practitioner advertised her services to women customers, stating that “if Venus should Misfortunately be wounded with a Scorponious Poyson by

16 While Siena mostly concentrates on promotional medical literatures prevalent in late Stuart London (1660-1715), he indicates that even previously women had been known to treat patients (especially other women) suffering from venereal diseases. For a thorough study of women medical practitioners throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in early modern England, see Margaret Pelling’s “Medical Practitioners,” in Health, Medicine, and Mortality in the Sixteenth Century; “Thoroughly Resented? Older Women and the Medical Role in Early Modern London,” in Women, Science and Medicine, 1500-1700: Mothers and Sisters of the Royal Society; and “Medical Practice in Early Modern England: Trade or Profession?” in The Professions of Early Modern England. Also see Pelling’s full-length work, Medical Conflicts in Early Modern London.

17 According to Siena, “throughout the seventeenth century venereal patients represented roughly one-fifth to one-quarter of the patients treated by St. Bartholomew’s Hospital” (205). Interestingly, the hospital’s records of the century show that patients often lied about the nature of their disorder in order to obtain treatment without having to enter “the dreaded foul wards” (206).

18 Examining various records of the College of Physicians in “Medical Practice in Early Modern England,” Margaret Pelling argues that “the College prosecuted unlicensed practitioners in London and that a consistently significant percentage of those prosecuted were women, usually 15 percent” (qtd. in Siena 217).
Tampering with Fiery Mars, to her own Sects [sic] it is she brings Comfort and Relief
and by her Antidot expels the Poyson Jove-like, though never so far gone without
Fluxing” (qtd. in Siena 218).

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, then, women were practicing within
the competitive and diverse field of medicine, among other specialized professional
areas; and even if their clientele comprised the poorer, marginalized communities of
England, it is evident that these women were paid for their services. Gauging from the
increasingly stringent laws and religious policies in the seventeenth century that restricted
the economic viability of non-domestic women, it is clear that autonomous and
economically self-reliant women were considered a real and present threat to the socio-
economic structure of patriarchal England. While contemporary drama problematically
re/presented these working women as dangerous yet essential identities living on the
fringes of society, their key positions within the theatrical spaces of the English stage
speak for their strong influence on the minds of their diverse audiences.
Working Women in Early English Drama

While maids and nurses are the consistent representatives of women’s work on the early English stage, non-domestic workingwomen are also problematically represented in contemporary drama. From Shakespeare’s Bawd and prostitutes to Middleton’s Witch, independent single women are strategically positioned (physically and socially) on the rim of the early modern consciousness. Even as they evoke laughter, ridicule, grotesque horror and/or fear, they function respectively as the murky glue that binds together (and infects) the mainstream and marginal identities of the audiences and protagonists. While these professional women are not cast in the unambiguously appealing light that other women in the plays may be granted, they perform crucial roles in bringing about positive resolutions to the main characters. Moreover, it is entirely through these women’s agencies (either direct or indirect) that the main characters unite in positive relationships—chiefly in marriage. Positioned in the plays at various points within the socially constructed spectrum of female labor, the theatrical representation of working women problematizes contemporary socio-economic structures and presents the gaping contradictions that abound within them.

Since syphilis was a real threat to many early English women and men, the brothel scenes in Pericles may have been easily recognizable to various members of the audience. Both Gurr and Cook state that prostitutes were frequently present among audience members of the early modern public theatres, which were mostly situated in

---

19 For a comprehensive coverage of the literary representation of early modern helping women and servants, see Susan Frye and Karen Robertson’s Maids and Mistresses, Cousins and Queens.
suburbs that were surrounded by brothels and alehouses—the primary haunts for local prostitutes seeking business. While Cook considers their presence in the theatres strictly a business related choice, Gurr suggests that prostitutes could even have patronized the public theatres for their own entertainment on their days off from work. In such a case, women in the audience may well have been empathic towards the plight of the theatrical syphilitic men and, more importantly, women, whose professional obligations as prostitutes made them most susceptible to the disease.

*Pericles* analyzes the interrelationship of a profession that is particular to women and a clientele that is specifically male, and situates consciously the non-domestic, sexually subversive profession of prostitution within the controlled folds of a patriarchal economy. Variously referred to in the play as a “profession,” a “trade,” and a source by which women—even when they grow old—can “earn” a living, prostitution is indeed an established, if unhealthy, industry. Additionally, the fact that the brothel advertises itself publicly (there are multiple references to a “sign,” indicating the organized presence and functioning of the brothel) shows that, as prostitutes, women could acceptably have economic interactions with each other and with men outside of the domestic space. Exemplified by moments such as the one wherein Lysimachus pays the Bawd for Marina’s syphilis-free virginity, *Pericles* represents contemporary (and accepted) conventions regarding the ready exchange of wealth among individuals for the gratification of sexual appetite and health.20

20 Boult’s references to the town’s “swearers” and to his “crying” out of the brothel’s new merchandise are additional signs that indicate the acceptable status of the brothel as a place of business. As with the other signs in *Pericles*, these too suggest that the
However, while the prostitutes are presented as economically unproblematic workingwomen, not all women’s work in the play is considered acceptable. Frustrated by his failure to seduce Marina, and irritated at having been recognized by the Bawd despite his disguise, Lysimachus angrily addresses the older woman as “herb-woman”:

Lysimachus: What, hath your principal informed you who I am?
Marina: Who is my principal?
Lysimachus: Why, your herb-woman; She that sets seeds of shame, roots of iniquity.

(Pericles xix; emphasis added)

Healy refers to the common practice during the Renaissance of addressing quack-healers and potion-making women as herb-women. These women secretly concocted and sold “medications” that claimed to alleviate various pains and ailments, most especially those involving sexually transmitted diseases. In Pericles it is, of course, deeply significant that none other than Lysimachus makes the connection between the Bawd and the threatening practice of quackery and witchcraft. Since the Bawd discloses Lysimachus’ true identity to Marina and the audience, she threatens to unravel his corrupt sexual politics. Thus threatened by the power that the Bawd has over him, Lysimachus

profession of the prostitutes was a well-established one that need not have been hidden or in any way treated secretively. More importantly, the open communication of these and other signs implies that in spite of their lived experiences as workingwomen, prostitutes did not threaten the economic patriarchy of early modern England.

While socio-sexually the prostitutes may have been threatening to mainstream early modern societies (their syphilitic condition in the play being a physical sign of the risks and threats of their profession); it is clear that the women’s sexual transgressions catered to and were monitored by upstanding male members of the community.
deliberately refers to her as “herb-woman,” thereby connecting her to the unacceptable—and punishable—professions of witchcraft and quackery. While apothecaries and medical specialists “purchased their drugs from a wandering army of ‘green men and women,’ who scoured the countryside looking for medicinal roots and herbs,” Lysimachus distinctly likens the Bawd to other potion-toting, witch-like women that the early modern audiences would have immediately recognized (Kail 123). Notably, his act of naming the Bawd something other than what she is re-establishes Lysimachus as the source of power, as one who can, in changing her name, undo the woman’s material security.

While it is dangerous for the women in Pericles to be accused of practicing the cunning skills of medical healing, men may openly profit from such powers:

Cerimon:  

Virtue and cunning were endowments greater

Than nobleness and riches. Careless heirs

May the two latter darken and dispend,

But immortality attends the former,

Making a man a god. ’Tis known I ever

Have studied physic, through which secret art,

---

22 As popular literature and treatises warning against witchcraft frequently associated healing women and medical practitioners with witches and quacks, it is likely that early modern audiences would have comprehended the severity of the consequences of Lysimachus’ accusation. As state and religious authorities actively persecuted unlicensed women practitioners of medicine; and as notorious theatrical figures such as Middleton’s Hecate and Heywood’s Wise-woman physically concocted potions and medications to solve their clients’ (patients’?) problems, early modern audiences would surely have been familiar with the dangerous, contemporary repercussions of being called a herb-woman.
By turning o’er authorities, I have,
Together with my practice, made familiar
To me and to my aid the blest infusions
That dwells in vegetives, in metals, stones,
And so can speak of the disturbances
That nature works, and of her cures, which doth give me
A more content and cause of true delight
Than to be thirsty after totting honour,
Or tie pleasure up in silken bags
To glad the fool and death.

(Pericles xii)

The discrepancy is meant to be clear. While the Bawd is accused of being a herb-woman, in the hands of a male practitioner, the same dangerous herbs can magically transform into lifesaving “blest infusions”; and “vegetive” concoctions are no longer the result of quackery or witchcraft, but rather the product of “studied physic” and “practice.”

Healy presents Pericles primarily as Shakespeare’s commentary on political dissent, (Fictions of Disease 182), but she does not connect the Bawd’s potential healing practices to what clearly was construed in the early modern period as politically and materially problematic. This connection is crucial to our appreciation of the tensions

23 Healy suggests that syphilitic prostitutes may have practiced healing measures on themselves and on other brothellers. Given the prevalence of venereal diseases among prostitutes, it seems likely that the Bawd may have been familiar with popular (and affordable) treatments for syphilis and other ailments. For further details regarding
within the medical field that erupted as a result of the pressures of professionalization.

While Healy focuses on the play’s “particular implications and dangers of … the tyrannical and abusive power-relations” that satirize the corruptions of the Jacobean court, I would suggest that *Pericles* explores these ideas predominantly through the socio-economic relationship that exists between the townsmen and the prostitutes (181). Although it is the town’s prostitutes whose professions render them women of ill repute, it is the gentlemen and dignitaries who participate in the spread of a debilitating social disease. Even as the working women struggle to survive within a patriarchally determined economy, it is the gentlemen who threaten to topple the economic and sexual balance of “this murky playworld” through their ability to transgress “Jacobean society’s safe boundaries” (181). 24 If, as the title page claims, *Pericles* was popularly performed at the Globe, there likely will have been gentlemen, whores, and bawds in the audience. (Perhaps even herb women attended the play.) The brothel scenes of the play, then, must be viewed within the dynamic of an actively present and represented audience. Just as importantly, the scenes must be appreciated within the professional dynamic of women’s prostitution and healing practices in a male-centered economy.

---

prostitutes’ self treatment of the pox, see Healy’s “Pericles and the Pox” and “The Pocky Body: Part I” in *Fictions of Disease*.

24 It is with the specific purpose of problematizing the socio-economic relationship between the marginalized women workers and the mainstream male clients that Shakespeare presents Lysimachus as a lecherous nobleman who threatens the stability of the economy not only by his sailor-like sexual appetite and lechery (“How now, how a dozen of virginities? … How now, wholesome iniquity have you, that a man may deal withal and defy the surgeon?”), but also with his loose tongue (*Pericles* xix). It is, after all, he who accuses the Bawd of possible affiliations with witchcraft, when he finds that his economic security may be threatened by her refusal to acknowledge and play along with his desire to camouflage his identity.
As with *Pericles*, Lyly’s *Mother Bombie* too was probably designed for a public performance to be held before a large and diverse audience. While Bombie is repeatedly called an “old cunning woman,” and though she is presented as someone who is often misconstrued as a witch (“They saie you are a witch. / They lie, I am a cunning woman”), her powers and prophesies are benevolent throughout. As three sets of lovers are faced with problems, it is Mother Bombie’s positivist visionary powers that unite them, respectively. The protagonists of the main plot are Candius and Livia. Though intelligent and attractive, the young lovers are kept away from each other by their fathers, who want their children to make profitable matches (I.iii). Sperantus, Candius’ father and a farmer by profession, having invested in his son’s education, chooses Silena as his son’s bride-to-be. Similarly, Prisius, Livia’s father, locks up his daughter and hopes for her to make a profitable marriage with Accius. Silena and Accius are mismatched to marry the lovers and are brother and sister (changelings who were swapped with Maetius and Serena by the latter’s wet nurse, Vicinia, who then raises the nurselings as her own). Maetius and Serena fall in love, but are heartbroken because their love cannot be accepted or confirmed in marriage. They go to Bombie who tells them not to be diheartened because she foresees their marriage. The troubled lovers are shocked at Bombie’s seemingly incestuous predictions and threaten the old woman with punishment. Eventually, however, Vicinia reveals the truth that Bombie had foretold, and all lovers are happily re/united with each other (the fathers Sperantus and Prisius realize that their children must not be treated as objects to be traded or sold).
While the plot of *Mother Bombie* is based on the popular conventions of mistaken identity that informs Roman comedy, Lyly makes certain crucial adjustments to tailor Bombie’s identity to the represent the population of early modern lay-women and charlatans who claimed to be fortunetellers, soothseers, and healers. These women were mostly old and single, and depended almost entirely on their ability to convince the townspeople and women of their mystical powers. While such women did not obviously threaten to usurp the male-dominated, established economy of early modern England, they were often treated with reservations by male “competitors” and were pushed out towards the margins of the communities. Given this, it is highly significant that Bombie is presented as a good woman who uses her skills and resources to benefit others. Yet, when her prophecies seem too unbelievable (for instance, when she tells Maetius and Serena that they will marry), or threaten to topple patriarchal structures of organization, Bombie is referred to as a “witch.” The contradictory nature of the treatment that she receives at the hands of the young and expectant lovers suggests not only the youths’ suspicions regarding her identity, but also their anxiety to avail of her potent utterance.

25 Kevin Siena comments on the large numbers of advertisements placed by both men and women who claimed to possess miraculous powers to heal and cure the mental, physical, and emotional troubles of their clients. Similarly, David Hoeniger suggests that several single laywomen claimed to have mystical powers, and hoped to attract customers and gain (nominal) fees for their “services.”

26 It is significant that while the desperate lovers shun Bombie’s predictions as witch-like and unnatural, they initially are willing to risk her foretellings when they approach her for help. Lyly, in presenting this duplicity in the otherwise sympathetic couple, questions the imposed marginalization of such single women as Mother Bombie.
Unlike Bombie’s rather benevolent presentation of the fortune-telling single woman, Heywood’s Wise-Woman of Hogsdon draws on the more complex realities of the status of workingwomen. Having no magical powers that might benefit her customers, the wise-woman strategically employs herself and her assistants to outwit—and therefore win over—her clients. As she hides in the secret chamber of her suspicious, multi-functional home, the old woman is presented as common cheat whose customers are stupid, though upstanding, members of mainstream society. With the proper facilities to cater to multiple needs, ranging from the gratification of sexual appetites to the secret delivery and disposal of illegitimate babies, the wise-woman’s home is a well-rounded capitalist establishment dealing in her customers’ weaknesses of the flesh.

Like Lyly’s workingwoman, Heywood’s wise-woman is also an independent economically motivated woman, who merely caters to the needs and fetishes of the central figures of the play. Although she lines the walls of her home—much in the convention of contemporary brothels—with portraits of women available as prostitutes for her customers, the wise-woman also questions the validity of the distinctions drawn between the mainstream and the marginalized sections of the communities that intersect within her subversive premises. In her ability to resolve the troubles of other, morally and socially upstanding women of the community whose fringes she dwells on, Heywood’s wise-woman emerges as a problematic hero-figure of the play, a character who, through deception and cunning, restores the sanctity of the mainstream world. Indeed she is the material other without whom the self-serving community of Hogsdon cannot regulate its own future.
Middleton and Rowley’s Anne similarly helps restore the precarious balance of the world that populates A Fair Quarrel. The play presents the workingwoman in the threatening role of physician’s assistant. Jane, an expectant mother, is introduced to Anne—a “counsellor” of the same sex as the patient, when she hesitates to reveal her pregnancy to the male physician: “Have you no friend so friendly as yourself / Of mine own sex, to whom I might impart / My sorrows to you at the second hand?” (2.2.46-48).

Though she is affiliated to her brother’s economic enterprise, the play highlights the Anne’s ability to act on her own accord, and to keep a secret regarding an illegitimate birth without upholding the patriarchal and religious requirements that were written into the midwives’ oaths. Working in collaboration with her brother, Anne helps deliver Jane’s baby and then financially supports it by paying the Nurse money for her services.

Significantly, Middleton and Rowley present Anne in the role of an able medical practitioner, who, though breaking the laws regarding women’s work and midwives’ oaths, is a sympathetic figure on the early modern stage.

---

27 While fathers were anxious to establish their patriarchy through the birth of a legal heir, the Church and State too took active interest in the midwives upholding the patriarchal laws by voicing any illegitimate births that they may have overseen. Consequently, midwives’ oaths instructed them not to “consent, agree, give or keep counsel, that any woman be delivered secretly of that which she goeth with” (The Book of Oaths. qtd. in Bicks 25). Similarly the bishop also required midwives to inform him of any “illegal” activities (that is, anything that amounted to a breach of the midwife’s oath) performed by other midwives.

28 In Act three, scene two, Anne, along with Jane and the physician, gives the Dutch Nurse money, thereby indicating that she had a monetary income that was separate from her brother’s.
Doubling as midwife and medical assistant, Anne’s figure poses multiple threats to a society that depended on midwives to establish proper patriarchal lineage. The midwife’s oath clearly indicated that it was the midwife who “determined which genealogical tale, with its attendant privileges or stigmas, would be delivered to a wider audience.” This emphasis on naming and exposing the true father reveals a “specifically male concern about the birth attendant’s supposed proximity to what is true,” thereby signaling the increased attempts by men to control or regulate the “production and dissemination of a child’s origins” (Bicks 24). Because Anne performs the medical functions of a midwife without fulfilling her ceremonial roles, she precariously locates herself on the cusps of the socio-economic spectrum of dangerous and subversive labor. In doing so, she embodies the “potent range of fears” of midwifery that constructed “its darker side: social inequality, contested paternity, fraud, conspiracy, infanticide, witchcraft, abortion, extortion, and the revival of Roman Catholicism” (Cressy 66). Moreover, as she readily displays her economic self-sufficiency, she subverts the conventional notions of women’s economic dependency and domesticity, and comes dangerously close to toppling the patriarchal balance.

But it is really Middleton’s Witch who finally dismantles the patriarchal hold over early modern economies. As she openly concocts potions and medicines for customers in exchange for material gains, The Witch presents all the dangers that were stereotypically associated with single workingwomen. Stavreva states, “in the (early modern) period’s language of contrariety, which defined good through evil, order through disorder, soul through body, male through female, and the ordered commonwealth through demonic
tyranny, witches epitomized the inversion of natural, patriarchal, Christian, and national order” (309). Middleton’s witch breaks all the codes of a patriarchally established, English and Christian society when she demands sexual attention from her son and threatens to live for as long as she desires, thus controlling the man’s futures by keeping him away from her amassed wealth. At a time when authorities were insistent on the domesticity of women’s work, and when James passed multiple regulations that increased the number of witch hunts in England, Middleton’s Hecate displays all the dangers of the uncontrolled identity of the autonomous workingwoman. Refusing to play the roles of the docile and domestic parent, she openly assumes authority and power over a patriarchal culture. Since she refuses to submit herself to Firestone’s control and instead controls him (and potentially may do so endlessly), she subverts all established laws of patriarchy and asserts her autonomy as an independent working woman. While Middleton represents her as a witch, what is truly threatening is her human, economic prowess.

It is interesting that James’ regulations were passed around the same time that the population of illegitimate children and unemployed single women was at an all-time high in England. Everywhere women were struggling to survive on their own in such professions as fortunetelling, midwifery, prostitution, and independent shopkeeping. Their identities must have been powerful and significant enough to be displayed theatrically, even if they are accommodated within contemporary dramatic conventions.

Plays such as Middleton’s Women Beware Women that seem at first glance to share nothing in common with the dramas that engage early modern anxieties regarding working women unravel surprisingly the period’s deeper concerns about women’s
abilities to break down economic infrastructures and transform the fixed conditions of subjects. *Women Beware Women* is in this a sense a Deleuzean text about “becoming-woman.” If “becoming-woman” is, as Catherine Driscoll suggests, “a way of understanding transformative possibilities” that enable identity to “escape from the codes which constitute the subject” (75), Livia is certainly an agent of becoming. Livia situates herself on the most problematic end of the spectrum of women’s work. The embodiment of the early modern adventuress, she performs the role the dangerous thinker, and, through her schemes, disrupts the smooth operation of Florence’s patriarchal economy. Her labor is an intellectual encroachment on men’s key positions of power and social architecture, specifically because it is “capable of crossing and impregnating an entire social field, and of contaminating men …” (*A Thousand Plateaus* 274). That she does not have to penetrate a professional space cordoned off by men for themselves in no way undermines her ability to overreach the established limits of her own and others’ material beings to construct alternative economies.

The game of chess that sets up the infamous rape scene in *Women Beware Women* engages women’s strategizing their victory, both in the space of “play” and “work.” Seen from the twenty-first century perspective, a time when we readily accept sports as profession, the chess match between Livia and Leantio’s mother could be considered a professional tussle. However, to translate this professionalism into the early modern context, we need to be able to theorize work—more specifically women’s work—during the period. Livia, while staying within the confines of her home and not earning her livelihood, works towards restructuring her society in direct opposition to contemporary
patriarchal norms. Livia’s work, though not recognized as a force of labor, should qualify as such, as a dramatic representation of the intellectual production of women such as Amaelia Lanyer and Lady Mary Wroth—writers who, in their works, imagined alternative communities, and mobilized alternative futurities that destabilized patriarchal organizations of power and progress.

Livia’s unusual plans for the dismantlement of Florence’s present economic culture involve what Herbert Marcuse would refer to as artistic if cruel innovation. It is through her “estranging language and images” that she renders “perceptible, visible, and audible that which is … not yet … perceived, said, and heard in everyday life” (Aesthetic Dimension 72). Specifically, the “everyday life” of women’s unstated desire that Livia relocates from the subterranean realms into places of prominence serves as an “indictment of … the monopoly of the established reality” of capitalist and patriarchal oppression within the period (66). The specific moments and phenomena of her indictment embody the revolutionary work of “art” and represent her resistance to “enslavement … by the objective conditions (which remain those of domination)” that deny her autonomy, or “freedom and happiness” (69).

Marcuse’s statement that women’s liberation from patriarchy “require(s) changes of such enormity in the material as well as intellectual culture, that they can be attained only by a change in the entire social system” is made in the context of modernity and advanced capitalism (“Marxism and Feminism” 280-81). However, he provides us with a valuable lens through which to read the effects of the disruptive behavior of the unruly characters that inundate early modern drama. I utilize Marcuse’s sense of “feminist
socialism” to make clear the interrelationship between the practices of Renaissance 
women’s socio-cultural and economic marginalization, and focus on the representation in 
the drama of the spectrum of women’s struggle for liberation from patriarchy. The 
spectrum of female resistance that ranges from the representation of women’s desire for 
economic autonomy within patriarchal society to women’s attempts at dismantling 
completely social structures of oppression forces in the drama a re-envisioning of “the 
established hierarchy of needs—a subversion of values and norms which would make for 
the emergence of a society governed by a new Reality Principle” (285-86).

Not only does Middleton epitomize female resistance to hegemonic structures of 
futurity, but his female characters embody a Marcusean spirit that links in varying 
degrees the oppressed subjects’ sense of liberation with their radical actions that change 
their present condition and dismantle the smooth progress of hegemony in the future. As 
Livia in *Women Beware Women* readies her home for the seduction-molestation of 
Bianca, she remarks to the widow, “Are we not well employed, think you? An old 
quarrel/ Between us, that will never be at an end” (2.2.265-66). The “quarrel” of which 
Livia speaks is, of course, the infamous chess game that sets up Bianca’s sexual “fall,” 
alongside the widow’s defeat at the hands of her “cunning” hostess. But at a more 
profound level, theirs is an irresolvable “quarrel” between their class identities, a quarrel 
that the women have inherited through their participation in the fundamentally patriarchal 
institution of marriage. While both women have been widowed, one twice before, they 
retain the class positions—and the accompanying liabilities and privileges—to which 
their dead husbands contractually bound them with the act of marriage. However, while
the nameless widow accepts her socio-economic class as unchangeable fate, and indeed attempts to propagate patriarchal ideology, Livia threatens its notions of stability and continuity by propagating and participating in illicit, cross-class relationships. While the old widow occupies the dubious position of being the sole patriarchal woman in the play, Livia leads the other women in their communal resistance to hegemonic ideologies: through their practice of incest, infidelity, and interclass sexual/economic liaisons, Isabella, Bianca, and Livia disrupt the space of the early modern family, rendering inadequate its oppressive tools of matrimony and futurity.
CHAPTER THREE

“YOUR CHANGE IS STILL BEHIND”: APPROPRIATED BODIES AND BIOLOGICAL FUTURITY IN MARLOWE AND MIDDLETON

Considering their centrality to the Renaissance canon, it would seem outrageous to propose that Marlowe, Middleton or Rowley is an author of minor literatures. Yet that is my purpose in this chapter. More precisely, I will suggest that certain characters in two plays—Doctor Faustus and The Changeling—engage in the Deleuzean politics of becoming and minoritarianism. Faustus and Beatrice-Joanna “amplify” the schizophrenia and the “disjunctions” that Deleuze and Guattari identify in their work as features of minor language and literature (Anti-Oedipus 76-77); they forge their identities by asserting their desire to “conquer” the hegemony of the “major language” and “delineate in it as yet unknown languages” of resistance through which they might construct alternative ideologies (A Thousand Plateaus 105). But as is the case with the various institutions in these plays, such as patriarchy, that work to monitor and control individual desire and disruptive futurities, the minor languages become reinvested in the established (conventional) methods of secured futurity. In limiting their visions of alterity, Faustus and Beatrice-Joanna eventually “reterritorialize” onto the fundamental ideology of reproduction and filiation. While their momentary breaks from structural modes of being are a sort of “deterritorialization,” a flight away from the encoded body of contemporary authority, their employment of the tropes of biological futurity—in hopes of perpetuating a temporal vision and culture wherein the future would propagate through their body and bloodlines the hegemony of the past—reorganizes their potentially dispersive movement
and repositions the characters within the social limits that accompany a linear temporality. In other words, even as the protagonists in the plays attempt to articulate their desire in spite of the limits imposed on them, their respective quests for locating themselves in a future wherein the present power relations may be inverted but not dismantled re-enters them into a culture of oppression. Their attempt at deterritorialization is “negative” because it is “overlaid by a compensatory reterritorialization” (A Thousand Plateaus 508).

The negativity, however, must not be interpreted as a complete failure of the characters’ attempt at a minoritarian politics. For theirs is an expression of their desire for transformation, a tangible sign of their willingness to seek out ways in which to construct alternative futures. In their work on Kafka’s literature Deleuze and Guattari explain minoritarianism as a concept that “forces each individual intrigue to connect immediately to politics,” wherein even microcosmic relations such as those of “the family triangle (connect) to the other triangles—commercial, economic, bureaucratic, juridical—that determine its values” (Kafka 17). Faustus and Beatrice-Joanna practice, albeit fleetingly, a minoritarian politics of transformation and resistance before reentering the dominant majoritarian worlds of patriarchy and capital. This transformation necessarily disconnects them temporarily from the linear temporal logic and enables their participation in a process that Deleuze and Guattari term “becoming.”

A detailed analysis of this and related terms that are specific to the philosophers’ glossary will be helpful here in foregrounding my discussion of the plays. Becoming “constitutes a zone of proximity and indiscernibility, a no-man’s land, a non-localizable
relation” that “sweeps up” the seemingly isolated structures or bodies that (b)lock power within their beings (*A Thousand Plateaus* 293), and that, by destabilizing them, forces connections to form between them through ungoverned flows of energy or desire. Becoming works in conjunction with deterritorialization, a movement that effects transformation. Invariably the deterritorialized bodies are once again reterritorialized, when they formulate alternative bases of structuring power and energy. But it is the moment of flux that is the site of becoming. This moment, Deleuze asserts in an earlier work, “does not tolerate the separation or the distinction of before and after, or of past and future”; rather, “the essence of becoming … move(s) and … pull(s) in both directions at once” (*The Logic of Sense* 1). In becoming, individuals experience connections with other beings, objects, and institutions, as opposed to merely responding to them or being absorbed by them. The product of these connections, howsoever transient, emits energy and power that sustains the relations between/among the subjects. As our encounters multiply, so too does our composition, so too the mutations or shifts in the flows of our energy. It is these shifts that interest the philosophers, who suggest that we can best understand them in terms of “lines.”

There are three broad categories of lines that Deleuze and Guattari identify in their text: “line[s] of molar or rigid segmentarity, … of molecular or supple segmentation, (and) line[s] of flight” (*A Thousand Plateaus* 204). The result of the intersection between the individual and larger structural organizations such as the State, molar lines serve to curtail the individual’s desire or to impose homogeneity over it and so bring it under the umbrella of collective interest. Molecular lines, on the other hand,
mark the intersections of experiences within an individual, the physical or emotional responses to stimuli. These internal lines are relatively free from social control and therefore are capable of expressing the individual’s desire. But the most potent effects of individual desire are the lines of flight, which, as Deleuze and Guattari explain, “are very dangerous for societies” because they mark individuals’ creative methods of reconfiguring, not simply escaping, their larger social problems (204). It is through molecular lines and the lines of flight that we cease to be and instead experience becomings.

In A Thousand Plateaus Deleuze and Guattari identify and outline various kinds of becomings: becoming-animal, becoming-child, becoming-minoritarian, becoming-vegetable, and so on. While becomings are unique and therefore non-definite, they must pass through a stage that the theorists identify rather problematically as “becoming-woman,” the necessary first-step that all revolutionary practices must take in order to dismantle successfully majoritarian ideologies. The theorists’ explanation and contextualization of the term within minoritarianism is important enough to be quoted at length. They state:

1 While various combinations of becomings are scattered throughout their texts, Deleuze and Guattari focus on these in a section of A Thousand Plateaus that is titled “1730: Becoming-Intense, Becoming-Animal, Becoming-Imperceptible.”

2 Feminism has a long-standing tradition of resenting Deleuzian politics, specifically on account of the hyphenated category of becoming-woman that seemingly absents female subjectivity from the female body. In fact it is only recently that theorists such as Camilla Griggers, Elizabeth Grosz, Verena Andermatt Conley, and Claire Colebrook have managed to complicate fruitfully the feminist interpretations of Deleuze and Guattari. For a comprehensive history of feminist engagement with Deleuzian philosophy, see Deleuze and Feminist Theory.
... [T]he majority in the universe assumes as pregiven the right and power of man. In this sense, women (and) children ... are minoritarian. It is perhaps the special situation of women in relation to the man-standard that accounts for the fact that becomings, being minoritarian, always pass through a becoming-woman. It is important not to confuse “minoritarian,” as a becoming or process, with a “minority”, as an aggregate or a state. Jews (and) Gypsies ... may constitute minorities under certain conditions, but that in itself does not make them becomings. One reterritorializes, or allows oneself to be reterritorialized, on a minority as a state; but in becoming, one is deterritorialized. ... Even women must become-women ... (and) [b]ecoming-woman necessarily affects men as much as women. ... [B]ecoming-woman ... (implies) two simultaneous movements, one by which a term (the subject) is withdrawn from the majority, and another by which a term (the medium or agent) rises up from the minority. ... Becoming-minoritarian is a political affair and necessitates a labor of power (puissance), an active micropolitics. This is the opposite of macropolitics, and even of History, in which it is a question of knowing how to win or obtain a majority. ... Unlike history, becoming cannot be conceptualized in terms of past or future. Becoming-revolutionary remains indifferent to questions of a future and a past of the revolution; it passes between the two. ... [A]historical societies set themselves outside history, not because they are content to reproduce immutable
models or are governed by a fixed structure, but because they are societies of becoming.

(A Thousand Plateaus 291-92)

In their respective opposition to a “macropolitics,” and owing to their momentary disjuncture from a historical timeline, Faustus and Beatrice-Joanna come close to becoming-woman. The minor languages that they forge in the plays’ worlds “exist only in relation to (the) major language” whose oppression they resist (A Thousand Plateaus 105). And it is because they cannot escape completely the history of patriarchy or capital that they reterritorialize on the ideology of biological futurity. While Deleuze and Guattari extend their philosophy to interpret modern minoritarian literature, specifically works by Kafka that express a “politics that is brought forth around a ‘most contemporary’ problematization of … social forces in the social movements of anarchism …” (Thoburn 28), a similar critical claim may be made for the dramatic investments of Marlowe, and Middleton and Rowley. Marlowe’s protagonists, infamous in the literary canon as overreachers, at the same time traverse various socio-political “triangles” or boundaries: Marlowe’s Faustus, for instance, forces the overlap of human, divine, and diabolical trajectories of desire; of biological and sociological systems of patriarchy. Similarly, Middleton and Rowley’s plays almost always dissect urban, suburban, and rural spaces, and plunge into the dramatic confusion that stems from the mixing of societies, classes, sexes, and peoples. These playwrights, then, anticipate a minor literature, and their characters epitomize the creativity of minoritarian modernists such as
Kafka, whose work “takes place in choked passages” amidst impossibilities (Negotiations 133).

*Early Modern Futurity: A History*

The future is clearly at stake in much of Renaissance drama, and the plays’ plots seem designed to accommodate the future of the plays’ worlds. Yet futurity as a concept is not articulated as a separate ideological category in either the plays or the non-dramatic literature of the period, but is often collapsed with contemporary notions of temporality. For instance, in *A New and More Exact Map or Description of New Jerusalem’s Glory*, a work published in 1651, the prophet writer Mary Cary has a “vision for the Millennium,” a future time wherein individuals’ present fears and material concerns will be eradicated. She declares with optimism that in the future “[t]here shall be no outward wanting to the Saints …: for what is it that can be desired or that heart can think of, that ever at any time maketh the lives of people comfortable, but the Lord hath promised that his people shall enjoy it, in (future) times” (Cary qtd. in Crawford and Gowing 286). Cary remarks on the pain of mortality, specifically the loss of male children, and goes on to makes a prophecy of a time in the future that would boast of higher life spans for children and adults: “[n]o infant of days shall die; none shall die while they are young; all shall come to good old age” (286).

---

3 Although the Cary text was published in 1651, I am using her work to clarify theoretically the underpinnings of early modern futurity. Cary’s writing is a valuable source of information on Renaissance concerns regarding material well being, most of which, the author claims, will not only be addressed in a mysterious future time, but also be resolved once and for all.
Cary’s millenarian rhetoric is especially useful for our understanding of the ways in which the ideology of futurity is constructed in the early modern period. While she imagines a future that is free of human desperation and helplessness, her specific examples—material comforts and elongated human lifespan—stem directly from her concerns for improving, not dismantling, her present situation and surroundings. Although her text takes on the rhetorical shape of a prophecy, the direct objects (and beneficiaries) of her prediction are individuals whose present is precarious and future uncertain. Her prophetic remarks are aimed at conjuring visions of a better time without sparking the possibilities of radical change in the future. The future, as Cary will have it, then, promises merely an improvement of the past and present ideologies. Cary’s optimistic visions of the future lifespan of children, for instance, are rooted in a fundamental premise of patriarchy that was central to early modern society in England: one needed heirs—ideally male heirs—to carry on one’s bloodline. Thus it was an especially “bitter thing to lose an only son” (Cary qtd. in Crawford and Gowing 286). Notably, Cary’s visions do not entail a fundamental change in politics; her prophecies are not lines of flight in so far as she continues to imagine a future society that depends on male heirs for its propagation and that only barely modifies the present realities to make more comfortable (and certain) the structure of hegemony.

A New and More Exact Map is representative of most early modern experiences and expressions of futurity. These experiences most often find representations within early modern comedies, but occasionally also noticeable in tragedies that seem to promise, howsoever obliquely, a future that reproduces the value-systems of the present.
In both cases, the Renaissance preoccupation with biological futurity is most clearly represented in contemporary drama’s focus on marriage, filial ties, and proper and improper trafficking between men and women of female bodies—the vehicles of propagation. But in brief flashes, futurity as a revolutionary concept is subversively addressed, as is the case in *Doctor Faustus* and *The Changeling*. In specific moments in these texts, Marlowe and Middleton and Rowley symptomatize the female body as a “space,” a “no-man’s land” but also an everyman’s land, wherein radical experiments may be conducted by women and men who desire to transform their own and others’ future within patriarchy by actively taking part in its construction. In their strategic ab/use of the female body, the protagonists (and the playwrights) force a feminization of patriarchy, specifically through the characters’ convoluted wielding of power and authority. While the ideological center of the plays remains patriarchal, what changes in each instance is the subject position of those that occupy the empowered positions within the hegemonic state. That is, even as the fundamental principles of patriarchy remain unchanged, the “new” patriarchs are a new breed altogether.

*Body Potential: Pregnancy and Molarity Plays*

Translated from the French and published anonymously in 1682, *The XV Comforts of Rash and Inconsiderate Marriage* declares women’s labor pains to be no more remarkable than “the laying of a great Eg, by a Hen, or a Goose, the ordinary effect of Nature, no more, notwithstanding all [women’s] Tittle-Tattle” (54). While Patricia Crawford refers to the work as a misogynistic “satire” against childbearing women (13), I would argue that the text betrays simultaneously its nervousness about a precarious and
exclusively female bodily experience, one that could only be contained in masculine rhetoric as “ordinary effect.” Thus in Birth, Marriage, and Death David Cressy notes male diarists’ anxiety regarding pregnancy, even as he acknowledges that some men accepted the risks of labor as “natural, ordinary, and common” (28). In reality, pregnancy and labor were considered anything but ordinary aspects of early modern experience,\(^4\) and many women even took pains to avoid the process.\(^5\) Those who became pregnant often expressed fear for their lives because “[c]hildbirth was,” as Linda Pollock reminds us, “a very conspicuous single cause of mortality and a fate which a prospective mother had several long months to contemplate” (47; original emphasis).

Given both men and women’s fears regarding pregnancy, it is not surprising that the topic occupied a privileged position in the metaphorical language of the period.\(^6\) Early

---

\(^4\) For an exhaustive study of the various stages of conception and pregnancy, and the corresponding early modern anxieties, see Linda Pollock’s “Embarking on a Rough Passage: The Experience of Pregnancy in Early-Modern Society.” Cressy’s Birth, Marriage, and Death, especially the early section on “Childbed Mysteries” is a rich source of the period’s complex reception of pregnancy. In his work Cressy includes “[t]he classic story of … Elizabeth Joceline, … who looked on her first pregnancy in 1622 as a likely sentence of doom” (30); according to records, Joceline died six days after giving birth. Cressy states vehemently that, in spite of the abundant records of women’s and men’s fear of “childbed mortality,” anxiety regarding pregnancy was often unfounded and that “[m]ost women survived childbirth without complications …” (30). But he is quick to add that “one does not need actuarial precision to be frightened” (Cressy 31).

\(^5\) In Travesties and Transgressions in Tudor and Stuart England, Cressy provides a detailed analysis of the trial and hanging of a Richard Skeete, who, the historian claims, may have been an abortionist and who worked alongside other practitioners to “cure” women of their undesired pregnancies (80).

\(^6\) A basic “keyword” search on EEBO for the word “pregnant” in texts published between 1473 and 1700 produces 70 hits. The term “pregnancy,” which lends itself less willingly to metaphorical usage, yields only three hits. While the most popular use of “pregnant”
modernists have duly noted this preoccupation, and works ranging from John Hankin’s “Hamlet’s ‘God Kissing Carrion’: A Theory of the Generation of Life” to Kathryn Moncrief and Kathryn McPherson’s Performing Maternity in Early Modern England address Renaissance literature’s fascination with pregnancy. However, while most of these works engage the relationship between marriage, childbirth, and lineage in the context of patriarchy, they hardly address the notion that the pregnant body offers itself as a biological space wherein futurity may be implanted and shaped. That is, the woman’s womb offers her, but also other (male and female) experimenters, a unique medium that can appropriate nature and biology to conceive (of) an alternative future society and so affect a shift in power relations. The scenes from the plays that I analyze dwell on this malleable and corruptible quality of the body that allows characters to invade it but also transform it by means of their own desires for transforming the future. While ostensibly the texts seem to share nothing in common, each is invested in the mutable shape of the pregnant body and in women’s ability to generate alternative relations of power. Ironically, in the simultaneous, oppositional movements of deterritorialization and reterritorialization, the protagonists, who experience Deleuzian becomings and thus

---

within early modern parlance seems to be metaphorical, the term was also used to signify women’s reproductive status. The OED notes that the earliest recorded use of the term within this latter context is in a 1425 text titled Grande Chirurgie. It also notes the 1545 translation of Byrth of Mankynde, which cites Hypocrates’ observation that “[t]he pregnant Woman which hath Tenasmus for the most part aborteth.” Arguably the most famous literary (and literal) use of the term in the early modern period comes from Book Two of Milton’s Paradise Lost: “My womb Pregnant by thee, and now excessive grown Prodigious motion felt” (779).

7 In the Introduction, I discuss Deleuze’s theories of rhizomatic and arborescent overlap (which he explains using the example of the orchid and the wasp), to elaborate the
extract themselves from linear temporality, are almost immediately restructured by the pregnant body onto a filiative and reproductive futurity.

The earliest of the plays, *The Tragedy of Doctor Faustus*, is a notable exception to Marlovian standards of violence, and is surprisingly scant in its spilling of blood and guts, focusing instead on Faustus’ tragic mental transformation. But even as the text consumes its protagonist with self-doubt and despair about the future of his body and soul, it offers him, through the shape of a pregnant woman, the possibility of escaping the complete extermination and deterministic fatalism to which he has contractually been bound.

Grape-craving and pregnant, the Duchess of Vanholt seems at first glance to be irrelevant not only to the grand scheme of Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus*, but also to the majority of critical conversations about the role of women or gender in the play. Even a text such as Sara Deats’ *Sex, Gender, and Desire in the Plays of Christopher Marlowe*, which offers a “feminist reading” of the play (217), manages only once to mention the Duchess in a chapter titled “The Rejection of the Feminine in *Doctor Faustus*.” Indeed the Duchess is an oft-rejected figure in Marlovian criticism. Yet she is one of two female human subjects in the play, and the only woman to escape omission from either the “A”

---

8 All references to the play’s texts are from *Christopher Marlowe: Doctor Faustus and Other Plays*. Eds. David Bevington and Eric Rasmussen. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995. Unless indicated, all textual citations are from the B-text. 
or “B” texts. The Duchess, I would argue, survives these textual cuts because she is crucial to the play’s investment in futurity. She inadvertently offers her pregnant body to Faustus, who renders it the primary site of his experimentation with the future. Drawing on his awareness of the socio-medical phenomenon called the “Andromeda effect” and on the contemporary anxiety regarding the corporality of the “maternal impression,” Faustus utilizes the malleability of the fetal form in order to inject the Duchess’ womb with his influence and thereby “father” through her an offspring that may prevent the extermination of his desiring soul. Consequently, the tragedy that befalls Faustus at the end of the play, which stems from his realization of the crisis of his soul, is undercut by his potentially successful effort at “impressing” himself onto the future.

We discover as early as in the first scene of the play that John Faustus is a man discontent with what Deleuze and Guattari would call the molarity of his present condition. Thus he obsesses over his future and strives to escape the limits of temporality. Weighing the benefits of the established forms of knowledge and self-empowerment, he dismisses them hastily, announcing that the fields of “Oeconomy,” “Physic,” and even “Divinity” are limited in their scope, since they cannot help him “be eternalized” (1.1.14), or furnish him with wisdom that could “make men … live eternally” (1.1.22). Clearly Faustus’ denunciation of the branches of institutionalized knowledge has to do with the fact that they, being rooted within the temporal scheme, cannot take him outside the present.

9 While the Dramatis Personae of the B-text include “A Woman Devil,” Alexander’s “Paramour” (a spirit), “A Hostess,” “The Duchess of Vanholt,” and “Helen of Troy, a spirit” as the play’s cast of female characters, only the Hostess and the Duchess qualify as human. Notably, the A-text’s abbreviated list of characters makes no mention of the Hostess, listing the Duchess as the sole female human subject in the play.
of time (to “eternity”). Consequently, he abandons these pursuits and promises instead
to glut himself with magic—an intellectual medium that he has not yet explored and that
has not been structured or organized along molar lines, through which he hopes to find
“omnipotence” (1.1.54), possibly even a line of flight. Magic, as Faustus imagines it,
offers him the possibility of experiencing limitless movement between spaces and forms.
Even before he trades his soul with the devil in exchange for what he hopes will be
seamless and uncensored identity, Faustus prophesizes his magical capabilities and
claims boldly that he will have his “spirits fetch (him) what (he) please[s]” (1.1.78), be it
precious rarities—pearls or fruits—from India and the new world, or “secrets” pertaining
to “foreign kings” (1.1.86). Imagining himself to be enriched by the uncoded flows of
magic that may traverse time(s), space(s), and mind(s), Faustus signs up for the
fulfillment of his desires, so he may experience the hitherto unrealized sensations “of
profit and delight, / Of power, of honour, and omnipotence” (1.1.53-4).

But his plans for writing himself outside of time are promptly shattered by
Mephistopheles. Just moments after he turns in the bloody scroll and signs over his soul
to Lucifer, Faustus learns of the insufficiency of magic to secure him in eternity; and he
experiences the first in the series of multiple disappointments with respect to his future.
Receiving equivocation from Mephistopheles in place of guidance regarding the location
and condition/s of hell—the site that has no future, and to which the scholar has promised
his citizenship—Faustus reverts to thinking more structurally about his material future:
he demands to have a wife who would satiate his “wanton and lascivious” desire to
procreate (2.1.141). But Mephistopheles refuses to fulfill even this conventional,
patriarchal drive, prioritizing his own bond to Lucifer over his promise of obedience to Faustus. Mephistopheles proclaims marriage to be “but a ceremonial toy” (2.1.146), and distracts the new recruit from seeking the socio-legal, Christian, and contractual means of procreation and futurity, promising him in its place sexually gratifying experiences with courtesans, experiences that would necessarily be more immediate (and less Christian or contractual) in nature.

It is vital to note the differences in the forms of desire that are at play in this scene. Faustus’ initial quest for omnipotence and unbounded knowledge is unschematized; it is, in fact, what Deleuze and Guattari would consider a line of flight that shatters the organized movements—or exchanges—of epistemology, of power and desire. When Faustus finds his resistance to normativity countered by the force of Mephistopheles’ ambassadorial refusal, a negation that represents both heaven and hell’s denial of his desire, he is forced to define structurally the scope of his quests and reduce himself to seeking futurity within earthly realms; thus his wish to be married. But even this desire is refused him because its institutionalized constituents conflict with those of Satan’s contract, itself a product of organization. With marriage taken out of the dynamic, Faustus is offered what seems to be a viable option for sexual gratification, perhaps even reproduction: countless encounters with diverse courtesans. However, the apparent freedom from the marital sexual economy is undercut by the twofold limit of the “courtesans”: being products of Mephistopheles’ conjuration, even if they are capable of bearing children, surely they would be servile to their devilish maker and therefore
reproduce his ideology, not Faustus’. Moreover, as courtesans and not wives, their wombs would be refused recognition as legally valid, socially accepted spaces to generate proper bloodlines.

Recognizing fully the precariousness of his offer of the courtesans, Mephistopheles is careful to throw in by way of additional recompense a tool that would continue to keep the Good Angel at bay and Faustus in check: a book that will instruct the scholar in ways of manufacturing gold, “thunder, whirlwinds, storm, and lightning” (2.1.157). However appealing these shiny toys may be to Faustus, he now recognizes them to be impotent in their generative capabilities. And in keeping with his quick intellect (Prologue 16), he quickly sees necromancy per se for what it is: a fickle pursuit that will at best provide him with cheap thrills but not more sustainable sources of proliferation or satisfaction. Having given up, perhaps prematurely, the possibility of experiencing becomings, Faustus reverts to the patriarchal ideology of secured biological futurity. In fact, from this point on he combines his existent knowledge of the conventional arts and sciences (for instance, the Andromeda effect) with the hard-earned petty privileges of magic to attempt to insert himself into the future. Since magic cordons off the experience of unearthly eternity (timelessness) at the same time that it distances Faustus from the social institution of marriage and its accompanying promise of

---

10 It is evident that the service of the courtesans will be modeled on the dynamic that we observe between Lucifer, Mephistopheles, and Faustus: Mephistopheles’ true affiliations are to Lucifer; his simulation of service to Faustus is a matter of opportunity. So in all matters of consequence, he prioritizes his true master Lucifer, as is made amply clear when Mephistopheles resists once again Faustus’ questions regarding the maker of the world by asserting that he is only bound by contract to answer questions that are “not against (Lucifer’s) kingdom” (2.3.70).
legitimized continuity, he hybridizes and perverts his approach to futurity: he focuses on his monstrous potential to infect the female body with (his) desire, to disrupt the process of “natural,” biological reproduction and inject himself—as an object of “unnatural” female desire—into the pregnant woman’s body.

Thomas Underdowne’s *Æthiopian Histories* (1569) is the first known English translation of Heliodorus’ romance, *Aithiopika*, the popular tale of the dark-skinned Queen Persina, who during conception was affected by an image of the white-skinned Andromeda to give birth to a child—Chariclea—who is marked by the whiteness of the mythical princess and not the blackness of her biological parents. As Sujata Iyengar notes in *Shades of Difference*, Underdowne’s was not the first or only Renaissance text that adopted this ancient story about bodily transformation (19). Early modern authors seem to have been fascinated with the physical miracle that was Chariclea, and various texts such as Jacques Amyot’s *Histoire Aethiopique* (1559), William Lisle’s *The Faire Ethiopian* (1631), John Gough’s *The Strange Discovery* (1640), and the anonymous *The White Ethiopian* draw from the Greek romance to narrativize miraculous births.

While Iyengar suggests that the Andromeda effect made available the notion of racial passing, and even allowed for the benevolent reception of difference (racial but also biological), I would argue that the popularity of the tale simultaneously betrays contemporary anxiety regarding unclean bloodlines, corrupt lineage, and the participation of non-biological agents in the conception or manipulation of a biological product: the human fetus. M. D. Reeve suggests that many Renaissance scholars and scientists offered the notion of the maternal impression or the Andromeda effect to account for physical
attributes—desirable or otherwise—of a child. They proposed that the child might be shaped in the womb either by the mother’s visual perception of an image or by her secret desire for sources of pleasure. Referring to the popular Renaissance rationalizations of monsters and monstrous births, Marie-Hélène Huet states that “a remarkably persistent line of thought argued that monstrous progeny resulted from the disorder of the maternal imagination” and desire. Consequently, “[i]nstead of reproducing the father’s image, as nature commands, the monstrous child bore witness to the violent desires that moved the mother at the time of conception or during pregnancy,” and was scarred by her perverse desires instead of by the legitimate markings of its “legitimate genitor” (Huet 1).

Similarly, tracing the history of science’s fascination with the possible relationship between the womb and the female imagination or desire, Simon Reynolds notes that thinkers ranging from Aristotle and Saint Augustine to Montaigne and Robert Burton warned against the “dangerous power of strong (female) imagination” (436). The effects of a pregnant woman’s fantasy could be as harmless as to produce in the offspring “blemishes and birthmarks”; but they could also lead to “the creation of monsters” (Reynolds 436).

Reeve, Huet, and Reynolds note that early modern scientists and philosophers were not only cautious of the fetal corruption caused by the Andromeda effect; they also warned against female acts of transgressive desire, such as “sex with devils or animals,” which could lead to monstrous births (Huet 6). But even more innocent female fantasies were not without consequence. Pregnant women’s cravings for certain food items also could shape the fetus and leave physical marks or scars on it by way of evidence of the
mother’s fetish. It was commonly accepted that “[i]f a pregnant woman greatly desire(d) a chickpea, she will deliver a child bearing the image of a chickpea,” or “[i]f, during pregnancy, she desire(d) a pomegranate, she (will mark) her child with a pomegranate or something that resembles it” (Pietro Pomponazzi qtd. in Huet 17-18). Clearly in the early modern mind monstrous births resulted from an intervention that “literally imprinted on progeny a deformed, misshapen resemblance to an object that had not participated in their creation” (Huet 5). While in rare instances the monster may have reflected the glory of God, as in the case of Chariclea, who bore the markings of white royalty, the most common assumption was that it was a horrible aberration that “shamelessly reveal(ed) its shameful origins” (Huet 31).

In light of the popular understanding of the Andromeda effect and of the sinister implications of birthmarks, an early modern audience may have recognized immediately the potentially monstrous connotations of the “little wart or mole” that marks the neck of Alexander’s otherwise “fair” paramour, whom Faustus conjures for the viewing pleasure of the Emperor (4.1.110-11). And later in the play they may have been troubled by Faustus’ use of the common knowledge regarding “great-bellied” women’s desire “for things … rare and dainty” to extract successfully from the Duchess of Vanholt her craving for “a dish of ripe grapes” (4.6.10-15). These troubles would have only been heightened by the audience’s recognition of the magical nature of “the sweetest grapes” that the scholar has his spirit deliver from India or Saba (4.6.30): nothing good could possibly spring from a culinary concoction conjured by the Devil’s advocate for consumption by a pregnant woman!
I would suggest that in discovering the Duchess’ pregnancy-induced food fetish and then fulfilling it by using his craft of magic, Faustus makes a singular attempt “to shun the snares of death” (5.1.67). Through the grapes that he feeds (into) the Duchess, the flamboyant-pathetic scholar inseminates and fertilizes her desiring body and imagination. Knowing full well that he is “but a man condemned to die” (4.4.21), that his “flesh and blood (are) frail” (4.6.76), and that Helen’s kiss will not “make (him) immortal” (5.1.95), Faustus tries to secure within the Duchess’ body the shape of his future. In the process, he perversely fulfills in the immediate sense his earliest prophesy (1.1.78-86), as he has his “swift spirit” conjure “pleasant fruits” from the orient (1.1.81-4). More essentially, he uses his magic and his earthly knowledge to transform the Duchess’ body into “a vessel for reproducing … [his] bloodlines” (Jankowski 228), into a space wherein his powers may be exerted on the “products of her body” that will record his “paternal” influence (228). This progeny would not only corrupt the noble lineage, but also help the dying scholar escape absolute extinction by retaining for posterity marks of his hybrid, conventional-magical creation. Having lost forever his place in Heaven—possibly the only space where he could finally break out of the cyclical burdens of both temporality and the conventional experiences of futurity—Faustus combines his knowledge and desire to return himself to a position of social power: having no clear future of his own, he manages nonetheless to participate in patriarchal futurity.

Faustus’ attempt to defy molarity and leave behind the monster-child of his desire is echoed in Negotiations by Deleuze, who announces that when studying the ideas of a philosopher he imagines himself “taking (the) author from behind and giving him a child
that would be his own offspring, yet monstrous,” a violent mix of ideas, “all sorts of shifting, slipping, dislocations, and hidden emissions” (6). The imagined child, Deleuze proposes, could be the fruit of his “buggery or … immaculate conception” (Negotiations 6). While the philosopher’s rather flamboyant fantasy has nothing directly to do with Faustus, it nonetheless emphasizes the common flows of knowledge, appropriation, and penetration that mobilize their respective desires to break free from defined and organized, in a word, territorialized, modes of being and knowing. The uncertain result of mixing energies is also common: the product of their desire could be monstrous or miraculous. In any event, it would defy the molar structures of reproduction, biological or epistemological.

“The Deed’s Creature(s)”: The Refusal of Futurity

The Changeling shares with Doctor Faustus the anxiety about pregnancy and women’s role in patriarchal futurity. The play is permeated with images of the results or consequences of maternal influence, crowded with descriptions of physical and mental deformity, of quasi-medical practices that target the policing of the female anatomy, and of the memory of a corrupt maternal womb that continually engenders corruption.

The Changeling opens with Alsemero remembering, not unlike Polixenes in The Winter’s Tale, his fall to heteronormativity and mortality. Mesmerized at the temple by Beatrice-Joanna’s beauty, the young voyager imagines a future union between himself and Beatrice that would parallel the course run by Adam and Eve, their earliest ancestors. Alsemero’s lines are significant because they schematize the interplay of fantasy, desire, and agenda that informs characters’ temporal experiences in the play:
'Twas in the temple where I first beheld her,
And now again the same; what omen yet
Follows of that? None but imaginary.
Why should my hopes of fate be timorous? (1.1.1-4)

Clearly, the young man’s past and present experiences—of beholding Beatrice-Joanna’s “beauties”—fill him with a contradictory desire. On the one hand he wants not to give in to flighty imagination, which might lead him to read into mere coincidences great omens; on the other he wants to assert the acceptable, even higher qualities of his attraction to the young stranger: his love is doubly holy because it is located within the pious space of the temple, and because he craves its fulfillment by legitimatizing it through marriage.

His romantic course to the secured futurity that informs matrimony runs counter to the mercantile visions that previously he shared with Jasperino, his companion and fellow “venturer” (1.1.90). Notably, even when he is surprised by his friend’s sudden transformation from stoic seaman to melancholic lover, Jasperino recognizes the similarities between the adventures offered by the sea and by the female sex: both entail risks and rewards; and both can lead to material futurity. But both forms of adventure also rely on external mediums—on waves and wind in one case, and on women’s chastity and their ability to breed in the other—that can never be fully controlled or tamed by men. (Like Alsemero, who interprets his repeated visions of Beatrice-Joanna in terms of the supernatural (“omen”), Jasperino also draws out the connection between witchcraft and the trafficking of waterways: gales, he states may be purchased “amongst the witches” (1.1.17), if they are not gifted to the shipmen by God.) Perhaps it is owing to
his recognition of their similarities that Jasperino decides to join his friend on land in
his heteronormative path to futurity, and seeks through Diaphanta similar rewards for his
romantic/sexual future. He promises to at “another time” “board” the waiting-woman and
take down her “topsail” on the condition that she is a “lawful prize” (1.1.153; 91-92).

But both men’s respective investments in the women are doomed to failure as
their hitherto stoical sensibility collapses into the “frequent frailty” of filiation that
Alsemero claims is the “general” human condition (1.1.116), one that, as Deleuze
suggests, reproduces itself without much alteration throughout the generations.
Strangely, Beatrice anticipates both men’s futures, when she means only to bemoan her
loss of Alsemero: “That he should come so near his time, and miss it!” (1.1.86). The
reproduction and appropriation of human frailty informs the subjectivity of each of the
characters in the play; among the most puzzling of which is Beatrice-Joanna’s. Famously
hailed by her rapist as “the deed’s creature” (3.4.140), Beatrice-Joanna has perhaps the
most radical and fertile imagination in the play; more importantly, she uses her
imagination in order to convert her desires into actions or events. Besotted with
Alsemero’s good looks and charm, the young woman acts on her desire and hatches a
plan that would kill, as it were, two birds with a single stone: she designs a plot wherein
De Flores, having murdered her betrothed Alonzo for a fee, would flee from her
household with her money, leaving her free to construct the opportunity for her father
Vermandero to warm up to her new lover, thereby securing her future happiness with the
Valencian. Beatrice-Joanna’s plans, though somewhat speedily arrived at, would even
have materialized as per her designs, had it not been for her inability to negotiate with De Flores the material terms of his service to her.

No stranger to contractual negotiations, Beatrice-Joanna makes a surprising and fatal slip in trusting that “his dog-face” will prioritize one form of material futurity over another (2.2.147). But when De Flores refuses the “three thousand golden florins” that she offers him for his future security (3.4.62), and seems obstinate to remain at her side despite her willingness to raise her offer to “double the sum” (3.4.74) or send after him whatever amount of money that he would demand in writing (3.4.82), Beatrice-Joanna recognizes with shock the price that she must pay: in submitting to him sexually, she must set aside her agenda of becoming a self-made woman and be “undone … endlessly” by the villain (4.1.1).

Judith Haber suggests that Beatrice’s rape by De Flores is prompted by his knowledge of her “perfect virginity” (3.4.120), and that it is the im/perfection of the hymen that unites the violence of rape and marriage that shapes much of the action in the play (80-84). While Haber is right to note that virginity clearly is an obsession not just with the men but also most of the women in the play, it is futurity that invades all the characters’ imagination, even their fantasies of maintaining or dispensing with their own or others’ virginity. “[A] thing but is both loved and loathed” (1.1.125), virginity in The Changeling functions literally as a passage to the site of futurity. Consequently, Alsemero’s closet concoctions predict results not only regarding women’s virginity, but

---

11 When Beatrice hears in Act Two, scene one of Alonzo’s return and of his designs of marrying her shortly thereafter, she negotiates privately with her father in order to delay the loss of her maidenhood by three days, time enough to set her murderous plans in motion (2.2.105-118).
also their pregnancy.\textsuperscript{12} His attempts to fix by means of scientific knowledge the non-localizable components of women’s desire result from a shared patriarchal anxiety about the impossibility of their controlling in absolute ways women’s mental and physical mobility. Not surprisingly, then, early in the play a similar anxiety shapes Tomazo’s fearful visions of his friend’s married future with Beatrice-Joanna:

\begin{align*}
\text{Think what a torment ’tis to marry one} \\
\text{Whose heart is leaped into another’s bosom.} \\
\text{If ever pleasure she receive from thee,} \\
\text{It comes not in thy name, or of thy gift;} \\
\text{She lies but with another in thine arms,} \\
\text{He the half-father unto all thy children} \\
\text{In the conception—if he get ’em not,} \\
\text{She helps to get ’em for him in his absence.}
\end{align*}

(2.1.132-139)

Tomazo’s cautious advice to Alonzo as the groom-to-be awaits his postponed wedding night is marked by the fear not only of the monstrous power of the maternal impression to disrupt patriarchal lineage, but also of the autonomy of women’s fantasies (times that are lived in the imagination), which men may never control, not even through the rites of marriage.

\textsuperscript{12} It is interesting to note that Alsemero’s dabbling with the dubious and magical science of potion-making likens him to Faustus, who is also invested in women’s capacity to shape the future, and in his own ability to penetrate and monitor the womb.
But if Tomazo’s observations of women are conventional, so too are De Flores’, who hopes to control Beatrice-Joanna’s visions and fantasies. His recognition that women have been known to “chid themselves abed to men” is based on the servant’s observation of the perverse scope of “wrangling,” which may yet bring about such an erotic transformation in his mistress as mimics the course run by other women who have loved “bad faces … beyond all reason” (2.1.84-89). The unreasonable monstrosity of women’s fantasies inundates his imagination, much in the manner that it does the other men’s. However, while Alsemero, Tomazo, and even Vermandero fear the loss of patriarchal authority and control that is mobilized by female desire, De Flores hopes to benefit from a woman’s unnatural (transformed) appetite.

Haber claims quite rightly that such obsessions interlock men’s patriarchal “fears and fantasies about women, sexuality, and marriage” (80). But it is crucial to note that these fears and fantasies are not exclusive to men. Women too could share the fear of the female body’s production of the future. Beatrice-Joanna’s desires, for instance, which involve changing the course of her future, also focus on the preservation of her virginity. Promising with “giddy” speed to “change” her “saint” (1.1.158-59), first she persuades her father to plead to Alonzo for a three-day prolongation of her maidenhood, the condition that all of the men that surround her seem also to value, but only in so far as they may oversee its eventual demise. Next, when De Flores demands her “perfect” virginity as just reward for his murder of Piracquo, she attempts to place between her and the servant a distance of social class (“Think but upon the distance that creation / Set ’twixt thy blood and mine”). But when De Flores insists on proximating himself to her by
emphasizing the equality of their “conscience” (“Look but into your conscience; read me there. / ’Tis a true book; you’ll find me there your equal”), Beatrice-Joanna in turn begs for the preservation of her “honour.” It is only when De Flores reminds her that she cannot “wee fate from its determined purpose” that Beatrice-Joanna recognizes the impossibility to sustaining her condition of virginity. Notably, having failed to avoid De Flores’ sexual invasion, she retains her desire to avoid sexual contact. Reading secretly from her husband’s “Book of Experiment” (4.1.24) and discovering Alesemero’s perverse and interventional medical practices, Beatrice promises to sabotage the “two spoonfuls of the white water” that can identify female pregnancy (4.1.31). And, having used one of her husband’s secret drugs to ensure Diaphanta’s maidenhood, she transfers the threat of pregnancy from her own body onto her maid’s as she bribes the servant to lose her maidenhood to Alsemero. Diaphanta’s plans for her own future of material and marital luxury, of course, are shattered (4.1.129-30), and she is murdered, once again by De Flores, thereby preventing once and for all her ability to create a future of (in)advertent corruption and bastardy.

The most powerful symptom in the play of a woman’s fear of the womb, however, takes place immediately prior to Beatrice’s rape, when she realizes that she cannot escape her monstrous sexual destiny. Still kneeling at De Flores’ feet, she resigns herself to her sexual partner, stating resentfully that:

Vengeance begins;

Murder, I see, is followed by more sins.

Was my creation in the womb so cursed,
It must engender with a viper first?

(3.4.166-69)

Strangely, this is not the first time in the play that Beatrice’s mother’s womb is summoned as a creative or destructive space. Wishing he “had a daughter … for” Alsemero (3.4.2), Vermandero speaks fondly of his wife who, being long dead, cannot provide him (or the younger man) with further vessels of futurity. Ironically, and in spite of the old father’s best efforts to protect his blood from spilling and entirely expending itself, Vermandero cannot secure futurity per se: infectious in her deathly condition and stamped with the signs of anti-futurity, Beatrice warns her father:

O come not near me, sir. I shall defile you.

I am that of your blood was taken from you

For your better health. Look no more upon’t

But cast it to the ground regardlessly …

(5.3.149-152)

With the death of all the women in his household, Vermandero is left at the mercy of Alsemero, a son-in-law who did not have the opportunity to produce or ensure the future production of the family line. Significantly, Isabella, the sole remaining biological vessel of futurity in the world of The Changeling, defers her bodily productivity to a time when her husband will behave as per her desire, wherein he will leave her free to move, think, and do as she pleases. In other words, Isabella desires a similar ideological and physical condition to that in which we find Beatrice-Joanna at the play’s beginning: in a
public space, gazing upon a strange, foreign, and forbidden vision, and casting the net to ensnare a catch, pleasant or otherwise.

**Futurity and Deleuzean Becomings**

While many of the characters in these plays adopt atypical, even problematic, tropes of futurity, their visions remain linked to the body and to the propagation of their present identity. In other words, the sense of futurity that they express is essentially corporeal, in so far as it is invested in the physicality of individuals, communities, and institutions. So, crafty as they are, their forgings of the future are not artistic or revolutionary in the Marcusean sense, which is rooted in individuals’ desire to sever future society from present modes of oppression. Instead the characters use and appropriate social tools that are available to them in the present—bodies, language, and knowledge—to attempt to write themselves into more powerful positions in the future, positions that at the present moment are unavailable to them. They strive to appropriate the culture of capital and patriarchy so as to usurp and occupy the position that hitherto belonged exclusively to molar identities, to dominant subjects. Because Faustus (as a disruptive agent of generation), Beatrice, and even Isabella crave power and dominance, “performance” standards that form the crux of a capitalist culture, they reterritorialize onto the foundations of patriarchal civilization. And they fail consequently to establish a

---

13 Early in “Marxism and Feminism,” Marcuse defines the term “Performance Principle” as a “Reality Principle” that is based on the efficiency and prowess in the fulfillment of competitive economic and acquisitive functions.” A “Reality Principle,” he states, is “the sum total of the norms and values which govern behavior in an established society, embodied in its institutions, relationships, etc” (279). Marcuse notes the contradictory culture of capitalism, whose “Reality Principle” is inextricably tied to notions of performance and performativity.
new, alternative society that is freed from the collective ideals of molarity. *Doctor Faustus* and *The Changeling* represent precisely the destabilizing effects of the social economy that Margot Heinemann identifies as being specific to a “prerevolutionary situation,” wherein “no single ideology is capable of holding the society at large effectively together” (151). Refusing to accommodate convincingly the comedic conventions of marriage that may mollify the horror, excess, and tragedy of the multiple deaths in the plays, the texts also decline to offer sublimity, a quality that is essential to the propagation of hegemonic stability. Instead they seem to be lurking in the dark spaces of futurity, in the aftermath of becoming, which Gilles Deleuze in his work identifies as the critical first step in the direction of revolutionary and radical social change.

The Deleuzian purpose of “becoming” involves fundamental philosophical explorations of humanity. Specifically, Deleuze and Guattari’s method targets the attainment of means through which human beings may “animate the possibilities of life” (Sotirin 99), constantly dissolving social and, indeed, the biological limits posed on them. “Becoming,” Sotirin states, “explodes the ideas about what we are and what we can be beyond the categories that seem to contain us: beyond the boundaries separating human being and animal, … child from adult, micro from macro …” (99). Deleuze suggests that in our quest for non-hegemonic futurity, “on the near-side, we encounter becomings-woman” (*A Thousand Plateaus* 248), the introductory but constantly mutating force of generation that can (and therefore should) defy the various disciplinary social and cultural forms, including normative marital, sexual, and economic relations, that are designed, “through their effects” (Sotirin 101), to reproduce oppressive ideologies. In other words,
becoming-woman is a politics that is “capable of … impregnating” and traversing, even infecting “an entire social field” with its energy (*A Thousand Plateaus* 276). I would suggest that *Doctor Faustus* and *The Changeling* engage this very body politic, infusing the female or feminized form with generative capabilities, ones that can simultaneously dismantle hegemonic structures and methods of futurity. The primary principle of early modern futurity, however, remains more or less intact, as the promise of a continuous culture of patriarchy marks the plays’ conclusions. But even as the three texts discussed above do not quite manage to liberate themselves from the rhetoric of hegemonic futurity, in their refusal to propagate it unproblematically, the plays take the first, Deleuzean, step towards the ultimate goal of socio-political liberation.
CHAPTER FOUR
“IN HOPE TO ALTER KINDE”: MAPPING POLITICAL FUTURITY IN LANYER AND MORE

Cities and human bodies have distinct shapes, and when locked into a disciplinary system they function more or less predictably, like clockwork. It is when the systems of containment are disrupted that interesting possibilities emerge regarding the future, both with respect to bodies and cities. In the previous chapter, I considered the possibilities that emerged in early modern drama from disrupting the structures that organized the Renaissance human body. Specifically, I discussed the period’s investment in the mutable female anatomy and analyzed texts that presented women’s bodies as the sites of experiments on (toward) the future. I suggested that while there is potential in such experimentation for the production of revolutionary change, or, to use Deleuzian terminology, for becoming, the human subjects cannot quite sustain their disparate visions of the future and invariably return to conventional and accepted systems of being. Yet, despite their reterritorialization, the protagonists articulate the possibilities of rupturing the linear logic of time wherein the future reproduces oppressively the structures of the past and present. In this chapter I will continue my analysis of the conflicted location of the future within the early modern temporal and cultural schemes. Instead of focusing on human bodies and on biological futurity, however, I will now move to an evaluation of communal and urban spaces that during the period offered themselves as the ideal mediums to bring about social and political change. My
discussion will involve an exploration of the limits and flexibility of the terms typically identified with urbanity and city culture.

In *The Urban Revolution* Henri Lefebvre notes that during the Renaissance “the city developed its own form of writing: the map, or plan, the science of planimetry” (12; original emphasis). Lefebvre adds that, quite unlike present-day maps, which are scaled and abstract, early modern maps were “[a] cross between vision and concept, works of art and science …” (12). Focusing primarily on the mappings of utopian spaces, including those represented in Renaissance literature, Louis Marin similarly states that “the city’s utopic figure seems somewhere between geometry and panorama” (207). The purpose of mapping the early modern city, in other words, was not simply to mark and categorize its geographic and cultural limits or features; rather, Renaissance cartography represented contemporary intellectual interest in designing possibilities and organizing urban futures. It emphasized, moreover, the versatile, even disruptive, power that Deleuze in his work recognizes as the essential quality of mappings, which may be “adapted to any kind of mounting” or medium—they may be “drawn on a wall, conceived as a work of art, constructed as political action or as mediation” (*Thousand Plateaus* 12).

Writers of the period recognized this power and shared the cartographers’ preoccupation with the Renaissance city. Not surprisingly, the genre of city comedy flourished in the seventeenth century at the same time that masques and pageants celebrated urban culture.¹ Even the poetry and prose asserted the value of the city as a

---

¹ For a detailed study of the treatment of the city as reflected in early modern masques, pageants, and city comedies, see Gail Paster’s *The Idea of the City in the Age of Shakespeare.*
space wherein futures could be written. “[S]imultaneously of the narrative and of the descriptive domain,” cities and other “utopic figures” emerge within early modern literature as “graphic texts” that witness transformations while interrogating present and past systems of organization (Marin 207-08). But while it is clear that the writers’ visions of the future are inextricably linked to their desire for change in present conditions of living, the precise direction of their imagination ranges from being nostalgic (wherein the future implies a re-turn to systems of the past) to being new and revolutionary, even aberrant (wherein the future is a radical deconstruction of past and present systems of being).

The ideology of nostalgia combined rapidly with the historical reality of urbanization to produce anxious pastoral narratives that emphasized the paternalistic culture of feudalism. The pastoral futurity articulated in texts such as *The Passionate Shepherd* and *Lycidas* entails what Raymond Williams recognizes in *The Country and the City* to be an imagining of a future time that returns the protagonists and the readers to “good old days.” Williams is quick to ask the obvious but responsible question: “Is it anything more than a well-known habit of using the past, the ‘good old days,’ as a stick

---

2 Isabella Whitney’s *Will to London* is an interesting example of a text that represents both the poet’s disillusionment with her present socio-economic conditions within the city and her desire to bring about change in the general future of London. Her designs for the future certainly are not nostalgic, in that they do not allude to a glorious past that has since been lost and to which Whitney’s imagination returns. At the same time, her musings of a future society are neither apocalyptic nor millenarian, but they are rooted in the material reality of Londoners. For details on Whitney’s imaginary production of a London after her time, see especially lines 33 through 236, wherein the poet catalogs the geographical transformations that she enables in the city.
to beat the present?” (12). While the question leads Williams to an important book-length analysis of the role of nostalgia in the construction of pastoral identity and to tracing cultural movements within and between rural and urban England, I want to appropriate the terms of his inquiry to consider literary history’s investment in the future: is it anything more than a well-known habit of using the future as a stick to beat the present?

Intent on being ahead of his time, Francis Bacon admits readily to his son that it is his “most profoundest care for the future” that fuels his humanist imagination but also his harsh critique of the epistemologies of the past and present (“The Masculine Birth of Time” 62). Far from encouraging nostalgia in his son, who is the intended reader and also the kernel of the future, Bacon embraces futurity as the much-needed antidote to the fetishistic culture of antiquity. His ensuing theories regarding the nature of the arts and sciences may be extreme, and his desire to sever all ties with past systems of knowledge unqualified. But what is of interest is his simultaneous quest for a reliable methodology of constructing an improved future society, a methodology that he claims will usher

3 See especially chapter two of the essay, where Bacon chronicles with astonishing speed and carelessness the achievements (each one being an intellectual faux pas, in Bacon’s opinion) of philosophers and scholars ranging from Aristotle and Plato to Hippocrates and Paracelsus.

4 In Book One of Utopia Raphael Hythloday expresses a similar contempt for the culture of intellectual and political passivity that camouflages as respect for preexisting systems and procedures. The example that he uses is particularly interesting because it draws attention to the temporal stasis implied by the intellectuals’ opposition to change: the hypothetical “counsellor” that Hythloday constructs “seize[s] the excuse of reverence for times past” as his justification for the avoidance of structural improvements for present and future societies. For details see More, Thomas. Utopia. Trans. and Ed. Robert M. Adams. New York: W. W. Norton, 1995, especially pages eight and nine.
England into recognizing “the noblest, the truly masculine birth of time” when citizens would rely for the betterment of society not on mere “intuition” or other “things accessible to the senses,” but would focus on concrete steps that result from “better … management of the human mind” (92). Better management: while Bacon’s phrase bears a particularly modern connotation that, in an age of global capitalism, has become the mantra for corporate success, in the Renaissance it worked within a broader cultural spectrum, one that the humanist shared with other writers and artists of the period.

Indeed for most English scholars of the early modern period, there was a clear connection between their visions of an improved time and the construction of England as a better communal space. Specifically, urban centers such as London became the focus of contemporary art and design, and works ranging from Anthony Munday’s spectacular pageants to the city comedies of Middleton and Dekker emphasized the urban terrain and cosmopolitan culture that were becoming increasingly desirable among the people of England. In other words, in the literature the Renaissance city became witness to the

---

5 Bacon seems deliberately to steer clear of the more sense-oriented, street-wise forms of knowledge that were employed by many of his scientifically inclined contemporaries, one of them being Hugh Plat, who collected his observations on diverse matters in a text titled *The Jewell House of Art and Nature*, which was published in 1594, the same year that Bacon composed his *Gesta Grayorum*, a fictional piece that is decidedly more abstract and conceptual than Plat’s work. For a detailed comparison of the scientific methods of the two men, see Deborah Harkness’ *The Jewel House: Elizabethan London and the Scientific Revolution*, specifically chapter six.

6 For a discussion of Munday’s pageantry and the ceremonial representation of London’s commercial and political success, see Ian Archer’s “Material Londoners?” in *Material London, ca 1600*. Ed. Lena Orlin. See Theodore Leinwand’s *The City Staged: Jacobean Comedy, 1603-1613* and Swapan Chakravorty’s *Society and Politics in the Plays of Thomas Middleton*, among others, for Renaissance drama’s growing focus on urban space and culture.
changing times, but it also represented a space where possibilities unfurled, where, moreover, the future could be planned and regulated. Almost as if it were a malleable female form, the city took on the shape of individuals’ desires.

_The Body as Citadel: Communal Transformation in Aemilia Lanyer’s_ 

_Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum_

Here in equall sov’raigntie to liue,

Equall in state, equall in dignitie,

That unto others they might comfort give,

Rejoycing all with their sweet unitie.


In _Writing Women in Jacobean England_, Barbara Lewalski applauds Aemilia Lanyer’s proto-feminist approaches toward her potential patrons and states that “[w]hatever actual patronage Lanyer may have received, her dedications rewrite the institution of patronage in female terms, transforming the relationships assumed in the male patronage system into an ideal community” (221). By dedicating her work to other women, prospective patrons of her art, the poet appropriates (with or without success) the notions of patriarchal capital to suit the changing needs of an early modern, urban society where women increasingly were testing the limits of the non-domestic economy.7 At the

---

7 As discussed in an earlier chapter, early modern Englishwomen continued to struggle against the various legal, political, and religious measures taken to restrict women’s work to the domestic sphere. Despite the various laws passed by the rulers, such as Statute Three passed during Henry VIII’s reign, declaring women’s specialized labor to be a dangerous and punishable offense, “female economic activity of all kinds appeared to be spilling over into the streets and lanes as never before” (Roberts 94).
same time that Lanyer economically empowers the women whom she addresses, by presenting herself as their equal both in terms of intellect and virtue, she manipulates the social conventions of patronage. In her poetic flight towards egalitarianism she imagines a future society that breaks down both the feudal notions of status and rank and the increasingly class-based system of capital. She constructs in their places an alternative system that is founded on relationships of exchange among equals. Her book, Lanyer claims, is “the glass which shows (her dedicatees’ and her own) several virtues,” and emphasizes the common bond among them: their disinterested appreciation of Christ their Bridegroom. In the poet’s imagining of a better time and a better society, not only would the women abandon their patriarchal stance as her superiors (Lewalski 221), but they would also be united and equalized in a rather idyllic communal marriage to a strategically feminized Christ figure.8

Lanyer’s seemingly risky or at least impractical insistence on the equality among women may well have its roots in a personal history. As a young woman, she held a dubious status as mistress to the Lord Chamberlain Hundson, when she was hurriedly married off to the court musician Alfonso Lanyer to prevent the scandal that would have stemmed from her illegitimate pregnancy. Her marriage decidedly lowered (if also stabilized) Lanyer’s socio-economic station and she became firmly rooted within the middling class as a resident of the “minories,” a locality populated by artists and foreigners. (Interestingly, the location of the minories is not unlike the problematic

8 Several critics, notably Wendy Wall and Jonathan Goldberg, have suggested that Lanyer’s Christ figure is “often feminized (in his suffering) and thus appears as a site of female-identification … (and) cross-gender identification” (Goldberg 33).
fringes of the forest occupied by Rosalind in *As You Like It*; it is also similar to the marginal economic spaces occupied by workingwomen in Renaissance drama.) Her sexual history, combined with the revised material realities that resulted from her relocation from the aristocratic outskirts to middle-class London, may have been a constant source of anxiety for the young woman; so much so that it triggered in her the desire to construct an alternative urban society for women, a utopia that absolved them of class and rank, that situated women at a plateau or citadel, and that banished patriarchy from its political system.9 Through Lanyer’s poetic representation of her politics, then, she disrupts patriarchal futurity by offering an alternative organizational vision of the future, one that refuses to reproduce past structures of oppression. In fact her construction of the future goes so far as to revise religious thought.

The feminized body of Christ, which is the central male figure in Lanyer’s poems, most obviously validates and purifies the poet’s own sexual history. Moreover, by complicating the gaze it unwrites for future times the negative contemporary conception of women’s sexual objecthood: Christ’s body and the reader’s gaze upon it are intertwined, inseparable. As a result, the distinctions between the two “collapse,” just as “the positions of ‘other’ and ‘self’” overlap (Wall 328). Indeed Lanyer’s poetry celebrates not only Christ’s body but also the female gaze as it locates itself in “[h]is joints dis-joynted …/ His alabaster breast, his bloody side, / His members torne, … / His bowels drie ….” (“Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum” 1161-8). In making Christ the object of

9For details regarding Lanyer’s socio-economic position, see Pamela Joseph Benson’s essay in *Opening the Borders: Inclusivity in Early Modern Studies.*
all women’s desire and the subject of all literary women’s writing, in short, by making him like the women whom Lanyer addresses in her poetry, the poet balances—at least within the scope of her utopia—any material differences that exist between the author and her intended readers. While Jonathan Goldberg clarifies that Lanyer’s treatment of religion is not exclusively sexual, he asserts that the poet uses the rhetoric of “sexualized religious passion … to overcome social disparity and to put (herself) on some kind of footing with her patrons” (36-7). In Lanyer’s poetry “religion vehiculates many things, not all simply to be understood as religion: power relations, gender relations, patronage, and sex among them.” (36). Goldberg’s use of the term “vehiculates” is especially useful because Lanyer uses her poetry precisely as a tool that will bring about motion and transformation. Put differently, Lanyer’s religious verse is a vehicle of futurity, one through which she confronts contemporary hegemony and presents alternative polities.

The plight of Christ on the crucifix is akin to the common experience of shame and pain that Rosi Braidotti suggests is essential to women’s identities within patriarchal cultures. She states, “‘I, woman,’ am affected directly and in my everyday life by what has been made of the subject of woman; I have paid in my very body for all the metaphors and images that our culture has deemed fit to produce of woman” (187). These words may well encompass Lanyer’s consciousness of her own plight within a patriarchally determined women’s world. Her comment to the “[v]ertuous [r]eader” that “all women deserve not to be blamed” indicates her awareness that much fault lies in men, “who forgetting they were borne of women, nourished of women, … doe like
Vipers deface the wombs wherein they were bred” (“To the Vertuous Reader 48).

Clearly, Lanyer is alert to the injustice that forces women such as her to endure contemporary patriarchy. In response, her poetry consciously appropriates the literary and cultural metaphors that work to contain women. Thus, refusing to limit herself or her readers to the role of mourner of injustice, which was, as Wall points out, traditionally ascribed to women, Lanyer calls for a radical shift in the communal dynamic. And much as she diagrams Christ’s body as a fluid site that unites pleasure and pain, she presents her own work as a “diagram (of) the future” that disavows patriarchal practices and reconfigures the “art of seeing and acting” within society (Rajchman 43).

Unlike Mary Sidney, who was one of her target patrons, Lanyer uses the permissible genre of religious writing but reinterprets it “in terms which enable her to negotiate both authorial and social authority, particularly in relation to what she assumes is a shared identification with Christ” (Clarke 158). At a time when religious writing was the only acceptable form of women’s writing, Lanyer fully exercises and stretches the rhetoric of religious verse to propose a radical political, economic, and gendered transformation in early modern culture. Whereas Danielle Clarke argues that Lanyer manages to stress her connection with Christ’s piety despite her “individual class position” (158), I would suggest that she does so specifically because of it. Her

---

10 Wall states that because “women have historically been forced into, and thus subsequently allowed, the social position of mourning” (321), it becomes an almost domestic function assumed by women in households. For details on Lanyer’s poetic appropriation of mourning, see Wall’s *The Imprint of Gender*, especially the section titled “Dancing in a Net.”
representation of Christ emphasizes the similarity between the poet and her creation; they are both victims of patriarchal corruption and aristocratic eccentricity. In drawing the connection between the two bodies (and many more, if we include all female bodies), Lanyer becomes a cartographer of radical futurity. The city of feminine subjects that she maps out is a unifying if fluid one, similar to the streets that Lefebvre describes as crucial to the growth of urban culture. “The street,” he claims “is where movement takes place, the interaction without which urban life would not exist, leaving only separation, a forced and fixed segregation” (Lefebvre 8). Refusing to accommodate the segregation of classes and gender, Lanyer embodies the quintessential characteristics of Renaissance intellectuals who, as Russell Ames identifies in his foreword to Citizen Thomas More and his Utopia, “dreamed of brave new worlds” wherein “the ideals of freedom, democracy and republicanism—born in the capitalism of medieval towns—now showed new possibilities …” (i).

The geography of Lanyer’s “new world” or utopia may not qualify it in modern studies as a space but rather as a “place,” which, Gillian Rose argues, is deliberately feminized by geographers, who “represent (it) as the location of direct experience, a sensuous swirl of emotions and perceptions and myths, which rational (masculine) analysis can only ignore or destroy” (71). By contrast, space is “completely transparent, unmediated and therefore utterly knowable” and open to “rational analysis” (70). While lacking the theoretical specificity expressed here by Rose, Lanyer in her poetry manages nonetheless to unite space and place by constructing and mapping a feminine Christian city. In so doing, she anticipates the need for a cultural geography, a need that has only
recently been articulated by scholars such as David Harvey and Neil Smith. The utopia that Lanyer imagines is the result of a revolutionary futurity precisely because in the topography of her text place and space become one. Christ’s body is the physical representation of this union: recognized and fully appreciated by and among women, who “more than man can comprehend” that his form in itself is a synthesis, a “union of contraries” (“Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum” 1217, 1258). Wall points out that “the Salve’s copious preliminary material announces the text’s site of production as collective and socially collaborative.” While her “dedications inform the work with a reciprocity that reproduces in print the community of the patronage system,” they encourage a reconfiguration of social responsibility (Wall 322). What Lanyer wants to establish in the women’s community is not simply a system of exchange whereby she will receive economic support in return for her literary services to her readers. Rather, she posits solidarity and empathy as the foundations of her utopia. Indeed this is a world where men’s rules no longer apply because hierarchy is forced out, howsoever tentatively, from its geographical limits. Instead citizenship implies common experiences (misogyny), common hurdles (patriarchy and socio-economic instability), common desires (an appropriated Christ figure). Lanyer’s political futurity is revolutionary in the “concrete” sense that Ernst Bloch in The Principle of Hope recognizes to be an agent of change, not simply a weak articulation of desire.\footnote{For further details on Bloch’s distinctions between abstract and concrete utopias, see especially Part Four of The Principle of Hope.} Ruth Levitas explains Bloch’s point at length:

Ernst Bloch … makes an important distinction between abstract and concrete utopia, between the elements within utopian images which are purely escapist,
compensatory, wishful thinking and those which are transformative and will-
full in the sense of driving forward to action and a real, possible, transformed
future; between expressions of desire and expressions of hope.

(Levitas 262)

In addition to being concrete, Lanyer’s call to revolutionize communal formations is also,
in the Deleuzean sense, a dangerous act that corrupts the clean (masculine) segmentations
of art, politics, and praxis by pushing for a restless future of becoming that is at the
convergence (or “correlate”) of all three (What is Philosophy?108).

_Here and There: Spatial Futurity and the Cultural Geography of Utopia_

“I simply cannot imagine the present situation of mankind as being the one in which it
will now remain, simply cannot imagine it as being its whole and final destiny. … Only
in so far as I can regard this state as the means to a better one, as the crossing-point to a
higher and more perfect one, does it acquire value for me …”

(Fichte, _The Destiny of Man_).

Like Lanyer’s work, Thomas More’s _Utopia_ is also a mapping of a radical
political transformation. If, as Levitas states, “… utopia implies drawing up blueprints for
the future and supposing that they can be realized through sheer force of will” (257),
More’s construction of the ideal community is mobilized by his vision of a future space
that erases the distinctions between the self and other. Here “[n]othing is more humane
… than to relieve the misery of others, assuage their griefs, and by removing all sadness
from their life, to restore them to enjoyment, that is pleasure” (_Utopia_ 51; emphasis
added). But Utopia is also the space where the self must be served similarly. The
community that More designs is a vision of such a political system as will engage in collaboration and erase binary polarizations. As is the case in Lanyer’s community of female citizens forging a shared identity with Christ, in Utopia “no man is placed so highly above the rest,” but all are united by Nature, which “cherishes alike all those living beings to whom she has granted the same form” (*Utopia* 51).

I want to draw attention to an important aspect of the utopias painted by More and Lanyer: neither is temporally fixed. That is, the societies that each author constructs are not specifically placed in the future. Rather, they are presented as spaces of difference. Ruth Levitas rationalizes the fact that More’s *Utopia* is “located elsewhere in space rather than elsewhere in time” by suggesting that the society that he presents is “intended as a critique, not an escapist fantasy” (259). Levitas asserts that it is “only with the advent of … the belief in some degree of human control over social organization that the location of utopia in the future, as a point to which society either inexorably tends or can be pushed by human action, becomes a possibility” (259). Zizek complicates Levitas’ point by stating that:

In a proper revolutionary breakthrough, the utopian future is neither simply fully realised in the present nor simply evoked as a distant promise which justifies present violence—it is rather as if, in a unique *suspension of temporality*, in the short-circuit between the present and the future, we are … for a brief time allowed to act as if the utopian future is (not yet fully here, but) already at hand, just there to be grabbed. Revolution is not experienced as a present hardship we have to endure for the happiness and freedom of the future generations, but as the present
hardship over which this future happiness and freedom already cast their shadow—in it, we are already free while fighting for freedom, we are already happy while fighting for happiness, no matter how difficult the circumstances. Revolution is ... as it were its own ontological proof, an immediate index of its own truth. (247; emphasis added)

The suspension of temporality is crucial to our understanding of Lanyer’s and More’s utopian mappings. It is in the suspended temporalities of becoming that the writers construct their revolutionary spaces. These and similar spaces, Jameson suggests, have two specific moments within their revolutionary movements. He states that the “first moment of world-reduction, of the destruction of the idols and the sweeping away of an old world in violence and pain, is itself the precondition for the reconstruction of something else” (89). This moment of initiation or of “absolute immanence”, Jameson adds, “is necessary ... before new and undreamed-of-sensations and feelings can come into being” (89). It is only after such a moment has been initiated that life, and our accompanying visions or dreams about it, might be constructed anew. Jameson asserts that the second moment in the reconstructive process would involve not only the restructuring or reimagining of state and cultural apparatuses, but also a fundamental redefinition of our imagination: “we might think of the new onset of the Utopian process as a kind of desiring to desire, a learning to desire, the invention of the desire called Utopia in the first place, along with new rules for the fantasizing or daydreaming of such a thing—a set of narrative protocols with no precedent in our previous literary institutions” (90). More’s and Lanyer’s utopias mobilize precisely the kind of education
of the imagination that Jameson outlines in his work. Alongside the reinvention of the schemes of imagination, the authors also prompt a shift in the experience of temporalities in the geographies that they construct within their literary narratives. These spaces of literary architecture and futurity are “simultaneously narrative and imagistic” (Vosskamp 264), and their geographies are peculiarly contradictory because, in their insulation of future spaces, they present a sharp criticism of the historical moments from which they erupt.

At the end of *Utopia*’s Book One, “More” urges Hythloday to map out the geography of Utopia. But he is careful to request that it be a cultural geography that “explain[s] in order everything relating to their land, their rivers, towns, people, manners, institutions, laws—everything” (30). Far from it being an abstract map of the land, Hythloday’s description of Utopia, which takes up most of Book Two, unravels in the manner of a picture story. It is crucial to note that the physical or spatial geography is inextricable from the human and social ones; the descriptions of Utopian place, space, cultural practice, and political activity blend seamlessly in a labyrinthine vision not unlike the maps that Lefebvre attributes to the Renaissance cartographers. Let us consider an example: early in Book Two Hythloday provides his audience with a virtual tour of the “most worthy” city of Amaurot, whose infrastructure, he claims, is representative of all urban spaces in Utopia (More 33).

While the narrative begins as an identifiable geographical description that locates Amaurot on an “almost square” plot of land “against a gently sloping hill” (33), it quickly weaves in a discussion of Utopian architecture and town planning. We are told of the
planned placement of bridges that allows ships to “sail along the entire length of the
city quays without obstruction”; of the man-made walls around the river’s source that
would prevent a potential enemy from cutting off, diverting, or poisoning the city’s water
supply; of streets that “are conveniently laid out for use by vehicles and for protection
from the wind” (34). In addition to this telescopic view of the city, Hythloday provides an
inset detailing the microcosmic geography of Amaurot.12 “Every house,” he states, “has a
door to the street and another to [a] garden” (34). The lockless construction of the doors
as “two leaves” that freely swing open and shut leads Hythloday to comment casually on
the nature of the Utopian economy: here “there is no private property” (34).

The seemingly casual nature of Hythloday’s comment is especially puzzling
because in Book One he initiates a more philosophical debate over the nature of private
property. Even before he takes on the role of the cartographer of Utopia, he tells “More”
and Peter Giles that “as long as you have private property, and as long as cash money is
the measure of all things, it is really not possible for a nation to be governed justly or
happily” (28). His position on the matter seems clear: “justice cannot exist where all the
best things in life are held by the worst citizens; nor can anyone be happy where property
is limited to a few, since those few are always uneasy and the many are utterly
wretched”; and that “[a]s long as private property remains, by far the largest and best part

12 More’s descriptive strategy here is surprisingly modern and anticipates the guide-maps
that tourists find handy while negotiating a foreign city. The overlapping structure of
macrocosmic and microcosmic views of Amaurot reminds me of the city-sponsored
foldout maps of cosmopolitan spaces such as London or Chicago that provide tourists not
only with an abstract grid of roadways and railways, but also with popular spots—
museums, bars and restaurants, hotels, places of worship and theaters—that encourage a
cultural engagement with the city and prompt an economic exchange.)
of mankind will be oppressed by a heavy and inescapable burden of cares and anxieties” (28).

When Giles and “More” express their skepticism regarding Utopia’s superior political and economic structures, Hythloday concedes that the western minds (primarily the English) “surpass them in natural intelligence” (30). However, he is quick to add that Utopian institutions are superior to their European counterparts. But he fears that despite their superiority, they “would seem inappropriate because private property is the rule here, and there all things are held in common” (26). In fact it is Hythloday’s position on private property and his positive view of the institutional structures of Utopia that prompt his companions to seek out a cultural map of the place. Given this background, then, it is peculiar that he throws in rather nonchalantly his economic explanation of the lockless doors of Amaurot, after which he moves onto the description of Utopian garden-spaces and the peoples’ love of gardening. The abundant “vines, fruits, herbs, and flowers” that occupy Amaurot’s gardens are both “useful (and) pleasant to the citizens” (35).

Explaining the cultural benefits of the garden competitions held throughout Utopia, wherein “different streets … challenge one another to produce the best gardens” (35), Hythloday expresses his appreciation for the foresight of Utopus the founder, who recognized the importance of such “natural” spaces and preoccupations.

In his recognition of the function of gardens and nature within urban culture, Hythloday (and More) anticipate the theorists such as Lefebvre, who in The Urban Revolution notes the prominent place of gardens within the metropolitan geographies of “Paris, London, Tokyo, and New York.” Lefebvre observes that “[t]here is no city, no
urban space without a garden or park, without the simulation of nature, without labyrinths, the evocation of the ocean or forest, without trees tormented into strange human and inhuman shapes” (26). The philosopher asks whether such an organized presence of nature is meant to “provide an essential reference point against which urban reality can situate and perceive itself,” and if it is a “visible re-presentation of an elsewhere, the utopia of nature?” (26). That is, is the city-garden a symbol of man’s removal from nature? This question that leads to Lefebvre’s complex theories of “blind fields” finds in Utopia an interesting answer. The organization of space represents the organized mindset of Utopians, a mindset that is invested in futurity. The leader clearly thought about the future of his land and his people when he instated specific policies that would erase the differences among them or even produce multiplicities within each citizen.

This idea of the leader’s (writer’s) thoughts about the future stand in direction opposition to recent theories that caution against utopianism. Antonis Balasopoulos explains a couple of reasons that the politics of utopianism is attacked in poststructuralist thought. He suggests that critics, such as Foucault, reduce utopian constructions to positivistic, ahistorical forms, without paying due attention to the complexities of history that are embedded in the genre, and that interweave multiple theories of “‘filiation, supercession, precedence, complementarity, antagonism, parallelism, and even complete independence’” (Holstun qtd. in Balasopoulos 123). In addition, the temporal density of utopias often is misinterpreted, Balasopoulos notes, in so far as critics overlook the “tension between the static temporality of description and the countermanding
motility of processes of narrative figuration” that is essential to all utopian constructions (123). Thus decontextualized as texts about static perfection—taken out of history and placed outside of time—utopian literature is rendered as a source that vacates conflicts and complexities.

In fact literary utopias possess not only specific historical and temporal context, they also are defined by their intrinsic instability. Far from being fixed or perfect, they are marked by “semiotic rupture and political deterritorialization,” by “disjunction” (Balasopoulos 124, 126). Focusing especially on *Utopia*, Balasopoulos explains:

More’s work confronts us with simultaneous yet mutually canceling choices of perspective: the division between the two books redoubles as one between England and Utopia, narrative and description, historical analysis and utopian projection, earnest critique and jocular play, laborious realism and self-conscious antirealism, the personas of More’s political pragmatism and of (Hythloday’s) uncompromising defiance of political expediency. (126-127)

This disjunction is perhaps best represented in *Utopia* by the island’s push and pull between land and water, specifically in the unfixity or malleability of both. The island, which “was not always an island” (More 31), is in itself a break or rhizomatic rupture away from the segmentations of the mainland. The sea/bay that surrounds the new-formed land is also a paradoxical body; at once “quiet and smooth … like a big lake” and “very dangerous to navigation” (31), it offers “a glimpse at the utopic potential of spaces whose apparent lack of authoritative inscription … makes them fertile grounds for the growth of fantasies of a different kind of existence …” (Balasopoulos 141). Unlike
“More” who, at the end of Book Two, assigns to Hythloday a quality of exhaustion that might not be able to withstand “contradiction” (84), More presents through *Utopia* a site that mobilizes and is energized by paradoxical becomings. Not surprisingly, then, “More’s” final thoughts about the Commonwealth of Utopia are infused with paradoxical language, which is the marker of futurity: leading his friend by his hand to supper, he “hopes” such “an opportunity will present itself some day” as will enable him to ponder the contradictions of the foreign or other land that is Utopia. Like Orlando in *As You Like It*, who simultaneously is doubtful and hopeful of Ganymede’s magical capacities to alter futures, “More” too wishes, though he does not “really expect,” that the future course of his “own country would imitate” that of Utopia (85).

---

13 Marin notes the paradoxes that abound within (and are crucial to) discourses of utopia: Utopia signifies “[n]either yes nor no, true nor false, one nor the other” but rather is “the neutral.” But this neutral, Marin clarifies, is not to be confused with “neutrality, the ideological trick played by institutions propped up by class rule.” Instead, this neutral “is the span between true and false, opening within discourse a space” prompted by the “limitless force” of becoming (Marin 7).
CHAPTER FIVE

“NOW I WILL BELIEVE IN UNICORNS”: DISRUPTIVE VISIONS AND POLITICAL FUTURITY IN SHAKESPEARE’S ROMANCES

All actions and thoughts take place in time; moral actions and thoughts are no exception. One could even argue that, in so far as they are moral or meaningful, individuals are evaluated in the context of their consciousness of the passage of time, specifically of the strong relationship between their past, present, and the future actions. In most cases, Shakespearean characters remain true to this principle as they engage with their past while performing present actions that will in turn influence the future. (Young Hamlet is an obvious but good example of this principle; Cordelia is a less obvious but perhaps even better example than the brooding prince.\(^1\)) While scholars have been attentive to the topic of time in Shakespeare, much hasn’t been said about the temporal breakdowns that take place in his plays.\(^2\) In this chapter, I want to initiate a discussion of

---

\(^1\) I am thinking specifically of Cordelia’s ability to contextualize her own and her father’s actions in time or history: “We are not the first / Who with best meaning have incurred the worst” (5.3.3-4).

\(^2\) Wolfgang Clemen’s lecture and Clifford Leech’s essay on temporality in Shakespeare are early examples of scholarship that focuses on the influence of the past on characters’ present and future actions. Phyllis Rackin’s work on anachronism, on the other hand, analyzes the misrepresentation of the time during which Shakespearean action unfolds. These and other scholars’ important observations, however, do not account for the occasional ruptures of the experience of time in characters’ minds that affects their action. For details, see Clemen, Wolfgang. “Past and Future in Shakespeare’s Drama.” *Proceedings of the British Academy*. LII (1966): 231-52. See also Leech, Clifford. “Shakespeare and the Idea of the Future.” *University of Toronto Quarterly* 35 (1966): 213-228; and Rackin, Phyllis. “Temporality, Anachronism and Presence in Shakespeare’s English Histories.” *Renaissance Drama* 17 (1986): 101-23.
the actions of several Shakespearean characters that disrupt the regular passage of time. My readings focus especially on the role played by the ideology but also ethics of memory and futurity as embodied in the actions of characters such as Polixenes and Leontes in *The Winter's Tale* and Prospero and Gonzalo in *The Tempest*.

Before moving into a discussion of the plays, and in an effort to foreground the literature, I want to present some points regarding memory and temporality that I will use throughout and that are raised in the works of Bergson and Deleuze and Guattari. Their ideas, when studied in conjunction, provide new possibilities for a discussion of Shakespearean temporality and consciousness (the characters’ moral actions being part of this). In *Matter and Memory* Bergson states that the fundamental purpose of memory “is to evoke all those past perceptions which are analogous to the present perception, to recall to us what preceded and followed them, and so to suggest to us that decision which is the most useful” (228). But memory, he declares, also has a more sophisticated function:

By allowing us to grasp in a single intuition multiple moments of duration, [memory] frees us from the movement of the flow of things, that is to say, the rhythm of necessity. The more of these moments memory can contract into one, the firmer is the hold which it gives to us on matter: so the memory of a living being appears indeed to measure, above all, its powers of action upon things and to be only the intellectual reverberation of this power. (*Matter and Memory* 228)

---

3 I realize that in addressing only Bergsonian and Deleuzian ideas of temporality, I am leaving out the theories of many other important thinkers, quite notably Heidegger. For my project, however, I am interested in the ideas of becoming, which I feel is best defined in the works of Deleuze and, to a lesser degree, Bergson.
Bergson’s use of the word “frees” in this passage is troubling; Deleuze too would have struggled to accommodate it. The problem with memory is that it doesn’t necessarily free the individual but can shackle her to her state of being by determining the direction of the flow of her experiences (either as forward or backward movement). In other words, memory, as defined here by Bergson, can dictate and thus limit an individual’s course of action.4

Deleuze and Guattari’s work, on the other hand, encourages anti-memory as the site of “becoming,” which is not a fixed state of being but rather “constitutes ... a non-localizable relation” that “sweeps up” the seemingly isolated structures or bodies that lock power within their beings (A Thousand Plateaus 293). By destabilizing and unfixing beings, becoming forces connections to form between them through ungoverned flows of energy or desire. It is these ungoverned flows that, the philosophers suggest, can transgress the limits of temporal sequence, of history, and thus free up human consciousness in ways that Bergson’s memory can’t:

[Becoming] is the opposite of macropolitics, and even of History, in which it is a question of knowing how to win or obtain a majority. … Unlike history, becoming cannot be conceptualized in terms of past or future. ... [A]historical societies set themselves outside history, not because they are content to reproduce

---

4 Bergson’s later work revises his reading of the influence of memory, which, in The Creative Mind, he subordinates to the future. His revised interpretation allows Bergson to recognize that, owing to its essentially unforeseeable nature, the future is the most potent experience of time. For an analysis of Bergson’s development of this theories on memory and the future see Constantin Boundas’ “Deleuze-Bergson: An Ontology of the Virtual.” Deleuze: A Critical Reader. Ed. Paul Patton. Oxford: Blackwell, 1996. 81-106.
immutable models or are governed by a fixed structure, but because they are societies of becoming. (A Thousand Plateaus 291-92)

Becoming works in conjunction with “deterritorialization,” another Deleuzian term that I brought up in the earlier chapters. Deterritorialization is a movement that “indicates the creative potential of an assemblage” or structured body, and attempts to “free up the fixed relations that contain” it (Parr 67). Invariably the deterritorialized bodies are once again reterritorialized, when they formulate alternative bases of structuring power and energy. But it is the moment of flux that is the site of becoming. This moment, Deleuze asserts in an earlier work, “does not tolerate the separation or the distinction of before and after, or of past and future”; rather, “the essence of becoming … move(s) and … pull(s) in both directions at once” (The Logic of Sense 1). Thus becoming is paradoxical because it encompasses “the infinite identity of both directions or senses at the same time—of future and past, of the day before and the day after, of more and less, of two [sic] much and not enough, of active and passive, and of cause and effect” (2).

That the Bergsonian past is appropriated in Deleuzian becoming is clear; the result of the appropriation being that, in becoming, the hold of the past does not determine the “infinite identity” of the future. What is of interest to me in this interplay of philosophies is the possibility of generating new ways of reading the mistimed, timely, and untimely actions performed by Shakespeare’s characters.

---

5 Many scholars have analyzed the relationship of Bergson’s and Deleuze’s philosophies of time; Deleuze himself made the connection explicit in Bergsonism and later in Cinema 2: The Time-Image.
I will begin with *The Winter’s Tale*, which centers around the body of Queen Hermione. Indeed Hermione draws attention to it, placing herself between Leontes and Polixenes’ friendship in the opening act of the play, prompting both men to participate in a rhetoric of loss that is burdened, as Janet Adelman notes, with “the imagery of pregnancy” (147). On a broader scale, her state of pregnancy is particularly revealing of the play’s uneasy temporality; being pregnant, the queen bears the physical signs of a past action that will, after a gestation period, cause a drastic shift in the future. Quite simply, Hermione’s body at once represents the past, present, and future of Sicilia. But she also enables a connection with the past that is only shared by the two kings. Hermione’s excessively feminine presence forces both men to relive the experience of their initial separation, one triggered by the intervention of wives whose mere presence asserted the fundamental responsibility of patriarchs: biological propagation (1.2.79). Her pregnant body, then, serves as a bitter reminder to the men of their powerlessness to control their own future, emphasizing simultaneously their inability to sustain the youthful terms of their fantasies of a presentist life wherein “…there (is) no more behind / But such a day tomorrow as today” (1.2.64-66).

This early scene in *The Winter’s Tale* diagrams the collision of multiple desires and limits and is riddled with the conflicts of memory and becoming. We learn from Polixenes that as unformed beings the young princes experienced their friendship beyond the scope of temporal regimentation. The past and the future were not matters that concerned their animalistic frolicking, and the natural flow of their energies was not governed by organized structures that work to limit desire. Consequently, in that stage of
becoming, the boys Leontes and Polixenes were “[n]ot guilty” of culture, of being fixed (1.2.76). But the children were soon territorialized by events that curbed their desires, and they were forced into the realms of temporality to inherit the royal responsibilities of governance in addition to the adult responsibility of propagation.

The boys’ encounter with the dominant culture of heteronormativity represents dramatically Deleuze and Guattari’s theory of the territorialization of the child. They claim that organized social structures like the family or the State “steal” the child’s body (A Thousand Plateaus 276), which, if left to its own devices, will “continually undergo becomings” (259). The structures, on the other hand, affix to the stolen child a sexual identity, one that is accompanied by fixed social responsibilities and codes. Accordingly, the girl, whose body is the first to be stolen and organized, is trained not to be “a little girl anymore” or “a tomboy,” but rather to be a woman who will serve the purposes of patriarchal ideology. The boy is similarly trained to define himself in contrast to the girl, whom he must view as an “opposed organism” but also “as an object of his desire.” Thus both boy and girl come to be defined “in the ... organic sense” and a “history, or prehistory” of identity is imposed upon them (276).

Owing to the normative drive of history, Polixenes recalls nostalgically that his “fall” to adulthood was prompted by the “[t]emptations … born to” him in the form of his wife (1.2.79). His subscription to memory marks the point of his reterritorialization. While “[b]ecoming is an antimemory,” we learn from Deleuze that memory always (serves) a reterritorialization function (A Thousand Plateaus 294; original emphasis). That is, while the child, yet untouched by molarity, is outside of time and perspective, in
constant flux, the memory of childhood operates distinctly within the limits of
temporality, which roots (fixes) childhood as a past state of being. The memory of
childhood thus affirms that one can never again become a child. The same memory
narrativizes the child’s future as an adult. Polixenes is the Bergsonian (or molar, to define
him via Deleuze’s terminology) adult par excell

ence; he fondly remembers his youthful
days even as he distances himself from the possibility of becoming-child. His memory
enables him to maintain a firm hold on adulthood and, echoing Bergson’s understanding
of the term, is a representation of his “intellectual reverberation of ... power” (Matter and
Memory 228).

Peter Lindenbaum suggests that although it is Polixenes who articulates a
yearning “for an existence unaffected by time’s movement” (13), the two friends share
their memory of and desire for Edenic, pre-sexual intimacy. Certainly Leontes desires a
connection with others that is not affected by sexual difference or obligation. But he does
not rely on memory the way that Polixenes does to assert melancholically the
irretrievable nature of his past.6 This precisely is the difference between the two men; for
Polixenes childhood is a state that he has long transcended, and while he may—in the
manner of a courtier—muse over his lost innocence, he is also certain that his adult life is
one of “higher” import (1.2.72), one that is superior to the pastoral identity that he applies
to the condition of childhood. Thus he is not, as Lindenbaum believes, resentful of his


6 Lindenbaum argues that the play’s parallel structure emphasizes the similarities
between Leontes and Polixenes. Foremost among their shared qualities is the kings’
aversion for heterosexual intimacy. While Leontes expresses this sentiment through his
violent rhetoric of jealousy, Polixenes adopts violence late in the play, when he threatens
the lusty pastoral world, especially Perdita, with death, defacement, and a stout rejection
of procreative ceremonies.
adult experiences or obligations, but is securely rooted in the ideologies of patriarchy and monarchy, both of which empower his being and which he wishes to pass on to his son. (If anything, later in the play he is furious that Florizel, who at his age should behave in a manner befitting an aristocratic adult, is caught up in a frolicking pastoral world that is excessively natural, overflowing with images of pure procreation as opposed to careful hybridity, which Polixenes professes to Perdita is the superior state.)

Leontes’ silence during much of the scene indicates his refusal to submit to adulthood and share his friend’s rhetoric of memory. Instead he becomes the petulant child. For the rest of the scene, indeed for much of the play, he distances himself from the adult couple—Polixenes and Hermione—and proximates himself to the boy Mamillius. In the child’s company Leontes “recoil(s) / Twenty-three years” to become as he “then was to this kernel” (1.2.156-61). Critically, Leontes stresses it is he who, twenty-three years earlier, looked like Mamillius, and not the other way around. This rupture of the temporal scheme and logic marks the king’s shift away from the molar state of being adult. His is not a memory of childhood but a new experience of becoming-child. But this becoming is almost immediately reterritorialized onto the patriarchal ideology of futurity. His anxiety regarding his “honest friend” Mamillius’ bloodlines reinserts Leontes into the realms of patriarchy and temporality.

Addressing the untimely and illogical nature of becomings, Deleuze and Guattari state that “a line of becoming has neither beginning nor end, departure nor arrival, origin nor destination” (A Thousand Plateaus 293). Indeed Leontes’ becoming-child comes from nowhere and it goes nowhere. Likewise, his becoming-jealous does not have any
basis or roots. But once Leontes reterritorializes, he immediately wants to achieve a specific goal or end: revenge. To this end, he follows predetermined procedures, such as court hearings, and inserts himself into the schema of jealous patriarch, a schema well recognized by Polixenes and others who are familiar with the History of jealousy. What I refer to as Leontes’ experience of becoming and his eventual reterritorialization is interpreted by David Houston Wood in his essay as the king’s complex symptomatization of his melancholia. According to Wood, Leontes is Shakespeare’s most thorough examination of “time’s role as an internalized, subjective agent in bringing about the catastrophic” and transformative experience of melancholy. Leontes, Wood argues, is uniquely melancholic because he undergoes a conversion: his condition moves from a “dominance by the diffuse, dilatory psychology associated with ‘natural’ humoral melancholy into the frantic, posthaste mind frame that appends to melancholy in its ‘unnatural’ state” (186). Wood suggests that Leontes’ melancholic transformation is triggered by his “emotions of nostalgic loss that stem from a troubled moment of intense self-reflection” (186; emphasis added). Certainly the play makes a strong connection between self-reflexivity and temporal disjunction. But nostalgia need not be a product of “intense self-reflection,” as Wood assumes it is, but could very well be the result of socio-cultural assimilation, of molarity and reterritorialization. Given this, it is Polixenes’ affectionate backward gaze upon his childhood friendship that is nostalgic. His fond recollections situate him as Deleuze’s molar adult, as I have discussed above, but also within Bloch’s construction of the adult: Bohemia’s king is a grown man who is fully conscious of his maturity, his “ego and its responsibility” (37). Indeed, early in the play,
it is Polixenes, not Leontes, who experiences melancholy, a symptom that, as Bloch states, “is in fact customary during the transition into … manhood, where the good old student days vanish, embourgeoisement begins” (37).

As opposed to Polixenes’ nostalgic gaze, Leontes’ vision of himself in or as his son is dangerous precisely because it is not nostalgic but is a radical collapsing of temporal experience and subjectivity; past and future combine within him to form a heady mix that pulls him in both directions at once—the result is his experience of becoming. In becoming-child, “‘a’ child coexists with (Leontes), in a zone of proximity or a block of becoming, on a line of deterritorialization that carries … (him) off” beyond the linear flow of temporality (A Thousand Plateaus 294). While Wood recognizes the temporal paradox of Leontes’ “nostalgic pursuit” (193), reading through a Lacanian lens he interprets it as a byproduct of narcissism and melancholy. Thus Wood states it is because the king is caught between “[n]arcissism and narcissistic shame that he is dissatisfied with his state of being and lashes out with violence (194). Wood asserts that Shakespeare’s portrayal of Leontes’ melancholia is a “case study in the dangers of … a shift in temporalities,” but I would argue that a more provocative reading of play unfolds when the jealous king’s discontinuous experience of time is juxtaposed with the constancy and linear schema of the characters that surround him. What emerges upon such a reading is not so much a text that is Shakespeare’s dramatic warning to “his early modern audience” about the instability of melancholics as it is a complex questioning of the temporal means by which all human experiences are categorized (Wood 186). In other words, the play questions not only Leontes’ disruptive temporality but also the
linear logic of characters such as Camillo and Polixenes who readily observe the rules of time and subscribe to predetermined codes of royal or secure futurity.

When Leontes reterritorializes onto the adult world, it is specifically to punish Hermione for exercising a disruptive power over him and the other male characters, and for enabling his consciousness to experience a temporal breakdown. Whereas Polixenes only suggests that she and his wife “are devils” (1.2.84), Leontes conjoins Hermione’s generative capabilities with her ability to cuckold him and declares his wife to be “an adulteress” who has compromised the royal lineage or future of Sicilia (2.1.79). But even in this accusation, Leontes gestures toward his recent experience of becoming, one that he may not remember but the effects of which he cannot undo; his speech is marked by confusion:

’Tis pity she’s not honest. Honorable;
Praise her but for this her without-door form,
Which on my faith deserves high speech, and straight
The shrug, the hum or ha, these pretty brands
That calumny doth use—O, I am out!
That mercy does, for calumny will sear
Virtue itself—these shrugs, these hums and has,
When you have said she’s goodly, come between
Ere you can say she’s honest. (2.1.68-76)
Much has been made of this peculiar scene in recent criticism. Reading it as one of the play’s chief metatheatrical moments wherein the tyrant simultaneously identifies himself as the actor unveiling the truth and staging the history of Hermione’s deception, some editors connect the king’s “I am out” to Coriolanus’ lines late in the eponymous play: “Like a dull actor now / I have forgot my part, and I am out” (5.3.40-41). But unlike Coriolanus, who, on seeing his wife, son, and his mother kneel before him, forgets himself yet cannot forget their power over him, and is therefore “tempted to infringe (his) vow / In the same time ’tis made” (5.3.20-21), Leontes is more resolute and is determined to have his way in spite of his forgetting. His momentary forgetfulness, however, is important because it is marked by a becoming that once again dissociates him from linear temporality and its accompanying logic. In becoming-jealous and becoming-tyrant, Leontes severs all ties from social logic or past experience; thus his refusal to be swayed by the seemingly unanimous counsel of his lords and servants regarding Hermione’s innocence.8

7 For more details on this connection, see Susan Snyder’s note in her edition of *The Winter’s Tale*.  
8 In his study of temporality and melancholia in *The Winter’s Tale*, David Wood suggests that “the frantic formulation of jealousy is … best represented dramatically as a specific form of temporally lived experience, as a psychological state characterized by a subjective form of temporality” (200). Wood’s argument is that the subject’s identification with time is directly related to his ability to interpret and express outwardly his internal condition or humors; in Leontes’ case, the expression of his melancholy perforce disrupts his experience of time. For details, see Wood, David. “‘He Something Seems Unsettled’: Melancholy, Jealousy, and Subjective Temporality in *The Winter’s Tale*.” My argument with Wood is that he offers a rather prescriptive view of temporality as something that may become unsettled but can also be resettled by an adjustment of the humors. His suggestion is that the unstable king suffers from an unstable or “unnatural” humor, owing to which his experience of time is unsteady. The piling-up of negatives
Those who protest on behalf of the queen seek reason and temperance in Leontes, who, they argue, has been given no cause to suspect his wife or his best friend. For Leontes, however, the cause is irrelevant. His becoming spirals out of the context of his historical experiences of marriage, friendship, or even supernatural authority; in a word, it is insensible. But as he reterritorializes onto the schema of monarchical practice, he realizes that his sense—or imagination—of Hermione’s adultery will need to be analyzed through systematic and conventional methods. He first turns to history to contextualize his cuckolded being:

There have been
(Or I am much deceiv’d) cuckolds ere now,
And many a man there is (even at this present,
Now, while I speak this) holds his wife by th’ arm,
That little thinks she has been sluic’d in ’s absence,
And his pond fish’d by his next neighbor—by
Sir Smile, his neighbor. (1.2.190-96)

David Wood and Katherine Maus study this scene as a crucial example of Leontes’ consciousness of the politics of patriarchal jealousy. In her impressive reading of early modern cuckoldry, Maus states, “[t]he analogue to the cuckold’s marginality is the exclusion of the spectator from the action of the play, an exclusion ambiguous in
precisely the same ways. Like the cuckold, the spectators in the theater see but are themselves unseen” (572). Whereas Maus alerts her readers to the various ways in which the cuckold problematizes his relationship with the audience and characters alike, specifically by drawing attention to his own feminized status that makes him a “spectacle at which others point mocking, phallic fingers” (572), Wood argues that, in *The Winter’s Tale*, Leontes breaks down any distinction there is between himself and the audience, between self and other, by emphasizing that he is not the first cuckold and that there are many who, in the present, are naïvely happy in the company of their wives, ignorant of their own feminized status as cuckolds. Moreover, Wood claims that by directly addressing his “play’s audience” Leontes “blurs (their) sense of comfort,” one that is generally “assumed,” owing to their sense of exclusivity from the stage-world (199).

But both Maus and Wood overlook Leontes’ insistence on his superiority to the other cuckolds; his words suggest that he alone is the cuckold in the know, his unhappiness a symptom of his wisdom. The reterritorialized Leontes is not only keenly aware of the politics of patriarchal anxiety or jealousy, but he is also familiar with the nuances of monarchical responsibility and the body politic. Thus even as he worries that his “plight” will become “public,” an anxious stage that Maus traces as inevitable to the consciousness of the jealous cuckold (572), the king manages to insulate his experience from that of the lowly cuckold. Although he “loses his peculiar privilege as unseen witness” to his own cuckoldry, he ensures that he raises himself above his audience or “confederates” by claiming a comprehensive knowledge of the situation—as both insider and critic (571). It is his consciousness of monarchical authority and duty that eventually
leads Leontes to announce to his bewildered lords that he has sent for word from the oracle in order to “[g]ive rest to th’minds of others … [w]hose ignorant credulity will not / Come up to th’truth” that he has recognized (2.1.191-93). With this declaration, he reestablishes himself at the heart of the public domain as a leader whose keen eye for “the truth” spurs him into patriarchal and protective action.

Once the reterritorialized Leontes reacquaints himself with the logic and practice of contemporary patriarchy and monrarchy, he realigns himself with the ideologies with which Polixenes has always been familiar. A comparison of Leontes’ above-mentioned lines with Polixenes’ earlier exchange with Camillo that leads to the Bohemian’s discovery of his friend’s unfounded suspicions emphasizes the kings’ shared thought processes:

Camillo I am appointed him to murder you.

Polixenes By whom, Camillo?

Camillo By the King.

Polixenes For what?

Camillo He thinks, nay, with all confidence he swears,

As he had seen’t, or been an instrument

To vice you to’t, that you have touched his queen
Forbiddenly.

Polixenes

O then my best blood turn
To an infected jelly, and my name
Be yoked with his that did betray the best!

Turn then my freshest reputation to
A savour that may strike the dullest nostril
Where I arrive, and my approach be shunned,

Nay, hated too, worse than the great’st infection
That e’er was heard or read.

(1.2)

Polixenes’ initial questions to Camillo are notably logical and to the point. Even upon hearing that his own dear friend and host has bid Camillo murder Polixenes, the king remains calm and undaunted; he asks for the cause or reason for Leontes’ murderous command. When Camillo reveals all, Polixenes does not turn mad with anger or hatred, but follows through with a highly sophisticated “if-then” rhetorical construction. He notes that, if indeed he has cuckolded Leontes, then his blood ought to “turn to an infected jelly,” that his crime should be compared to the betrayal of Christ, and that he should rightly be ostracized. Nowhere in his speech does Polixenes articulate his shock at Leontes’ sudden conviction. Rather, it is Camillo who emphasizes the absurdity of his king’s stubborn decision; he suggests that it might even be easier for him to “[f]orbid the sea for to obey the moon” than to return Leontes to his senses (1.2.422). In spite of this
announcement Polixenes persists in his line of rational inquiry: “How should this grow?” (1.2.427), he asks Camillo. To which Camillo responds that, given the urgency of the situation, it is wiser for Polixenes to stop seeking the cause or source of the problem and hasten instead to avoid its effects. Polixenes understands immediately, makes plans to escape from Sicilia, and promises to provide for and “respect” Camillo on the condition that the counselor assists and accompanies him to Bohemia (1.2.456). Even as he ruminates and goes over his future course of action, Polixenes cannot help but rationalize his former friend’s jealous rage. After all, states Polixenes, Leontes’ “jealousy / Is for a precious creature” (1.2.446-47), once again offering ways in which to understand the Sicilian’s point of view. Moreover, Polixenes acknowledges that Leontes’ anger and insecurity would need to be articulated in a manner fitting his status as absolute monarch of his kingdom; a lukewarm expression of jealousy simply does not become the (or any) king.

It is not altogether surprising, then, that even when confronted with the horror of his friend’s murderous desire Polixenes attempts to map out the overall situation; the irrationality of the child has long been extricated from Bohemia’s adult identity, which now allocates to childhood the remote space of memory. Although Leontes’ rational logic applies not to his friendship or his own jealousy but rather to his position within the respective historical contexts of cuckoldry and monarchy, his deductive method is quite like Polixenes’, as is his reliance on contemporary social norms. Being all too familiar

---

9 Later in the chapter I will offer an analysis of Camillo’s pragmatic logic, one that reflects his dedication to the ideology of royal futurity.
with and therefore wary of the maternal influence, Leontes forces a physical separation between mother and son, thereby initiating a bit too hastily Mamillius’ breeching or, in Deleuzian terms, the child’s social and sexual coding as male. To further ensure that Hermione does not spread her infection to others, Leontes later punish her labor-tired body by exposing it to the “open air” of contagion.

The lords’ reactions to Hermione and her women’s departure to prison juxtapose two ways in which the pregnant queen’s health and safety are important to the men of Sicilia. An unnamed lord urgently requests Leontes to recall the queen from imprisonment; he swears that Hermione “is spotless / I’th’eyes of heaven” and that he

---

For a detailed discussion of patriarchal anxiety regarding maternal impression and maternal influence, see my earlier chapter on biological futurity.

The connection between mother and son in The Winter’s Tale is an issue to which many critics have duly paid attention. Notable among recent studies of the boy-prince is “Mamillius and Gender Polarization.” Significantly, where Leontes initiates his exchange with Mamillius with a show of affection and anxiously clings to even the smallest detail that would bind their two bloods and bodies as one, Hermione wishes to create, at least for a brief period of time, a physical distance between mother and child, her first words about her son being those of disapproval (2.1.1). As opposed to the father, who fawns over the son using a language and manner that infantalizes the prince, Hermione and her women create a space wherein Mamillius can perform adulthood. Here his nose need not be attended to (1.2.120), his “welkin eye” marveled at (1.2.135), but he may banter flirtatiously with young women about the qualities of their beauty, or use his discretion to offer the ladies a “tale” that, in his judgment, is “best for winter” (2.1.25). Indeed Mamillius seems not only to enjoy the company of women and be comfortable in their presence, but with them he also successfully performs a masculine code that, in Deleuzian terms, anticipates the boy’s acceptance of a dominant history that fabricates male and female beings as “opposable organisms” (A Thousand Plateaus 276). It is not surprising, then, that, among women, Mamillius readily states his resentment of being spoken to “as if (he) were a baby still” (2.1.5), when earlier, in the company of his father, he has no choice but to be spoken to and treated as an “unbreeched” boy (1.2.154). Leontes’ premature breeching of the boy leaves Mamillius without a community or a structure to which he can cling—the result is disastrous for the child but also for larger society.
readily would “lay down” his own life so that his king will “accept” the truth (2.1.130-32). Antigonus, on the other hand, thinks on a less abstract level. After asking Leontes to “be certain” of his judgment, he presents the king with various scenarios that construe Hermione as representative of universal female virtue but also vice. Thus his declaration that “every inch of woman in the world, / Ay, every dram of woman’s flesh, is false / If she be” (2.1.137-39). That both the Lord and Antigonus believe Hermione to be chaste is clear. The important difference between their respective expressions is that, while the Lord does not turn to social logic but rather to divine faith in order to vouch for his queen, Antigonus firmly situates his judgment in the social realm. The queen, the king, and their son the prince represent for Paulina’s husband the earthly trinity whose actions reverberate among their subjects. Not surprisingly, he echoes his king’s fear of infectious female bodies when he promises to take prophylactic measures against his daughters before they too can spread the disease of unchastity and patriarchal corruption. Just as it is no surprise that the Lord’s faith-based words are abruptly cut short by the newly reformed, socio-logically inclined Leontes, who, pointing to his royal “prerogative” (2.1.163), announces that he “need no more of (the lord’s) advice” (2.1.168). At the same time, his recognition of the social value of negotiation prompts Leontes to offer the Lord a supernatural solution. And, fully conscious of his position as the supreme earthly power, Leontes initiates Hermione’s trial scene with his performance of the role of a grieving but just king, one who must set aside his affection for his queen in order to pursue truth. Leontes’ performance does two things: it establishes his reterritorialized being as one that is familiar with protocol; but it also emphasizes the pre-
determined quality of the “truth” that Leontes seeks. To his mind, Hermione is an infected woman whose disease he must publicly identify and isolate in order to preserve the health of the state and its various ideological apparatuses. This contagion that remains but a threat to the mother’s life becomes real in the experience of her son, who, despite resembling his father, remains fatally related to the maternal world. Leontes’ fantasy of punishing the disruptive female bodies (mother and infant) leads to his inadvertent disruption of his patriarchal line and to the near voidance of his futurity.

The term futurity that has come up on several occasions in my discussion of the play and which is directly related to the characters’ investment in their bloodlines is in this case a result of successful reterritorialization. This is not to suggest that futurity is always to be seen within the context of molarity or reterritorialization. Radical futurity, a discussion of which will emerge in my discussion of Paulina and in my analysis of The Tempest, opposes the ideology of temporal continuity and doesn’t rely on biology for the re/production of ideas or culture. But in the case of Leontes and The Winter’s Tale more generally, biology is crucial to the spread of moral and social codes from present to future times. Reinvested in a temporal scheme that entails a linear logic of continuity, Leontes seeks to destroy even the remotest of threats to his adult and royal being; thus his desire to have the infant Perdita murdered. Whereas Paulina hopes that “the sight o’th’child” will stir the king to a softness that will enable his forgiving both the mother and babe (2.2.39), Leontes embraces aggression and grows impatient for vengeance, eager to
punish the offender nearest to him and easiest to reach.\textsuperscript{12} So determined is he in his trajectory of securing patriarchal futurity that not even supernatural intervention can deter him; although Apollo’s oracle declares Hermione to be chaste and confirms the innocence of Polixenes and Camillo, Leontes disregards the authoritarian message and pursues his violent desires. As a king who claims to “so openly / Proceed in justice” (3.2.5-6), and who warns his wife that, when found guilty, she must “[l]ook for no less than death” (3.2.89), Leontes also recognizes that he must—despite divine opposition—uphold those codes of patriarchy that prompted him in the first place to embrace socially recognized expressions of jealousy: Hermione must be put to death, for he has bloodthirstily declared that “[w]hile she lives, / (His) heart will be a burden to (him) (2.3.204-05).

Notably, the play offers more than one male character that is capable of murderous thoughts that justify his desire for futurity. Antigonus, Leontes’ loyal servant and Paulina’s husband, is all too ready to sacrifice the three fruits of his wife’s labor, if such an action would convince Leontes of Hermione’s chastity. He claims:

… Be she [Hermione] honour-flawed—

I have three daughters: the eldest is eleven;
The second and the third nine and some five;
If this prove true, they’ll pay for’t. By mine honour,
I’ll geld ’em all. Fourteen they shall not see,

\textsuperscript{12} Although Leontes’ impatience is sensed throughout the play, his urgent quest for vengeance is nowhere more disturbing than in his sleep-deprived speech in 2.3, lines 19 through 23: “The very thought of my revenges that way / Recoil upon me … For present vengeance, / Take it on her.”
To bring false generations. They are co-heirs,
And I had rather glib myself than they
Should not produce fair issue.  

Antigonus’ speech is striking not simply because it suggests a knowledge about Hermione’s chastity that cannot empirically be determined by him; more importantly, it homogenizes female bodies and experiences: his argument seems to be that should the queen be unchaste, so too are all women, including his own daughters. And he swears to Leontes that, along with Hermione, they too shall bear the punishment for female sexual transgression, real or potential. With his statement he situates Hermione—the self-declared molar woman who establishes her identity as the object of exchange between men—as the very theme of molarity, the standard by which all women’s capabilities within patriarchy are to be judged.

Certainly Antigonus is faced with a difficult moral situation, in that he has to choose between two structural codes or modes of being that in this instance are opposed to each other. As servant to Leontes, he is duty bound to the king. As a patriarch, he is dependent on the female body for propagating his bloodlines and ideology. Struggling to negotiate his dual citizenship in the coded communities of monarchy and patriarchy, Antigonus strides on their cusp, which leads to fatal results. At the same time that he opposes Leontes the monarch by emphasizing Hermione’s chastity, he supports Leontes the patriarch and the fundamental structure of patriarchal futurity by promising to weed out even the potential for women’s unchastity in future times. He dwells on the details of his daughters’ anatomies as also that of his own, promising to strip both children and
parent of their sexual organs, the necessary mediums of biological futurity.

Antigonus’ violent imagination of disemboweled female bodies represents what Gail Paster recognizes as the early modern period’s dominant “male fantasy of escape from the condition of being born of woman” and being simultaneously liberated “from infant suckling, from dependency on the breast” (*Body Embarrassed* 220). The reterritorialized Leontes, who shares his servant’s grim fantasy of a secure, patriarchal futurity that is independent of the female body, can afford, owing to his status as king, to have it realized without literally bloodying his hands: he orders Antigonus to execute Hermione’s newborn girl and bring him some bodily token as proof of the murder. When this prospect is refused as all too horrible to act upon an infant who hasn’t yet been socially or sexually coded and is not even as old as Antigonus’ youngest child (who, at five or so years of age, may be treated with a misogyny appropriate to her female form), he charges his servant to see to the babe’s abandonment and isolation—a more indirect form of execution. So far having only threatened the futurity principle on a microcosmic level, Antigonus now has to bear the burden of extinguishing the political future of the state; left with no choice but to fulfill his king’s wishes, he leaves Sicilia, carrying with him the infant load that he must discard. Wife-beaten and feminized, he suffers the ultimate punishment when he is the one that dies in the wilderness, violently disemboweled by a bear: a fitting if horrible punishment for threatening not only his own bloodlines, but also royal futurity.

But not all servants in *The Winter’s Tale* end as badly as Antigonus; Camillo’s service to his masters and to the general cause of royal futurity takes a remarkably
different turn. Perhaps one of the only Shakespearean servants who claims a written recommendation from the gods, Camillo holds a unique position in *The Winter’s Tale* as counselor to both Leontes and Polixenes. While he does not possess Antigonus’ ready wit or glib tongue, he also is inflexible in his commitment to royal futurity. In the opening scene of the play he tells Archidamus that Sicilia’s hope in Mamillius is so great that it could fill “old hearts” such as his own with a “desire to live” long enough so as “to see him a man” (1.1.33-37). His optimism is disturbing specifically because it seems desperate to see the future of the kingdom secured through proper lineage; he confesses to his Bohemian friend that “[i]f the King had no son,” the Sicilians “would desire to live on crutches till he had one” (1.1.39-40; emphasis added). It is to such a future that Camillo remains loyal throughout. Unlike Antigonus, who caves under the pressure of oppositional codes of being, Camillo experiences no ideological conflict: he readily and fully adopts the role of protector of the future of Sicilia. His commitment emboldens him to chastise Leontes for suspecting Hermione of adultery:

> I would not be a stander-by to hear  
> My sovereign mistress clouded so without  
> My present vengeance taken. ‘Shrew my heart,  
> You never spoke what did become you less  
> Than this, which to reiterate were sin  
> As deep as that, though true.  

(1.2.276-81)

Unlike Leontes, who seeks vengeance for imagined wrongs done to him in the past, Camillo swears vengeance in order to secure the future. But when he realizes that
his king’s disease is far more serious than can be cured through reason, he proposes to escort Polixenes out of Sicilia on the condition that, once they leave, Leontes “[w]ill take again (his) queen as (his) at first, / Even for (his) son’s sake …” (1.2.332-334). His willingness to sacrifice his initial wish to see the young prince grow to be a man is representative of his still greater desire political stability and continuity. The loyal servant of monarchy, Camillo embraces a politics that is not unlike the one that Ernst Bloch in *The Principle of Hope* ascribes to medical practitioners and healers. He states:

> The general practitioner essentially contents himself with forcing back the end of the disease, i.e. death, he fights against the acquired weakness of the flesh, not against the innate one. His medicine does not yet undertake to assume the high office of being an improver of the body on the same scale as the rebuilding and improving of society and the vast bold changes of inorganic technology. This is a powerful distinction between medical wishes, in so far as they are individual and practical, and those of the more far-reaching attempt to change the world. Thus, however bold the operations and changes may be, in the consciousness of most doctors the goal itself is a stationary one: namely the restoration of the status quo ante. (463)

Bloch’s discussion of the reactionary culture of medical practice may seem at first glance to be irrelevant to my discussion of Camillo’s service. However, closer analysis of the Renaissance play reveals interesting parallels. Camillo’s language and imagination consistently rely on metaphors of disease and healing: from delaying the deaths of old men on crutches and advising Leontes to “be cured / Of … diseased opinion” that has led
the king to believe Polixenes “does infect” Hermione to sacrificing despite “break-
neck” pain his own future in Sicilia, a place that is abundant in an unnamable “sickness,”
the servant’s speeches seem almost to run the gamut of a medical glossary! Critically,
and quite like Bloch’s physician, Camillo does not care to find or uproot the cause of
Leontes’ dangerous malady; he tells Polixenes that it is “safer to / Avoid what’s grown
than question how ’tis born” (1.2.427-28). With this remark, he places himself squarely
alongside Bloch’s general practitioner, whose only desire is to delay change (death) by
prolonging stasis (life). The “innate” condition of Leontes’ becoming does not concern
Camillo, who would much rather see the state restored to its earlier state of being. The
changes that he brings about, then, are not radical even though they may be interpreted as
insubordinate. Camillo is first and foremost a servant to royal futurity; his switching of
masters from Leontes to Polixenes solidifies his ideology of service as one that is
dedicated to the perpetuation of monarchical politics.

Thus, sixteen years after he leaves homeland, the aged Camillo still craves with
desperate optimism a royal future for Sicilia. Not surprisingly, he manipulates Florizel to
elope with Perdita to Sicilia and make a marriage bed of the hitherto estranged space. The
vision that Camillo conjures is one that is invested in a linear and unproblematic futurity:
with a son forgiving the crimes committed upon his father, with forgiveness and love
taking over from unkindness and division; with fruitful marriage replacing barrenness.
And all this is to take place at a pace “[f]aster than thought or time” (4.4.533). At play’s
end, Camillo the preserver of royal futurity is himself is promised in marriage to Paulina,
effectively to replace Antigonus, the loyal servant who suffers fatal punishment for inadvertently threatening royal futurity.

Despite the characters’ near-magical reuniting and the many marriages that ensue, the conclusion of the play, with its speedy settlements and inexplicable silences, is infamously problematic. The problems have to do with the generic instability created by the play, which is neither wholesomely comic nor satisfyingly tragic. Addressing this issue in *A Theater of Envy*, René Girard points to the glaring absence of either hero or villain in *The Winter’s Tale*. “The standard form of drama,” Girard states, “is the hero-versus-villain dichotomy” (317). For the dichotomy to be effective, the villain must “interact with the hero on equal terms, … must be sufficiently like him and yet, to qualify (sic) as a villain, he must be strikingly different” (Girard 317). *The Winter’s Tale* stands out in Girard’s view as Shakespeare’s rejection of the popular dramatic scheme (317-18). The point Girard makes about the hero-villain interlock is interesting especially because in *The Winter’s Tale* we do find something similar. Leontes may not, like Troilus, articulate the schizophrenic nature of heroism and villainy; indeed, he does not feel the confusion of his wife’s or friend’s identities in the way that the young Trojan does when he claims of his pawned lover, “[t]his is, and is not, Cressid” (5.2.149). Yet, like Troilus, who swears that (he) will not be (himself), nor have cognition / Of what (he) feel(s) (5.2.64-65), Leontes becomes other to himself when he is faced with the horror of betrayal. In becoming-jealous he is both hero and villain at once. And later, in being penitent, he is fully conscious of the results of his past villainy.
The villain, then, that Girard finds lacking in the play is present in the form of the Leontes who is unforgivable even to himself, whose reterritorialization is accompanied by a sharpened memory that in turn rekindles self-hatred: “Whilst I remember / Her and her virtues, I cannot forget / My blemishes in them, and so still think of / The wrong I did myself: which was so much / That heirless it hath made my kingdom …” (5.1.7-10). Leontes’ self-loathing is unique not because it is tied to his recognition of his unfounded jealousy and the hazardous results thereof (Othello is by far a more self-conscious archivist of his own crimes and prejudices). Rather, the king’s agony stands apart from other hero-villains in Shakespeare specifically because he is conscious of his self-division and the suffering that he has inflicted upon himself. More importantly, unlike most Shakespearean tragic hero-villains who bravely face their deaths, Leontes is left alive, altogether aware of the passage of time and of the burden of living on without a glimpse into the future. The memory of the “wrong” he has done himself weighs so heavily on him that Leontes swears soon after driving his wife to her “death” that he deserves “[a]ll tongues to talk their bitt’rest” about and to him (3.2.213); none exceeds the abuse that he hurls upon himself. He perpetuates his shame by routinely visiting the site of his villainy: the graves of Hermione and Mamillius. Sixteen years into their deaths, although Cleomenes and other lords at court plead with Leontes to acknowledge his “saint-like” sorrow and “[d]o as the heavens have done” and, in forgiving himself, “forget (his) evil” (5.1.2-6), the mournful king refuses to forget his individual crime. Yet

---

13 There is nothing in the body of Leontes’ guilt-ridden speeches that surpasses Othello’s “O cursed, cursed slave! / Whip me, ye devils, / From the possession of this heavenly sight! / Blow me about in winds, roast me in sulphur, / Wash me in steep-down guls of liquid fire!” (5.2.274-78).
he forgets, as Dion pragmatically declares, his royal duty of repairing Sicilia by finding another “sweet fellow” who would “bless the bed of majesty again” and produce fair “issue” (5.1.27-33). Despite Sicilia’s calling for royal futurity in the shape of Leontes’ biological issue, it is fairly clear that loyal subjects such as Dion and Camillo will die without the hope of seeing a male heir blossom into king. Although Perdita is eventually found and passed on through marriage to Bohemia, between the death of the boy Mamillius early in the play and “the wide gap of time since first” Leontes and his wife “were dissoevered” (5.3.154-55), the future of Sicilia has only wrinkles to claim as fruits of royal labor.

The problematic conclusion, then, has not so much to do with the play’s uneasy treatment of protagonist and genre; rather it has to do with its precarious approach to futurity. Paulina, who plays a fundamental role in problematizing the future of Sicilia, is popularly considered a passionate advocate of Hermione’s innocence and is central to the play’s sense of strategic goodness. Without taking away from such interpretations, I want to consider Paulina’s role in the play as a disruptor of royal futurity and the instigator of political transformation. That Paulina may be held responsible for destabilizing Leontes’ lineage is clear. She is responsible, after all, first for the separation of mother and infant and then, indirectly, for Perdita’s abandonment in the woods. Doubtless when Paulina leaves the prison cell in Act two with the new born child with her, she is confident of her ability to safeguard the princess against any harm, return the babe to her mother, and
perhaps restore both to freedom. Given this, it is no surprise that Hermione readily lends her offspring to Paulina in hopes that together the two forms of female virtue—one silently innocent and the other defiantly articulate—will clear Leontes’ dangerous misconception regarding his wife’s unchastity. And it is shocking when, in the following scene, Paulina, who repeatedly uses the infant as a visual tool or device that will benefit her argument against the king, leaves her behind in Leontes’ bedchamber. Notably, Leontes time and again orders Antigonus in Paulina’s presence to “take up the bastard” and “give’t to [t]he crone” (2.3.75-76). He even threatens to “commit” the child “to the fire” (2.3.94) and later Paulina herself (2.3.112), whom he accuses of witchcraft. When Paulina finally leaves Leontes’ bedchamber, it is clear that the king’s violent hatred for Perdita has not transformed into pity or affection. Although Paulina appeals to him to “look to (his) babe” for better and divine guidance (2.3.125), Leontes’ mind remains keen on violent ends: he once again orders Antigonus to take the child “hence / And see it instantly consumed with fire” (2.3.132-33).

If, by leaving the infant in Leontes’ care, Paulina intends to kindle paternal affection within the tyrant, surely she is also aware of the risks involved in her scheme. By her own admission, Antigonus and the lords who surround Leontes are unable to “do him good” or offer true advice (2.3.128). In the sense, then, that she leaves the child

---

14 Although Paulina states nothing to the effect that she will protect the infant Perdita with her life, we are given ample clues in this scene to gather that she will be guardian to all innocent subjects. The jailer’s first words to Paulina establish her as a woman well known in the land for her honorable nature. Even the queen trusts Paulina’s qualities as she seems to have indicated to Emilia that “there is no (other) lady living” who can persuade Leontes to be just (2.2.44). Most importantly, Paulina’s final words to the jailer assert that she “[w]ill stand betwixt (justice) and danger” as a protector of the former (2.2.65).
unguarded with a bloodthirsty, absolutist king whose temper rages like a storm, it is Paulina who initiates Perdita’s history of abandonment, the bedchamber scene almost anticipating the babe’s literal abandonment in the forest amidst a horrible storm, surrounded by carnivorous animals. Although Paulina claims throughout to have the benefit of royal futurity in mind, her actions against Perdita cause more damage to Sicilia than she imagines the king’s tyranny will (2.3.114-119).

Of course Paulina’s threat to monarchic futurity is not limited to her abandonment of Perdita. Once Mamillius—Sicilia’s “hopeful prince”—is dead, Paulina conceals Hermione, only to retrieve her to the king once the political future of the state has radically changed. And in the sixteen-year hiatus, she refuses to let Leontes forget Hermione and remarry. The ticking of Sicilia’s clock rings doom in the ears of subjects like Dion, who frantically calls Leontes’ attention to his public responsibility of reproduction:

If you would not so,
You pity not the state, nor the remembrance
Of his most sovereign name; consider little
What dangers by his highness’ fail of issue
May drop upon his kingdom and devour
Incertain lookers-on. What were more holy
Than to rejoice the former Queen is well?
What holier than, for royalty’s repair,
For present comfort, and for future good,
To bless the bed of majesty again

With a sweet fellow to’t? (5.1.24-33)

To all this Paulina flatly responds: “Care not for issue; / The crown will find an heir” (5.1.46-47). Her statement, which embraces a politics of unpredictability, represents what Elizabeth Grosz applauds in her essay as a radical futurity that is wrested from “the tired discourses and ritualized practices” that secure the dominant structures of state (“Thinking the New” 29).

In spite of the various ways in which she halts or stunts Leontes’ bloodline, then, Paulina is not merely a proponent of counterfuturity. The future she vehiculates is in keeping with Gonzalo’s dream vision in The Tempest of political difference; hers too is a utopian vision. But unlike Gonzalo whose becoming is cut short, Paulina possibly finds the Deleuzian line of flight, as her becoming stretches across decades and enables her to make connections between individuals through her flows of energy and desire. Her actions, speech, and her craft all work as the tools that liken her to what Bloch would refer to as the “non-bourgeois dreamer” (35). Bloch states that, although such an individual may desire “many things that the others have,” her essential focus is on the achievement of “a life without exploitation” (35). This dreamer does not “wait for what chance brings to” her, but rather she “overhauls the given world, both in actions and in dreams” (Bloch 35). Even when she does not articulate her fantasy of and desire for a radically altered future, one that does not have to submit to the whim of monarchy, Paulina acts out her desires by disrupting the royal bed and waiting until after Florizel.

---

15 My analysis of Gonzalo’s experience of becoming in the following section of this chapter.
and Perdita are wed before conjuring Hermione. By preventing for sixteen years a sexual or organic connection between the king and queen, Paulina forces Sicilia to become what Deleuze would call “the offspring of (its) own events, to have one more birth, and to break with (its) carnal birth” (*Logic of Sense* 149-50).

The fact that Paulina practically hands off the future to Florizel and Perdita indicates her ushering in of a new kind of tomorrow. Granted, Perdita turns out to be of royal birth. However, Florizel’s readiness to marry a base shepherd’s daughter and to overthrow the inheritance of his father’s enmity indicates that he is a new kind of king, one that may not declare his “prerogative” the way that Leontes does early in the play. How Florizel will turn out is left open, our knowledge of him is so limited to his affairs of the heart that his political course seems uncertain. Just as the political future of Sicilia is stripped of secured futurity. This insecurity that Paulina instigates is directly related to her desire to construct a new politics, the likes of which are analyzed by Elizabeth Grosz in *Becomings*:

The concept of the new raises many anxieties. While it is clear that newness, creativity, innovation, and progress are all terms designated as social positives, the more disconcerting notion of unpredictable, disordered, or uncontainable change, which lurks within the very concept of the new, seems to disconcert scientific, philosophical, and cultural ideals of stability and control. Predictable, measurable, regulated transformation seems a social prerequisite; but upheaval, the eruption of the event, the emergence of new alignments unpredicted within old networks seem to threaten to reverse all gains, to position progress on the
edge of an abyss, to place chaos and disorder at the heart of regulation and orderly progress. ("Thinking the New" 28)

Strangely enough, Shakespeare assigns to yet another servant the important task of a deliberate attack on secured futurity and the imagining of a new uncertain and disorderly politics. Like Camillo, Gonzalo in The Tempest also performs loyalty to multiple masters, but for different reasons and with very different results. I will focus mostly on his speech on the commonwealth that obviously echoes Montaigne’s essay “Of the Cannibals.” Amidst constant disruptions and ridicule, Gonzalo articulates his vision of the future as follows:

I’th’ commonwealth I would by contraries
Execute all things. For no kind of traffic
Would I admit; no name of magistrate;
Letters should not be known; riches, poverty,
And use of service, none; contract, succession,
Bourn, bound of land, tilth, vineyard, none;
No use of metal, corn, or wine, or oil;
No occupation, all men idle, all;
And women too, but innocent and pure;
No sovereignty—

(2.1.143-52)

Gonzalo’s imagination is triggered by his sense that the island on which they are marooned has in fact “everything advantageous to life” (2.1.49). Instead of pocketing his
vision to “give it his son” as a token of his memory of a bizarre past, the old man promises to sow the “kernels” of futurity and generate political transformation (2.1.86-88). He refuses to sacrifice his perception of the island to memory, which would only lead to inertia, but chooses in its place to experience a political becoming by means of radical futurity.

To emphasize the newness of Gonzalo’s project, David Norbrook in his essay on *The Tempest* cites Jurgen Habemas and recalls that for the philosopher “[l]anguage and utopia still go together” in so far the “‘utopian perspective of reconciliation and freedom … is built into the linguistic mechanism of the reproduction of the species’” (Habermas qtd. Norbrook 23). Clearly, Leontes and Antigonus’ utopian imagination is Habermasian, in that it involves an appropriated patriarchy that relies on the “reproduction of the species” without depending on the female body as the medium that will secure the connections between the past, present, and future. Even Caliban’s vision of an island people first with his own monstrous progeny and later with that of Stephano’s offspring alludes of Habermas’ logic of propagation. However, Gonzalo’s utopia, which undoubtedly is of prime importance in the play, is freed from the labor or responsibility of sex: the natural abundance ensures that practices such as marriage will be needless.

The strategic un-reliance on reproduction separates Gonzalo’s futurity from those

---

16 Key here is Shakespeare’s use of the term “kernel,” which appears in both Leontes’ speech to Mamillius that I have discussed above and also in this early scene in *The Tempest*, wherein Gonzalo agrees with Antonio’s analysis of the old man’s desire to “bring forth more islands” (1.2.88-89). The kernel of course is an important metaphor of futurity: in *The Winter’s Tale*, it functions within the biological context of reproduction and impression; in *The Tempest* it allows for the birth and construction in the human imagination of radical newness, of political difference.
discussed earlier in this chapter; his vision of the future requires an entirely new system of politics.

It is crucial to note that Gonzalo is not simply ahistorical but rather has a sound appreciation for the past; his knowledge of Tunis’ ancient history suggests as much. Yet in his construction of a happy future he does not fall prey to nostalgia wherein he fetishizes the past, but instead promises a time that would “excel the golden age” (2.1.163). His avoidance of the political reproduction of the past likens him to More’s Raphael Hythloday, who in Book One of *Utopia* expresses a similar contempt for the culture of intellectual and political passivity that camouflages as respect for preexisting systems and procedures. The example that Hythloday uses to draw attention to the temporal stasis implied by intellectuals’ opposition to change is particularly useful to my reading of Gonzalo. The hypothetical “counsellor” that Hythloday constructs “seize[s] the excuse of reverence for times past” as his justification for the avoidance of structural improvements for present and future societies (More 8-9). By contrast, Gonzalo the “honest old councillor” risks shaping the future in ways that are shockingly new, even absurd. So shocking is his concept of political futurity that King Alonso shakes off his otherwise overwhelming parental sorrow and puts an end to Gonzalo’s audacious and insubordinate imagination by telling him that he “dost talk nothing” (2.1.167). With that statement the king forces the old man to reterritorialize onto the established structure of monarchy. Gonzalo hurriedly suggests that he only meant to grab royalty’s attention and get a few laughs out of Antonio and Sebastian in the process. While his implication seems to be that he wouldn’t dream (with hope) of a radically altered future society and
that his loyalty to Alonso and to monarchy are absolute, he opens up the possibility of and desire for political change. Consequently, even as the “councillor” returns to his fixed identity of faithful subject, he initiates various actions of betrayal on the island, near becomings that share elements of Gonzalo’s vision.

Infected by Gonzalo’s becoming or counseling, various “citizens” of the island plan for a politically transformed future: Antonio and Sebastian immediately appropriate and contain the old man’s vision by pondering the benefits of usurpation; soon after, Caliban, a servant who had at one point been loyal to his master Prospero, recruits Stephano and (to a lesser degree) Trinculo to help him in his project of overthrowing and replacing his master. Even Miranda dares to disobey her father; mad with love for Ferdinand, she breaks her promise to her father and tells the young prince her name, swearing to him that even if she isn’t able to wed him, she will at least “be (his) servant” (3.1.85). Gonzalo’s experience of futurity, then, does indeed “bring forth more islands” some of which might “in good time” bring about radical change (2.1.89, 91). Sebastian’s and Antonio’s political ambition is the most obvious spin-off from the old man’s vision of change. I will next address their preoccupation with futurity.

Soon after Alonso and his exhausted shipwrecked crew falls into a magically induced sleep, the two younger brothers of the party awaken their political desires. Standing guard over their king, Antonio the experienced usurper ponders the possibilities that accompany his and Sebastian’s present experience:
What might,  
Worthy Sebastian, O, what might?—No more.  
And yet methinks I see it in thy face,  
What thou shouldst be. Th’ occasion speaks thee, and  
My strong imagination sees a crown  
Dropping upon thy head.

(2.1.200-204)

Sebastian, the subject of Antonio’s “strong imagination,” responds to his friend at first by questioning his consciousness. Indeed to him Antonio’s is a “sleepy language” (2.1.207), his friend’s ability to daydream making him more like Gonzalo than either man would care to admit. However, the contents of Antonio’s dream are not as new or absurd as the old man’s, even if they are shocking. Surely most members of an early modern audience, who were well exposed to the foul play entailed in much of dynastic or historical drama, will quickly have recognized the dangerous potential in this scene for usurpation. After a brief moment of puzzlement or confusion, Sebastian too catches on:

Prithee say on.

The setting of thine eye and cheek proclaim

A matter from thee; and a birth, indeed,

Which throes thee much to yield.

(2.1.224-227)

That Sebastian compares Antonio’s imagination to childbirth is not merely a matter of linguistic style. Rather, Sebastian sees his friend’s imagination as a device that is capable
of generating the future. To express his imagination, Antonio must experience, in
Sebastian’s mind, the torments of labor, the unsupervised (or natural) progress of which
is marked by pain. The end result of Antonio’s speech of course is that the two men agree
to “perform an act / Whereof what’s past is prologue, what to come / In (their) discharge”
(2.1.248-50). Death and birth are inextricably related in the men’s proposal for regime
change.

I use the term regime change in place of political change because the latter is
dreamed of only by Gonzalo. In the old councillor’s imagination contradictions not only
abound, as he himself admits (2.1.143), but they also thrive together miraculously in the
form of a monarchical commonwealth. Death does not have a place in Gonzalo’s
imagination of a future of limitless transformation or becoming. Consequently, the
“[s]word, pike, knife, gun, or … engine” of the present are replaced by “all foison, all
abundance” (2.1.157-59), that is, by what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as the uncoded
flows of desire. By contrast, the two young usurpers rely on the molar lines of systematic
and precalculated violence in order to realize their fantasy of royal authority. Thus their
pondering the “real” and potential deaths of their shipmates. Not surprisingly, their
attention first moves to imagining the death of Gonzalo and next to Ferdinand, the two
most potent kernels or providers of change and futurity:

Antonio: Although this lord of weak remembrance, this,

Who shall be of as little memory

When he is earthed, hath here almost persuaded

(For he’s a spirit of persuasion, only
Professes to persuade) the King his son’s alive.

’Tis as impossible that he’s undrowned

As he that sleeps here swims. (2.1.228-234)

In this speech Antonio doubly distances Gonzalo from “memory” and “remembrance,” the most effective devices of reterritorialization. Instead he associates the old man with “impossible” and death-defying hope, the one trigger that is necessary for bringing about political revolution. It is not surprising, therefore, that Antonio wants Gonzalo—the “ancient morsel” of hope and revolutionary futurity—dead and out of the way (2.1.282).

For Gonzalo, as Antonio quickly recognizes, is capable of “upbraiding” their “course” toward a future of appropriated monarchy. It is only once they have imagined Gonzalo’s demise that Antonio and Sebastian move on to discuss the political ramifications of the young prince’s death. To Sebastian’s “I have no hope / That (Ferdinand’s) undrowned,” Antonio responds, O, out of that no hope / What great hope have you! No hope that way is / Another way so high a hope that even / Ambition cannot pierce a wink beyond, / But doubt discovery there” (2.1.234-38).

The repeated play on the idea of “no hope” or death leading to a highly specific kind of hope—the collaborative if painful birth of the two younger brothers’ logic of futurity—is important for our understanding of the kinds of imagination that are at work here. Whereas Gonzalo embodies the spirit of a ridiculous and fantastical imagination, Antonio’ futurity is based on familiar, logical deduction and application. First he carefully deduces that Ferdinand, despite Gonzalo and Francisco’s optimism, has drowned at sea; next he painstakingly renders Claribel’s ascendancy to the throne of
Naples to be a geographical impossibility. Through a calculated appropriation, he manages finally to kindle in Sebastian the spirit of murder and usurpation. Having been perfectly logical so far, he employs the rhetoric of logic to seal the deal that would strike fatal blows to the slumbering monarch and his entourage: “Say this were death / That now hath seized them: why, they were no worse / Than now they are” (2.1.256-58).

Almost as if it were an infection, Sebastian adopts logic as his ally when he states that his “dear friend” will “be (his) precedent”, and that just as Antonio “got’st Milan,” / (He’ll) come by Naples. Empowered by their logic-driven imagination, the two men envision a future of absolute power, a state wherein they could just as easily determine their citizens’ conception of right and wrong as they could manipulate their “clocks” (2.1.285-86).

But it is their very reliance on logic that strips Antonio and Sebastian’s political imagination of any radical potential. Brian Massumi states that “an exploratory politics of change is philosophy pursued by other means—a radical politics equal to the ‘radicality’ of the expanded empirical field itself” (243). Massumi explains at length:

Radical politics is an inherently risky undertaking because it cannot predict the outcome of its actions with certainty. If it could, it wouldn’t be radical but reactive, a movement dedicated to capture and containment, operating entirely in the realm of the already possible, in a priori refusal of the new. Radical politics must tweak and wait: for the coming, collective determination of the community. Its role is to catalyze or induce a global self-reorganization: tweak locally to induce globally (to modulate a slogan). Speaking of slogans, repeat this one: ‘be
realistic, demand the impossible.’ Under what circumstances could that be a formula for a political empiricism?

Doubtless, the political movement initiated by Gonzalo’s imagination is echoed by most other characters in the play, including Antonio and Sebastian. But as is the case with echoes, the radical quality of the old man’s original call grows increasingly muffled as it travels through the minds of the other islanders. Whereas Gonzalo’s vision can be considered an “exploratory politics of change,” the others do not experience becomings even when they are brought close to the possibilities of finding the Deleuzian lines of flight that would enable radical transformations. Theirs aren’t the fairy tale imaginings, which, Ernst Bloch argues, are alone capable of triggering revolutionary changes in our vision of society. “[O]nly the fairy tale,” Bloch claims, “which is always instructive, and the fairytale of an ideal state can tell us about the Magic Table, and the Land of Cockaigne” (472). The Land of Cockaigne seeks out social wishful images of equality and prosperity, not unlike those of Gonzalo’s fantasy island:

All human beings are equal there, i.e. well off, there is neither effort nor work. …

Thus those in Cockaigne lead a pleasant life, they are no longer prepared to let the rich tell them how unenviable riches are. How unhealthy a lot of sleep is, how deadly leisure is, how much we need deprivation so that all life does not come to a standstill. The people have merrily embroidered on their own most nourishing fairytale, their most obvious utopian model, and even caricatured it: vines are tied together with sausages, the mountains have turned into cheese, the streams are
flowing with the best muscatel. The Magic Table and Indian magic meadows here exist as a public institution, as a state of happiness per se.

(Bloch 472-73)

Just as in Cockaigne, where there is no dearth of materials, the people of Gonzalo’s imaginary land reap the benefits of an inherently abundant Nature without “effort” or “work.” Interestingly, Bloch’s point about Cockaigne being such a land where everyone is happy and where “they are no longer prepared to let the rich tell them how unenviable riches are” brings to mind the situation that immediately precedes, perhaps even contributes to, Gonzalo’s utopian vision. Alonso is chastised by Sebastian, who accuses the sovereign of poor judgment, owing to which the shipwrecked crew is now marooned on foreign territory, far removed from their homelands and forcefully separated from their public and filial responsibilities. Sebastian tactlessly drives home his point that Alonso’s decision to marry his daughter Claribel to the dark-skinned King of Tunis has led to many more inconsolable “widows” in Naples and Milan than there are men at home to correct the situation. In response to Sebastian’s cruel but truthful accusation that the ultimate “fault” lies in the king, Alonso claims that he also suffers “the dearest o’ th’ loss” (2.1.131). Alonso’s point is that his loss (of son and land) is far greater than that which can possibly be experienced by anyone else of lesser status. The implicit message in Alonso’s response is that the absolute nature of his power—as monarch and father to the future of Naples—intensifies his experience of pain, his sorrow being, to use Bloch’s terms, “unenviable,” and which cannot be shared even by the many
widows in their homeland, who are bereft of their spouses because of the king’s ambitious act of arranging the royal marriage of Claribel to the king of Tunis.

Almost as if he were responding to the pessimism of Sebastian’s and Alonso’s aristocratic crisis, one that is embedded in thoughts of death and lineage, Gonzalo shatters the moment with his line of flight and experiences a becoming. His experience, Bloch would argue, which is akin to “the very awakening of (the) majority is (an) utterly unusual occurrence, the rare event in history” (475). But such an event or moment of becoming does not always lead to successful revolutions, which are rarer still: “[f]or a thousand wars there are not even ten revolutions; so difficult is walking upright” (Bloch 475). In their place, more often we experience regime change, the kind that on the island is envisioned by Antonio and Sebastian, Caliban, Stephano, and Trinculo, and, of course, by Prospero. As Bloch points out, “[e]ven where they (succeed), as a rule the oppressors (turn) out to be exchanged rather than abolished. An end of deprivation: … only as a waking dream (does) it enter the field of vision” (475).

David Norbrook also recognizes the play’s failure to present its audience with a complete vision of change or utopia. He states that “all of the play’s utopian ideals … come up for ironic scrutiny … precisely because they tend to an idealism that refuses to recognize the material constraints of existing structures of power and discourse” (25). Norbrook focuses on Gonzalo’s vision to make his point about the play’s inability to imagine radical difference. His words are significant enough to be quoted at length:

The scene in which Gonzalo outlines his utopia parallels Montaigne in illustrating the process of ideological forgetting … He is so used to commanding that his own
social status is simply invisible to him, and he can see himself as a king of an egalitarian society. The scene builds up a very complex interaction between a generalizing aspiration and a reminder of the limits of specific social contexts, and in particular of courtly discourse. The context of Gonzalo’s utopian speech resembles the situation imagined by More, where a Senecan prophecy of a golden age is recited at court. Gonzalo imagines a world with no letter, ‘no name of magistrate.’ … But the speech-act he is performing in evoking this utopia is strongly hierarchical, its aim is to console the king, and Gonzalo’s soft primitivism bears the stamp of someone used to euphemizing awkward social realities.” (Norbrook 30)

Norbrook’s point about Gonzalo’s forgetfulness is noteworthy specifically because in it he establishes memory as a positive virtue that stands in opposition to the ideology of “forgetting” (30). Moreover, he assigns to Gonzalo considerable authority and status, both of which undermine his utopian vision. While Norbrook’s points are interesting, it seems to me that he overlooks the fact that Gonzalo, despite possessing limited authority as counselor, is only presented in the play as a man who serves figures of authority and is often placed by them in situations wherein he has to perform tasks that don’t necessarily represent his individual morality. If anything, Gonzalo wields more authority owing to his age than to his position! Thus he manages to convince King Alonso to take a break from his search for the prince by pleading on behalf of his “old bones” that “ache” and therefore must be rested. Clearly, in this case Gonzalo uses the medium (or authority, albeit a perverse one) that he knows will yield positive results. Not
surprisingly, he chooses to appeal for his master’s pity and not to exercise officious authority.

Furthermore, my argument with Norbrook is that he falls in line with the scholars whom he repudiates as being narrowly historical. Earlier in his essay when he discusses the impact of Montaigne’s essay “Of the Cannibals” on the Renaissance and the political activists of the 1640s, notably on the Leveller Willaim Walwyn, Norbrook acknowledges that several decades separated the works of Montaigne and Shakespeare (specifically *The Tempest*) and the political rebels. But he suggests that scholars “need to allow more generous intellectual horizons” for understanding Shakespeare and his contemporaries “than some critics have been prepared to grant” (30). Why may not such a generosity be extended to an informed critical reading of Gonzalo, who, as Norbrook acknowledges, is the initiator of strong imaginations among the play’s various characters? “Utopian discourse pervades the play,” claims Norbrook, but “most notably in Gonzalo’s vision of a world where nature would produce all in common and ‘[l]etters should not be known.’” Norbrook is quick to add quite rightly that “every figure on the island has some kind of vision of a society that would transcend existing codes and signs: ‘Thought is free,’ sing Stephano and Trinculo (3.2.121)” (21).

The radical energy of Gonzalo’s dream vision is interpreted as music by Stephano and Trinculo in their song of freedom. Although Norbrook’s analysis provides a detailed overview of the utopian and political emphasis of the play, it overlooks important differences among the characters’ investments in their imagination. Not all of the figures think alike, after all; Gonzalo’s radical politics, as I have argued above, is nothing like
Stephano’s imperial imagination, which continues to accommodate hierarchy and punishment. And it is even lesser like Antonio and Sebastian’s political imagination that can only stretch so far as to imagine usurpation or what I have called regime change. Only Gonzalo’s politics manages to break from or “transcend” the established “codes and signs” (Norbrook 21), in other words the limits of molarity. The others exhibit what Deleuze identifies in *A Thousand Plateaus* as molecular moments that, though they may lead to becomings and to lines of flight, can just as easily lead to experiences of reterritorialization. Like the others Gonzalo, at play’s end, is a reterritorialized being. But he returns to the structural codes only after he has articulated the possibilities of escaping, forgetting, and therefore becoming. In other words, he returns to the accepted monarchical system of politics only after he has imagined radical political futurity. In the sense that Gonzalo may be taken as a representative of the larger citizenship of Milan and Naples, he is also an Everyman type. For all his life he has been a servant and loyal citizen, his affiliation being to not any particular ruler, but to rulers in general.\(^\text{17}\) The ruler whose authority ultimately determines the future course of all the

\[^{17}\text{While it may be argued that Gonzalo is loyal to Prospero throughout, it is vital that we remeber that the old man did comply with Antonio’s wishes and successfully carried out his responsibilities as “Master of (the) design” to exile Prospero and Miranda. Although he took pity on the Duke and his infant daughter and furnished them with “[r]ich garments, linens, stuffs, and necessaries” for their trip, his generosity is complicated by the fact that Gonzalo also saw to their boarding an unrigged “rotten carcass of a butt,” a vessel that almost certainly would have dashed the father and child to their deaths at sea (1.2.145-164), a fate intended for them by the usurping ruler. Remarkably, Gonzalo is given the responsibility to oversee an indirect murder of royalty, just as Antigonus in *The Winter’s Tale* is charged with the task to do away with Perdita. Of course, through the intervention of appropriative parenting and magic, respectively, all exiled parties in both plays survive the murderous intentions of Nature and corrupt royalty. However, the fact that Antigonus is punished with death for performing his duty whereas Gonzalo is}^{-}\)
characters in the play is Prospero. I will now turn to a discussion of the magus’ unique and appropriative engagement with futurity.

Likening Prospero to the tragic teenager Romeo, in so far as the two share a contempt for the state of exile, Janet Kingsley-Smith argues that the old magician spends all his time on the island “yearning for the past” (225; emphasis added). Undoubtedly Prospero holds his memory of the past close to his heart and it even fuels the vast majority of his actions within the play’s world. But I would suggest that, far from yearning for the return of the bygone years, Prospero conjures an elaborate scenario to usher in a future that will bear the markings of his past experiences (of magic and usurpation) and bear the fruits of his exiled labor. He does not crave his Milanese past but anticipates a future of retirement, a condition wherein “every third thought” of his meek and non-magical existence without his true subjects Ariel, Caliban, and Miranda will bring him closer to his “grave” (5.1.311). This Prospero who foresees his own end or his future is certainly not the same as the man who presents his daughter with a picture of his past when he assumed that all his “temporal royalties” were everlasting (1.2.110). At the play’s conclusion he is also not the same political figure who was at one point both “a prince of power” and a practitioner of “secret studies” (1.2.54, 77). On the contrary, as he speaks the Epilogue, Prospero claims that he has neither occult power nor material strength with which to impress his onlookers. After twelve long years of preparation and

rewarded with affection begs our analysis of the differences between the two servants. I would argue that Gonzalo remains alive at play’s end to “rejoice / Beyond a common joy” specifically because he experiences a becoming, one that despite being reterritorialized almost immediately onto the codes of service and hierarchy, enables a truly revolutionary or utopian vision of political difference in the future.
planning, he places his future at the “mercy” and “indulgence” of altogether new subjects (Epilogue 18-20).

Kingsley-Smith proposes that Prospero undertakes all the struggles, strifes, and risks of life on the island specifically in order to exhibit his “humanity” to the original banishers, “Antonio, Sebastian, Alonso” (225). Moreover, she suggests that the magician’s continued investment in the liberal arts is triggered by his desire to perform “a civilizing function by confronting his enemies with the evil they have perpetrated” (226). But it is key to note here that in order for Prospero to be the arch educator of civility, he needs to embrace a contrary state and be uncivil, cruel, even inhuman. In this sense, his enslavement of Ariel and Caliban may be understood in terms of a molecular line, which, as Deleuze and Guattari claim, marks the intersections of experiences within an individual, the physical or emotional responses to stimuli. While molecular lines are relatively free from social control and therefore are capable of expressing the individual’s desire, they may also provide an occasion for reterritorialization or re-entry into coded structures. To this effect, Norbrook argues that “it is not so much that the play is a romance as that it stages, and in the process distances itself from, the romance scenario of dynastic redemption that Prospero is staging” (26). At the same time, “the play also recognizes a certain congruence between a narrowly aristocratic romantic impulse and a broader utopian project” (Norbrook 26). It is this congruence to which various critics have pointed, suggesting that the characters’ imagination of alternative systems or communities “may be an essential mode” of imagining an altered, even improved, but not drastically different politics (Norbrook 26).
This precisely is Prospero’s case. His project of educating Caliban, Miranda, and, to a lesser degree, Ariel, is in effect a rehearsal routine that prepares him for the ultimate civilizing of the disempowered Alonso and his aristocratic posse. Remarkably, Prospero’s exhibition of a boundless “humanity” toward them that is rewarded with his banishers’ new-found sense of “guilt” (Kingsley-Smith 226), also results in his reinserting himself into civilized society as a true and noble Milanese. The molecular lines of magic and education that were symptoms of Prospero’s exiled condition are in the end reterritorialized onto the organized state of citizenship. His departure from the magical island that “is full of (incomprehensible) noises” (3.3.133), and his return to the familiar society of Milan, whose culture we may assume is similar to the England that Trinculo describes (2.2.26-32), also repositions him temporally. And back in the sway of things, he must prepare himself for the cultured course of aging and the event of death that accompanies the process and culminates the linear experience of time.
CHAPTER SIX

“If wishes were horses, beggars would ride”: Desire, Articulation, and Movement in Everyday Performances of Futurity

The previous chapters have focused mainly on biological and political futurity, the two principal categories that influence early modern temporal consciousness. In this final section of the text, I will turn to the application of futurity in the context of the everyday lives of characters in the drama of the period. In other words, I will consider such phenomena of early modern culture as put futurity into practice. It is in everyday practice that the theories about the future are most tested and challenged, but it is also here that the same principles come to be the most absorbed, even naturalized. As discussed in the Introduction, the everyday applications of early modern futurity are discernible in various cultural spheres that Louis Althusser identifies as superstructural elements of society: in bureaucracy, in education, in modes of entertainment, among others. But futurity also is identifiable in the various points of intersection between peoples and economies, and is at the core of rhetorical exchanges between the characters who weave in and out of borderline spaces: the cusps of market and home, foreign and native soil, country and city, outdoors and indoors. Much like Althusserian superstructural institutions that have a lingering effect on the future of any given society, these borderline spaces also cross temporal borders and become venues for the seemingly innocuous, everyday performances of futurity that have far-reaching consequences.
Without consciously engaging in the theoretical construction of the ways in which the future might be effected or imagined, the rhetorical, physical, and economic practices of characters located at the points of early modern intersection apply and appropriate those principles of futurity that they have absorbed from the base of society.\(^1\) It is to these latter reflectors of futurity that I will now turn my attention. I will trace the diverse everyday applications of futurity through an analysis of two groupings of Renaissance texts, each group comprising two plays. The groups share a fundamental schematic structure: while one play symptomatizes the methods and effectiveness of futurity through the uneasy engagement with the supernatural (magic and witchcraft), the other displays these using the dynamic of mobility (physical and social movement). The unlikely juxtaposition in the plays’ worlds of unearthly and all too earthly cultures enables the representation of futurity as a consolidating sweep that mobilizes and interweaves characters’ divergent desires. Moreover, it is through the plays’ traversing of multiple spaces and temporalities

\(^1\) In the preceding chapters I have discussed the influence of characters such as Faustus and Beatrice-Joanna, Gonzalo and Paulina, and More and Lanyer, who attack the basic foundations of futurity and attempt to bring about fundamental changes to the ways in which the future may be imagined or envisioned. Faustus and Beatrice-Joanna theorize alternative futures for the body and the means through which biological transformation may impact their futures and lineage. Gonzalo and Paulina, on the other hand, construct models of collective political change and unpredictability that may successfully dismantle monarchical state formations. Also political in their endeavors, More and Lanyer situate the future in utopian geographies that bring about radical transformations of the nature of citizenship. The efforts and the effects of these characters (in the drama) and authors (in the case of the prose and poetry) remain intellectual, theoretical, and somewhat untested. The testing grounds of their theories are the very borderline spaces where the everyday practices of and exchanges between people represent the seepage of futurity into early modern culture.
that we arrive at what Jonathan Gil Harris identifies in the early modern period as a
“pleated notion of time.”

Early modern drama is dotted with points of intersection. Geographical as much as they are ideological, these intersections mark the locations of characters’ everyday concerns and dealings with futurity. Not surprisingly, these spaces are also situated on temporal fault lines, the cusps of the past and future, the old and new. When characters cross each others’ paths as they do in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* or when they wander nomadically through streets that are the sites of exchange, as in the case of *The Roaring Girl* and *The Witch of Edmonton*, they engage in the momentary politics of Deleuzian becoming. This politics, as has been explained in chapters two and four, impacts the temporal scheme by disengaging it—with varying degrees of success—from the sedentary practices of nostalgia and associating instead with the radical practices of unpredictability and unforseeability. Although becoming invariably is followed by the event of reterritorialization, the instability caused by the former cannot entirely be forgotten or undone.

*Constructing Experiences and Charting Narratives: Imagined Futures in A Midsummer Night’s Dream and A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*

Futurity—which Derrida defines as “the condition of all promises or of all hope, of all awaiting, of all performativity, of all opening towards the future” (68)—is a play of multiple desires that exist simultaneously within our present beings. Simply put, it is that condition of our present experience in which we want, need, wish, hope, and plan for
diverse objects and states to be realized in our future. *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* essentially are plays about futurity, texts in which characters’ processes of constructing their desire are scrutinized and, at certain points, transformed into their realities. The exercising of their desires (or dreams) leads these characters to conflicts within or between organized spaces of their bodies, kingdoms, and territories. Moreover, their imagination of the future collides with cultural sites of their memory, resulting in a powerful if transient stage of “becoming,” which emerges at the spatio-temporal borderlines of the plays.

*A Midsummer Night’s Dream* hurriedly dislocates the dramatic center of the play from the urban geography of Athens to the surrounding wooded fairy realm where Oberon and Titania wage a war that is not merry but rather a cause for global concern. Titania believes that the couple’s battle over “a little changeling boy” has resulted in complete natural and social chaos on earth (2.1.120). In a speech conjuring images that eerily anticipate twenty-first century horrors of global climate change, the queen of fairies claims joint responsibility with Oberon for the various sea storms and floods that have ruined the crop and rendered useless the agrarian economy, which depends on the systematic notion of seasons, the climatic representation of the passage of time:

> But with thy brawls thou hast disturbed our sport.
> Therefore the winds, piping to us in vain,
> As in revenge, have sucked up from the sea
> Contagious fogs which, falling in the land,
Hath every pelting river made so proud
That they have overborne their continents.
The ox hath therefore stretched his yoke in vain,
The plowman lost his sweat, and the green corn
Hath rotted ere his youth attained a beard;
The fold stands empty in the drownèd field,
And crows are fatted with the murrain flock;
The nine-man’s morris is filled up with mud,
And the quaint mazes in the wanton green
For lack of tread are indistinguishable.
The human mortals want their winter here;
No night is now with hymn or carol blessed.
Therefore the moon, the governess of floods,
Pale in her anger, washes all the air,
That rheumatic diseases do abound.
And thorough this distemperature we see
The seasons alter: hoary-headed frosts
Fall in the fresh lap of the crimson rose,
And on old Hiems’ thin and icy crown
An odorous chaplet of sweet summer buds
Is, as in mockery, set. The spring, the summer,
The childing autumn, angry winter, change
Their wonted liveries, and the mazèd world
By their increase now knows not which is which.

(2.1.87-114)

It seems the clockwork that oversees the efficacy of the seasons and, more importantly, of farming, is dismantled by the violent tempers of the unearthly creatures. The result, claims Titania, is that “[t]he spring, the summer, / The childing autumn, angry winter, change / Their wonted liveries, and the mazèd world / By their increase now knows not which is which” (2.1.111-14). Titania’s speech ponders the eccentricity of the mundane, everyday sites of futurity. The farm and the village that, in the past, epitomized pastoral productivity and generation were also hosts to cultures of predictability. But, owing to the feuding fairies, these spaces now are defiled locations disconnected from their past and from the systematic if cyclical logic of agriculture. Their future unforeseeable, they are the directionless “progeny of evils” (2.1.115). Indeed, Titania’s repeated stress on the word “therefore” in her speech presents the horrific transformation of the earth as direct and undeniable consequence of untimely fairy intervention. Just as important, her speech suggests that the human experiences of temporality are in fact the result of unearthly agency. Her implication is important because it discloses not only the power of the creatures such as herself, Oberon, and Puck, but it also emphasizes the folly of characters like Lysander and Hermia, who, despite believing that they can successfully
manipulate their futures by taking action against the fate to which Athenian patriarchy has doomed them, are controlled by the eccentricities of atemporal agents.

The intersections of the mundane (everyday activities that comprise human life) and the spectacular (fairy dispute) mark the many points or locations that, in the play, become the sites of contestation. The fairies articulate their mutual discontent not in a private fairy realm that is inaccessible to human beings, but rather in “the palace wood, a mile without the town” (1.2.78-79), in a place that is frequented by the human subjects whose lives are the very matter that is at stake in the fight between Titania and Oberon. Moreover, the Indian boy who, in the play, functions almost in the manner of territory over which the royal fairies dispute, forces the intermingling of supernatural and human futures. But even the prehistory of the child is not without the traces of futurity that emerge at borderline spaces. Refusing to surrender the child to Oberon’s patriarchal desire for dominance and continuity, Titania’s claim to the boy is rooted in social and cultural history and a sense of inheritance—secured futurity:

His mother was a vot’ress of my order,
And in the spicèd Indian air by night
Full often hath she gossiped by my side
And sat with me on Neptune’s yellow sands,
Marking th’ embarkèd traders on the flood,
When we have laughed to see the sails conceive
And grow big-bellied with the wanton wind;
Which she, with pretty and with swimming gait,
Following—her womb then rich with my young squire—
Would imitate, and sail upon the land
To fetch me trifles, and return again
As from a voyage, rich with merchandise.
But she, being mortal, of that boy did die;
And for her sake do I rear up her boy,
And for her sake I will not part with him.

(2.1.121-37; emphasis added)

Titania’s speech is an important one that has been widely discussed by post colonial and feminist scholars alike. In “The Changeling in A Dream” William Slights argues that the Indian boy, a figure of great mystery but little matter, is an object interpreted variedly by those characters within the play that desire him. Whereas Oberon boldly claims his entitlement based on his desire for a “henchman” (2.1.121), Titania clings to the child based on her sense of loyalty to her dead friend and her inheritance of the properties left

---

1 For recent scholarship on the play that focuses on this speech, see Thomas Frosch’s “The Missing Child in A Midsummer Night’s Dream,” Jill Ehnenn’s “‘An Attractive, Dramatic Exhibition’?: Female Friendship, Shakespeare’s Women, and Female Performativity in 19th-Century Britain.” For postcolonial and materialist readings of this scene, see especially Margo Hendricks’ “Obscured By Dreams’: Race, Empire, and Shakespeare’s A Midsummer Night’s Dream” and Ania Loomba’s “The Great Indian Vanishing Trick—Colonialism, Property, and the Family in A Midsummer Night’s Dream.”
behind by her Indian votaress. Thus, in “Titania’s eyes,” Slight states, “the fact that [the boy] straddles the border between human and fairy in no way obviates his need for mothering” (261). Stevie Davies and Regina Buccola also focus on the borderlines or liminal spaces that mark Titania’s speech and her recollection of her Indian companion. However, while Davies remarks on the impossibility of the women’s friendship (126), and Buccola points to the liminality that is essential to fairies and to fairy lore (77), Slights insists on the “deep understanding and trust” between the women that allows them to transcend the limits of human and fairy. Border spaces are key also to Margo Hendricks’ analysis of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. Hendricks emphasizes the ideology of race in the play that is often overlooked by readers and viewers alike but is nonetheless crucial to the development of its spatial and cultural logic. In her interpretation of its function in the play, race is “visible only when its boundaries are violated” (Hendricks 42). This site of violation, Hendricks argues, is evident in the fairy world’s engagement

---

3 As critics have noted, Titania’s nostalgic speech about her time spent in the company of the votaress is inundated with metaphors of pregnancy and mercantilism. Caroline Bicks, among others, suggests that, in keeping with the early modern female interactions of gossips and pregnant women, the two women share a friendship that transcends the barriers of social class and evokes a sense of egalitarian homosociality. Also focusing on their friendship, Slights notes the near conflation of the images and rhetoric of pregnancy and mercantilism that presents the women’s relationship in terms of mirthful empathy. The two states of pregnancy and mercantilism most obviously share the sense of investment and productivity, but they also possess distinct elements of risk: merchants’ ships easily foundered at sea, and pregnant women often died in childbirth; in both cases the future is vehiculated through uncertain and unreliable mediums.
with the Indian boy specifically, but with Indian-ness more generally.\footnote{Hendricks’ study of \textit{A Midsummer Night’s Dream} focuses on Oberon’s Indian heritage, which she traces back to the medieval romance \textit{Huon of Bordeaux}, a text that also was a source for Spenser’s \textit{Faerie Queene} and Greene’s \textit{Scottish Historie of James the Fourth}. She also evaluates the ideological fabric of two sixteenth century travel narratives that construct the English readers’ sociological fantasies of India. The “Indian boy” that proves to be an occasion for the fairy feud and the earthly discord in Shakespeare’s play is a product of the literary imagination that fetishizes the geographical, cultural, and sexual otherness of India. Hendricks’ chief point in the essay is to draw attention to such fetishization, a phenomenon that she notes was not only an early modern one, but which she identifies in modern performances and interpretations of the play. For details, see \textquote{“Obscured by dreams”: Race, Empire, and Shakespeare’s \textit{A Midsummer Night’s Dream}}, especially sections I, II, and III.} But while, with Steven Mullaney, she emphasizes the physical and localizable aspects of Renaissance England’s imagination of India, she overlooks the temporal significance of the same.

A point that needs to be emphasized in the fairies’ relationships with the Indian mortals that are all founded on principles of liminality and located on “the narrow margin between sea and land” is that they are defined by transience (Davies 126). Quite like pregnancy, which is both a condition—a state of being—and a stage, the relationship between the votaress and the queen of the fairies is premised on impermanence and opportunity. The votaress is a vehicle of futurity for Titania. Much like the ships whose movements she imitates, the Indian woman brings goods or “trifles” back with her from her travels and gives them to Titania. And like the ships, she is also a vessel that carries within her “rich … merchandise” in the shape of the “young squire” whom she may only keep for the duration of her pregnancy but must invariably give up to the Indian king or
the Fairy queen, in short, surrender to someone of greater status or power. The politics of trade that she playfully mimics prior to her death on the Indian shores anticipates the multiple and mutable trades that take place upon her death between the members of fairy royalty. The transformation of the woman’s jovial simulation of trade into a tragically real transaction in which she loses her life and the child also anticipates Titania’s bizarre transformation from the lyrical protector of the Indian boy to the foolish beast lover who loses both the child and her dignity to Oberon. The liminality to which the critics point, then, must be studied in conjunction with the temporal flux that defines the fairies’ relationships with the votaress and her “lovely” offspring (2.1.22).

The fairies’ relationships with the Indian mortals, which are all founded on principles of liminality and located on “the narrow margin between sea and land,” are defined by transience (Davies 26). Titania and Bottom’s erotic entanglement is similarly suspended in space and time. Seeking vengeance and cheap laughs, Oberon punishes his wife by casting a problematic spell upon her. For his magic to yield the results he desires, Titania must give in to a monstrous appetite and, blinded by her desire for the deformed Bottom, surrender the pretty boy to the king of the fairies. Much has been made of Titania’s desire for the base human. For instance, Jan Kott, who famously visualizes the transformed Titania as “a very tall, flat, and fair girl” of Scandinavian

---

5 Titania’s emphasis on the word “rich” in her speech about her votaress’ wealth is crucial to our understanding of her investment in the Indian woman. This sense of investment is only heightened when it is coupled with the queen’s indication of her entitlement to the Indian boy: her votaress’ womb, Titania claims, is “rich” not with the mortal’s own child, but rather with the fairy queen’s “young squire” (2.1.131).
origin, insists that she forces Bottom to bed with her because “[t]his is the lover she wanted and dreamed of,” although “she never wanted to admit it, even to herself” (118-19). In claiming that her actions are a direct product of her sexual appetite, Kott overlooks the fact that Titania’s love and judgment have been perverted by none other than her husband and it is precisely because Oberon wills it so that Titania hankers after the ass-headed Bottom. While Kott sees in Titania’s goblin train all the potent ingredients of “the pharmacy of the witches” (118), it is only Oberon who has access to the magical power contained within things such as the petals of love-in-idleness.

Moreover, it is Oberon, not Titania, who winds up a dangerous if musical charm while squeezing pansy juice onto his wife’s eyelids:

What thou seest when thou dost wake,
Do it for thy true love take;
Love and languish for his sake.
Be it ounce, or cat, or bear,
Pard, or boar with bristled hair,
In thy eye that shall appear
When thou wak’st, it is thy dear.
Wake when some vile thing is near. (2.2.33-40)

Notably, Titania’s train is wary of the negative effects of such charms as the one uttered by Oberon. Thus, in the lullaby for their queen intended as a prophylactic to protect her from perilous magic, they pray “[n]ever harm / Nor spell nor charm / Come (their) lovely
lady nigh” (2.2.16-18). But their song is powerless and fails to safeguard Titania against Oberon’s more ominous spell.

If, as Kott suggests, the various animals listed in Oberon’s spell “represent abundant sexual potency, and some of them play an important part in sexual demonology” (118), it is also perfectly clear that it is the fairy king who wishes to conjure up the deviant logic of desire and smear it upon Titania’s eyes. Of course, where he wishes his wife only to suffer humiliation and ridicule, the fairy queen experiences a marvelous becoming before reterritorializing onto her position within the culture of royal patriarchy. What I identify here as a becoming, Philippa Berry calls “a highly potent, combustible combination of phantasy and desire,” which “produces the midsummer night’s dreaming,” one that first “reverses and then reorders the erotic preferences of the male lovers” (138). Berry is right to point to magic’s connection with masculine fantasy and to the eventual return of all characters’ individual desire to the familiar coded locations of hierarchical heternormativity. But the nuances of some of the characters’ desires remain secret. Chief among these is Oberon’s, whose wish to debase his wife by animalizing her erotic exchanges at the same time implicates him in his own cuckoldry through his participation in a voyeuristic bestial sexuality.

In their chapter on the diversity of the experience of becomings, Deleuze and Guattari give particular importance to the connection between the human and animal, which they term “becoming animal.” Their explanation of the phenomenon is important enough to be quoted at length:
A becoming-animal always involves a pack, a band, a population, a peopling, in short, a multiplicity. … One may retain or extract from the animal certain characteristics: species and genera, forms and functions, etc. Society and the State need animal characteristics to use for classifying people; … But we are not interested in characteristics; what interests us are modes of expansion, propagation, occupation, contagion, peopling. … We do not wish to say that certain animals live in packs. … What we are saying is that every animal is fundamentally a band, a pack. That it has pack modes, rather than characteristics, even if further distinctions within these modes are called for. It is at this point that the human being encounters the animal. We do not become animal without a fascination for the pack, for multiplicity. (239-40)

In this difficult yet fascinating passage, Deleuze and Guattari suggest that becomings in general but becoming-animal in particular entails multiple, complex networks of desire. The socially simplified and categorized being (the animal or the human) is bereft of its potential to articulate its multifaceted desires, until it liberates itself from the limiting structures of State and initiates hitherto unthought-of collaborations.

The theorists go on to define becoming-animal in terms of “unnatural participations” or “unnatural nuptials” of human and animal. They ask: “[w]ho has not known the violence of … animal sequences, which uproot one from humanity, if only for an instant, making one scrape at one’s bread like a rodent or giving one the yellow eyes of a feline? A fearsome involution calling us toward unheard-of becomings” (239-40).
The spread of unnatural nuptials does not result in production, reproduction, or filiation; rather it results in “contagion” and “epidemic.” Human and animal “bands,” they argue, are like “hybrids,” which, “being born of a sexual union that will not reproduce itself,” are sterile. As a result, becoming-animal (banding through non reproductive means) constantly confronts the newness of unions and “begins over again every time, gaining that much more ground” (Deleuze and Guattari 241). Such a phenomenon “is a far cry from filiative production or hereditary reproduction, in which the only differences retained are a simple duality between sexes within the same species, and small modifications across generations” (242).

Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophy may at first glance seem farfetched in connection with the transformations triggered by Oberon in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. However, their theories of unnatural participation echo the thoughts of several Renaissance scholars, particularly that of Ambroise Paré, who, in *On Monsters and Marvels*, presents the various (horrible) transformations that result from the combination of human and animal.

First published in 1573, Ambroise Paré’s *On Monsters and Marvels* provides an intriguing catalog of monsters born of diverse unnatural causes. In a section on the birth of those monsters that result from the unnatural sexual union between human beings and beasts (the “mixture or mingling of seed”), Paré writes that such creatures “bring great shame to those who look at them or speak of them.” Although he hurries to inform his readers that the horror “lies in the deed and not in the words” that narrate or the eyes that
witness the details of the monstrous result of bestiality, his self-conscious articulation of guiltlessness betrays an urgent desire to justify his curiosity about what he presents to his readers as deviant sexuality (67). In fact, at the conclusion of the chapter he promises to “refrain from writing … about several other monsters … which are so hideous and abominable, not only to see but also to hear tell of, that, due to their abominable loathsomeness I have neither wanted to relate them nor to have them portrayed” (73). Ironically, before reaching his conclusion, Paré provides his readers with six detailed illustrations of monsters that resulted from inter-species copulation; his brief chapter covers nothing short of nine cases of monstrosity.

Paré’s declaration resonates through the speech and actions of Oberon and Puck, who maintain their grim fascination for the monster Bottom’s exchanges with Titania even as they judge her fairy bed to be a corrupt space. As discussed earlier, Oberon’s spell articulates his wish to make his wife “languish for … a vile thing.” But he also wishes to imagine his wife’s monstrous dotage: “I wonder if Titania be awaked; / Then what it was that next came in her eye, / Which she must dote on in extremity” (3.2.1-3). Puck too takes delight in announcing to Oberon that his “mistress with a monster is in

---

6 Janis Pallister points to the sixteenth century French medical community’s opposition to Paré’s publications. The faculty of medicine was in part appalled by Paré’s unification in his writing of the fields of medicine and surgery. But they were also concerned that his books, published in French and not Latin or Greek, made medical secrets cheap, readily “available to anyone and everyone who could read” (Paré, On Monsters and Marvels, trans. Pallister, p. xxiv). Whereas Pallister clearly interprets Paré’s cataloguing of monsters as conducted in “the spirit of critical investigation” (xxv), his contemporaries and even some of his early translators (notably Malgaigne) identified a carnivalesque delight in his work.
love” (3.2.6). In fact, it is by means of their respective imaginations of the conjunction of Titania and a beast that Oberon and Puck experience their becomings. By magically imposing on his wife his own desire for an animal connection, the fairy king becomes quite like the sorcerer that Paré describes in his work:

…[N]o one can deny, and one should not deny, that there be sorcerers … who through subtle, diabolic and unknown means corrupt the body, intelligence, and health of men and of other creatures, [such] as animals, trees, grasses, air, earth, and waters. (85, emphasis added)

Paré’s words find a parallel early in A Midsummer Night’s Dream, when Titania accuses her estranged husband of similar sorcery, of creating through his ill will an imbalance in nature.

Oberon’s sorcery also finds parallels in Deleuze and Guattari. But unlike the early modern surgeon who views sorcery as merely a step away from the diabolical, Deleuze and Guattari celebrate the figure of the sorcerer as a fundamental agent of becoming. Indeed, to them the “sorcerer” is the “exceptional” or “anomalous” individual with whom “an alliance must be made in order to become-animal” (Deleuze and Guattari 243). Such sorcerers, they claim, are located “at the edge of the fields or woods. They haunt the fringes. They are at the borderline of the village, or between villages” (246). The theorists’ description of sorcerers fits with Gail Paster and Skiles Howard’s evaluation of Oberon’s hybrid activity. They propose that “Oberon, when he alters Titania’s imagination and causes her quasi-amorous, quasi-maternal dotage upon the
monstrous baby Bottom, may be said to participate in both traditions … of science and … of fairy lore” (301). Not surprisingly, Oberon also is located on the geographical cusp of the city and the forest. His proximity to the human and the fairy is what enables him to work his magic equally on them.

While what Oberon ultimately wants is his wife’s disempowerment, humiliation, and subservience, at the same time in exercising his magical desires he problematizes the future of matrimony. Titania’s loss of control and will can only come about if Oberon endangers his own patriarchal hold over his marriage bed. The deformation wrought by his spell, then, not only plays a cruel trick upon his wife and the Athenian weaver, but it also transforms—albeit tentatively—the sexual conventions of monogamist patriarchy. Eventually, conventional order is restored: Oberon acquires the Indian boy for whom he risked cuckoldry; Titania, having suffered embarrassment for her gross misjudgment, wishes only to separate herself from the mortals and dance the night away with her husband, whom she once again recognizes as her “lord” (4.1.98). In effect all characters reterritorialize onto the contemporary modes of patriarchal and hierarchical being. But through their inability completely to forget their suspended transactions with the other, and through their desire to narrate and expound upon their monstrous becomings or imaginations, they carry forward into the future remnants of their experiences. That the play ends on a conventional comedic note, in marriage and laughter, in no way alleviates the audience’s disturbing recognition that all the marital arrangements in the play have resulted from Oberon’s unnatural desire for a human mortal, and that all corrections or
reformations of transgressive individuals have stemmed from not entirely forgotten intersections between human and fairy. The uneasy laughter at play’s conclusion, then, is as much a result of potential for the resurrection of deformity as it is a product of the re-establishment of form (norm) in the present. But this uneasiness of comedy marks the entire play, not just its conclusion. Indeed in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* Shakespeare consistently unravels the murkiness of deviant laughter.

Andrew Stott’s analysis of early modern representations of deformity is rooted in the period’s theoretical preoccupations with genre, specifically comedy, but also in its ethical engagement with laughter. Stott combines the influence of Sidney’s discouragement in *Defence of Poetry* of the use of vulgar elements in comedy, those that do not produce a sophisticated sense of delight in readers or the audience but merely a raucous laughter, with the growing early modern appreciation for Hobbesian ethical objections to laughing at the deformed, in order to suggest that Renaissance intellectuals strove to reconfigure the terms of comic laughter. The politics of such a reconfiguration are represented in Shakespeare’s shifting appeals to laughter in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. The play prominently situates the rude mechanicals as worthy of “loud laughter” (5.1.70). But it simultaneously positions them in the eyes of a few as pitiable subjects whose “wretchedness” must not be “o’ercharged” by the demands of pleasure-seeking aristocrats (5.1.85). This polarity of response that plays itself out in Philostrate’s and Hippolyta’s respective anticipations of the players’ comic performance is remarkable
especially because it is foreshadowed early in the play, both in the earthly and fairy realms.

Bottom’s transformation into a deformed creature in Act Three, scene one, produces a laughter that is at the heart of what David Cressy recognizes as the social power of ridicule. Indeed, Oberon expects and desires the production of merriment among those subjects who condemn the deformed body as one that is unworthy of dignity, much less romantic or erotic pursuit. The ass-headed Bottom becomes funny specifically to those observers (Oberon, Puck, the audience) who expect the undrugged Titania to have better taste and sense than to fawn over a shallow “thickskin” (3.2.13). In the earthly realm Philostrate and the aristocratic men of Athens mimic Oberon’s dominant ideology of laughter when they welcome as comic performance the “simpleness” of the “hardhanded” Athenian labourers (5.1.83, 72). The “tragical mirth” of the play of Pyramus and Thisbe brings “merry tears” to Philostrate (5.1.57, 69). For Theseus, Demetrius, and Lysander the mechanicals’ drama becomes the occasion for the witty offstage performance of their repartee about the beastliness of the actors. (Notable among these are Demetrius’s reference to the actors as “asses” and Theseus’s suggestion that the poor men are all “beasts,” fox-like and goose-like in their performance.) But this is only half the story. While popular early modern responses to disability and deformity combined social contempt with laughter, a powerful minority pressed for a revision of the terms of merriment. In A Midsummer Night’s Dream, Hippolyta presents the minority position among the mortals; her objection to the comedy of the rude mechanicals is as
much to the production of laughter at them as it is to their inadequate sense of theatrical production.

The most immediate result of this shift in the dynamic of laughter is the inversion of the perception of the laugher. That is, the hitherto secure position of the individual laughing at the lowly or deformed body begins to be challenged when the object of contempt is relocated from the physically monstrous to the morally pitiless. In short, it now is the turn of the scorner to be the scorned. This is best exemplified by the transformed Bottom’s initial exchange with his fairy mistress. As opposed to Oberon and Puck’s contemptuous laughter at their reshaping of Bottom, Titania’s erotic longing and love for the deformed creature problematizes the earlier comic moment by injecting into it a mesmerizing lyricism that counters the vulgar if alliterative sounds of laughter. In place of Puck’s “hempen homespuns” (3.1.72), Titania presents an alternative vision of the mechanical whose “fair virtue’s force” moves the queen of the fairies “to swear” that she loves Bottom (3.1.133-34). Moreover, instead of inflicting fear on the lowly humans and extracting a cruel laugh at the expense of their physical terror—Puck’s “I’ll be … a headless bear, sometimes a fire” speech comes to mind (3.1.103-04)—, Titania appeals to Bottom’s desire for both material fulfillment and absolute immateriality:

I am a spirit of no common rate.

The summer still doth tend upon my state,

And I do love thee. Therefore, go with me.

I’ll give thee fairies to attend on thee,
And they shall fetch thee jewels from the deep,
And sing while thou on pressèd flowers dost sleep.
And I will purge thy mortal grossness so
That thou shalt like an airy spirit go.  

Titania enacts Oberon’s wishes by playing the fool in love; indeed, she takes Bottom for her “true love,” just as her husband wishes her to when he casts a spell upon her eye, and she languishes for the beastly creature’s “sake” (2.2.34-35). Through the monstrous appropriation of Bottom, Oberon successfully acquires a child—the sweet Indian boy—whom he doubtless will tailor to suit his own principles of futurity.

It is important to note that Oberon (and Puck, who is the king’s spritely minion and representative) and Titania are interested in dominating their relationships with the human. But where the male fairies choose the established—if jaded—methods of comic scorn to control Bottom, Titania relies on mystical seduction to do the same. Consequently, her command to her minions to “[t]ie up [her] lover’s tongue” and “bring him silently” to her “bower” resembles the erotic violence that accompanies the sadomasochistic dynamic which (3.1.191, 187), Deleuze would argue, may be interpreted as a “path of mutation precipitated through the actualisation of connections among bodies that were previously only implicit” and which unravel “new powers in the capacities of those bodies to act and respond (Parr 145).

On one level, the image of a tied-up Bottom feeds into the carnivalesque violence of charivari, which often involved crude reenactments of the inversion of gender and
power within matrimony. That the bossy Titania manages to silence two male figures in the play, one of them her husband and the other her proposed lover, surely makes her a ripe candidate for social punishment; an early modern audience may well have been aware of this potential as they watched the fairy queen order her minions to disempower Bottom. But the tongue-tied Bottom also conjures up the Deleuzean image of the masochist who relies on a “‘cold’ oral mother” to provide “an alternative source of psychosexual authority to the father” and thus expels “the phallic power of the paternal” from his universe (Mansfield 70). Titania’s quasi-sadistic silencing of Bottom, then, “is in reality a transmutation of cruelty from which the new man emerges” (Deleuze Masochism 12). (Thus their sadism and masochism are respectively invested in the invention of “new ways of feeling and thinking,” even though they act in fundamentally different ways.) Bottom’s enslavement to Titania, if it can be called that, leads to his experience of becoming. In his transformative stage not only is he freed from the scornful interventions of the likes of Puck and Oberon, actions that resemble the early modern social devices of shaming, but while with Titania and her train of fairies Bottom is also capable of transcending the limits of temporality.

When he awakens at the end of Act Four, scene one, Bottom’s speech suggests that he has not skipped a beat in the mechanicals’ rehearsal of Pyramus and Thisbe. Finding himself alone in the woods, abandoned by his friends, Bottom confronts what he can at best construe as his dream-like experience. He tries in vain to articulate it to/for himself and soon defers the task of narration to an unimaginable or “bottomless” future:
Man is but an ass if he go about to expound this dream. Methought I was — *there is no man can tell what Methought I was*—and methought I had—but man is but a patched fool if he will offer to say what methought I had. The eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen, man’s hand is not able to taste, his tongue to conceive, nor his heart to report what my dream was. *I will get Peter Quince to write a ballad of this dream.* It shall be called “Bottom’s Dream,” because it hath no bottom. (4.1.203-12; emphasis added)

His promise is obviously funny. It is also disturbing because of its impossibility; for how is Peter Quince to give artistic salience to his friend’s becoming when Bottom himself cannot intelligently articulate it? When he is reunited with his friends in the city, Bottom is unable to give words to his wondrous experience, even though he promises his companions that he is “to discourse wonders” (4.1.26). The alternation between his recognition of the impossibility of narrative to explain becoming and his desire to “tell … everything” is best understood through Deleuze’s explanation in *The Logic of Sense* of Alice’s experience of becoming when in Wonderland (4.2.28):

> It is language which fixes the limits …, but it is language as well which transcends the limits and restores them to the infinite equivalence of an unlimited becoming. Hence the reversals which constitute Alice’s adventures: the reversal of becoming larger and smaller …; the reversal of the day before and the day after …; the reversal of more and less …; the reversal of cause and effect. (Deleuze *Logic* 2-3)
Narration cannot contain Bottom’s experience, thereby rendering “unlimited” his becoming. However much he struggles to articulate his experience, it is clear that he has not forgotten it, just like the young lovers, who recall in a haze their experiences within the fairy-laden forest.

Demetrius first attempts to give some shape to his experiences of becoming by referring to them as “these things” that “seem small and undistinguishable, / Like far off mountains turnèd into clouds” (4.1.186-87). Hermia, on the other hand, believes that, owing to her transformed vision, “everything seems double” (4.1.189). As with Deleuze’s Alice, who cannot determine “which way to turn because her travels take her always in both directions at the same time,” so it is with the Athenian lovers, whose efforts at narrativizing their respective becomings fail because of the paradoxical tension within the experiences. But unlike Bottom, who hopes in future to transcend through art (specifically “a ballad”) the limitations of language and express the “infinite equivalence of an unlimited becoming” (Deleuze Logic 3), the young couples, on returning to the organized space of the city, quickly reterritorialize onto the established codes of marriage. Their refusal to question the process of the renewal of their romantic entanglements, which has once again enabled the lovers to partake of the socioeconomic fruits of Egeus and Theseus’s approval of their marriages, makes them subjects of “regulated transformation,” which, as Elizabeth Grosz explains in Becomings, is in direct opposition to the truly new experiences of identity:
Predictable, measurable, regulated transformation seems a social prerequisite; but upheaval, the eruption of the event, the emergence of new alignments unpredicted within old networks seem to threaten to reverse all gains, … to place chaos and disorder at the heart of regulation and orderly progress. (28)

Keen to gain predictable social acceptance through their revised relationships, then, the Athenian lovers discard even the hazy recollections of their wild (culturally new) experiences. Their burden of inexplicable waking dreams is taken up by Bottom, who alone refuses to let go of his wild experiences but promises to share them with others. Although Theseus claims to the “fair lovers” that he of their “discourse … more will hear anon” (4.1.176-77), he makes it perfectly clear to Hippolyta that he does not want to engage in such “forms of things unknown” that only a “poet’s pen” can translate or “name” (5.1.15-17). Similarly, after their initial confusion regarding their own consciousness, the lovers agree that they “are awake” and will nostalgically “recount” their past “dreams” to each other en route to the temple. However, when they speak again, the lovers do not mention their experiences in the woods, but, along with Theseus the Duke, ridicule the mechanicals’ performance of Pyramus and Thisbe. Notably, we only hear from Demetrius and Lysander, even though Hermia and Helena are present at the performance. Doubly reterritorialized, the two female friends seem not only to have left behind their twinned experience of childhood friendship when they were “[l]ike to a double cherry, seeming parted, / But yet an union in partition” (3.2.209-10), but, being married, they also embrace a chaste silence that distances them from their hitherto
autonomous identities as mobile and articulate lovers. Ironically, the women’s earlier state of mobility coincided with their willingness to explore fearlessly new realms of identity. When Demetrius finds himself plagued by Helena, he warns her against rape, the necessary consequence of her romantic exploration and wandering:

You do impeach your modesty too much

To leave the city and commit yourself
Into the hands of one that loves you not,
To trust the opportunity of night
And the ill counsel of a desert place
With the rich worth of your virginity.

(2.1.214-19; emphasis added)

But the as yet unmarried Helena is unfazed by the Athenian’s beastly threat of rape or death at the hands of “wild beasts” (2.1.228). Instead, she embraces the opportunity to shift contemporary politics and the rhetoric of erotic chase. “The story shall be changed” (2.1.230), she informs Demetrius, when she will successfully rewrite the dynamic between Apollo and Daphne to cast the nymph in the body of the pursuer, the Greek god as the object of her pursuit. The myth that Helena chooses to appropriate in her “story” is central to her physical location at the moment of her utterance—in the woods outside Athens.

In Ovid’s first book of Metamorphoses, Apollo, cursed by Cupid’s arrow, follows Daphne through the woods in hope that she will reciprocate his love. But the young
god’s desire for the nymph is quickly frustrated, as he learns that the object of his love has an untamable, independent spirit that is far removed from patriarchal heternormative modes of being:

In woods and forrests is hir joy, the savage beasts to chase,

…

Unwedded Phebe doth she haunt and follow as hir guide,

…

Full many a wooer sought hir love, she lothing all the rout,

Impacient and without a man walkes all the woods about.

And as for Hymen, or for love, and wedlock often sought

She tooke no care, they were the furthest end of all hir thought.

(Book I 573-80, emphasis added)

Penaeus, the river god and father to Daphne, reminds his daughter of her duty to the patriarch of marrying and bearing him male heirs to carry forward his lineage (Ovid, Book I, 584). But the nymph, “hating as a haynous crime the bonde of bridely bed” (Ovid, Book I, 585), pleads with her father to grant her a wish that would secure her maidenhood. Penaeus reluctantly gives in to Daphne’s transgressive desire, but simultaneously warns his child that her chastity will eventually be threatened by her beauty, the limit of her own form. Penaeus’s words come true all too soon. Driven by his desire for the beautiful lover of woods, Apollo catches up with Daphne and courts the maiden by assuring her that he is neither “Carle nor countrie Clowne” but the son of
“[t]he king of Gods” (Ovid, Book I, 623, 630-31). Daphne, however, is not charmed by Apollo’s bloodlines or even his divine powers, and sneaks away from the scene, famously leaving the young lover in midsentence. Unfortunately for her, the violent god chases her down, “even as when the greedie Grewnde doth course the sielie Hare” (Ovid, Book I, 649). Exhausted and unable to withstand Apollo’s gaze or his erotic pursuit, Daphne seeks her father’s help and prays to him to transform her shape, so she may escape possession. Peneaeus once again gives in to his daughter’s wish and transforms her into a tree that, even while its leaves and branches adorn Apollo’s “golden lockes” or “[q]uyver” (Ovid, Book I, 685-86), remains sexually impervious to the bellicose god.

Helena’s reimagination of Daphne’s transformation is consistent with her overarching desire to effect a change in the politics within the play. As early as Act One, scene one, she wishes to “to be … translated” so as to experience Demetrius’s love through her friend Hermia’s eyes (1.1.191). Recognizing the power of love, which can “transpose” monstrous objects to “form and dignity” (1.1.233), she plans accordingly to alter the future course of her romantic career. Helena divulges to Demetrius the secret of Hermia and Lysander’s elopement, and, confident that he will pursue the object of his love into the woods, decides to “transpose” contemporary gender roles by adopting the role of pursuer and feasting her eyes upon her own lover, chasing him “thither and back again” (1.1.251). Her willful mobility is astonishing, specifically because she hopes as author to document the means through which she will bring about a change in women’s position in the arena of romantic courtship. Despite changing the roles of Apollo and
Daphne in her appropriated tale, Helena retains the sexual dynamic of the mythical figures; Daphne remains female, even as she hunts down her lover. Thus, in her vision of the future of all her “sex,” women will actively “fight for love as men may do” (2.1.240-41). Propelled by her authorial intent, Helena traps her lover “within the wood” outside the realms of civil, patriarchal society (2.1.192), just so she may “speed to catch” him (2.1.233). In the process, the woods, the site where Demetrius earlier states he “shall do … mischief” to Helena, suddenly become the space where the young woman may experiment with her dangerous and subversive desire, in short the location of her becoming. But as with all other moments of becoming in the play, this one too is reterritorialized. Promised Demetrius as reward for her return to the city (and its accompanying order of subservience), Helena promptly falls into line with patriarchal ideology, happily and silently following the figures of authority to the temple, the site of reterritorialization.

While Titania’s return to her marriage is not accompanied by a perfect silence, her language is meek, her verse finally humbled to a recitation defanged of aggression and pride, the very qualities that marked her early speeches in the play. Although she retains her musicality, a characteristic that, as I have suggested above, the queen mobilized effectively to woo Bottom, her much abbreviated verse is now merely a part of Oberon’s general magical scheme, her words sandwiched between the fairy king’s authorial chant (5.1.382-413). The patriarchs of the earthly and fairy realms manage to assert through their respective articulations the direction of their subjects’ futures. With an “iron
tongue” Theseus sends off the newly married couples “to bed” (5.1.354-55); Oberon orders “every fairy” to “bless” the marriage beds of the mortals so that “Never mole, harelip, nor scar / Nor mark prodigious such as are / Despisèd in nativity / Shall upon their children be” (5.1.402-07). Clearly, the leaders are eager to pave the way for heternormativity and patriarchally secured reproduction, to establish biological futurity as the fundamental means of imprinting the self onto the future. In fact, Oberon’s spell specifically targets the prevention of such monstrous births as are “the blots of nature’s hand” (5.1.400). Instead he certifies the future as a time of “sweet peace” in a space of “safety” (5.1.409, 411).

In spite of his organizing chant, there is some unfinished business at the conclusion of A Midsummer Night’s Dream. Bottom’s troublesome memory that he wishes to eternalize in song, Titania’s eagerness to learn about her recent experiences with the other, and the Athenian lovers’ enchanted marriages are all remnants of becoming, aspects of uncertainty that even Puck’s magic broom cannot sweep under the carpet. To varying degrees, the characters’ “demand to remember … aspires to define the present and prescribe the future” in ways that cannot be determined or controlled by Theseus and Oberon (Sullivan 10). Their reordering of characters’ desires, then, may all come to naught. That the last words of the play, spoken by the troublemaker Puck, offer no resolution but instead plunge us into the vagaries of equivocation anticipates the ungovernable and unpredictable movement that is integral to the experience of becoming. With the prospect of further becomings lurking in the shadows and applying a
paradoxical force to the seemingly stabilized relations in the play, the future in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* is as uncertain and unassuring as Puck’s honesty.

While at first glance, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* seem to share no common boundaries, closer analysis reveals important similarities between the plays. For instance, the fairy king Oberon and the city-smart Allwit both manipulate the desire of others in order to sustain their own interests; in the process they willfully embrace cuckoldry and reconstruct the logic of power within patriarchy. Quite like his sorcerer counterpart in Shakespeare’s early comedy, Allwit in Middleton’s play engages in unnatural Deleuzean nuptials by replacing himself in his marriage with Sir Walter Whorehound, the jealous lover of Mistress Allwit. The Londoner recognizes the geography of the marriage bed “as the location of direct experience, a sensuous swirl of emotions and perceptions and myths, which (his) … analysis can only ignore or destroy” (Rose 71). But even as he tosses aside the social “perceptions and myths,” in short, ideologies, attached to marriage, Allwit remains fully conscious of its economic potential. Thus, in his analysis of matrimony, he expounds on the material benefits that accompany his reimagination of his role as husband:

I am like a man
Finding a table furnished to his hand,
As mine is still to me, prays for the founder:
‘Bless the right worshipful the good founder’s life.’
I thank him, he’s maintained my house this ten years,
Not only keeps my wife, but a keeps me
And all my family. I am at his table;
He gets me all my children, and pays the nurse
Monthly or weekly; puts me to nothing,
Rent, nor church-duties, not so much as the scavenger:
The happiest state that ever man was born to!

... I have the name, and in his gold I shine;
And where some merchants would in soul kiss hell
To buy a paradise for their wives, and dye
Their conscience in the bloods of prodigal heirs
To deck their night-piece, yet all this being done,
Eaten with jealousy to the inmost bone—
As what affliction nature more constrains
Than feed the wife for another’s veins?—
These torments stand I free of; I am as clear
From jealousy of a wife as from the charge. (1.2.12-50)

For Allwit marriage is a doorway that conveniently straddles the two marketable
spaces of street and home, providing him with ample opportunity to simulate the logic of
production and exercise the logic of consumption. At the same time, marriage allows him to construct a future that is fundamentally performative; his recognition that he “must fit all … times, or there’s no music” is symptomatic of his greater awareness of the theatrical nature of domesticity. Having assigned to Whorehound the normative functions of biological futurity, he performs a perverse or monstrous fatherhood that stands in direct opposition to the early modern anxiety regarding paternal imprinting. Like Oberon, whose desire for a “henchman” is not obstructed by the limits of his vision of the future of patriarchy, Allwit too embraces a futurity that is “labyrinthine” in its ability to engage with and problematize multiple systems of commercial exchange (Wells). Quite unlike the “Ovidian wittol” who fails to “grasp the extent to which his wittolry effeminizes its subject” (Boehrer 180), Allwit becomes the strategic wittol who disinherit[s] conventional performances of gender and production. Indeed the “Rabelaisian poetics of the consuming and leaking body” that John Jowett regards as peculiar to Middleton’s canon is nowhere more prominent than in his characterization of Allwit in *A Chaste Maid* (508).

While Sir Walter Whorehound may also to a certain degree be seen as a participant in carnivalesque eroticism, his adulterous festivity is limited by his guilt and

---

7 While Alizon Brunning interprets Allwit’s self-determined and self-directed cuckoldry as a symptom of his removal “from the cycle of production and consumption” (14), I would argue his separation is purely performative. Allwit is fully invested in the cycle of his wife’s and Whorehound’s material production and consumption. As one who can stand between the two (as promoter but also as prohibitor), Allwit embraces the ideology of exchange by performing the role of connector.
its accompanying recognition of negative repercussions. In a speech that parodies both Claudius’ confession soliloquy and Faustus’ many speeches about his unrepentant soul, the injured Whorehound cries:

O how my offences wrestle with my repentance,
It hath scarce breath,
Still my adulterous guilt hovers aloft,
And with her blacke Wings beats downe all my prayers,
Ere they be halfe way up, what’s he knows now,
How long I have to live? O what comes then,
My tast growes bitter, the round World, all Gall now,
Her pleasing pleasure now hath poyson’d me,
Which I exchang’d my Soule for,
Make way a hundred sighes at once for me. (5.1.83-92)

Critics have often been troubled by this scene, which Derek Alwes considers to be among the most “notorious” in Middleton’s dramatic canon (101). The fundamental division between scholars’ interpretations of the pseudo death-bed scene is telling; while one group presents Whorehound as a nasty “villain” who “fully deserves” his “punishment” (Gill 35), the other finds his expression to be sincerely painful, the scene “one of the cruelest… in all of Renaissance drama” (Rowe 137). Neither extreme, as

---

8 In keeping with the tradition of carnival, Whorehound’s adultery is always-already contained by his knowledge that his affair with Mistress Allwit will necessarily come to a close and be replaced by a legitimate marriage, ideally to Moll Yellowhammer.
Alwes astutely points out, provides a satisfactory moral explanation for Whorehound’s outburst. Rather, his character must be evaluated within the context of the contradictions that it presents (Rowe 101-02).

But Whorehound’s morality is not the only matter here that is riddled with contradictions. His fear of death and afterlife notwithstanding, Whorehound’s primary cause for concern is future life, specifically his loss to Touchwood Junior of Moll, their vehicle of secured futurity. Where earlier he imagined a future endowed with the wealthy goldsmith Yellowhammer’s fortune and young daughter (and, presumably legitimate offspring through her), he now has nothing substantial to look upon but his bastard children whose lives hardly secure his economic future or lineage. Faced with dire material consequences in his lifetime, he ponders his fate after death and panics at the thought of “what comes then.”

Allwit too panics at the prospect of his benefactor’s death, declaring to his wife and Davy Dahumma that Whorehound’s mortality may very well bring about his own (5.1.5-8). But even as he thinks of death, what lies beyond the earthly realm is of no interest to him. Unlike Whorehound, who transfers onto his immaterial soul the quandary of his material future, Allwit is horrified by the moment at which he must give up his innovative and seamless adaptations of matrimony to reterritorialize onto the conventions of patriarchy. Thus resigned to his fate as husband and master of his house, he admits to his wife that he is “done” with his playful or adaptive ways that let him have his “Nose … in everie thing” (5.1.197-98). Instead, the future that Allwit now imagines entails the
couple renting out their “Lodgings,” not his wife (5.1.187);\(^9\) along with his humbled return to economic sensibility, the hitherto gamester acknowledges the systematic power of institutions such as marriage and the state: “There’s no Gamster like a politike sinner, / For who e’re games, the Box is sure a winner” (5.1.200-01).

Despite his reterritorialization and promise of reformation, the spirit of performative domesticity continues in the play; what Allwit must perforce give up, the Touchwoods enthusiastically embrace. An effective insemination device, Touchwood Senior is “the comic avatar of Eros” who holds the biological key to multiple, intertwined futures (Marotti 67). Importantly, he is also an embodiment of the paradoxes straddled by the play; at once “too fruitful” and of “barren fortunes” (2.1.9), Touchwood Senior trades in his insolvency for the strategic redistribution of his productivity. While in the past his hyper-potency may have jeopardized not only his own fortunes but also that of others, he articulates his determination to mend his ways and, in the process, acquire material wealth. His self-amendment, however, stems from his continued ability to destabilize the patriarchal bloodlines in Cheapside. The only difference is that the bastard children that are his “workemanship” and owing to whom he had spent all his wealth (either to “tender” husbands to the women he impregnated or else to purchase their silence) will now be transformed into valuable sources of investments (2.1.69, 84). The Kixes, who would readily “give a thousand pound to purchase fruitfulness” (2.1.154), are so driven

\(^9\) Notably, even when Allwit has to give up his hitherto happy identity as consumer of his wife’s labor, he does not abandon the ideology of exchange. As landlord, he simply means to switch the item that he will exchange for wealth and material security.
by the desire for biological futurity that they are willing to simulate its course and willfully corrupt their bloodlines in order to “keepe” the children that are got for them (5.4.88). Released from one form of patriarchal anxiety—cuckoldry—they are consumed by another, namely their “dry barrenness,” which threatens to famish them and “fat (the) fortunes” of others who will have a secure material future thanks to the steady inflow of dowries and inheritance (2.1.169-72). In their ability to recognize and embrace the paradoxes that inform contemporary patriarchy, the Kixes along with Allwit and Whorehound echo Oberon’s appropriative genius.

The paradoxical means by which patriarchy operates in A Chaste Maid is most keenly drawn out by Tim’s and the tutor’s multiple plays on faulty logic. “In the university” and therefore “ne’er trained up to women’s company” (3.2.116-17), Tim and his tutor come to Cheapside donning academic sterility on their sleeves. “In league with logic” (3.2.144), and armed with rhetoric, the men swear they can erase the common perception of fools and whores and instead render them “reasonable” and “honest” (4.1.36-41), respectively. As Tim’s arranged wooing of and marriage to the Welsh Gentlewoman becomes an occasion for crafty wordplay, what becomes increasingly clear is the “monstrous absurdity” of matrimonial alliances (3.2.137), which link mysterious but vehemently material goods to human bodies:

They say she has mountains to her marriage;
She’s full of cattle, some two thousand runts:
Now what the meaning of these runts should be,
My tutor cannot tell me.

I have looked in Rider’s Dictionary for the letter R, and

There I can hear no tidings of these runts neither … (4.1.93-98)

Aside from the meaning of nonexistent “runts,” the chief irony here of course is that the Welshwoman is a doubly material being, far removed from Tim’s fantasy of the well-versed and well-traveled female scholar he would enjoy marrying. A prostitute whose body is literally an item for sale, she is also the bait that Whorehound hopes the Yellowhammers will bite on and, in so doing, allow for a lasting transference of the goldsmiths’ fortunes to him. She is to function, in other words, as a passageway for the unequal exchange of wealth.

But as Whorehound’s plans are foiled by the appropriative patriarchal practices of Allwit, the Kixes and the Touchwoods, the union of Tim and the Welsh Gentlewoman, epitomized by the seemingly nonsense word “runt,” becomes a spectacular display of that “thing called marriage,” which, in the play’s world, is a giant “trick beyond … logic” or learning (5.4.111-12). Never particularly keen on the company of women, Tim hardly is even disappointed that his wife was a whore. He settles on the marriage, promising to love the absurd wit of the situation. Indeed Middleton’s drama distills the qualities of material futurity that inform matrimony and discards the surrounding ideology of love for the demise of which Tim and the tutor compose their ridiculous epitaphs. Not surprisingly, in his mock description to his parents of Moll’s waning health, Tim compares the melancholy lover’s transformation to the “change” of “[g]old into white
money” (5.2.17). Even love’s disappointment, it seems, cannot be explained without the rhetoric of currency and cash flow. Well grounded in their economy, then, the various couples in the play reterritorialize onto marriage, specifically “two marriages” for which “[o]ne feast will serve” (5.4.118-20).

The Rhetoric of Capital: Market and Movement in The Roaring Girl and The Witch of Edmonton

Unruly women and men litter the London streets of Middleton and Dekker’s The Roaring Girl, just as they populate the Edmonton of Dekker, Rowley, and Ford’s The Witch of Edmonton. Their unruliness is the product of the changing face of the English economy that, moving away from a feudal structure towards early capitalism, by force destabilizes all personal relations in the communities, including those of gender. The effects of the instability are felt most clearly within the microcosmic organization of marriage, but they are tangible even in the larger social contexts. Significantly, the difference in the texts’ representation of unruly characters, matrimony, and social codes also marks the difference in the genres’ ability to negotiate the early modern experience of socio-economic flux. Despite the differences, the functioning of the everyday principles of futurity is at the center of both plays, and the generic distinctions between them serve to emphasize the flexibility of the social codes that determine the ways in which characters in the drama contextualize their past, present, and future actions and desires.
Being true to the conventions of comedy, *The Roaring Girl*, published first in 1611, manages to tame—howsoever tentatively—the characters’ unruliness through the all-subsuming medium of marriage. Indeed, marriage, which is the goal with which the play begins and that establishes the action in all plots, is in the end achieved; the lovers are united in the bond of matrimony, and marriages, even if they are threatened by adulterous interventions, are technically uncorrupted at play’s end. Unlike Valerie Forman, who suggests that in the play “the marriage plot itself is not the issue” (1550), I would argue that the opposite is true. While the play is not merely about the particular marriage plots that it sets up (of Sebastian and Mary, of the Gallipots and the Openworks, or even the potential marriage of Moll Cutpurse to a fitting man), it is about the construction of various institutions that rely on matrimony for securing their future. Of course Forman is right when she points out that “[t]he ‘economy’ of (the) play is driven not by romantic desire …, but by the circulation of commodities and particularly the counterfeits with which that circulation is associated” (1551). But it is crucial to note that, in the play, marriage itself is presented as a commodity that is the primary medium of economic exchange between individuals, a vehicle for both sound and counterfeit investments.

*The Roaring Girl* depicts an urban society that focuses on the reluctant conjunction of class mobility and appropriative gender roles. While the protagonists actively seek ways to secure themselves materially and emotionally, their vehicle of choice remains marriage and the forging of lucrative family relations. Of course, in the
play’s market-savvy world, temporary “fixes,” such as sexual and romantic liaisons outside of marital confines, are popular alternatives because they are presented as avenues through which class ascendancy may be simulated. Thus we see young Sebastian feigning a love interest in Moll Cutpurse, so as to coerce his father Sir Alexander to give in to his desire to marry Mary Fitzallard, whose father seemingly can no longer afford a hefty enough dowry to satisfy the avaricious Justice of the Peace.\(^\text{10}\) Similarly, the pauper-gallant Laxton strings along the tobacconist Mistress Gallipot in order to furnish himself with the conveniences offered to him through his illicit affairs with the married woman—free tobacco, money, and the opportunity to engage in other fetishized relationships. Although it seems that we are to judge harshly the unstable marriage bed and corrupt marital arrangements, we are not offered a positive alternative that would reestablish matrimony safely within the realm of patriarchy. Instead we are left with a suggestion that if patriarchy’s various apparatuses, including matrimony, are to survive into the future, they must undergo fundamental transformations in order to accommodate the economic changes brought about by the growth of capitalism. The most notable marriage in the play is that of the Gallipots, whose relationship destabilizes the patriarchal premises of matrimony. The prototypical scold, Mistress Gallipot not only cuckolds her naïve husband, she also manages successfully to extract money from him in order to

maintain Laxton as her lover.\textsuperscript{11} Hippocrates Gallipot himself is presented as the noble-hearted cuckold, as a man who, not unlike Othello, loves his wife too dearly. But unlike Othello, Gallipot is only too hasty to trust his wife. As he fawns over Mistress Gallipot, striving “to please her night and day” (3.2.36), going so far as to “wink at” the possibility of his wife thrusting his “soft pillow under another’s head” (3.2115-16), the apothecary is doubly feminized: by his wife, who accuses him of being an “apron husband” (3.2.33), and also by himself.

Unable to withstand the demands of a shifting economy, then, love is weak. Even when it is brought to its desirable (and conventional) goal of marriage, we can hardly imagine, given its consistently cynical portrayal, an unproblematic and successful future for the institution that is fundamental both to patriarchy and capitalism. The primary love-plot of Sebastian and Mary is no exception and also is inextricably linked to contemporary concerns regarding capital and investment. Although Sebastian claims to “have a free will” that “perfect shine[s] … in his will to love” (2.2.1-2), he makes it equally clear that he is not prepared to risk disinheritance by prioritizing the woman over the money. Consequently, he recognizes that he must “wildly in a labyrinth … go” (1.2.95), and must “counterfeit passion” in order to inherit from his father something more valuable than just “birth” (1.2.92)—“the keys of wealth” that would secure the

\textsuperscript{11} While Mistress Gallipot never manages to fulfill her sexual desire for Laxton, her desire in itself may be read as an act of adultery. Moreover, it must be noted that she does not accomplish her adulterous goals only because Laxton, who “hate[s] her” but uses her facility “to keep (him) in fashion with the gallants” (2.1.90-91), does not oblige her with sexual gratification, but instead repeatedly postpones its possibility.
young man’s material future and enable him to pursue a romantic career with Mary Fitzallard (5.2.200). Indeed, for Sebastian to secure himself economically and be united with his betrothed, he must offer his father the monstrous figure of the alternative daughter-in-law: mad Moll. A cross-dressing “creature” of dubious birth and income, who mocks not only “the sex of woman” (1.2.127-28), but, more importantly, also that of man, Moll Cutpurse stands in direct opposition to the ideologies of the old guard of patriarchal futurity. While her confusing physicality renders her a difficult site of biological futurity (for she is “woman more than man, / Man more than woman”), her status as single woman emphasizes the uncertainty of the sources of her income, thereby denying the pre-established economics of inheritance.\textsuperscript{12} Despite the cynical view of matrimony, the play retains it as its central component, establishing it as a necessary if troubling institution through which the culture of patriarchy and capital may be propagated in new ways toward newer, hitherto unimagined futures.

\textsuperscript{12} As I have shown in chapter two, single women are a stock feature of early modern drama. One need only think of Portia in The Merchant of Venice, to recognize that single women occupy a central role in the Renaissance imagination. But unlike Moll Cutpurse in The Roaring Girl, Portia and most of the other single women have traceable sources of income. In fact, Shakespeare in The Merchant goes through pains to put on display the history of the women’s acquisitions. Even the more problematic, self-employed female characters in the drama have verifiable incomes. For details, see chapter two, especially my discussion of Anne in A Fair Quarrel and Hecate in The Witch. Moll Cutpurse is exceptional because, while she is capable of making luxurious purchases at the marketplace, patronizing local taverns, and employing servants, there is no evidence whatsoever in the play regarding either her bloodlines (her inheritance) or the line of work that economically sustains her flamboyant lifestyle. (Although Moll is accused of prostitution, as her profession it hardly can account for her lavish purchases of fabric or tobacco.)
Unlike *The Roaring Girl*, however, *The Witch of Edmonton*, a tragicomedy “[w]ritten between the execution of Elizabeth Sawyer on April 19, 1621, and a Court performance later that year by the Prince’s Company on December 29” (Champion 112), makes no effort to negotiate the contradictions that abound in a society that is faced with the problem of restructuring itself around the nascent ideals of capitalism, while maintaining through matrimony the notions of stability that are crucial to the success of patriarchy.¹³ Thus, while two of the three plots in *The Witch of Edmonton* end “not merely (with) a threatening possibility but the reality” of death (Champion 112), the third plot, involving Cuddy Banks, ends in frustration, as the economic, marital, and sexual aspirations of the young clown are inconclusively repressed. Although the play concludes with a marriage—that of Katherine and Somerton—the general future looks bleak, neither deaths nor marriage, that is, the two established mediums of reterritorialization, bring about a satisfactory (or convincing) resolution to the world of Edmonton. Indeed, as Champion notes, the playwrights’ “emphasis on the festering social corruption and (their)

---

¹³ Various scholars, notably William Alfred Harbage and M. L. Wine, consider *The Witch of Edmonton* to be a tragicomedy, while others, such as George Price and Lenora Brodwin, refer to it as a domestic tragedy (Champion 112). Larry Champion argues that the play cannot fit easily into the category of tragicomedy, because “[u]nlike the typically monolithic figures (of tragicomedy), Frank Thorney and Mother Sawyer are ambivalent individuals who simultaneously provoke sympathy and judgment,” thereby aligning themselves (and the play) with the tradition of the “English Renaissance tragedy” (113). For further details regarding the varied approaches to the play’s generic structure, see Larry Champion’s “Factions of Distempered Passions: The Development of John Ford’s Tragic Vision in *The Witch of Edmonton* and *The Lover’s Melancholy.*” “Concord in Discord”: *The Plays of John Ford, 1586-1986.* Ed. Donald K. Anderson, Jr. New York: AMS Press. 1986, 109-30.
refusal to provide a single convincing teleology for the stage world … convey a fundamentally pessimistic view of life in which man’s challenge is not the heroic deed or the new horizon but the ambiguity of moral values constantly frustrating his search for a meaningful life” (111). This “ambiguity” betrays an anxious domestic futurity in an unfamiliar world that, having rendered meaningless the feudalistic ideology of the past, is incapable of constructing a reliable capitalist alternative.

In light of the complications in its plot structure, it is clear that *The Witch of Edmonton* does not satisfy Fletcher’s infamous definition of a tragicomedy: the play does not “want death”; and while it is “a representation of familiar people,” it seems also at pains to represent “a God” who is not “as lawfull …as in a tragedie” (qtd. in McMullan and Hope 3). However, it is through its generic nonconformity that the play expands the dramatic possibilities of imagining and representing the future. Refusing to accommodate convincingly the comedic conventions of marriage, conventions that may mollify the horror, excess, and tragedy of the multiple deaths, *The Witch of Edmonton* is a timely play that speaks as much to contemporary anxieties regarding unstable gender and class relations within an early capitalist milieu, as it represents the social crises that stem from the absence of right, or at least clear-cut, directions that its protagonists must pursue toward fruitful ends. In its unwillingness to commit to contemporary regulations of tragedy, comedy, or even Fletcherian tragicomedy, the play situates on the early modern stage a new brand of tragicomedy, one that represents effectively the contemporary sense of unsettlement.
Of course, in both *The Roaring Girl* and *The Witch of Edmonton* attempts are made to use the disciplinary rhetoric of gossip and law to uphold patriarchy and contain the unruly subjects, especially the women, whom these devices render as monstrous. Notably, the effects on their male counterparts are not as dire, in that the unruly men are allowed to retain their humanity, even while they are punished (disciplined) for their transgressions. Doubtless, *The Roaring Girl* manages more successfully than *The Witch of Edmonton* to negotiate the disciplinary tool of gossip, and, in so doing, averts tragedy. But the logic that leads to comedic resolution is forced and the future that is promised at play’s end is tentative, quite like the Roaring girl herself, who addresses the possibility of her virtuous marriage at a future time (which, notably, Lord Noland thinks of as “doomsday”), while retaining her desire to “o’both sides o’th’bed” with herself (2.2.37-38). In *The Witch of Edmonton* the disciplinary tools are even less effective, at times functioning counterproductively: although they lead to the executions of a witch and a bigamist-murderer, neither gossip nor the law provides a semblance of stability, and both are therefore rendered incapable of reestablishing a sense of security within the community of Edmonton.

As early as in the Prologue to *The Roaring Girl*, we are introduced to a news-savvy culture, to a people whose “attention sets wide ope (their) gates / Of hearing” (13-14).\(^4\) What they are keen to hear are the spectacular tales of women’s and men’s

---

\(^4\) I use the term “news” as much in its early modern context of gossip or untrustworthy information, as in its modern sense, wherein it connotes “facts” that are of concern for members of a community.
unruliness. Sir Alexander, eager at once to display to the gallants the spoils of his accumulation, which “cost many a fair grey groat ere it came here” (1.2.12), and use their attention to narrate his concerns regarding his errant son, negotiates his “pretty tale” through the rhetoric of gossip (1.2.61). Transferring onto an imaginary “aged man” his own anguish at Sebastian’s alleged affair with Moll Cutpurse (1.2.64), Sir Alexander spins a story shrouded in namelessness and secrecy, piquing in the process his audience’s interest. Significantly, the listeners are eager not simply to hear the tale, but also to be informed of the names of its “characters.” Hoping that his guests “shall pardon (him)” for deferring this vital piece of information (1.2.68), Sir Alexander builds up the gallants’ curiosity, constructing his narrative through strategic pauses and elisions that leave the men craving more information. In so doing, he converts his aptly furnished parlor into a theatrical space wherein he is both performer and playwright.15

15 In the scene Sir Alexander gives his guests a tour of the “inner room” and parlor of his fashionable home, which is cluttered with luxurious furniture, fine tapestry, and expensive artwork (1.2.10-59). By dwelling on the material value of the objects that he has purchased, and demanding that his guests pay attention to his acquisitions, the old knight identifies the work of art as a commodity. But he also represents artistic production as a means of deception, wherein in the “[t]ronged heaps” may lose themselves to “[s]tories of men and women, mixed together/ Fair ones with foul, like sunshine in wet weather” (1.2.17-18), and in so doing risk being robbed of their belongings by “a cutpurse” who “thrusts and leers/ With hawk’s eyes for his prey” (1.2.26-27). While Sir Alexander’s comments target the visual dynamics of paintings, his “theory” can be applied just as easily to the dynamics of the early modern theatre: members of the audience often were absorbed by, and participated in, the “action” onstage; and pickpockets frequented the theatres, seeking easy and abundant targets. In another sense, this scene parallels nicely the form of The Roaring Girl: as the playwrights weave for their audience’s pleasure Mad Moll’s “character” (Prologue 26), they rely to some degree on the historical events of her trial, with which contemporary Londoners
The purpose of his playing unfurls along with his narration of the old man’s tale. Having established his “old man” as an icon of wealth and generosity, as one who “spend[s]” his wealth yet has enough to give some of it away “to all that need it” (1.2.100-01), Sir Alexander introduces another character, the “cause” of his “protagonist’s” sorrow (1.2.77): the son’s love interest. The “flesh-fly” whom the knight conjures up through his narrative is none other than Moll Cutpurse (1.2.124). His description of the woman is important. In Sir Alexander’s view, Moll is:

> ‘A creature … nature hath brought forth
To mock the sex of woman.’ It is a thing
One knows not how to name: her birth began
Ere she was all made. ’Tis woman more than man,
Man more than woman, and—which to none can hap—
The sun gives her two shadows to one shape;
Nay, more, let this strange thing walk, stand, or sit,
No blazing star draws more eyes after it.

(1.2.127-133; emphasis added.)

Sir Alexander deliberately constructs Moll in terms that problematize not only her gender but also her humanity. Not surprisingly, his guests assign her the title to which their host has cleverly pointed, even if he has refused to grant her a name: putting two and two must have been familiar. But they use the interest that Moll’s character generates to make their play more about the Londoners themselves, specifically the politics of their viewership.
together, the gallants identify Moll as “[a] monster!” (1.2.134). The gallants are the perfect audience and Sir Alexander is the perceptive architect who, knowing full well the social order within which his audience functions, offers up a body that they would readily identify and judge to be unruly and dangerous. Even before Moll has made her first appearance on stage, then, she has been made monstrous, or at least anomalous. At Sebastian’s staged outburst at his father’s vilification of Moll, Sir Alexander confesses to being the “wretched father” whose story he has just narrated (1.2.146). The townsfolk, being characteristically updated with the town’s rumor, inquire whether Sebastian is not to wed Sir Guy Fitzallard’s daughter. While Sir Alexander initially welcomes this piece of gossip as true, when his son demands to have his father accept Mary (Moll) Fitzallard, the covetous Londoner steps back from the prospect, swearing that he would rather “give (his son) ratsbane” than have him marry a pauper (1.2.169). Upon hearing his father’s verdict against his true love, Sebastian reverts to his “counterfeit passions” for the cross-dressed, socially suspect Moll (1.1.102), claiming that he is “so bewitched, so bound to (his) desires” that “nothing can quench out (the) fires/ That burn within (him)” (1.2. 174-76; emphasis added). It is crucial to note here that Sebastian too participates in the rhetoric of the Londoners that insists on identifying the unruly female form as monstrous or “witchy.” While in an earlier exchange with his betrothed Sebastian may only have represented Moll as a comic convenience that would facilitate his marriage to Mary Fitzallard, he now casts her decidedly in the figure of a dangerous, supernatural, being that is capable of creating familial discord and disrupting patriarchy through her mere
presence. Significantly, Sir Alexander responds (albeit in an aside) to his son’s defiance by promising to murder Moll Cutpurse.

The scene concludes on an ominous note. As the gallants and Sebastian take their leave, and as Sir Alexander instructs his new recruit and employee, Ralph Trapdoor, to ensnare Moll Cutpurse, we are introduced to the terrifying undertones of the comic plot. Quite likely a petty criminal, Trapdoor is invited by the nobleman to perform a social function: that of discipline.\textsuperscript{16} However, as the community’s Justice of the Peace, Sir Alexander is also careful to write himself into the chief disciplinary position, stating that he will “play the shepherd,” and that, to protect his townsmen’s lives and reputations and futures from the socially wayward Moll, he will magisterially “cut her” throat (1.2.235-36). While the scene would have been a comic highpoint for a contemporary audience, it also brings us dangerously close to dramatic horror. Violence, both in desired action and in speech, inundates the scene between Sir Alexander and Trapdoor. Be it in their references to cutting Moll’s comb (1.2.216), violating her chastity with the lure of wealth and sexually assaulting her in the process (1.2.219-20; 226-29), or plotting her murder through the appropriation of the law (1.2.232-34), the men rejoice in the prospect of punishing the unruly subject for her transgressions. While their verbal exchange could be seen to function within the realm of cultural fantasy (for Moll does not suffer death or

\textsuperscript{16} In the scene Sir Alexander remarks that Trapdoor’s palms are burnt. While the villain states that this is a result of an accident with respect to fireworks, it is likely that, in keeping with contemporary practices of punishment for petty crimes, Trapdoor may have been subject to the judicial system with which he seems familiar.
even shame at the hands of the men), nonetheless it is clear that the men charge their speech with a potent threat, one that, in a tragicomedy such as *The Witch of Edmonton*, leads to the execution of the transgressive female.\(^{17}\)

As with *The Roaring Girl*, *The Witch of Edmonton* too has multiple marriage plots—one of which involves both bigamy and paternal deception—that propagate the play’s action. However, without transporting marriage to the background, the play also focuses on the material conditions of poverty and old age. Living by “her own hands” and struggling to survive, Mother Sawyer is a deformed presence whose age, gender, disability, and economic precariousness render her a prime target for victimization. In the throes of poverty, the citizens of Edmonton persecute any and all deviance from the norm and strike dead the antisocial dissenters who voice or make visible their opposition to patriarchal authority. Consequently, Mother Sawyer, who is hailed as a witch and charged with the crimes of spreading disease, poverty, and marital perversions (infidelity and murder) throughout her community, is executed. Her deformed body, one that possibly is no longer even of reproductive use to patriarchal futurity, is put to use anyway: framed as a supernatural-criminal being, it is held up by the authorities as an unruly form, as an external symbol that instigates the townspeople’s fictionalization, consumption, and imaginary destruction of their own sufferings.

A direct source for the playwrights’ construction of their female protagonist, Henry Goodcole’s *The Wonderfull Discoverie of Elizabeth Sawyer, a Witch* is representative of the multiple witchcraft tracts that were published in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. The tract embodies the contradictions that surrounded the identity of the early modern witch, contradictions that, ironically, it claims to resolve by presenting “nothing but matter of fact” (Goodcole qtd. in Onat 381). But even as Goodcole condemns the idle gossip and superstitions about witches, and is “ashamed to see and heare … ridiculous fictions of (Elizabeth Sawyer) that are “fitter for an Ale-bench then for a … Court of Justice” (382; emphasis added), he readily constructs the old woman as the stereotypical witch: “crooked and deformed, even bending together” (383). Moreover, he makes a point to note her “cursing, swearing, blaspheming and imprecating” speech (383). However, while the tract avoids focusing on the material circumstances that may have led to the accusations against the old woman, it inadvertently hints at Sawyer’s socio-economic and cultural position within her community. Goodcole states that Sawyer cursed and verbally abused or threatened the citizens of Edmonton for the specific reason that they would not support her economically: they “would not buy broomes of her.” Of course, the chaplain “uses … (Sawyer’s) poverty as proof of her malice towards her neighbors” (Stymeist 37), and goes on to extract from her the bizarre confession regarding her familiar—the dog who sucked on her blood. Contemporary readers may have concentrated on Sawyer’s malice more than on the economic conditions that led to her hostility towards her community. But we
ought not to overlook this vital element of her confession, especially since Dekker, Rowley, and Ford make Sawyer’s poverty, her age, her disability, and her gender a focal point of the plot in *The Witch of Edmonton*. While the playwrights subscribe both to the generic and social conventions regarding witches (by incorporating popular superstitions), they also write into the play a sense of representational ambivalence. Through its use of the parallel plots and the competing discourses reflected therein, the play situates the witch alongside the other residents of Edmonton: within the changing economic structure of early modern England.

Even as it caters to contemporary stereotypes of witches, then, the play situates Mother Sawyer, and all the other characters, within a rural community that reels under the pressures of the Enclosure Acts. The Acts were passed in response to the growing demand for wool, which was the largest English export item of the early modern period. Keen to capitalize on the sheep-rearing business, many landowning farmers converted large sections of their land into pastures for grazing sheep, thereby putting a stop to the hitherto paternalistic structure of the agrarian economy that, prior to the passing of the acts, had sustained the poor, who “could gather domestic essentials, like firewood and building thatch, from the local common” (Stymeist 37). However, as Stymeist points out, “[w]ith early modern enclosure legislation, marginal members of rural communities became more dependent on their neighbors’ charity, and many of them were forced to become petty beggars, slipping into the criminalized class of vagabonds and the underemployed” (37). While the Enclosure Acts may not have initiated agrarian
capitalism, they certainly sped up and solidified the phenomenon, uprooting in the process vast sections of the rural population of England. In conjunction with these acts, others legal enforcements (such as the Vagrancy Act) made survival increasingly difficult for those members of the community who did not fit into any fixed and recognizable demographic category. With the support of the shifting economic and legal system, then, the able-bodied poor were punished for begging without due license and permission from the authorities; and women and men could be thrown into prisons (such as Newgate) and mental institutions (Bedlam) if they were caught “out of service.” Although the Poor Law that was passed in 1601 was designed to provide relief to the poorer sections of England, it also limited the scope of charity, which in earlier times was a Church endorsed but private activity. Now local parishes were officially responsible for maintaining their poor, and also for controlling their own “poor problems.” Given this, it is not unthinkable that the local authorities and leaders worked hand in glove with the more prosperous members of the community to identify and persecute those residents whose poverty and inability or unwillingness to work rendered them altogether parasitic or at least a threat to the developing principles of economic futurity. Since poverty was beginning to be regarded as a menace, and the poor as a collective burden on their society’s scarce resources, citizens no longer felt obliged to participate in the well-being or even survival of individuals such as Elizabeth Sawyer. Instead they were resentful toward such women

---

18 It is crucial to note that the passing of the Enclosure Acts, and their renewals during the reigns of Henry VIII and Elizabeth indicates the state’s endorsement of the economic shift from a feudal to a capitalist structure.
and held them up as scavengers, creatures whose futures did not coincide with or propagate the interests of larger society. These women’s bodies became the loci of early modern anxieties regarding economic redistribution. Superstition and religious anxiety became convenient tools of social engineering that could be put to use, in order to rid early modern communities of the economic threat posed by elderly women.

In *The Witch of Edmonton* Mother Sawyer’s opening speech exemplifies her awareness of her marginalized status in Edmonton’s community: as that of an old woman upon whom the “envious world/ Throw[s] … scandalous malice” (2.1.1-2), specifically because she is identifiable to them as “poor, deformed and ignorant” (2.1.3). Clearly Mother Sawyer is conscious of the systems of oppression and social injustice rampant in a changing world that marks her as a witch. Beaten by Old Banks for trespassing on his property, persecuted and ridiculed by the mindless youth of Edmonton, and abandoned by her community, which, in the past was “wont to wait on age” (4.1.122), Mother Sawyer spirals into acts of defiance. Desperate to seek relief from the constant vexation and torture that she suffers at the hands of the Edmontonians, the old woman wonders at the powers of witchcraft, powers of which she has heard tales, powers that she needs in order to sustain herself with basic dignity, but which she does not fully believe she can attain.19

19 At the first sight of the Dog, Mother Sawyer is both amazed and frightened by his presence. In fact, when Tom claims to be nothing short of “the devil” (2.1.122), Mother Sawyer likely retracts from fear: in response to her “Bless me! The devil?” (2.1.123), the Dog responds promptly: “Come, do not fear, I love thee much too well/ To hurt or fright thee” (2.1.124-25). While there are no stage directions that indicate Sawyer’s performance of fear, it seems clear from the Dog’s lines that she is at least intimidated, if not horrified, by the diabolical presence.
Even after the dog manages to recruit Mother Sawyer’s “soul and body” (2.1.134), the woman is not entirely convinced of her status as the witch of Edmonton. However, she soon begins to cherish (false) notions of her diabolical power, rejoicing in the idea that she is “an expert scholar” who can “[s]peak Latin, or … know not well what language, / As well as the best of ’em” (2.1.181-82). Accepting money from Young Banks in return for agreeing to cast a love-spell on Katherine Carter, Sawyer takes her first step away from her hitherto subordinate position, and, empowering herself both economically and socially, loses some credibility as a victim of her community’s oppression.\(^{20}\) By the time the Edmontonians prosecute the unruly (delusional) woman for being a murderous witch, Sawyer has hardened into a cynical subject whose actions engage a counterfuturity that also defies the disciplinary aspects of language. At her initial hearing she refuses to confess to the alleged crime of witchcraft, swearing instead to “muzzle up (her) tongue from telling tales” (5.1.70). While she reverts to her earlier complaints about being “reviled, kicked, (and) beaten” each day by the “slaves” of Edmonton (4.1. 77-78), Sawyer no longer is convincing as a pitiful victim of the changing social milieu. Rather, as she becomes firmly rooted in her unruliness and resists the structures of legal authority, she loses her position in the play as sympathetic protagonist. Thus, even though she confesses in the end to her practice of witchcraft and regrets her subscription to the

\(^{20}\) It is significant to note that while she convinces Young Banks of her diabolical abilities, Sawyer herself is fully aware that she has no power to manipulate Katherine’s emotions. In fact, even as she accepts Banks’ money, she admits (in an aside) that she means to “have sport” at the young clown’s expense (2.1.224).
devil’s path, she does so hesitantly, complaining that the citizens want her to “spend” her final moments “bawling” out her repentance (5.3.48). The text’s final judgment of Mother Sawyer is, of course, precarious. Even as it prioritizes the woman’s socio-economic position and perhaps offers it as a rationale for her transgressions, it does not allow her the privilege granted to tragic heroes: while almost all the other deaths in the play take place onstage, Elizabeth Sawyer’s takes place offstage, and her absence is hardly noticeable at the end of the play, which turns its focus on Frank Thorney, the unruly young man who, in his dying speech, both repents and reverts to the patriarchal norm.

Unlike Mother Sawyer’s, Frank Thorney’s social morality moves him in a disciplinary course from patriarchal and capital anxiety through panic-driven, anti-patriarchal, action, to his dramatic climax, which is also his moment of “moral sensitivity” and due repentance for his prior actions, wherein he acknowledges the supremacy and validity of patriarchal ideologies (Champion 113). However, even in this plot multiple complications arise that lead to the play’s skeptical representation of the hegemonic assimilation processes embodied in Frank Thorney’s rites of passage. The play opens with a private exchange between Frank Thorney and his secret bride, Winifred. Much like his counterpart in The Roaring Girl, young Thorney is anxious to maintain his father’s goodwill, which in turn would lead to a secure inheritance, while at the same time exercising his “free will” to marry a wife of his own choosing. The crucial difference between the two plays is the biological state in which we encounter the female
lovers: while the presumably virginal (certainly unpregnant) Mary Fitzallard in *The Roaring Girl* is camouflaged only in order to conceal her identity from Sir Alexander’s greedy eyes, Winifred, being pregnant, needs to conceal her unruly body from larger society. Thus, within the first few lines of the play, Frank Thorney informs his wife of the careful arrangements he has made to transport Winifred from Edmonton—the center of the play’s world—to a remote location “[n]ear Waltham Abbey (1.1.38), away from the potentially convicting speech of “the tattling gossips” who “can speak against (her) fame” (1.1.3-4), and, in so doing, divorce the young man from “th’inheritance/ To which (he is) born heir” (1.1.28-29).21

While the Frank Thorney-Winifred plot upholds what Walter Cohen identifies as the “love-and-honour code” that was rapidly being embraced by the early modern tragicomedies (128), and while the play even seems to represent a “toleration of premarital intercourse by the betrothed couple” (133), at the same time it suggests that “property in marriage” is necessary for the continued health and social acceptance of the matrimonial arrangement (133).22 Indeed, Frank Thorney speaks as the play’s voice of

21 Caroline Bicks notes that the early modern midwife’s oath clearly indicated that it was the midwife who “determined which genealogical tale, with its attendant privileges or stigmas, would be delivered to a wider audience” (24). This emphasis on naming and exposing the true father reveals a “specifically male concern about the birth attendant’s supposed proximity to what is true,” thereby signaling the increased attempts by men to control or regulate the “production and dissemination of a child’s origins” (Bicks 24).

22 Although Winifred alludes repeatedly to her secret marriage to Frank Thorney, it is clear that the couple has not been recognized publicly—or legally—as man and wife. Consequently, the child born to Winifred would necessarily be condemned as a bastard, a “brand” that would automatically alienate him from his community.
reason when he announces to his forlorn wife that he is weaving the intricate mesh of deception only to be a good parent and ensure that their unborn child will not “feel/ The misery of beggary and want;/ Two devils that are occasions to enforce/ A shameful end” (1.1.17-20). The “shameful end,” however, is inescapable in *The Witch of Edmonton*.

While Winifred, who may not even be carrying young Thorney’s child but her employer Sir Arthur Clarington’s, is confined to the “invisible” space of her uncle’s home, the young hero is subjected to a lucrative marriage to Susan Carter, one that is arranged for him by his father.  

From this point on, Frank Thorney fluctuates between moral anxiety that stems from his emotional commitment to Winifred and material ambition, ambition that is fired by his awareness of the need to secure his socio-economic position.

This conflict—which in *The Roaring Girl* is resolved painlessly through the characters’ witty manipulation of town gossip, economic transactions, and the law—leads only to catastrophe in the tragicomedy. Gossip, which is only potentially malicious in the comedy, is elevated to the level of hysteria in *The Witch of Edmonton*; economic transactions between the resourceful (the young) and the wealthy (the elderly) that in the comedy lead to financial stability for the youth and moral education of the aged are

---

23 Michael Roberts notes that in purely economic terms, women who were domestic servants or illegal inmates of houses ran the risk of increasing the town’s population of illegitimate, dependent children (the implication being that as single women, they were prone to sexual encounters with male servants, other inmates, and/or employers). For greater details on the issues of illegitimacy in early modern England, see Keith Wrightson’s *English Society* and Wrigley and Schofield’s *The Population History of England*. 
frustrated in the tragicomedy; and the law, which in the earlier play is rendered subservient to the moral dictates of love and honor, is actively defaced in the later play by authoritarian figures who embody lust and dishonorable conduct.

Relating the generic innovations of the Stuart tragicomedy to the material realities of the period, Margot Heinemann suggests that in “a troubled, unstable, and divided society, the deeper changes taking place (very roughly, from a social order based on rank and status to one based on wealth and money) affected every social grouping and its ‘mentalities’ in one way or another, so that dissent and conflict over political policy and social and moral codes can be discerned even within … plays intended for a privileged and fashionable audience” (151). The Witch of Edmonton represents precisely the destabilizing effects of the social economy that Heinemann’s essay identifies as being specific to a “prerevolutionary situation,” wherein “no single ideology is capable of holding the society at large effectively together” (151).

Heinemann notes that, in the plays produced during the prerevolutionary period in England, there is a sense of “the world turned upside-down to right injustices and resolve social conflict” (153). While this may be true of the city comedies of which The Roaring Girl is an excellent example, the same cannot be stated of The Witch of Edmonton. Granted, in both plays the world is “turned upside down,” the principles regimenting patriarchal futurity dismantled: women take on transgressive forms—be it through crossdressing or witchcraft—and poor men morally outweigh noblemen. Of course, The Roaring Girl executes effectively the benevolent spirit of “proletarianism,” which in
itself is a reversal of social mores. Moll Cutpurse—a single woman who mysteriously also has the financial resources to purchase luxury items at the marketplace—manages single-handedly to save the day, uniting the young couple in a lucrative yet loving marriage. Moreover, she chastises Laxton’s deviant sexuality, humbles the money-driven Sir Alexander, and shames misogynists at large while endorsing the patriarchally determined feminine virtues of obedience and chastity. Conveniently, the various social and economic reversals in the play serve to unite the generic blueprint of comedy to the increasingly popular moral purpose of urban culture.

---

24 I use the term proletarianism conscious of its ahistoricism in the early modern context. However, I am basing the usage on my sense that the play focuses on the everyday activities or an everyday people. While Sebastian and Mary Fitzallard may form part of the aristocracy and gentry, most of the characters seem entrenched in the growing working and middle classes.

25 It is interesting to note that Laxton, whose name, as several critics note, puns on his sexual inadequacy, is aroused not only by Moll’s masculine attire, but also by her ability to physically and verbally assault men. Remarking that her voice “will drown all the city” (2.1.189), the pauper-gallant constructs an elaborate fantasy of Moll that is triggered by Mistress Gallipot’s statement of the local gossip regarding the young woman’s unstable gender and sexuality: he imagines greedily how the crossdressed woman “might first cuckold the husband and then make him do as much for the wife!” (2.1.211-12). Soon after, when Laxton is witness to Moll’s attack on a nameless but armed “fellow” (2.1.248; also see stage direction), he lauds her ability to wield “gallantly” and “manfully” the sword (2.1.261). In his readiness to be schooled by Moll, then, Laxton displays a sexuality that deviates from the tropes of masculine aggression (which are embodied in the rhetorical exchanges between Sir Alexander and Trapdoor). Similarly, Laxton’s refusal to consummate his illicit relationship with Mistress Gallipot may be interpreted as a sexual “perversion” or deviance on his part, in that he derives pleasure from the act of infinite deference—from inaction—rather than immediate gratification through sexual intercourse. Of course, we cannot overlook the economic power that he wields over the married woman, which stems directly from his unwillingness to gratify her sexual expectations of him.
However, in the later play similar reversals do not yield positive results, and cannot bring about dramatic resolution. Women—both transgressive and subservient—from all social orders end up dead, often unjustifiably; love within marriage, though idealized from the beginning, amounts only to tragedy; and as the play concludes, there is no redistribution of wealth and/or power within the community. In short, at play’s end the dead seem to have died in vain because the living are none the better (or richer) for the former’s sacrifices, their future courses altered but not improved.
REFERENCES


Anonymous. The XV Concerns of Rash and Inconsiderate Marriage.


Drama: Shakespeare, Marlowe, Webster Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.


VITA

Tripthi Pillai was born and raised in New Delhi, India, where she completed her undergraduate education and also received the first of her two Master’s degrees in English. She moved to the United States in 1997 and completed her second Master’s program from Bradley University in Peoria, Illinois. She has been at Loyola University Chicago since 2002. Tripthi’s research and teaching interests include early modern studies, post structural theories, and cultural studies.